Update and upgrade of the training curricula for local communities focused on citizens participation

2023

alda*

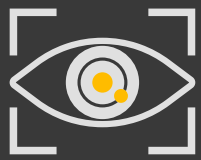European Association for Local Democracy

Taking into consideration ALDA's competencies and experiences from the past 20 years, this curricula lists key proposals of training modules that ALDA could offer to local communities in order to work better on citizens participation and to enhance the engagement and actions at the local level.

This toolkit includes tools and methodologies developed as part of various initiatives and projects, highlighting in some cases the thematic focuses to which they refer. In particular the first part, the proposed modules cover not only topics and methods dealing with citizens participation but also give the possibility to have an overview of general approaches and good practices, with the support of working groups and exercises that help to put in practice all the theories learned.

Training for local communities: tools and techniques for a basic framework

Focus: local capacity building for a better participation of migrant communities

Focus: inclusive participation of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities

Training for local communities: tools and techniques for a basic framework

MODULE TRAINING 1:
INVOLVING COMMUNITY AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF ART

Topics and structure:

- Use of multiple sources to gather information about needs and challenges
- Conduct a SWOT analysis, with analysis of key behaviors, environmental factors, targets and agents of change, and potential solutions
- How to start a collaborative partnership, and how to sustain its activities and effects
- Case study

MODULE TRAINING 2:
APPROACHES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Topics and structure:

- The community development approaches are: needs-based approach, problem-solving approach, participatory approach, asset-based approach, the power-conflict-approach, welfare approach and rights-based approach. Analysis of all the approaches interesting for the community
- Include diverse groups in the work
- Working groups test: each group tests one approach

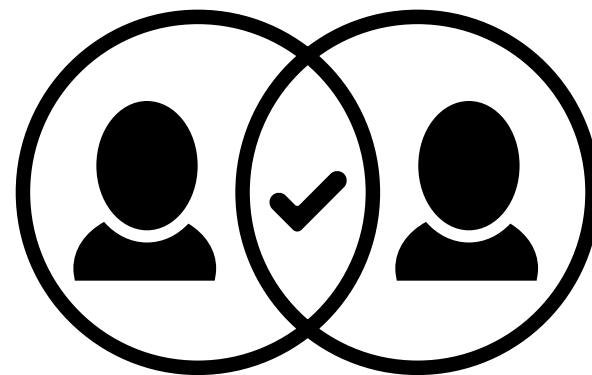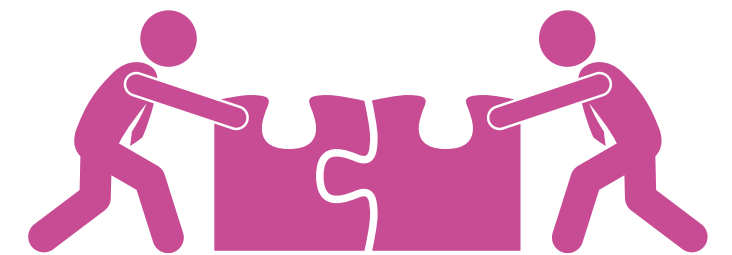# MODULE TRAINING 3: DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Topics and structure:

- Determining who should be a part of a collaboration; understanding networking, communications, trust, and shared vision
- Importance of developing strategies and action plans and using them
- How to create trust among participants and empower others for the purpose of shared leadership
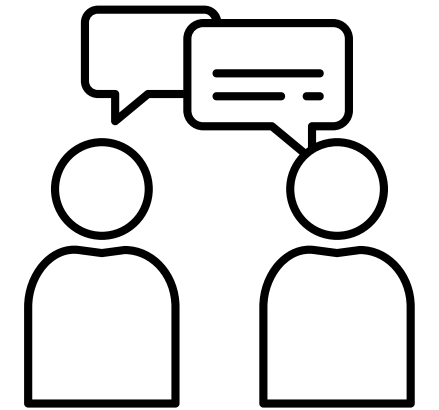- Role-play about different kinds of leaderships

MODULE TRAINING 4:
INCREASING PARTNERSHIP AND SHARED BUDGET

Topics and structure:

