

# Two Decades of Building Democratic Society: LDA Mostar's Legacy





**“Two Decades of Building  
Democratic Society: LDA  
Mostar’s Legacy”**

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Two Decades of Building Democratic Society: LDA Mostar's  
Legacy

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# ABOUT LDA MOSTAR

Since its establishment in November 2004, Local Democracy Agency Mostar (LDA Mostar) acts as a locally registered non-profit, nongovernmental organisation, with the support of its partners and co-operation with other Agencies and the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA). It is precisely this co-operation, both on local and regional level that has enabled numerous activities and projects useful for the development of the local community and its inclusion into processes at the regional level.

## OUR MISSION

„Together with active citizens, LDA is building successful communities, improving deliberative democracy, and encouraging good governance.”

## OUR VISION

„We believe in an equal and inclusive society.”

LDA Mostar is a statutory member of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) (Strasbourg / France), is a co-founder of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy (BNLD), and has the support of the founding partnership of the Cities and Regions of Europe, among which the City of Mostar is the host partner. This partnership was made official in Mostar on LDA Mostar inauguration day, November 22, 2004 by signing the [Partnership Agreement](#).





## OUR APPROACH

- Advocating good governance, cooperation and participation of citizens, and strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations and authorities, with the aim of contributing to the development of successful communities.
- Encouraging the cooperation of decision-makers, civil society organisations and citizens through deliberative participatory processes with the aim of creating a democratic society of equality and inclusiveness.
- Encouraging political, economic and social reforms in the areas of democracy, rule of law, human rights and economic development in order to align them with the standards and policies required for EU accession.
- Raising awareness of underrepresented and marginalised groups with the aim of their active participation in building a society of equality and inclusion.
- Contributing to solving social and economic inequalities affecting young people by promoting diversity and inclusion, creating mentoring programs for education and skills development,

providing access to resources and opportunities, and improving the physical and mental well-being of young people.

## OUR ACTION

Through participative methods and decentralised cooperation, we implement projects and actions in areas of:

- Good governance
- Civil participation
- EU Integration
- Human rights
- Gender equality and inclusion
- Raising awareness on underrepresented and marginalised groups
- Youth participation
- Reconciliation
- Non-formal education
- Public spaces and public discourses
- Economic development and sustainability
- Intercultural dialogue and cultural heritage
- Migrations
- Environment

Year of Establishment

2004



Headquarters

Mostar  
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Currently  
Employed

7



Total number of  
permanent employees  
over the past 20 years

30



Total number of external  
associates hired over  
the past 20 years

2,000





# FOREWORD

## DŽENANA DEDIĆ

Director of Local Democracy Agency  
Mostar



Twenty years of building democracy in local communities has been a learning journey for all of us—both for LDA Mostar and the citizens. Many definitions of democracy assert that democratisation is a slow process, and we have seen first-hand just how true that is.

The Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans began their mission during the war of the 1990s, a time marked by the collapse of one society and the creation of new ones. Along with deep personal traumas, the establishment of new states on unstable foundations with different socio-political visions meant that the Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans faced a daunting challenge: to create a society with equal rights and opportunities for all. Established in 1992 by the initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the LDAs aimed to support local democracy, human rights, and sustainable development.

LDA Mostar was established in 2004 as the eleventh Agency to be founded, with a relatively clear organisational path and mission. However, its work in the city of Mostar was far from easy or straightforward. The divided local community—burdened by personal and collective traumas, conflicting visions of future development and governance, and constant political and social tensions—was not a favourable environment for an organisation whose mission was to establish a democratic society. Though the context was difficult, it was also stimulating and challenging, which for us became a powerful motivation to persevere. We committed ourselves to those who live, work, learn, and raise future generations in this city—those who truly deserve a safe environment that fosters growth and development. All our efforts have been made for the citizens of this city. After 20 years, we are particularly mindful of this, having been present not

only in Mostar but in numerous local communities across Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region through our partnerships.

Over the years, we have implemented more than 120 projects, built over 800 partnerships, organised countless events, and reached hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries, participants, collaborators, and friends, alongside donors who supported our work. Our activities have spanned various thematic areas, engaging all sectors of society, but always with one goal: to inspire citizens to become active and local authorities to be open and responsive to the needs and challenges of the community. To make this process possible, we have worked for years with local governments to update and create sustainable mechanisms that ensure meaningful and competent citizen participation in decision-making and policy creation.

