



THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCIES IN UKRAINE:

AN INSTRUMENT OF COOPERATION, COMMUNITY COHESION AND DEVELOPMENT

Common action, bottom-up approach and support to local and regional authorities and civil society will lead the reconstruction and future of Ukraine.



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WHO WE ARE

ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy – is a global alliance of local and regional authorities and civil society dedicated to promoting good governance and citizen participation at the local level in the European Union, its Neighbourhood, and beyond.

ALDA is a key stakeholder in the field of local democracy, active citizenship and cooperation between local authorities and civil society in Europe, its neighbourhood and worldwide, mainly acting through participative methods and decentralised cooperation.

As a core element, ALDA supports citizens and civil society organisations in their initiatives aimed at improving their local context, building bridges with local authorities to bring about tangible change.

ALDA leads a broad range of actions supporting local, national and international stakeholders in achieving their goals in the fields of European integration, decentralisation, human rights, social inclusion, sustainable development, civic initiatives and much more.

Established in 1999 at the initiative of the Congress of the Council of Europe, ALDA aims to promote local democracy and citizens' participation in Europe. It also coordinates and supports the network of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), which are self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs acting as promoters of good governance and local self-government.

300
members

500
projects

54
countries

30
years

16
LDAs

MISSION STATEMENT

ALDA works with and for local resilient communities, to address future challenges from a democratic, environmental, social and economic point of view. Democracy and citizens' engagement are and will be key factors for unlocking positive and constructive proposals for the future and ALDA, together with its members and partners, is at the centre of concrete proposals and activator of positive changes. Through the analysis of the past and its capitalization, reflecting on what has been achieved so far, our ambition is not only to overcome the crisis but to gain relevance and importance at the global level.



ALDA VISION

ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy – aims to strengthen a global alliance of local and regional authorities and civil society actors working collaboratively in local communities. The goal is to make these communities more resilient, socially and economically successful, inclusive, sustainable, and fair. Participatory democracy at the local level is crucial for improving the lives of citizens and achieving the universal Sustainable Development Goals.

ALDA IN UKRAINE

Since 2014, ALDA has been actively involved in Ukraine, relying on its two operational partners - LDA Dnipro and LDA Mariupol. ALDA actions in Ukraine are implemented by the **Ukraine Task Force** comprising teams based in Kyiv, Brussels, Wroclaw, Chisinau, and Vicenza.

Most of its activities focused on Ukraine's involvement in ALDA's transnational cooperation projects on good governance, civic participation, training, and capacity building for local authorities. Amongst the projects ALDA implemented in Ukraine:



GROWING STEPS

2014, funded by European Commission: Youth in Action program;



CHOICE

Cultural Heritage: Opportunity for Improving Civic Engagement, 2015-2017, funded by the European Commission, Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility; EUR 873.000;



Update on Reform

Update on Public Administration and Local Governments reform in EaP, 2016, funded by Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, EUR 17.450,00;



BET on Democracy

(Building and Enhancing networking for Democracy) funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, 2016-2017, EUR 39.240;



IDPs SAVE

IDPs' Social Adaptation as a Human Rehabilitation Vital Element; EUR funded by Valdesian Church, 2017-2018, EUR 31.200;



JOURNEY

Joint Organization to Unite Rural Networks of Entrepreneurial Youth, 2018-2021, funded by the European Commission, EUR 169.436,46.



PAVE

Peace Awareness through Volunteering and Education (with associated partners LDA Mariupol and the University of Mariupol); 2023-2024 Erasmus+

Cooperation with the UNDP Ukraine

In 2021, ALDA experts delivered 24 trainings on Good governance for local authorities from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (territories under the UA government's control), two conferences, and a publication of best local initiatives within the "Recovery and Peacebuilding" Program implemented by UNDP Ukraine.

After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, ALDA consolidated its efforts on international advocacy, support to LDAs in Ukraine, and fundraising for humanitarian projects.

2.1 Advocacy

In its effort to advocate for Ukraine, ALDA actively contributes to the work of regional networks supporting local governance and civil society empowerment as:

- an observer member of and contributor to the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine of the Committee of the Regions;
- a contributor to the EU/Ukraine working group of the Committee of the Regions;
- a contributor to the CORLEAP assembly of the Committee of the Regions;
- a permanent observer to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- an integral part of several partners of civil society supporting Ukraine communities, such as Civil Society Europe, European Partnership for Democracy, and CONCORD Europe.

