



A WEALTH OF EXPERTISE

Toolkit for Local Authorities
to successfully engage citizens

2024



Co-funded by
the European Union

The present document aims to showcase the extensive body of work developed by ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy - in the realm of citizen participation and local democracy over more than two decades. It capitalises on the expertise of ALDA and its members in its attempt to increase citizen participation.

Established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe, ALDA is a global alliance of associations, civil society organisations, and local governments, dedicated to supporting local democracy and citizen engagement in Europe and beyond. Since its establishment, ALDA has implemented hundreds of projects and has engaged millions of citizens, promoting its values and reaching its objectives in good governance at the local level. Throughout its long history, ALDA has produced an extensive body of knowledge and practical tools to engage with citizens.

This publication provides a comprehensive overview of ALDA's contributions, methodology and publications, which are organised into seven thematic hubs. This material reflects ALDA's expertise in developing and implementing innovative tools and methods for enhancing citizen active participation in local governance.

The second part highlights significant initiatives and best practices demonstrating the practical application of participatory democracy and citizen participation activities with the contribution of ALDA members and partner municipalities.

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Introduction

ABOUT ALDA

By supporting local democracy and citizens engagement in Europe, the Neighbourhood and beyond, ALDA is a global alliance of associations, civil society organisations and local governments.

Established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe, ALDA coordinates and supports the network of Local Democracy Agencies, be they self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs acting as good-governance and local self-government promoters.



During its more than 20 years of activities, ALDA has developed more than 500 projects and engaged almost 25 million citizens. Thus, thanks to its expertise and knowledge, and by promoting participatory methods and decentralised cooperation, ALDA results to be a strategic and essential stakeholder in the field of local democracy, active citizenship, and cooperation between local authorities and civil society, in Europe and beyond.

Together with its 300 members from 45 countries and 17 Local Democracy Agencies, ALDA actively contributes to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030.

WHAT WE DO

To promote good governance and citizen participation at the local level in the whole Europe and beyond, ALDA leads a wide range of actions aimed at **supporting local, national and international stakeholders in achieving their goals to promote local democracy**. These efforts include different fields such as European integration, decentralisation, human rights, social inclusion, sustainable development, civic initiatives, and more.

ALDA represents a wide network of citizens and local authorities fully committed and engaged to support local democracy and the empowerment of local communities through citizens participation, in Europe and beyond. Since 2020, ALDA has been “going global”, by bringing its experience in local democracy beyond the European borders and the neighborhood, reaching out to other regions of the world in need of assistance and support in our field of expertise.

ALDA leads its activities through different forms of actions and channels:

- **Conducting projects** in the field of good governance and citizen participation at the local level in Europe and beyond, with its members, partners and the Local Democracy Agencies
- **Coordinating and supporting** the network of the Local Democracy Agencies
- Managing and supporting its wide network of members made of around 300 stakeholders including local authorities, associations of local authorities, provinces, counties, civil society organisations, and academic institution
- **Collaborating with European and worldwide networks** on campaigns, statements and joint initiatives to let citizens be heard and contribute to the decision-making process of their communities.
- Cooperating as **official partners of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**.
- **Supporting local stakeholders’ initiatives** by providing ALDA’s unique expertise gained during its 25 years of activity in the European Union and its Neighbourhood through the establishment of partnerships and the identification of relevant stakeholders to cooperate with, scouting funding opportunities to implement project ideas, and assuring dissemination and visibility of their initiatives
- Leading advocacy and lobbying activities raising the voice of its members and partners to orient local, national and European policies in our field of activities to make a stronger and more cohesive Europe, based on the principles of equality, democracy and human rights.

ALDA & Citizen Participation

Following its fast growth in recent years, ALDA has become active in many areas, ensuring a more holistic approach in the governance and planning of the Association.

Thus, seven **Thematic Hubs** have been created:

- **Citizen engagement**
- **Territorial and local development**
- **Digital and innovation**
- **Youth empowerment and education**
- **Environment and climate**
- **Gender, inclusion and human rights**
- **Migration**

One of the key priorities that encompasses all activities of ALDA, regardless of the thematic focus, is the **promotion of citizen participation** to strengthen local democracy, participatory processes, democratic resilience and decentralized cooperation.

Being one of the broadest and multifaceted democracies in the world, Europe is nowadays a leading actor in the promotion of citizens participation and participatory democracy worldwide.

Throughout more than twenty years of activity, ALDA has developed extensive expertise in enhancing citizen participation and creating innovative tools and methods to foster greater engagement in local governance. As a result, ALDA has produced a substantial body of work, including numerous handbooks and recommendations to support the empowerment of local communities all over the world.

ALDA's experience demonstrates that the principle of local democracy transcends geographic boundaries.

The topics and methodologies employed can be effectively applied across various political and social contexts, using similar approaches.

Why Citizen Participation?

Governance is about the interaction between governments and other social organisations in decision-making processes involving different stakeholders and actors. In the realm of good governance, which concerns different levels, from the local to the international, **participatory democracy is an essential process to empower citizens in political changes.**



Especially in times where democracy is threatened and vulnerable, rebuilding trust in public institutions and create a space for exchange becomes necessary. Engaging the citizens at the local level, raising awareness about current challenges, and giving them voices in relevant debates can benefit all the actors involved and foster a more inclusive, transparent and efficient democracy. Ongoing dialogue and engagement between political bodies and citizens are necessary for responsive and effective decision-making.

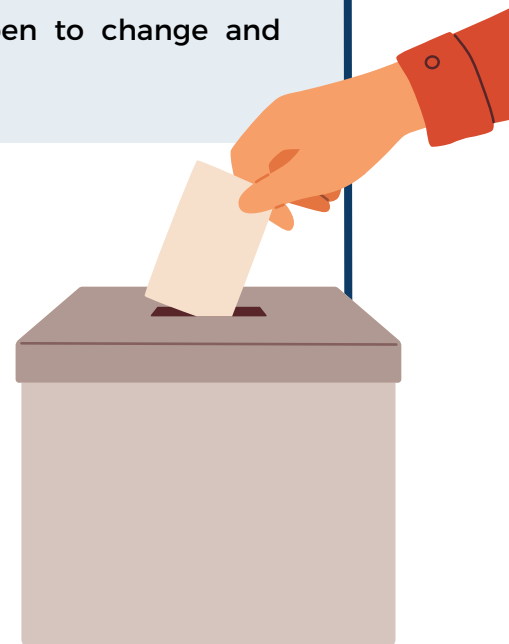
Participation by all groups of civil society in decision-making at all levels of government is necessary for a functioning and secure democratic society.

Citizen participation and the involvement of civil society is essential to foster trust in public authorities and encourage further long-term collaboration with the citizens. When the public opinion is involved and different perspectives are considered, the authorities can make better decisions and more effective changes. As a result, the outcomes are more likely to be accepted by the citizens.

Principles of Participation

The Council of Europe has developed the criteria to define civil participation and achieve good local governance according to which an effective civil participation process must be based on the following key principles:

- **Openness and accessibility** of the participatory processes.
- **Trust** between the actors as the basis for honest interactions.
- **Independence** of the NGOs and the actors involved in their actions and decisions.
- **Participation** of all groups, including those with particular interests.
- **Transparency** of the processes, which must be open to scrutiny and available to the public.
- **Accessibility** through clear language and appropriate use of the means of participation.
- **Non-discrimination and inclusiveness** of all the voices, including the less privileged.
- **Accountability**, with any process producing results being open to change and subject to opinions.