- Why it is crucial to intentionally involve others in the work,
- Key principles in outreach and recruitment
- Steps for identifying potential funding sources
- Step-by-step guidance in applying for grant funding
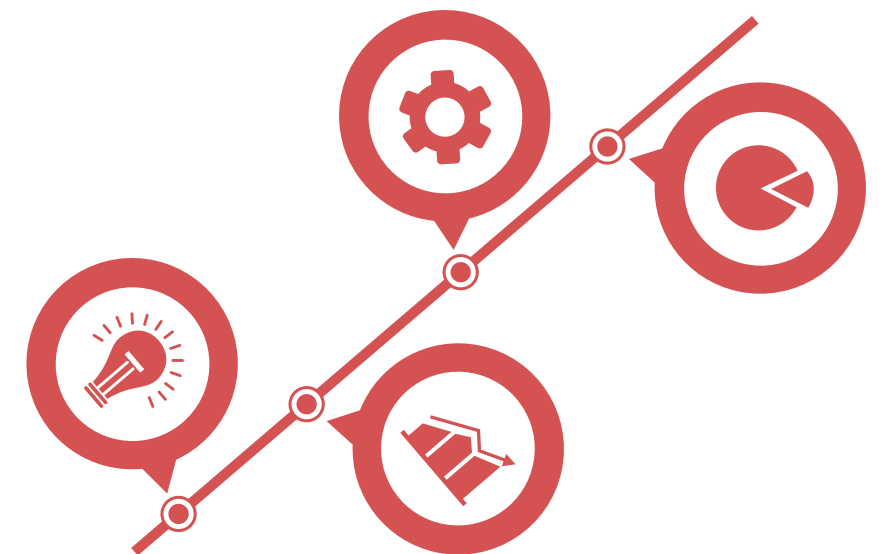- Exercise

MODULE TRAINING 5: EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Topics and structure:

- Develop evaluation questionnaire(s) consistent with the framework and intervention
- Gathering evidence to address evaluation questions, and how to use data to learn and make adjustments
- Tactics for sustainability to the community's situation
- Development of a sustainability plan
- Case study

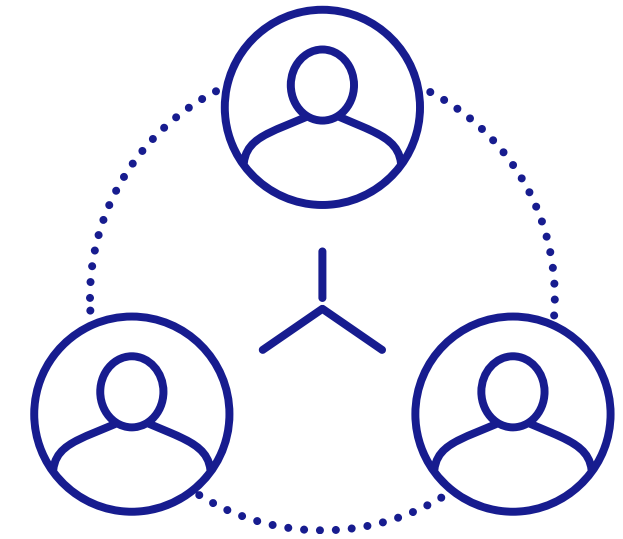# INTER-MODULE TRAINING:
METHODOLOGIES TO LEARN AND TO APPLY

Methods that could be applied in the trainings and community activities:

- World Cafè
- Focus groups
- Citizens' Assembly Simulation
- Open Space Methodology

METHODOLOGIES

Open Space Technology

Extracting the valuable lessons learnt from this experience and using also information he gathered in Liberia at the end of the 60s when he had assisted to passage rites of young boys, Harrison Owen put together a series of ideas that underlie the Open Space approach:

- The circle with an open space in the middle – is the geometrical figure that best promotes human com- munication (we never talk of ''squares of friends'' or ''family square'' but always use the term ''circle'')
- The rhythm of breathing – which leads to a successful conference – is natural and does not involve any organizing committee.

Two basic mechanisms were clearly defined here. In order to decide on the content and on the regularity two other traditional (sometimes forgotten, yet very useful) mechanisms were borrowed:

- Chatting together, a simple and comfortable way to find out what is interesting to citizens
- The marketplace of the village that offers a means to bring these interests together in an orderly fashion

- **The Open Space Methodology** works without an agenda and without a table. Sitting in a circle, all parti- cipants have the opportunity to propose and to post on the walls the topics that seem important to them – within the larger topic initially agreed on. Thus, the participants are invited to take initiative, to contribute to the elaboration of the agenda and to create self-run working groups

- All types of questions are explored: all the questions brought forward by the participants are dis- cussed, which facilitates the communication and the elaboration of their solution.