2.3 Capacity Building

In March 2023, in the framework of ALDA support to Ukrainian civil society, ALDA provided capacity-building training on EU programs and project development for 20 Ukrainian NGO leaders from multiple regions that belong to the Association of Ukraine Civic Initiatives. Three-day training took place in Lviv, Ukraine. More capacity-building activities are pending for 2023 (together with U-LEAD with Europe).



ALDA is in constant dialogue with its Ukrainian members to provide direct inputs from the field to the international networks in which ALDA has a stand.

2.3 Humanitarian Aid

As humanitarian support, ALDA has already provided EUR 89.000 to the humanitarian relief projects of Ukrainian partners including the support to Ya Mariupol (ukr. Я - Маріуполь) IDP support centres, equipment of three shelters in Dnipro by the LDA Dnipro, and provision of medical and electricity generating equipment to the hospital in Vinnytsia region. Two more humanitarian projects dedicated to IDP housing support and integration in the Odesa and Dnipro regions are undergoing for a total amount of EUR 45,000. This assistance was possible thanks to the support of ALDA members Fons Mallorquí, Fons Menorquí, and Fons Pitiús. Recently, ALDA also helped LDA Dnipropetrovsk secure EUR 20 000 for equipping the shelters (NRW region); and EUR 20 000 for Poltava city for the Veteran's Hub (CoE).

2.4 Enlargement of Membership Network

For the year 2023, ALDA's Governing Board has decided not to withhold membership fees from Ukrainian members while martial law is in effect. This decision allows numerous new members to access ALDA's network and enjoy its benefits.

ALDA members in Ukraine as of February 2024

- LDA Mariupol
- LDA of the Dnipropetrovsk Region
- LDA Odesa
- Dnipro City Council
- Mariupol Municipality
- Mariupol State University
- NGO "I am BUCHANETS"
- Odesa Rayon Council
- University of Customs and Finance (UCF) of Dnipro
- Volyn Regional Council
- Poltava City Council
- Executive Committee of Novomoskovsk City Council
- Vinnytsia Regional Association of Local Self-Government Bodies
- National Interests Advocacy Network - ANTS
- Association of Ukrainian Civic Initiatives
- Executive Committee of Vinnytsia City Council
- Rivne Regional Council
- Executive Committee of Kryvyi Rih City Council
- All-Ukrainian Association of Communities - AUAC
- Poltava Region Council
- Kremenchuk City Territorial Community
- Association of Amalgamated Territorial Communities
- Merefa City Council

ALDA signed cooperation and Memorandum of Understanding with :

- The State Ecological Academy
- The Ukrainian Association of District and Regional Councils



LDAs' Actions in Ukraine

LDAs have been implementing several projects since the start of the full-scale invasion to support local communities and the IDPs.

Psychological rehabilitation of IDPs, LDA Dnipro



The project included individual consultations and two one-day trainings with the use of art therapy and other effective-communication methods.

Project "I Mariupol" (ukr. Я Маріуполь), Mariupol City Council



Support centers for displaced Mariupol residents across Ukraine to rehabilitate them and meet their basic needs (food; hygiene).

Shelters for IDPs, LDA Dnipro



The project provided the IDPs who lived in the 2 mini-shelters of the Dnipro's condominiums with daily lunches (436 lunches for 27 people temporary residing in shelters), June-September 2022.

ALDA's engagement with Ukraine

2022-23 ALDA'S WORK

Raising awareness among members and partners on all possible ways to support Ukrainian society during the war

Leading projects with local and international partners and members to support Ukraine

Supporting ALDA members in their initiatives and enlarging the network of members in Ukraine

Drafting and disseminating statements to lead a strong advocacy action

**ALDA MEMBERS DONATED EUR 94.000,00
IN HUMANITARIAN AID TO UKRAINE IN 2022**

2.5 Position and International Events

Final declaration of ALDA's General Assembly (Strasbourg, 2nd of May 2022) - ALDA, in its 2022 General Assembly, while the war in Ukraine is raging and the whole continent is shaken by this tragedy:

- is calling its members, its partners, and the international community to support the Local Democracy Agencies as an instrument of local Democracy, Peace, and Resilience;
- is proposing to support the existing Local Democracy Agencies in Ukraine, in Mariupol and Dnipro, with more partners engaged and project activities that could support the communities affected but also support the medium and long-term reconstruction;
- is proposing to have more support for the opening more Local Democracy Agencies in Ukraine, in particular with members and contacts.