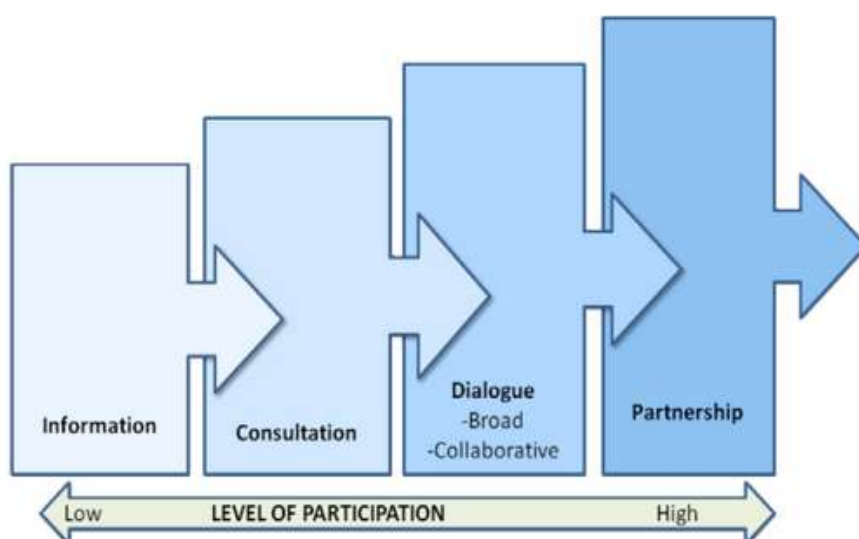


CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (2019): 6-8. <https://rm.coe.int/code-of-good-practice-civil-participation-revised-301019-en/168098b0e2>

Different Levels of Participation

Be it a citizen assembly, a consultation platform, a participatory budgeting initiative, etc., there are different levels of participatory democracy practices that can be applied at any step of decision-making processes. From the least to the most participative, the levels are:

- **INFORMATION:** the public authority guarantees the right of the public to access all information during the process, to enable them to react.
- **CONSULTATION:** it provides NGOs and civil society with the possibility of feedback and opinions on specific policy topics.
- **DIALOGUE:** built on mutual interests and shared objectives, it consists of an exchange of views to develop a common strategy.
- **PARTNERSHIP:** it implies shared responsibilities between the parties and collaboration at all levels.



CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (2019): 9-10. <https://rm.coe.int/code-of-good-practice-civil-participation-revised-301019-en/168098b0e2>

Steps in the political decision-making process

According to the CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, every political decision-making process is characterized by seven steps, each offering opportunities for NGOs and local authorities to interact:

- **Input/incentive ideas**
- **Agenda setting**
- **Drafting**
- **Decision**
- **Implementation:**
- **Monitoring**
- **Reformulation**

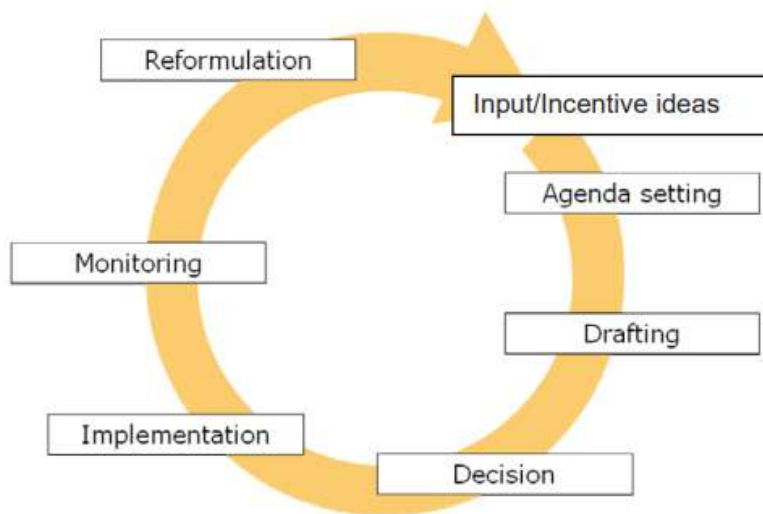
Contributions of NGOs:

- **Advocacy:** NGOs raise issues, concerns, and needs of specific groups, lobbying for the renewal of policies when necessary
- **Awareness building:** NGOs share findings with public authorities, inform the public and stakeholders, and raise awareness about policy processes and their impact
- **Expertise and Advice:** NGOs provide expert analysis, research, and advice.
- **Innovation:** NGOs develop new solutions to address societal needs and demonstrate how these innovations can be included in policies.
- **Service Provision:** NGOs deliver services that align with policy objectives, ensuring the meeting of the needs of specific groups.
- **Watchdog Function:** NGOs monitor the decision-making processes, ensuring transparency, inclusiveness, and the achievement of intended goals.

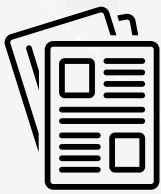
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Responsibilities of Public Authorities:

- **Information Sharing:** Public authorities must provide accurate, timely, and accessible information at all stages of the process, including information on current policies, decision-making procedures, and implementation strategies.
- **Procedures:** Public authorities must guarantee transparency, openness, and accessibility to all processes to allow for the participation of civil society in the decision-making process. This includes organising consultations.
- **Resource Provision:** Authorities must allocate resources to enable active participation by NGOs and civil society.
- **Responsiveness:** Public authorities must engage with NGOs, listen to their input, and provide feedback, responding to the needs and concerns raised by civil society, particularly during the implementation and reformulation stages.



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Publications

Specialised toolkits for Citizens Engagement

Participatory plan for local communities focused on citizen participation

The presentation provides a useful picture on participatory democracy and good practices of participatory processes elaborated by ALDA members as inspiring experiences. It includes definition and principles of participatory democracy, the key actors involved, and descriptions of tools of participation. The publication was published within the activities of operating grants with CERV.

Training curricula for local communities focused on citizens participation

This presentation lists key proposals of training modules on citizen participation offered by ALDA to local communities. It includes tools and methodologies developed during various initiatives to enhance the citizen engagement and actions at the local level.

Toolkit for Local Authorities - How to engage citizens at the local level

This document offers practical resources for public officials and civil servants on the local level for implementation of civil participation actions and consultations. It includes an introduction to benefits and the actors involved in participatory processes, as well as the methodology and the relevant steps to involve citizens.

Analyses on citizens' awareness and perceptions on the EU Elections 2024

This document is part of ALDA's campaign on EE24. It includes some considerations and data on citizens' participation in European elections, highlighting key challenges; a series of ALDA's initiatives for greater participation and awareness on the matter; and some suggestions and recommendations for policy-makers for a more inclusive democratic society.

○ **Challenges and Opportunities on Local Governments in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, and Moldova**

This document includes 4 brief studies on the current situation of local self-governments, civil society, and participatory democracy in 4 countries of the Eastern Partnership after the Russian aggression, and some reflections on the EU enlargement.

○ **Methodological Handbook: Management of Re-granting Schemes**

This article outlines ALDA's approach to re-granting, serving as a bridge between local authorities, institutions, and citizens to address local needs and promote active citizenship. It includes a detailed description of the 5-step methodology on re-granting.

○ **Implementation of the ELoGE program - European Label of Governance Excellence in Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo**



The ELoGE programme is a toolkit created by the Council of Europe to measure good governance and democracy. ALDA has implemented the programme in various municipalities in Croatia, Kosovo and North Macedonia.

The document provides a general explanation of the programme and the countries' reports with the final results.

○ **ALDA towards 2030 - Localising the SDGs: Good practices from Europe and the Neighbourhood areas**

This publication provides an explanation of the 17 SDGs which are part of the Agenda 2030 and have been included in ALDA's strategy. It shed lights on what ALDA has done in the past 20 years to achieve the SDGs, with best practices elaborated from the field.



○ **Survey on Development of Active Citizenship: A Way to Strengthen Local Democracy in Eastern Partnership Countries**

This report presents the results and findings from a survey conducted by ALDA on issues and opinions on the development of local areas in Georgia, Armenia, and Ukraine with the help of the Local Democracy Agencies. The survey was an initiative of the Mayor of the City of Gdansk.

○ **Participative democracy in Moldova and Ukraine. Empowering authorities and civil society to deliver solutions at the local level** - published in English and Russian by

SUSIL Edizioni, October 2020, ISDN, 978-88-5550-155-5

This book, written by ALDA's Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida, highlights how local democracy is a powerful tool that allows for people's energies, resources and experiences to emerge with a fundamental pillar that is good local governance. The program in Moldova and Ukraine researched four very different municipalities and communities, both small and big, central and decentralised, and assessed the potential for citizen participation by uncovering existing practices and analysing future possibilities for empowerment. The resulting outcomes are encouraging and pave the way for further support to local participatory democracy. The book presents the research, tools and practical recommendations for development.