All of us - local authorities, civil society organisations, and citizens — share not only equal rights but also the responsibility to contribute to building the communities in which we live. It is only when we fully embrace the importance of using democratic mechanisms in our everyday lives that democracy will become the living culture of our society as a whole. Stronger, more prosperous local communities ultimately contribute to real global progress.

These first 20 years of dedicated work and commitment to a vision of equality and inclusion have equipped us to take on even greater challenges. We are ready to support all those who need it and to serve as an experienced partner to those whose support we seek.

We remain steadfast in our belief that only through genuine cooperation and mutual understanding can we build thriving communities and a more just society.



Relied upon as a trusted and efficient partner with more than

**85%**

of our funders reinvesting in our work.

120 projects with over

**4.5 million KM**

grant funds implemented with the support of international and local governments, institutions and organisations.

**200.000+**

policymakers, practitioners, and representatives of vulnerable and underrepresented groups engaged.

Collaborated with

**800+**

partners, including local and international organisations and institutions

Supported

**100+**

CSOs in building more active and inclusive communities with over

**600.000 KM**

in funding

Strengthened the capacities of

**15.000+**

representatives of local governments and CSOs through

**300+**

trainings and educational programs

**100.000+**

youth engaged in educational activities, skill-building and exchange.

Provided expert contributions to

**200+**

events aimed at strengthening democratic processes

Produced

**150+**

publications on topics important for strengthening democratic society





## CHAPTER I

# GOOD GOVERNANCE

## Promoting Good Governance and Strengthening Local Authorities on the Path to European Integration



LDA Mostar is committed to enhancing good governance at the local level by strengthening the capacities of local governments, including both the administration and legally elected representatives of local authorities. Our efforts align with Bosnia and Herzegovina's aspirations for integration into the European Union, which requires strong, transparent, and accountable local institutions capable of effectively implementing EU standards and policies.

Capacity building is one of the essential foundations of our work. Through tailored programs, training sessions, workshops, and advisory services, we empower public officials and public administration with the knowledge and skills needed to improve efficiency, transparency, and service delivery to citizens. By providing good governance tools, LDA Mostar enhances the ability of public resources management, promotes economic development, and creates inclusive communities.

A key aspect of our work is creating favourable conditions for enabling mechanisms for citizen participation in decision-making. In line with EU principles of democratic governance, we advocate for and assist in establishing platforms that allow citizens to engage meaningfully with their local representatives. By promoting a culture of civic engagement, LDA Mostar fosters greater accountability and trust between local authorities and the communities they serve.

Finally, our work contributes to building resilient local institutions that not only respond better to the needs of their citizens but are also in a better position to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's path toward full EU membership. Through our expertise in capacity building and governance assessment, LDA Mostar continues to play a crucial role in shaping effective citizen-centred governance.

# LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LONG-TERM CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

**GORAN KUČERA**

Public Governance Expert / Legal Adviser and Component Lead at USAID/BIH E-Governance Activity



Good governance in public administration is the foundation of sustainable institutional development and a key aspect of Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into the European Union. Essentially, good governance entails transparency, accountability, efficiency, and participation, ensuring that authorities act in the interest of citizens and the community as a whole.

This concept encompasses all aspects of governance—from the local to the national level—and requires a deep commitment to reforms that will enhance the functioning of institutions, increase citizen trust, and improve decision-making processes. For Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopting these principles not only represents a path to modernising governance

structures but is also a necessary prerequisite for progress toward EU membership. Modern and resilient institutions are essential for stability as well as social and economic advancement.

The Local Democracy Agency Mostar (LDA Mostar) has evolved over its twenty years of operation into one of the most influential civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although it began as a local initiative, LDA Mostar quickly transcended its local framework, expanding its activities throughout the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as on the international level. Evidence of this is the successful implementation of several local and international projects that have made a significant impact on various segments of our society.







LDA Mostar's commitment to the democratisation of institutions and capacity building for the adoption and application of good governance principles has positioned it among the leading organisations in this field. One of its most significant contributions has been through the "European Label of Governance Excellence" (ELOGE) program of the Council of Europe, which recognizes and rewards local authorities demonstrating excellence in applying good governance principles. Through the evaluation of local governments within this program, LDA Mostar has facilitated the strengthening of local authorities' capacities.

Additionally, LDA Mostar contributed to the implementation of the first and second Citizen Assemblies of Mostar, as the first Citizen Assemblies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These assemblies, held in Mostar in 2021 and 2024, represent an innovative approach to participatory decision-making, allowing

citizens, as active participants, to directly shape policies and decisions that affect their community.