The principles

1. **"Whoever comes is the right person"**: this principle reminds the members of the group that in order to accomplish something it does not necessarily take a large number of participants and a leader, but a number of motivated individuals who are prepared and interested to participate.
2. **"Whatever happens, is the only thing that could have happened"**: this principle keeps the participants on the here-and-now and eliminates all the "who could have/ would have".
3. **"When it starts, is the right time"**: this principle reminds the participant that the inspiration and true creativity rarely keep track of the time. These come (or go) whenever they come (or go).
4. **"When it's over, it's over"**: you don't have to waste time. Do what you have to do, and when it's done, move on to something that's more important.

The context

The Open Space approach is particularly designed for a **specific context**:

- The problems to solve are complex and require creative, innovative solutions that can result in an intense exchange of opinions.
- There is a great degree of diversity of individuals touched by the problem and involved in the identifi-cation of the solution.

The time available for finding an appropriate solution is limited

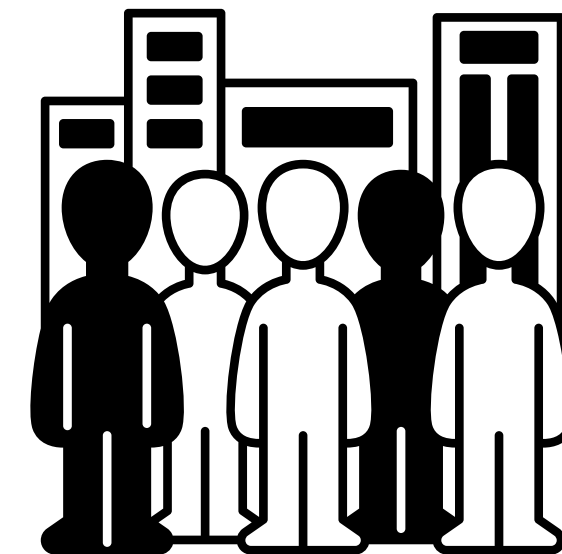# The advantages

This approach allows:
- To unify groups with a diverse background in terms of education, ethnicity, political visions, cultures, economic and social conditions
- To bring up important questions that had previously been ignored
- To stimulate intense and fruitful exchanges, particularly in conflict situations
- To share the leadership and to alleviate the negative effects of authority

Citizens' assembly simulation

First part (duration: approximately one hour):
- ☒ Introduction – concept of participatory process and active citizenship
- ● Citizens assembly origins
- ● Who and How
- ● Purpose and steps of the process

Case Study: "Mostar citizens' assembly"

Mostar Citizens' Assembly was developed in the framework of the project "Building democratic participation in the City of Mostar", implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2021.
- The subject of the Assembly: Cleanliness of the city and maintenance of public spaces in Mostar.
- Rulebook

Second part (duration: approximately two hours):

☐ Simulation with approximately 40 participants
The subject of the Assembly, i.e. participatory budget could be interesting topic/activity for the citizens' assembly simulation

1st step: Learning phase
Role division of participants ☐ 3 groups: Assembly members; stakeholders; experts.

Speeches by stakeholders and experts and general discussion on the chosen topic.
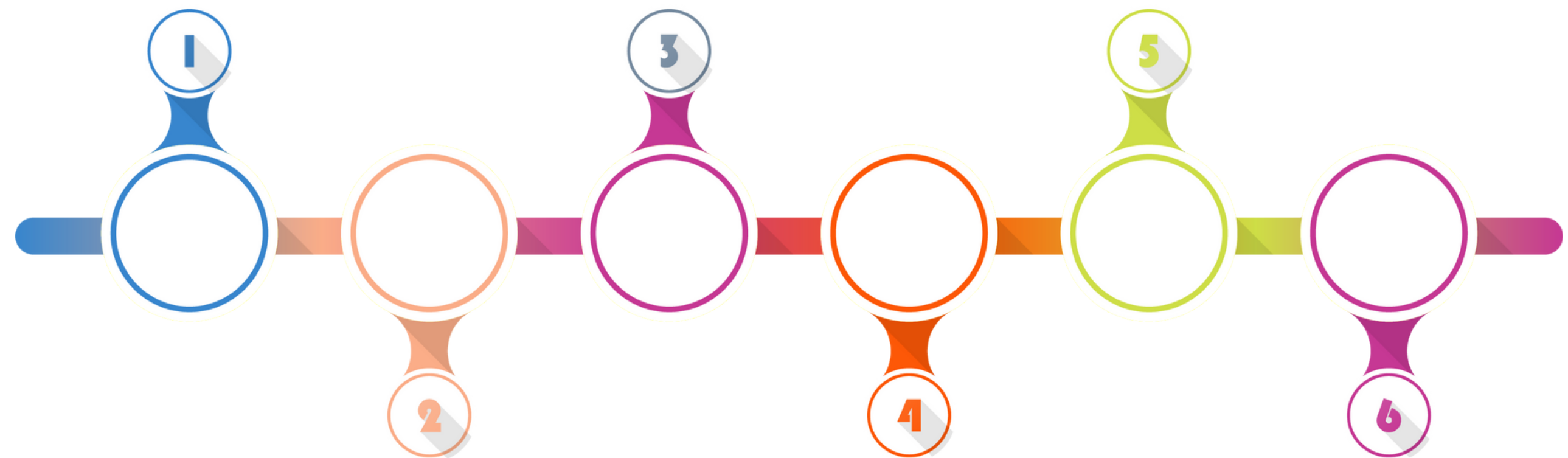
2nd step: Submission of proposal for recommendations by Assembly members, stakeholders, experts (use of Ideaflip/Jamboards).