○ **The ALDA Podcast “Shades of Democracy”**

In 2021 ALDA has launched a monthly podcast to get closer to people in a more informal way. The episodes give explanations, examples and inspirations on topics such as citizens engagement, crowdfunding, culture, and youth participation. It is available on Spotify, Google Podcast, Spreaker, and Deezer.



○ **CRISCO Recipes Book**

This publication contains 13 good practices shared by the municipalities that were partners in the CRISCO project, which aimed to foster the involvement of all citizens in local life. The experiences were exchanged within the CRISCO network during the project’ events.

○ **Conclusions and Recommendations from the Forum for exchange of best practices “Partnership as Key for Local Democracy: Rethinking the Cooperation between Local Authorities and Civil Society”.**

In June 2019 the Forum for exchange of good practices took place in Skopje, North Macedonia. At this international event more than 90 representatives of LAs and CSOs from the Balkans and the EU gathered to discuss best practices for the cooperation between LAs and the civil sector. This document presents the key messages from the speakers and the overall conclusion and recommendation resulting from the event.



○ **Guide for Local Participative Democracy in Algeria** (in French and translated into Arabic), programme of the Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities of Algeria, contract AETS France. CO-drafted by ALDA’s Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida.

○ The **LADDER** project was a 3-year project co-funded by the EU under the Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) program. It aimed at enhancing and increasing the role of Local Authorities in EU DEAR policies, strengthening the cooperation with CSOs, and sensitizing citizens on their responsibility on global issues. Within the project, the following publications are significant:



- The Thematic Handbook “**Promoting Development Education through a multi-topic approach**”, which gathers the work of LADDER’s community on advocacy related to 6 main themes, as well as the advocacy actions undertaken by the project partners, a collection of good practices, methodologies, and approaches, serving as a future guideline for CSO and LAs.
- The Handbook “**LADDER beyond the European Union: LAs and CSOs working together for development education in the neighborhood areas**”, which provides an overview of the different geographical paths of the LADDER project in South-East Europe, the Mediterranean area, and the Eastern Partnership, including contexts, advocacy actions, and recommendations for future work on SDGs in those areas.
- The research paper “**Decentralised cooperation and community approach as a tool for a strengthened cooperation between the European Union and Eastern Partnership Countries**”, written by the Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida, which analyses the level and content of cooperation between local governments and their communities in the EU and Eastern Partnership Countries, highlighting added value and difficulties of cooperation, potential future empowerment of instrument of cooperation.

○ **Cooperation with Civil Society to promote Public Administration Reform in the Eastern Partnership countries** by Antonella Valmorbida.

This document analyses how Public Administration Reforms (PAR) and Decentralization represent crucial and cross-cutting elements among the objectives of the Neighborhood policy in the EaP. The paper aimed to raise awareness on the possibilities and advantages of working together with CSO as stakeholders to support Public Administration reform and decentralization in the Eastern Partnership, and present good practices of CSOs.

○ **Democratic Compact: Improving Democracy in Europe**

This document is the final publication of the DECIDE project. It is a set of measures to increase the quality of democracy and citizen participation, which are elaborated and tested by all the project partners from 14 different countries, and which can be further disseminated and implemented.

○ **The actors of decentralized cooperation: Local Authorities and CSOs working together.**

This publication delves into the roles and governance of CSOs and local authorities in decentralized cooperation and their impact on democracy.

○ **Strengthening Local Democracy in Armenia: Guidelines on citizens' participation.**

This document was prepared as a contribution to the project "Support for the consolidation of local democracy in Armenia" implemented by the Council of Europe in 2013 with the Government of Denmark. The document presents standards, reference texts, best practices, participation techniques and useful ideas on citizen participation, as discussed during the regional seminars held in Armenia in July 2015.

○ TANDEM II Final Publication: **Cooperation for Citizen Participation and Community Development in Belarus.**

The final publication of the TANDEM II project, which aimed at strengthening and inclusive society in Belarus by supporting the Local Authorities, provides an overview of the project activities and 12 civic initiatives implemented by the project partners.

○ **Citizens' Participation at the Local Level in Europe and Neighborhood Countries** by Antonella Valmorbida.

By analysing ALDA's 15 years of hand-on activities with its members and partners, this publication contributes to a better understanding of the added value of citizen participation at the local level in Europe and its neighboring countries. It offers conclusions and insightful input for future activities to build a truly democratic local democracy.

○ **Supporting European Active Citizenship (2014-2015)**

This publication showcases the key outcomes of the program 2014-2015 within the framework of the project TANDEM. It provides descriptions of a series of activities implemented in Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece and The Netherlands encouraging active citizenship.

○ **RePlaY - Active Ageing European Booklet**

This booklet was created with the contribution of all partners by the end of the project RePlay. It contains a collection of best practices concerning active ageing, intergenerational dialogue and active citizenship in senior citizens, as well as guidelines and tips on how to develop a good project.

○ **Decentralization and Local Governance in South Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus.**

This publication, published in 2011, examines the state of decentralization in SEE and Southern Caucasus. It provides an overview of legal frameworks, challenges in implementation, case studies of successful practices, and recommendations in the management of local government.

○ **Code of Good Practice Civic Participation of the Council of Europe**

As partner of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations, ALDA has been involved in the drafting of the Code of Good Practice. The document defines a set of European principles and guidelines for NGOs participation in decision-making processes to be implemented at local and national level. It includes a general framework for civil participation and steps, toolkits, and mechanisms to engage citizens.



○ **“Education for Remembrance - Good Practice in Active European Remembrance.**

This educational booklet, published by the partners of the project “E-FOR - Education for Remembrance”, is a user-friendly tool for developing programs on issues of Remembrance at the local level. It provides guidelines inspired by successful practices among the partners and an example of good practice. This publication can be helpful for teaching professionals, project managers, and citizens concerned by the topic.

○ **“ALL.4.EU: Citizens For Europe” Final publication**

This publication is the final result of the ALL.4.EU project, which consisted in setting-up citizens’ panels in 6 different places in Europe. The first provides an explanation of the methodology of citizens’ panels as a tool to engage citizens and its application within the project. The second part is a SWOT analysis about the citizens’ participation in the partners’ countries, and the results of the citizens panels in the different countries.

○ **“How Civil Society and local governments are fighting the global crisis. A joint active citizenship: a launch pad for a new future?”**

This document from the 2010 International Conference in Skopje discusses the impact of the 2009 financial crisis on local development in Europe, highlighting major challenges faced by the Local Authorities. It includes recommendations and guidelines for the Council of Europe and member states for good governance and advocates for increased active citizen participation.

○ **First Assessment on Active Citizenship in South Eastern Europe.**

This preliminary assessment of the “Europe for Citizens” program in Southeast Europe, which aims to promote active citizenship and strengthen European identity, discusses activities for promoting active citizenship, country-specific activities that were implemented, and an analysis of the situation of the civil society in the region.

- **“Raising Awareness on European Elections: Actions for European Active Citizenship”**. This publication is the final report of a project conducted by ALDA aimed at raising awareness about the 2009 European Elections. It describes various activities and initiatives carried out in different countries to promote democratic participation and share knowledge on the functions of European institutions. It also presents conclusions and recommendations to encourage greater citizen participation.

- **“ALDA Activity Report “10 years in the making of a new Europe in support of local democracy and citizens’ participation”**
This report capitalises on the first 10 years of ALDA’s activities providing an overview of its path from a window in Europe to a strong network of LAs and NGOs. It provides a detailed description of some best practices and methodologies of citizen participation and final lessons learned.



EURaction: Citizens acting for Europe.

This publication provides the results from a pilot project in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France, which aimed at including ordinary citizens in the debates about Europe. It gives detailed information on the citizens’ panels that were set up in these countries, with results and evaluations of this methodology. This handbook was reported back to the European institutions and other European stakeholders.

- **Local authorities and NGOs together for peace and democracy in Europe.**
This handbook provides an overview of the project “Cities for Peace and Democracy in Europe” intended to bring LAs, NGOs, and young people together to debate their role in the construction of a democratic Europe. It includes summaries of the main activities and best practice examples of how to foster peace and democracy at the local level.