ALDA frames its work according to the (i) principles of the Lugano and following Ukraine Recovery Conferences, which underline 'digital transformation, green energy transition, national and international innovative and sustainable financing, including harnessing possible reparations, contributions by private donors and the private sector; invite the private sector, academia, and civil society as well as actors at the sub-national levels, such as cities, hospitals, and others, to enter into partnerships with Ukrainian counterparts';

(ii) European Council's decision 'to recognize the European perspective of Ukraine and grant Ukraine EU candidate country status'.

After the General Assembly in 2022, ALDA's commitment has turned into concrete actions. The "Donors Conference" held in July 2022 in Brussels showcased the needs of communities of four cities where ALDA is most active: Dnipro, Odesa, Vinnytsia, and Mariupol. The conference of Wroclaw in November 2022 identified 10 recommendations for local self-governments that would pave the way for more targeted support. The Secretary-General and some members of ALDA's Governing Board visited Ukraine in May 2023, which was followed by the big "All-partners meeting of Ukraine LDAs" during the General Assembly in June 2023. In July 2023 the Ukraine Flagship Initiative was presented to the delegation of Verkhovna Rada Committee on Local Self-Government, Regional Development, and Urban Planning in Brussels. On 23-24 November 2023 ALDA organised the International Conference on Decentralised Support for Ukrainian Communities in Vicenza in collaboration with the Municipality of Vicenza and with the support of CEI and U-LEAD with Europe. ALDA organized a pivotal Network Meeting in Kyiv on March 7, 2024, aimed at shaping its strategic direction in Ukraine for 2024-2028. The event brought together European and Ukrainian partners. ALDA, namely Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida and Representative in Ukraine Khrystyna Kvarstiana actively participated in the URC 2024 in Berlin, contributing to discussions on Ukraine's recovery and decentralization efforts, and showcasing its ongoing initiatives to support local democracy and civil society development in the region.



Ukraine Task Force

To coordinate ALDA's growing work in Ukraine, ALDA has established the Ukraine Task Force. Since the beginning of 2024, ALDA Representative in Ukraine, Khrystyna Kvarstiana, is based in Kyiv. The Task Force works in close cooperation with the Secretariat of ALDA.

WHAT ARE THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCIES

ALDA coordinates and supports the network of 15 Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) in their activities. Initiated by the Council of Europe in the early '90s, the LDAs represent a unique and successful experiment of democratic support, with full engagement of local governments and civil society organisations from Europe and the neighbouring countries.

The LDAs are locally-based organizations, funded and supported by both local partners and international associates with a long-term joint program providing financial and political support to fulfill their mandate and to accompany local democracy and civil society empowerment. Partnership-building is a crucial aspect for each LDA, as their work is based on the innovative method of multilateral decentralized cooperation. The LDAs are also operational in the field of city diplomacy. Each LDA is locally registered and works with local staff coordinated by ALDA.

Local Democracy Agencies are recognized by the Congress as an instrument for promoting city diplomacy and long-term support, also in view of peacebuilding and future accession to the EU (Resolution 257/251 – 2008 - recognizing LDAs as an instrument of City Diplomacy). On a yearly basis, the LDAs receive from ALDA's Governing Board, the label of the LDA after assessment of their report of activities actions plans, partnership support, and sustainability. The Director of the office, the Delegate, is validated by the Governing Board of ALDA.

They are built on local partnership (the local city or region supports logistically the local office also with activities) with local authorities and civil society engagement. They also engage European partners that contribute with a partnership for supporting local staff and then engage in activities that are funded by ALDA and its partners.

See [here](#) the reports of the LDAs activities. You can find more on our [website](#).