3rd step: Final Vote

Maximum 10 recommendations, participants cast their vote by selecting one of the following options for each proposal (use of Slido or Mentimeter):

1) I strongly agree
2) I agree
3) I agree, although I have some doubts or reservations
4) I have many doubts
5) I disagree
6) I strongly disagree

Wrap-up and conclusion

Focus: local capacity building for a better participation of migrant communities

SHAPE project

The SHAPE project – SHaring Actions for the Participation and Empowerment of migrant communities and Local Authorities – funded by the European fund AMIF aims to foster the participation of people with a migratory background in democratic processes and in the design and implementation of integration policies at local, national and European level.

The action targets 3 states, so-called border states Italy, Hungary and Croatia, where public opinion appears particularly negative towards migrants and 2 leading states regarding migrants' participation in the democratic process, Germany and Portugal.

Methodology

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITH FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

in order to delineate the needs of migrant people and local authorities by means of focus groups and interviews. In the case of our project, the research was conducted by the IRS (nationally and internationally recognized research organization).
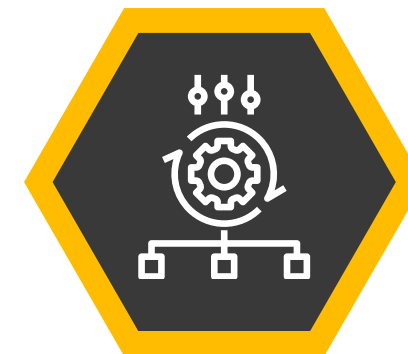
TRAINING SESSIONS FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

- to increase the capacity of operators, officials and managers of local authorities to build an active and fruitful dialogue with citizens and migrant communities,
- to foster participatory processes in the defining of local policies and improve integration in the main areas of interest (health care, education, housing, work, and gender equality).
- to promote networking opportunities and the exchange of good practices on the participation of people with a migratory background in democratic life through direct experiences, including at international level.

TRAINING SESSIONS FOR MIGRANTS AIMED AT INCREASING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND SKILL-SETS

- to improve the knowledge of people with a migratory background about the functioning of democratic systems and the resources and initiatives available at local, national and European level;
- To promote networking opportunities and the exchange of good practices on the participation of people with a migratory background in democratic life through direct experiences, including at international level.

PILOT ACTIONS AT LOCAL LEVEL

- to activate a participatory process at local level in the defining of integration policies and priorities, taking into account the different areas of intervention, collecting ideas from migrant associations and citizens on how to improve communication and participation;
- to create structured and formalized avenues to regularly consult immigrants on policies, through the appropriation and bottom-up approach of consultation mechanisms at local level;
- to ensure the feasibility of the methodology through experimentation and evaluation of the proposed pilot action

step 3) training program for people with a migratory background

objectives

- Increasing the possibilities and competencies of people with a migrant background, citizens of foreign origin, associations and migrant communities to actively participate in the design of integration policies;
- Increasing the knowledge of people with a migrant background about the functioning of democratic systems, resources and initiatives available at local, national and European levels

Target

The training counts between 15 and 25 people with migrant backgrounds, NGOs, civil society associations working with migrants and\or migrants led.