○ **“Participation of civil society in the decision-making process at the local level. A common added value for local authorities in Europe” (part 1 - part 2 - part 3)**

This publication is a result of the 2004 conference organised by ALDA and the City of Barcelona. It includes the results of a survey on the participation of civil society in the decision-making process, and a selection of case studies of best practices to include the civil society at the local level.



Territorial and Local Development



○ **“Decentralised Cooperation: an added value for Eastern Partnership Countries”**

Written by Antonella Valmorbida, the Secretary General of ALDA, this paper deals with decentralised cooperation as an instrument to engage local authorities in international cooperation for development. Highlighting some successful examples of decentralized cooperation and the advantages for EaP countries, the document is intended for EU policymakers in the field of development cooperation of authorities in the Eastern Partnership countries.

○ **The European Decentralised Cooperation: acting for development engaging local authorities and civil society**, by Antonella Valmorbida.

This book provides an overview of the processes of decentralized cooperation and their impacts on the local communities, focusing on the neighbouring countries of Europe and those engaged in process of accession to the EU. Resulting from thorough research and extensive work in the field, this publication gives insights on the process of decentralisation and development through cooperation between local authorities and civil society.

○ **Resource Anti-Crisis: Town Twinning, Innovation, Openness and Networking 2014.**

This publication is the final result of the REACTION project, funded by the programme “Europe for Citizens”, which consisted of three events where several municipalities discussed different resources to promote citizen well-being and community development. The publication collects the best practices and specific resources used by the project partners.

Digital and Innovation

○ **Online Democracy Guide: Empowering Democracy in the Digital Era.**

Within the project EU24 - Engage for the Planet, this publication was created as a resource to navigate digital democracy. Targeting citizens, organisations, and policy-makers, this guide is a library of online democracy tools, platforms, and knowledge, containing best practices on e-democracy, and instructions for events' set-up and for the use of the E-democracy platform.

○ **P-CUBE Video Game**

This educational strategy game (the Policy Game), created by the Technische Universiteit Delft during the P-CUBE project, was designed to teach the theory and practice of public policy-making to different groups of people to promote good governance. The game is articulated in four different fields: social inclusion, urban innovation, science, and European Union.

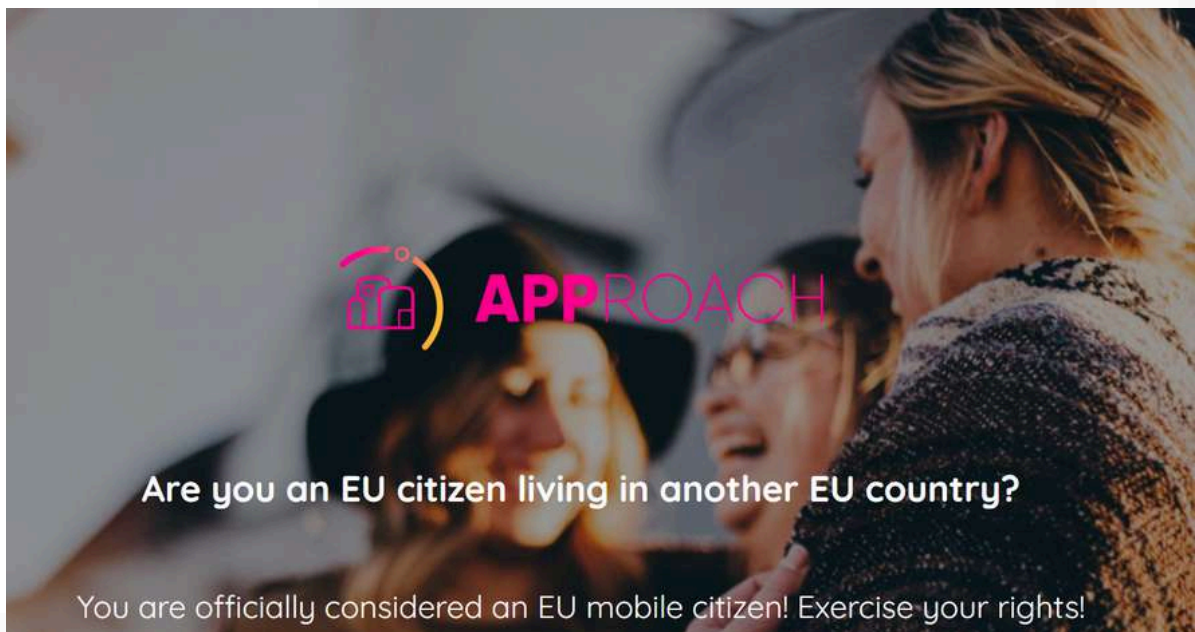
○ In the framework of the Mind Inclusion project, the **Mind-Inclusion APP** was created to promote and foster the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in their community through the Mind Inclusion facilitation methodology. Two manuals were developed:

- **The Theoretical Manual**, which presents the theoretical foundations under which the app was developed.
- **The Operational Manual**, which is a guide for educators to apply the Mind Inclusion methodology through the use of the Mind Inclusion APP.



○ In 2018, the APProach project was implemented for European mobile citizens (EUMCs) to better communicate with their welcoming cities thanks to digital tools such as the new APProach online platform. Within the project, two significant publications were:

- The **APProach Final Publication**, which includes the project overview, a description of the APProach online platform, designed for better collaboration between European citizens and project partners, and a detailed explanation of the “co-creation methodology”, a best practice used during the project to include different actors around one objective.
- The **APProach Solution Manual**: a practical guideline for the APProach IT instrument for those who want to join the platform and support EU mobile citizens.



Youth Empowerment & Education

○ Starting in 2022, the H.E.Y! project - *Heightening the Engagement of Youth*, gathered 7 partner organisations from 6 EU countries to develop an approach focused on empowering youth, especially those with fewer opportunities, and supporting their engagement for more inclusive communities



The following publications are the main results of the project:

- **“HEY! What is Happening?”**: a guide that presents the data, information, and results collected, as well as conclusions reached by the research surveys conducted in the partner countries to understand the context of young people with fewer opportunities. It collects information about the socio-economic inclusion opportunities for youth, best practices in community engagement, and success stories.
- **“HEY! Tell Me Your Story!”**: a series of short documentaries resulting from different narrative and storytelling workshops in the 6 partner countries to collectivize common problems, desires, and journeys. The key themes addressed by the young participants are education, employment, living conditions, physical and mental well-being, rights, and political and social activism.
- **“HEY! Capacity building of the Youth work”**: 6 Training Modules composed by original training sessions, material, and resources to enhance the capacity building of NGOs and other stakeholders in providing support to young people re-integrating into society.
- **“HEY! Now What? Policy Recommendations”**: a publication of recommendations to improve the involvement of local actors in youth engagement and their participation. These guidelines can be incorporated into youth strategies at the community, national, and international levels.

○ **The PACIFY-D Policy Handbook**

This publication is the final outcome of the PACIFY-D project, aimed at developing guidance on the organisation and support of youth participation environments. It brings together various aspects of the project: lessons learned, best practices, feedback, and policy recommendations on how to increase youth civic engagement for a more inclusive democracy.

○ **Youth Engagement Through Local Involvement: A Step-by-Step Guide to IDEATHON**

This guide was produced during the ADD Something Meaningful project. It presents the IDEATHOD method to foster active participation including objectives, detailed descriptions of the different steps, a SWOT analysis of the method and an example of implementation. During the project, the method proved to be highly effective.

○ The **PART-Y TOOLKIT** to build a Communication Campaign for a Young and Inclusive Placemaking. Developed during the PART-Y project which aimed at fostering participation in civic life of young people and their inclusion in the decision-making processes, this toolkit consists of four resources created to be used together:

- The handbook **“How to Build an Inclusive Communication Campaign to Promote Placemaking Projects”**, which provides guidelines and recommendations on how to involve young people and educators in the implementation of gender-inclusive placemaking.
- The **“TOOLBOX to Design Your Communication Campaign”**, which collects references, indications, and practical tools to facilitate users in planning and realizing their communication strategies.
- The **STATIC INFOGRAPHIC**, which addresses young pacemakers highlighting the 4 necessary steps to build a communication campaign.
- The **INFOGRAPHIC VIDEO**, which presents to municipalities and organisations how to make an inclusive communication campaign.