3.1 Current and Future LDAs in Ukraine



The partnership of the Local Democracy Agencies is the backbone of the initiative. They are meeting in regular partner meetings that represent the decision-making body of the programs. After a year of difficult management, due to the ongoing war, in 2023 we are bringing back activities into tracks aiming, on one hand, at further strengthening and consolidating (given the circumstances) the existing LDAs in Dnipro and Mariupol and, on the other hand, at opening 6 new LDAs in other regions of Ukraine.

The Local Democracy Agencies in Ukraine are an instrument of stabilisation and cohesion in a community that is torn by the conflict. The communities needs help, support and medium long term support, accompanied towards unity.





A New Beginning: Local Democracy Agency Odesa opened its doors!

In a significant stride towards bolstering local democracy, ALDA and the entire Local Democracy Agency's family are proud to announce the establishment of the LDA Odesa in Ukraine. On **November 17th, 2023**, this milestone event took place. LDA Odesa is the first LDA to open since the launching of the Flagship Initiative and underscores the pivotal role of LDAs in advancing ALDA's overarching vision of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities across Europe and beyond.



The inauguration of LDA Odesa is an extremely important achievement that could not have been possible without the cooperation of the LDA Odesa partners



**Host institution:
ODESA RAYON COUNCIL**

European partners:

- 1. FOSTER EUROPE FOUNDATION (AT)**
- 2. ISTRIA REGION (HR)**
- 3. FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA REGION (IT)**

Local partners:

- 1. CENTRE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES**
- 2. ODESA OBLAST BRANCH OF THE "COMMITTEE OF VOTERS OF UKRAINE"**

Among the participants in the event were Mr. Vitaly Barvinenko, Chairman of the Odesa Rayon Council, Mr. Marc Cools, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Ms. Yuliia Molodozhen, Regional Office of U-LEAD with Europe in the Odesa Oblast.

1 LDA Dnipropetrovsk region, opened in 2015

Among the first initiatives of LDA Dnipro since its establishment was to revitalise the implementation at local level of the national legislation regarding condominiums and local self-organisation of the population. This led to a city-wide network of community leaders that successfully coordinated the population in addressing local issues and a special department to support these citizens' structures. Another focus was to support the integration in Dnipro and its surroundings of IDPs relocated from Donbas (after the first invasion from 2014). In the near future LDA Dnipro plans to enlarge it with the Oblast administration with the aim of contributing to the resistance against invasion and post-war reconstruction. As of September 2023, LDA Dnipro succeeded in equipment and modernization of 3 bomb shelters in the Dnipro that could host tens of citizens and offer decent conditions during missiles' attacks. LDA Dnipro has been providing psychological and legal support to veterans and their families.

LDA Dnipro has started working together with an entity from North-Rhein-Westphalia (Germany) for developing a joint project.

2 LDA Mariupol (currently working from Kyiv), opened in 2017

If before the war the LDA's activities were focused on supporting Municipality's efforts of city's development and citizens' engagement in the development and implementation process, then right after invasion all the staff was relocated and switched to remote type of work. The focus was to make LDA operational again and continue the cooperation with the municipal authorities in keeping the connection with the citizens wherever they are. For 2023 LDA Mariupol is aiming to foster it's internal functionality in new realities, finalise the movement of its operation in a new office (potentially hosted by Mariupol State University), support the "Ya Mariupol" project initiated by city's authorities and contribute to promotion and fundraising for the "Mariupol Reborn" initiative that foreseen the reconstruction of the city after its liberation.

3

LDA Odesa, opened in 2023

Since becoming an ALDA member in August 2021, Odesa Rayon has worked closely with ALDA on various initiatives and participated in a series of international activities. Since the invasion, Odesa's representatives have been engaged in raising awareness about the war and necessary support for Ukraine. As a result, together with ALDA, several EU partners were identified who continuously provide necessary humanitarian assistance that is distributed by volunteers and LDA team throughout the county. The partners joined the opening ceremony and identified action plan and delegate of the LDA.

4

LDA Vinnytsia, to be opened

Being still at the level of establishment, ALDA is already actively engaged with the initiative team of LDA Vinnytsia to raise funds and provide support to several hospitals in the region with necessary medicines and medical equipment for which 12,000 euros were already ensured by ALDA.