Over these twenty years, LDA Mostar has significantly contributed to promoting good governance principles, creating a foundation for long-term change and improvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is particularly important to highlight that LDA Mostar has maintained a strong sense of local patriotism and continues to selflessly invest in the development of the local community, especially in Mostar, where it began its activities. This organisation remains deeply rooted in the needs of the local population, consistently striving to create conditions for a better life at the local level while also setting standards for the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Their dedication and commitment to this goal make them an indispensable actor in the process of democratisation and building a better future for all of us.

I am confident that this is the path that LDA Mostar will continue to follow in the future!

# FEATURED PROJECTS

2004-2006

## Actions of Capacity Building for Local Authorities and Civil Society in South-Eastern Europe

- info point on human rights and sustainable development established in Mostar
- 40+ representatives of LAs and CSOs acquired skills in conflict management and participatory planning
- 50+ representatives of LAs educated on EU competencies and strengthened communication skills
- 70+ young people engaged in dialogue due to the Youth Council of the City of Mostar establishment

2007-2009

## Resource Centre for supporting the democratisation process in Mostar

- advisory office on human rights “Small Room for Democracy” inaugurated
- 180+ representatives of local authorities, CSOs, and media educated on civic participation and EU funds
- 40 radio and television programs about democratic processes broadcasted
- 3 documentary films on the inclusion of marginalised groups produced
- 2 publications on human rights and democratisation processes published
- raising awareness of multiculturalism and democratic values pilot activity for children conducted (fairy tale “Europe’s Bear or the Toy Store”)

2009–2010

## Councillor – Citizen

- priority problem lists for 43 local communities in Mostar developed
- 7 public forums for direct meetings between citizens and local authorities organised
- Centre for free Legal Counselling for Citizens promoted
- Manual for the councillors of the City of Mostar created
- improvements to the functioning of ParlaNet – the communication system of the City Council initiated
- councillors educated on the importance and techniques of planning with citizen participation

2011-2012

## Monitoring of public services on local level – citizens and local government together to better

- 2,000 households from 70 local communities in Mostar, Konjic and Jablanica surveyed on the quality of 16 public services
- research results presented to local decision-makers
- 3 public forums with candidates for mayors of Jablanica and Konjic held to improve public services
- 1 public forum with representatives of political parties in the City Council of Mostar held to improve public services

2011-2012

### **Promotion of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**

- gender equality studies published in Kraljevo, Niš, Mostar, and Kotor
- citizens informed about policies and budgeting for gender equality in Serbia, BiH, and Montenegro
- European Charter for Equality between Women and Men signed with Kraljevo, Mediana (Niš), Mostar, and Kotor
- Local Action Plans (LAP) for implementing the Charter developed
- public discussions on the implementation of LAPs conducted

2012-2015

### **Strengthening accountability of women and young political leaders in BiH – PHASE 1 and 2**

- 50 women from the government and non-government sectors trained to coordinate a project aimed at strengthening communication and political awareness among women and youth
- 350+ workshops with 15,000+ participants held in 8 cantons and 49 cities/municipalities for active political engagement
- 124 women, workshop participants, became municipal/city councillors in the local elections of 2012
- 520 women, workshop participants, became members of the Council of their local communities in 2013.

2013-2014

### **Improvement of local government services in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

- survey results on citizen satisfaction with quality of public services (in Mostar, Konjic, and Jablanica) presented to decision-makers
- community commissioners informed on communication channels between authorities and citizens (e.g., ParlaNet in Mostar) and the citizen participation planning techniques
- community commissioners and representatives of CSOs gained skills in public advocacy and lobbying
- 16 radio shows broadcasted to familiarise citizens with the work of the departments and services of the City of Mostar, Municipality of Konjic, and Jablanica

2016-2018

### **URGENT – Urban Re-Generation: European Network of Towns**

- territorial analysis of the central zone of Mostar performed, comparing population migrations before and after the war
- publication “[City Manifesto for Inclusive Cities](#)” on multiculturalism and the inclusion of migrants published
- [Manual on overcoming stereotypes about migrants](#) and building positive narratives promoted
- 10 local pilot projects focusing on migration implemented in the region
- 200+ government and civil society representatives exchanged experiences at 4 international events
- 300+ direct and 100,000+ indirect stakeholders participated in the project activities



2020 - 2022

### **STEP - Systematic transparency in the election process**

- the observation of the electoral process and Local Elections 2020 in Mostar coordinated in collaboration with the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections “Pod lupom”
- 240 observers for non-partisan and impartial monitoring of local elections educated
- street actions to inform citizens about the electoral process conducted
- long-term observation of the electoral process in the municipalities of Neum, Ravno, and Mostar carried out