The **Handbook** and the **Toolbox** are also presented in a second version for people with visual or literacy impairment.

○ **Facilitator's Kit - Youth Committee (FR)**

This manual for facilitators developed in 2021 within the project “Youth Empowerment to build local democracy in Tunisia” is intended for young people, community leaders, and organisations involved in a youth committee. It provides tools, methodologies and resources necessary to engage in participatory democracy and develop participatory projects. It includes training modules on various topics such as project development and advocacy techniques.

○ **YouthMetre Training**

The training is a free-to-access set of recourses developed in the framework of the YouthMetre project exploring innovative and creative ways to empower young people and promote their engagement in policy making, in particular through the use of the YouthMetre e-tool and the advocacy toolkit. The training is available in three forms: online as an e-toolkit; as an open Moodle course; as three downloadable files.

○ **Political Report: The Involvement of Young People in Democratic Life at Regional Level.**

This report was published in 2013 by the Assembly of European Regions with the contribution of ALDA, and presents good practices and recommendations on how to integrate young people in democratic life in Europe. It addresses decision-makers who want to achieve a high youth participation rate.

○ **Manual for peer education (SRB)**

Basic workshop techniques and good practices for peer education by LDA Central and Southern Serbia.

○ **Youth in Niš - Situations and Perspectives - Analysis of the Position of Youth”**

The document provides a study conducted by the Local Democracy Agency in Niš, Serbia. It analyses the status, challenges, and prospects of youth in the city, highlighting issues such as unemployment, lack of local youth strategy, insufficient activism, and poor access to information. It offers insights into young people's needs and suggests establishing an Info Center to improve access to education, employment, and cultural opportunities.

Environment and Climate

○ Since 2022, ALDA has been engaged in the REAL DEAL project - Reshaping Citizens' Deliberation for the European Green Deal - which aims to stimulate a pan-European debate and reshape citizens' active participation in the green and just transition. The following publications are part of the material produced by ALDA and the project's partners:



- **The REAL DEAL Handbook: Frameworks for citizen engagement in the European Green Deal**, which presents general and practical guidance for policymakers and other stakeholders on the existing legal and institutional frameworks for citizen engagement in relation to the EGD. It also includes 13 country profiles.
- The Policy Tool **“The European Green Deal: Towards new social and ecological narratives for the European Elections 2024.”** This Social-Ecological Transition Policy Tool provides examples of emerging issues, potential stakeholders for coalition building and key messages, as well as a structure for a campaign briefing to guide CSOs in the development of their own campaigns.
- **The People’s Green Deal: Citizens’ Participation in Europe’s Sustainability Agenda**. This report provides an evaluation of the tools for the participation of citizens and CSOs implemented in the European Green Deal’s framework. It provides an overview of the instruments and some recommendations for improvement.
- The report **“Gap Assessment of the European Green Deal”**, which includes the gaps and recommendations for policy-makers to bring the EGD closer to citizens.
- The policy brief **“The Future of the European Green Deal”** by the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability, resulting from a debate between more than 60 CSOs. The article provides the main points from the Forum’s policy recommendations.

○ In the framework of the project Grey4Green, which was initiated in 2022 with the purpose of engaging the elderly in environmental volunteering, the following material was produced by the consortium, including ALDA, regarding nature conservation and volunteering for elderly.



- **A Collection of Good Practice on Senior Volunteering in Nature Conservation**. This Good Practices Report collects initiatives and projects from Denmark, Cyprus, Switzerland, Italy, Iceland, and Portugal focused on senior environmental volunteering.
- The **“Handbook for Senior Volunteers in Nature”**. Gathering the analyses studied by the various project partners, this Handbook provides an overview of what senior volunteering is and why it is important in nature conservation, as well as the legal framework of green volunteering programs and information about volunteering in Europe. This document can help to create a working framework for senior environmental volunteering.
- The **“Senior Volunteers for Nature Implementation Handbook”**. This manual provides step-by-step guidelines for the implementation of senior environmental volunteering programmes that can be carried out by several stakeholders. It highlights the needs, obstacles, challenges and potential of senior volunteering in the environmental field.



○ **The FOREST Booklet “Towards and European Standard Forestry Curricula”.**

This publication is part of the FOREST project, which started in 2019 to promote the exchange of good practices between different forestry organisations around the discussion of a standardization strategy for the training and qualification of forestry workers. This report provides a summary of the information and a comparative analysis on the state of forestry training in Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, and Romania, as well as some suggestions and best practices.

○ In 2016, the ENLARGE project - Energies for Local Administrations to Renovate Governance in Europe - was implemented to generate and share knowledge on participatory governance in the field of sustainable energy through an intense dialogue between different stakeholders.



The following publications resulted from the project:

- The **Gamebook “Choose your own collaborative adventure in sustainable energy”**, which presents different scenarios and stories that could happen in real life regarding the involvement of citizens in the planning of sustainable energy, highlighting how different choices can contribute or hamper the achievement of policy results. It is a useful tool for all communities wishing to kick off collaborative processes.
- The report **“Manifesto for boosting collaborative processes to achieve relevant results in sustainable energy policies and processes”**, which draws on the findings of one of the project’s events, and sheds lights on the key ingredients for boosting three main democratic objectives of collaborative processes.
- **“31 case study reports and case study cross analysis”**, which is an in-depth analysis of good practices, projects and initiatives to boost participation in a range of categories of sustainable energy.

○ **Time to Act - Guide for #ClimateofChange Campaigners.**

As part of the #ClimateofChange Campaign, which aims to energise youth to raise their voices on the climate change issues, as well as the ones of forced migrants, this guide aims to support and inspire activists to build a strong climate justice campaign.

○ As part of the LADDER project, ALDA contributed to the publication of:

- **“Bringing Global Issues at the Local Level: Raising Awareness About the Sustainable Development Goals Through Grassroots Level Initiatives”**: a detailed and extensive series of initiatives implemented by 25 European countries to raise awareness among citizens on the SDGs.
- The two guides for LAs and citizens: **“26 ways to turn your Local Authority more sustainable”** and **“32 ways you can change the individual and collective footprint”**.

LADDER

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

Gender, Inclusion, and Human Rights

○ Within the EXTRA-C project - Extraordinary Citizens - which aimed to promote participatory democracy and active participation of young people with intellectual, psychosocial, and developmental disabilities, the following publications were produced by ALDA and the project's partners:

- A **study report on the situation of democratic participation of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities**, which analyses their democratic rights and active role at the national and international level, and proposes 3 good practices.
- The **Training Programme “Promoting the Democratic Participation of Young People With Disabilities”**, which provides 6 Modules developed as tools for a better inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the democratic processes.

○ **“Outils de renforcement de la participation citoyenne”**

This document is the final result from the PARFAIT project, which focused on the promotion of citizen participation in Tunisia, especially focusing on gender parity. The paper outlines the project's context, strategy, and various methodological tools, including training in participatory democracy and social accountability, as well as initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality.

○ **SW-UP Guidelines for Promoting Physical Activity for Women in Urban Public Spaces.**

This publication gathers ideas, recommendations and observations raised from SWUP's community of practice on how to enhance women's sports participation in urban places and how to realize women-friendly urban planning regarding outdoor sport facilities.

○ **ACSOBE: Acting Social Rights in Belarus.**

This book is the final publication of the ACSOBE project. Published in 2008 by ALDA, it highlights the difficult situation of Belarus and the social and cultural rights in the country. It also includes best practices to foster democracy and successful experiences of cooperation in Belarus.

Migration

○ **3 STEPS Policy Brief: “Outlining evidenced-based policy recommendations for the integration and inclusion of young migrants and refugees”.**

Produced within the framework of the 3 STEP project, this publication summarises the project’s methodologies, some relevant recommendations from the fieldwork, and suggests actions for a more inclusive education, promoting participation and inclusion of young migrants and refugees into the labour market.