Contents

The thematic modules discussed were context-based depending on the situation in the various partner countries and on the requests of the stakeholders. Among the most discussed topics and recommended:

- "Cultural Storytelling and Communication Channels" (Italy)
- "Living the City: Homes and Institutions" (Italy)
- "Participatory Democracy and Civic and Political Participation of Youth and Immigrants" (Portugal)
- "Anti Discrimination Policy" (Germany)
- "The Hungarian context of integration of migrants" (Hungary)
- "Accessing Health Services and Exchange of Experiences" (Croatia)

structure

The training is structured in **4 sessions of 4 hours each** (16 hours of training)
Some partners divided the training into four separate meetings, while others decided to merge 2 meetings into a single day. The modality and frequency of the training took into consideration the availability and free time of the various participants in order to maximize the level of adhesion and uptake.

final results

Training for people with migratory backgrounds in the five countries has touched on the issues that emerged from the analysis of the research, thus responding to needs.

- **1 training course of 16 hours** (4 session of 4 hours each)
- **1 multiplier group** made by people involved in the training and acting as a multiplier by passing on the knowledge gained to other people
- Certificate of attendance at the Shape Academy
- **New collaborations and networks** among participants both as individual citizens and associations

Focus: inclusive participation of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities

alda*
European Association
for Local Democracy

How To Implement Enterprise Risk Management Practices

The European Project Extraordinary Citizens (Project number: 101089825) intends to raise awareness and improve inclusive democratic participation of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities. This is because young people with disabilities - intellectual or physical - are often excluded from important political, economic, cultural and social processes.

The **Promoting the Democratic Participation of Young People with Disabilities training program** aims to provide individuals with disabilities with tools and knowledge to feel more confident in all democratic processes, thereby increasing their participation.

To achieve this, six training modules were developed:

1. **Human and Civil Rights of people with disabilities**

2. **Democracy and Democratic Participation of people with disabilities**

3. **The Main European Democratic Values**

4. **A Voice in the Decision-Making Process**

5. **Relationships and socio-emotional learning**

6. **Participatory Actions with People with Disabilities**

Module on Participatory Actions with People with Disabilities

Objectives of the module

Providing practical activities that enable people with disabilities to be better prepared for active participation in the community and to get involved in democratic processes and decisions in the future.

Tools to Create Debates and Make Decisions

Role-Playing

Engage participants in role-playing scenarios related to democratic processes. For example, simulate a mock election or a town hall meeting where they can practice making decisions and expressing their views. Use simple language, images or painting to be more inclusive for all the participants.

Visual Decision-Making Boards

Create decision-making boards with images or symbols representing different choices. Participants can point to their preferred options, making decision-making more accessible

Voting Cards

Use simple voting cards with pictures or colours to help participants cast their votes during debates or decision-making exercises. This can make the process more interactive and inclusive

Group discussion

Facilitate small group discussions with clear discussion guidelines. Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and share their thoughts in a supportive environment

MODULE	**Participatory Actions with People with Disabilities**
TOPIC	4. A Voice in the Decision-Making Process
OBJECTIVES	Create a meaningful and educational experience for the young participants and encourage their active participation in the political process. Provide young people with an opportunity to come into contact with reality and the political context. Promote the civic and political participation of young people in democratic actions and of community interest.
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY AND CONTEXTUALIZATION	Encouraging young people to have an active civic participation is crucial so that they can stay informed about what's happening around them and assert their rights. So, organizing a visit for the group to a Municipal Assembly in your city or a session at your country's Parliament is a great way to engage young people in civic participation.
TIME	About 2 hours
NECESSARY RESOURCES	Questions previously formulated by young people
STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS	Step 1) Preparation: Before the visit, provide the young participants with background information about the political structure, the topics that will be discussed, and the politicians who will be present. Encourage them to research and prepare questions related to the issues that matter to them. Step 2) Visit to the Assembly/Parliament: During the visit, instruct the young participants to pay close attention to the following aspects: i) How politicians structure and present their arguments and ii) The posture and body language of the participants. If possible, encourage them to actively participate in the discussion by asking questions or sharing their viewpoints on the topics being discussed. Step 3) Post-Visit Discussion: After the session, gather the young participants for a discussion. Ask them to share their thoughts, observations, and what they've learned from the visit. Encourage them to reflect on how political decisions can impact their lives and the importance of civic engagement.

alda*
European Association
for Local Democracy

**Co-funded by
the European Union**