5

LDA Kharkiv, to be opened in April 2024

Given the city's proximity to the Russian border and ongoing military operations, the short-term focus is to secure support from partners and identify local leadership for the LDA. This local leadership will be responsible for setting up operations and initiating activities to support local development and reconstruction.

This LDA process is a part of ALDA's project with U-LEAD with Europe programme.

6

LDA Mykolaiv, to be opened

Activities are still to be identified by the partners.

7

LDA Rivne, to be opened

Activities identified so far are focusing on regional and territorial development and help to communities. More information will be identified at the next partner meeting.

8

LDA Bucha, under discussion

Being one of the first and most affected municipalities by Russian invasion, Bucha was also one of the first to be liberated. The atrocities discovered after liberation became known around the world and showed the cruelty and brutality of the invasion. As a consequence, local administration is currently overwhelmed by international attention and can not efficiently handle all the aid and mid/long-term support that the city is offered by different international partners.

The LDA role, right after its establishment, will be to support the town administration to efficiently channel and manage the aid and support, but at the same time to contribute to the elaboration and implementation of a long-term view and strategy for city's development with the focus on attracting active young population that would move (back) and contribute to local progression.

9

LDA Lviv, under discussion

Trento and Lviv are working together for the development and implementation of the European Volunteering Capital in 2024. They might develop initiative under the same umbrella. Lviv has been, since February 2022, at the centre of international cooperation and humanitarian support. In February 2024, Lviv and Trento meet for their first bilateral meeting coordinated by ALDA to establish LDA Lviv.

3.2 Establishment of a LDA and involvement of new partners



Expression of interest

ALDA gauges the interest of the city/region in opening an LDA. Subsequently, ALDA and the city/region mutually agree on the principles and methodology. Typically, the expression of interest is formalized after a visit to the field by ALDA's dedicated team.



Call for partners

ALDA launches a call for partners open to European cities, counties and regions as well as NGOs. Partners are invited to express their interest and have an online call - or meeting in person if feasible - with ALDA staff in order to share their priorities, get to know each other and secure the funding.



Partners meeting and action plan

International and local partners are invited to meet, either online or in person, to get to know each other and discuss the strategy of the LDA and further steps. The partners meeting is facilitated by ALDA.

ALDA, along with the LDA delegate - if the LDA already exists - builds with partners a first action plan and the available budget for functioning. The action plan takes into account the needs of the community where the LDA is established but also the priorities of the partners involved in the coalition.

Memorandum of Understanding

Contacts and exchanges bring to the elaboration of a Memorandum of Understanding which includes the partners, their focus and interest, their contribution:



- local partner pays the office and assure constant partnership;
- International partners commit to support financially the LDA on an annual basis;
- ALDA centralises the contribution and supports the LDAs with an annual operating grant.

The MoU is drafted complying with the national law.

The MoU is signed by all the partners, preferably in the city and office of the new LDA.

Starting of the activities



After the agreement of all international partners, together with local stakeholders ALDA proceeds with the recruitment of the staff and the signature of contract. After setting up the office, the designated delegate of the LDA - in a common agreement of all the partners - starts the implementation of the activities (projects relevant for the community involved), fundraising and establishing the contacts. The LDAs' activities are always followed and supported by ALDA.

Monitoring of the activities



The activities of the LDA are monitored by ALDA on a regular basis through constant contact with LDAs delegates and assessed on a yearly basis by the Governing Board of ALDA. LDAs are asked to provide a report of their activities and the action and sustainability plans. LDAs are given the label if they have implemented the activities planned in a financially sustainable way.

3.3 Financial contribution of international partners

International partners contribute to the support of the LDA by financing its operations, covering costs such as the LDA delegate(s), office materials, travels, and project implementation support. Typically, partners contribute financially with a **minimum of 2,000 EUR and up to 5,000 EUR**. We usually aim to reach a total of 20,000 EUR per year operating with a small office.

The financial contribution of partners is paid to ALDA which transfers the money of partners to the LDA through an annual operating grant.

Membership to ALDA does not cover the financial support to a LDA. Members of ALDA can pay in a unique envelope the membership fee and the financial support to the LDA.



For more information and if you are interested to join a LDA, please write to: khrystyna@alda-europe.eu.



www.alda-europe.eu



alda*

30

years LDAs in the Balkans

European Association
for Local Democracy



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