○ **The LIME Comic Book.**

This comic book was produced by the partners’ consortium of the LIME project - Labour Integration for Migrants Employment to raise awareness and fight the stereotypes about social inclusion and labor integration. The project aimed to promote the swift integration of young third-country nationals through the MEIC methodology, and innovative and participatory approach based on the creation of a multi-stakeholder partnership. This book gives a voice to the all the people met during the project.

○ **WEMIN project - Stories of Change**

This booklet is a collection of testimonies of migrant and refugee women who participated in the activities organised within the WEMIN project, which aimed to promote integration and empowerment of migrant women through direct interventions.

○ Starting in 2011, the GOAL project - Granting Opportunities for Active Learning - was implemented to promote citizen participation in areas where immigration represents one of the main challenges through a series of activities and citizens’ panels. The following publications were produced:

- The **Citizens’ Panels Recommendations**, which gathers the draft recommendations by the citizens’ panels on how to improve the situation of migrants in Europe.
- The **final publication**, which includes the methodology of the project, namely the citizens’ panels and the results, including recommendations for EU decision-makers in the field of immigration.

Best Practices

on citizen participation

As a key stakeholder in local democracy and active citizenship, ALDA supports local, national, and international actors in promoting initiatives aimed at enhancing and encouraging civil participation. ALDA and its members have implemented and developed various forms of citizen participation locally on various themes and topics. Participatory processes give citizens the possibility to take part in decision-making fostering a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient democracy, which benefits the local authorities, CSOs, citizens, and the entire population.

The next section shows some successful good practices of participatory processes implemented by ALDA and its members. It includes a description of the initiatives and their application.

SUPPORT TO NGOs



The Bazaar of NGOs: Connecting Communities and Fostering Collaboration in Slovenia

The Bazaar of NGOs in Slovenia is a recurring event organised by the Regional NGO Center for South Eastern Slovenia in collaboration with the Association for Developing Voluntary Work Novo Mesto, which hosts the event 3 times a year at different locations. The Bazaar serves as **a platform for NGOs to present their activities to a wider audience, interact with the public, and foster future collaborations and joint actions.**

The associations and private institutions participating act in different fields such as culture, social care, youth, sport, tourism, and protection. The aim of the Bazaar is to educate the public about NGOs and their significant role in the community, and to raise awareness about their contributions, as well as stimulate cooperation and networking of NGOs.

The event targets the general public, attracting visitors and passers-by with its interactive program. It features about 70 stalls and 300 NGO representatives, offering various activities such as workshops, live demonstrations, and presentations. Activities include face painting, healthy lifestyle sessions, Scout skills, and thai boxing training, accompanied by music dance and sport demonstrations.

Including stakeholders such as NGOs, local authorities, CSOs, and citizens, the Bazaar is opportunity to enhance communication and interaction among these actors, and create new networks.

The impact of the Bazaar includes public awareness of NGO functions, greater involvement in NGO activities, and potential future collective actions. With over a thousand visitor, the Bazaar is a great opportunity for the local community.



The NGO Center in North Macedonia: Strengthening Civil Society and Building Strategic Partnerships

The NGO Center in Skopje, North Macedonia, was established in 2009 to support and develop the capacities of the NGOs within the city. Funded by the Swiss Agency of Development, the center is part of a broader initiative to enhance the development of Macedonian NGOs in various cities in the country such as Veles, Prilep, Stip and Kicevo. After many years of strategies and cooperation with several NGOs to **strengthen the capacity of civil society**, this center was established in the City of Skopje.

The main objective is to help associations and foundations in their work by providing logistical support, counseling, consultation, adequate training, and grants that focus on establishing partnerships between NGOs, NGO and local government, media and business sector, and their involvement in public policy creation. The center offers free resources such as computer equipment, meeting spaces, and rooms for training and presentations, as well as professional assistance and training sessions.

The target groups include associations of citizens and foundations in Skopje, with the Center offering tools such as the NGO Gate Portal for the needs of associations of citizens, an electronic register for associations and foundations, and the NGO Forum, which provides regular meetings and direct contact opportunities for NGOs.

The NGO Center has been successful in helping over 200 associations and foundations to achieve their goals, propose new ideas, and address citizens' problems. An average of 30 meetings, 20 workshops, and 15 presentations are held monthly.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION



The iDEATHON method: Empowering Youth to Drive Change and Innovation in Local Communities

The IDEATHON method is a **practical tool to encourage youth participation in their local communities by generating and implementing ideas that address specific challenges**. This method encourages young people to think about the changes for their communities and to take action to implement them. It consists of a series of sessions where groups of participants collaborate to identify challenges, ideas, and needs, find solutions, and put their ideas into action. The winning ideas receive funding for the implementation.

Given its practical characteristics, this method allows young people to become agents of change and receive the necessary financial support to implement their ideas. The purpose of this method is to activate and empower young people and local authorities in all stages, from conceptual design to implementation.

Within the ADD Something Meaningful project, sixteen IDEATHON events were carried out in four partner countries, involving more than 480 young people, strengthening social and political participation. The sessions in each country were divided into a pilot 2-day IDEATHONs event, and 3 follow-up 2-day events, which allowed the participants to apply the knowledge previously gained. The 16 winning solutions were implemented in the local environments and impact evaluation reports were produced.

This method involves partnerships with local organisations, municipalities, and other stakeholders who help with the support and implementation of the winning ideas. Each partner organisation has specific tasks and responsibilities, from cooperation with local authorities to impact evaluation.

The IDEATHON at Litija Grammar School in Slovenia serves as an example of a successful implementation of the method. The challenge, proposed by the school itself, was to create a student-oriented social space within the school. A group of 32 third-year students participated to develop some ideas and vote for the winner project in collaboration with local organisations. The outcome was the creation of a library and a gallery with the necessary materials and equipment, fostering a dense pride and sense of belonging among participants. Moreover, a partnership was established between the school and the local authorities, laying the foundation for future collaborations.



Common Student Council in Denmark: Raising Student Voices in Municipal Governance

The Common Student Council in Denmark is a **practical tool to encourage student participation in their local communities by representing their interests at the municipal level**. Through debates and workshops, this method allows students to become active participants and empowers them to have an influence of education policies

The aim of the council is to encourage students to engage in democracy by raising their voices on issues that affect their school life in order to safeguard their interests and connect with local politicians, officials, and the press.

The Common Student Council in Vejle established in 2008 is an example of how students work democratically and independently to promote their interests.

The target group includes individual student councils in school within a municipality, which join the common student council to ensure representation at school, municipal, and national levels. The Student Council work independently and freely, organising events like theme days and workshops to discuss school policies. By cooperating with the council, students can write letters to the municipality, hold meetings with school officials, and organise conferences.

The Common Student Council foster a sense of inclusion and participation in decision-making processes, improving the well-being of students and their democracy at the municipal level.



“Student Talk” Forum: Bridging Dialogue between Students and Public Institutions in Albania

The “Students Talk” Forum is a social medium focused on the process of speaking, discussing, consulting and engaging students in a sustainable dialogue with representatives of public institutions at local and central level. The forum is also focused on sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices with representatives of civil society organisations, public institutions, and successful young people in the professions of who will inspire students by narrating their journey to success.

Throughout its activity, aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To engage students in a sustainable and structured dialogue with central and local government institutions, in order to find alternatives and practical solutions that improve addressing the problems related to the education system in its complexity, as well as the employment challenges of youth;
- Establish an advocacy group on the problems, challenges, and difficulties that students face in the education system;
- To provide the opportunity for students to talk and discuss with representatives of youth organisations in the country, and not only, on various youth issues as well as internship opportunities or employment opportunities that the latter offer;
- To inform students about the youth structures that operate at the central and local levels in the country;
- To empower the students themselves through training and workshops on various topics.

USE OF PUBLIC SPACES



Valongo's Participatory Planning: Engaging Citizens in Shaping the Future of Territorial Development

In 2020, the municipality of Valongo has initiated a participatory process for the elaboration and revision of the Plano Diretor Municipal (PDM), a **fundamental instrument for defining the strategic framework for territorial development of the municipality and its organisational model**. A set of initiatives open to all citizens has been launched to stimulate the active involvement of the citizens in the elaboration of the PDM. The process was organised in different stages:

1) Expectations: during this stage, experts and technicians presented the expectations and the proposals related to the territorial planning and the citizen participatory process. This served as a starting point for the construction of a common vision of the future of the territory of Valongo.

2) Diagnosis: this stage consisted in online and face-to-face meeting where citizens could raise memories they have about their territory in order to produce a shared vision of the different problems and potentials. During each session, a map of collective memory was produced.

3) Proposals: at this stage, different thematic sessions were organised to design proposals from citizens and local actors for experimental actions related to topics such as environment, mobility, housing, etc. Citizens were invited to collaborate to produce a set of proposal to be included in the PDM.

4) Experimental actions: this stage consisted in the design of micro-actions to test the proposals in a collaborative, low-cost manner. The citizens' ideas were tested on a micro-scale and low cost. Of the 50 actions identified, 8 were selected for experimentation

5) Public presentation: this stage consists in the publication and dissemination of a final non-technical report to facilitate citizens' understanding of the plan, as well as the support in the public presentation of the PDM.



Vejle Mobile Urban Gardens: Cultivating Community, Sustainability, and Green Spaces

The Vejle Mobile Urban Gardens project aims to enhance the recreational and environmental value of Vejle, Denmark, through citizen-run urban gardens. Initiated in 2013 with 14 gardens, this initiative is managed by the Grow Vejle association to **promote mental and physical well-being, healthy food, and social cohesion**. An urban garden consists of a euro pallet with pallet sides and soil to grow in. The gardens are available for rent for a season and can be cultivated by individuals, families, schools, and other groups. This initiative aims to **revitalize local neighborhoods and enhance social cooperation through shared activities**.

Local residents and organisations work daily in these gardens like communal meals, garden days, reading sessions, and competitions, developing community spirits and self-sufficiency in food production. Alongside, the project hosts public lectures and cultural events on green transformation, sustainability, and recycling.

In 2014, the project grew including other facilities such as outdoor kitchen, greenhouse, sensory gardens and rainwater collection. The green corridor of edible crops “Eat the City” was built in 2015, connecting the gardens to the city center and converting unused industrial areas into greenhouses.

The impact of the project is evident in increased local engagement and ownership, contributing to the development of local networks.

PARTICIPATION OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS



The EPIC-UP Communities of Practice (CoPs): Local Strategies for Migrant Integration

Within the project EPIC-UP, which aims to develop and test integration strategies for the inclusion of migrants at the local level, six Communities of Practices are being established in Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain.

The Communities of Practice are **collaborating environments** where different actors such as local public authorities, Civil Society Organisations, migrants and migrants’ associations, NGOs, research communities, and communication platforms work together **to implement and disseminate effective integration practices such as better services and policies.**

Each CoPs will conduct a needs assessment to develop a map of effective practices, which will be followed by capacity-building initiatives such as Training of Trainers program on civic engagement and peer learning lessons to raise awareness on migration issues. Other activities include field visits, a policy lab, and webinars to facilitate sharing of knowledge. The CoPs will then design six new integrating strategies to be tested and implemented in local communities.

These tools will empower and encourage migrants to participate in the process and to raise their voices in the matter, strengthening political participation and fostering a more inclusive society.

After being tested in the six partner countries, a database of good practices will be created and disseminated widely to encourage replication in other contexts.



Q-AGENING in Hungaria: Empowering Seniors Through Engaging Activities

Q-AGEING is a program aimed at **encouraging and facilitating activities for people over 60 years old to improve their mental health and strengthen social cohesion**. It includes special activity groups like crossword solving and photographing; organised programs such as excursions and theatre visits; and voluntary activities. These activities aim to enhance the sense of belonging to the local community.

The program includes the participation of elderly through public opinion polls and focus groups meetings to map the sociological landscape of this demographic and understand their preferences and expectations in relation to their government. They were asked for example what kind of program they would be interested in, and how much they would pay for it, as well as their preferences for hobbies, and they could also recommend events to be organised. Their willingness to participate in the implementation of the programs was also surveyed. In order to advertise the programs, a group of volunteers was involved, who regularly passed on information about the opportunities in their local communities, and reported back to the local government about the interest for the different programs. With the help of their work the local government was able to get a more authentic picture about the needs and the necessary circumstances they have to ensure

By involving senior citizens in the planning and implementation of programs, Q-AGEING encourages active participation and new social connections, improving mental health and satisfaction with community projects.



Commission for Disabled Persons of Sisak: Promoting Rights and Inclusion in Croatia

The Commission for Disabled Persons of Sisak, Croatia, was established in 2013 and aims to create and implement a local strategy for the rights and opportunities for disabled people. Its mission is to monitor and advocate for disabled individuals's rights in Sisak.

The Commission is composed of representatives from public institutions and CSOs focusing on various disabilities of all ages, which are divided into three working groups to address the specific needs of different disabled groups. The goal is to improve and ensure their inclusion in public, political, and cultural life, including education and employment. The Commission meets quarterly, with monthly sessions to monitor and discuss the strategy. Activities include interviews, focus groups, round tables, and reports to raise awareness and gather data.

This tool fosters the participation of disabled people in its work ensuring daily interaction with target groups, promoting tolerance acceptance and inclusion of disabled individuals.

MEDIA AND E-PARTICIPATION



“Hello, this is a reader fo Dolenjc!”: Engaging Citizens through News Participation

The newspaper column "Hello, this is a reader of Dolenjc!" is a feature in the local newspaper "Dolenjski list", which comes out every Thursday and covers the area of South Eastern Slovenia. Newspaper readers have the opportunity to call the newspaper's journalist on duty every Thursday between 6 and 7 p.m. They can express their opinion about something, ask a question, praise or criticize someone or something and express their observations when they notice that something is wrong, or give their approval on something.

The objective of the column is **to give readers the opportunity to say what they think, what they notice and what they would like to alert the competent and local authorities about.** The column promotes the activity of citizens to pay more attention to their environment and for them to have the opportunity to speak out and to get a quick response from the competent authorities.

The influence of the column "Halo, tukaj bralec Dolenjca" is a long term one that has, according to results of questionnaire, a great influence in the region of Dolenjska. Answers to almost all questions in the questionnaire suggest that most of the people think that the column has a positive influence in shaping the political, cultural, economic and social life of the region.

The column provides a quick response from the competent authorities and readers. It offers a fast reply, comment, feedback that relevant to the question and to the expressed opinion. The column encourages citizens to be more aware of what happens around them, to be more critical, to they think more about things and be reminded that they have the ability to deliver their opinion and to get a quick response from the competent authorities or if not from journalists or the media.



Decidim Barcelona: a Digital Platform for Democratic Participation

Decidim is a **digital participation and democratic platform designed to facilitate collaboration and collection of ideas among citizens**, so it can be easily used by institutions and organisations. As a free open-source platform, Decidim can be used and implemented by anyone. Nowadays, more than 200 local and regional governments and more than 100 organisations are using this platform.

Launched in 2016, its most notable version is Decidim.barcelona, which among other projects allowed the city to be nominated European Capital of Democracy in 2023. The platform gives citizens' voices the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and debates, where they can discuss issues related to the city and make new proposals.

The platform is open to any citizen regardless of their legal status and serves as a democratic tool where they can make new proposals, debate and comment on existing ones give arguments for or against, or make general reflections and recommendations. After the implementation of a proposal, citizens can find out the details and trace their path. This fosters transparency and accountability of public institutions, a collaboration between the city and its citizens, and active participation. Examples of citizen proposals include the designing of green areas and the planning of play areas in public spaces.

Through Decidim, citizens can also consult the several participation bodies' meetings and channels of dialogue between citizens and the City Council. If these meetings are open, people can participate in several ways: attending, adding points to the agenda, or commenting on the proposals.

The success of this initiative is evident in the increased amount of information available to the citizens and their increased participation and proposal deliberation. More than 110,000 participants are registered, almost 30,000 ideas have been proposed and around 15,000 proposals have been accepted.

This tool can be used for democratic inclusion since it allows the participation of groups of people who have difficulties in attending face-to-face meetings, people without the right to vote in electoral processes, and people with disabilities.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT



Polish Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy: Engaging Public Participation for a Sustainable Food Future

Citizens' Assemblies are **temporary decision-making bodies where randomly selected citizens make political decisions representing the society**. During the meetings, participants gain knowledge on the topic to be addressed, listen to experts, and collectively deliberate on important issues.

In May and June 2024, a Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy took place in Poland as part of the European REAL DEAL project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020, to which ALDA participated and which aimed to reshape citizens' participation in the debate of the European Green Deal and green transition. This assembly is part of the participatory processes and techniques that are being tested as part of the project.

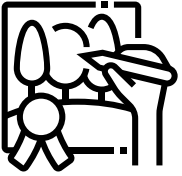
The Citizens' Assembly consisted of 65 participants above 18 who discussed the future of food policy in Poland, in particular how to improve access to and consumption of healthy and environmentally friendly food. Participants were randomly selected according to criteria such as gender, age, education, and place of residence, and didn't need any prior knowledge on the topic, as experts imparted the necessary information related to food policy and presented the proposed solution during the educational part.

Afterward, the deliberation phase consisted in a discussion among the participants about the recommendations that were put forth in the previous part. This part aimed to an effective exchange of argument, encouraging attentive listening and the understanding of various perspectives. Participants collaborated to assess and refine suggested solutions, or present new ideas.

Finally, a list of recommendations was published and distributed to politicians and media.

Reports:

- [The impact of climate change on Poland's food security](#)
- [Atlas of pesticides - Facts about toxic chemicals in agriculture](#)



EU24 Poster Competition: Fostering Climate Action Through Creative Engagement

A poster competition is an event where participants are invited to create posters on a specific topic, which are then judged, displayed, and/or distributed. They are a valuable tool for promoting participatory democracy as they serve as a **platform for individuals to express their ideas, raise awareness on specific issues, and foster creativity and inclusivity.**

Within the EU24 - Engage for the Planet project, a poster competition was launched in 2023 on four different topics related to climate change: energy, food production, mobility, and climate justice. The aim of the project was to narrow down the democratic participation gap among citizens in a gender-balanced way, empowering their voices and fostering dialogue and action in the realm of climate change and sustainability.

The poster competition served as an awareness-raising tool among the participants through a participative and creative format to mobilize the citizens and encourage their participation and engagement for the planted in the EU24 elections.

Each poster competition preceded one of the debates which were part of the project and which took place in Strasbourg, Groningen, Gothenburg, and Berlin, and each was linked to the specific theme addressed at each event.

The competition targeted individuals with diverse backgrounds, under and over 18 years old, artists and creative individuals, but also local communities, youth organisations, and schools, including minorities and marginalized groups. Participants could submit up to four posters via the website or post them on their social media accounts. The posters were then evaluated and the four selected winners were invited to the final event in Brussels.

All the submitted posters were disseminated through various channels such as online platforms, debate events, and the press.

The competition was a crucial initiative in the context of youth activism, empowering youth voices in larger societal debates and giving them the possibility to express their concerns and solutions. Encouraging the active participation of young citizens brought fresh perspectives and ideas, and fostered their sense of responsibility. The diversity of perspectives enriched the wide debate on social climate justice and environmental issues.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING



Gdansk's Civic Budget and Green Civic Budget: a Tool for Collaborative Decision-Making

Participatory budgeting is a **participatory democracy tool through which individual citizens, groups, and associations contribute to decision-making on how to spend part of the public budget by proposing project ideas to then be translated into concrete actions.**

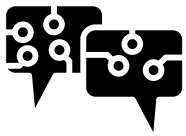
The city of Gdansk, Poland, has been implementing participatory budgeting continuously since the establishment of its statute in August 2013. The initiative has always had successful responses from the public, with more than 933 projects implemented for a total amount of PLN 177 million (41 million euros).

The Civic Budget assumes the cooperation of residents and local authorities in public activities, the active participation of many agencies in implementing the projects. The process consists of open assemblies in the different districts of the cities, where every citizen over 16 years old can participate in voting for projects and proposing new ones in their neighborhood and the city. After filling out the application form including a list of supporters, the project proposals are evaluated and approved by the City Office, and finally submitted to the vote of the population in online form. People with no access to the internet at home can vote in public spaces such as city libraries. All residents can vote regardless of their attendance at the assembly. The projects that receive the highest number of points will be implemented. All the winning projects are available on the [Municipality's website](#).

The regulations of the civic budget in Gdansk change regularly to meet the people's requirements. Due to a change in the residents' priorities and the increased number of projects concerning the environment, since 2021, the civic budget has been divided into the regular participatory budgeting and **the Green Civic Budget**, which is dedicated to projects on environmental protection and ecology, such as the construction of new green spaces and the renovation of existing ones, as well as educational activities concerning this matter.

The amount allocated to the Green Citizens' Budget every year is around PLN 5 million (EUR 1.1 million). From its implementation until 2023, 492 projects were submitted, and 144 were selected to be implemented. Most of them include planting new trees and planning new green areas. The successful impact of the Green Civic Budget does not only concern the wider number of green areas in the city but also a much higher awareness among citizens regarding the environmental policy and willingness to actively participate when the construction works are carried out. The residents are also increasingly interested in the city's activities.

OTHER MEASURES



Participatory Context Analysis: Developing Digital Skills in Rural Areas through Collaborative Workshops

The Participatory Context Analysis consists on nine **national workshops** organised within the project Our Digital Village to **foster a self-analysis on the conditions of the rural areas where the participants lives.**

The project, launched in 2023, brings together Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Romania in the common effort to intervene in rural areas by co-creating high-quality educational content that respond to the local needs, and promote the acquisition of digital skills in the long-term goal of digitalization by raising awareness among the society.

The self-analysis workshops aimed at identifying the intrinsic motivations and needs of each local context to be taken in mind while co-designing the educational material and used for the following training for teachers and trainers.

After creating the 'Digital Village Communities' composed by educational institutions, local authorities, and policy makers in the rural areas, and after a series of informative sessions to underscore the importance of digitalization, nine self-analysis workshops were implemented with specific target groups composed of: at least 10 educational teaching staff, 10 school students, 10 adult learners, and 1 policy maker in the field of education. In total, 276 participants from diverse backgrounds were engaged.

For the self-analysis process, the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach was used to promote a sense of responsibility in the groups and individuals. The workshops consisted of cycles of discussion on the living conditions in the rural areas, the current state in terms of digital skills development. Facilitated by twelve trainers equipped with the needed skills, the participants collaborated to identify common needs in the light of an open dialogue.



EURaction Citizens' Panels: Empowering Ordinary Citizens on European Issues

Citizens panels are structured discussions where groups of ordinary citizens can deliberate on specific issues. The aim is to encourage active citizens participation in decision-making processes, especially for those citizens who would not have spontaneously participated in projects of that nature.

Within the project "EURaction - Citizens acting for Europe" five citizens' panels were set up in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France. The aim of the pilot project was to **promote the participation of citizens in European issues, encourage a bottom-up approach to allow citizens to raise their voices, and promote trans-national mobility opportunities among the citizens of the countries involved**. Each panel was designed to consist of at least 60 ordinary citizens, specifically targeting those who usually don't engage in European projects. Each partner was encouraged to organise two meetings and a final conference adapting the guidelines for the set up to fit their local context.

The participants were selected through a strategy designed to ensure diversity and inclusivity: each partner identified five or six "key citizens" to motivate and recruit other participants. This allowed for the inclusion of participants from different backgrounds.

The method used for the panels was the "Open Space Methodology" to facilitate debates and encourage open dialogue among the participants. This method consists in sitting in a circle without an agenda or a table, so that the participants feel more comfortable to contribute to the discussion. Participants could discuss their insights and propose meaningful ideas to improve communication between citizens and European institutions. Several recurring themes concerned education, environmental issues, youth, mobility, participation, and European identity.

The results from the citizens' panels were gathered and reported to the European institutions and stakeholders aiming to influence European policy and improve citizens' participation in European issues.



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