2021-2023

### **LINK 4 Cooperation**

- 12 local governments from BiH performance assessed using the [ELoGE programme and methodology of CoE](#)
- [detailed ELoGE implementation analysis with recommendations published](#)
- smart benches with innovative software for citizen communication with decision-makers installed in 12 local communities
- 60 local government and civil society representatives trained in CoE “Leadership Academy”
- representatives of 12 local governments developed skills related to participatory processes
- 22 initiatives implemented in collaboration between LAs and CSOs for a total of 118,000 KM
- [Book of 22 successful stories](#) from the 22 initiatives published
- informal “Participatory Democracy Network” with 50 CSOs and 12 local governments established

# LDA MOSTAR IN FOCUS – COMMUNITY VOICES



*“Projects such as ‘LINK 4 Cooperation’ are important for enhancing understanding and collaboration between civil society and public officials. As a result, civil society is no longer perceived as an opponent of processes in local communities, but as a corrective measure and a trusted local partner.”*

**“LINK 4 Cooperation”  
project beneficiary**

*“Over the past twenty years, LDA Mostar has significantly contributed to the growth and progress of many local communities in BiH through its commitment, expertise, and vision. Thanks to your engagement, the municipality of Žepče is now more competitive and attractive for new investments and business. We have received the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE), which places us among the local governments that have demonstrated high management standards, making us one of the best-managed local governments. This brings us a reputation as a reliable and effective partner and opens opportunities for collaboration and experience exchange with other municipalities and cities.”*



**Mato Zovko,  
Mayor of Municipality Žepče**

# ELOGE

Since 2022, LDA Mostar has been accredited to implement the [ELOGE \(European Label of Governance Excellence\) program of the Council of Europe](#).

LDA Mostar has been recognized as one of the main local partners in the [Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022-2025.](#), significantly

contributing to the introduction of the ELOGE program and the establishment of the first Citizens' Assembly in BiH.

So far, LDA Mostar has successfully implemented the ELOGE process in 12 municipalities/cities across BiH.

*"It is a privilege to collaborate with the Local Democracy Agency Mostar in advancing good governance principles through the Council of Europe's Centre for Expertise for Good Governance and the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) program, implemented for the first time in Bosnia and Herzegovina. LDA Mostar's tireless work on the ground over the past 20 years has been instrumental in shaping citizen-centred governance practices that reinforce the very foundations of democracy in local communities. Their efforts, alongside partners such as LDA Zavidovići, to bring the principles of transparency, accountability, and civic participation into 12 municipalities and cities in BiH demonstrate an enduring commitment to improving the quality of local governance and trust between citizens and their representatives.*

*We warmly congratulate LDA Mostar on their 20th anniversary and commend their profound dedication to building resilient, democratic institutions across BiH. Their unwavering engagement, from supporting the first Citizens' Assembly in Mostar to bringing the ELOGE methodology to life, exemplifies the crucial role they play as agents of change. The Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo looks forward to continued collaboration in fostering inclusive, responsive, and effective governance, which brings BiH ever closer to European standards and integration."*



**Bojana Urumova**, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo







## CHAPTER II

# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

## Active Participation of Citizens in Shaping Policies for Local Prosperity and Innovation

One of the key priorities of LDA Mostar is to promote active citizen participation in the processes of creating local policies. We believe that involving citizens in decision-making is crucial for fostering a more transparent, inclusive, and accountable local governance. By providing platforms and mechanisms for meaningful civic engagement, LDA Mostar empowers individuals to shape policies that affect their lives and communities.

Our efforts are focused on building stable and effective participation mechanisms that ensure citizens can express their opinions, share their ideas, and collaborate with local authorities to address key issues. From public consultations, civic initiatives, and petitions to direct contacts with decision-makers and collaborative projects between civil society and local administration, these mechanisms promote dialogue and cooperation.

It is important to note that active citizen participation results in more prosperous communities with greater potential for innovation. Involving diverse perspectives often leads to creative solutions and fairer policies that meet the real needs of the community.

By fostering the establishment of sustainable participation structures, LDA Mostar nurtures a culture of civic responsibility, both individual and collective action, ensuring that policy-making is not just a top-down process but a joint effort that leads to lasting positive change.



# PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY, A NEW FRONTIER FOR AN EMPOWERED DEMOCRACY

**ANTONELLA VALMORBIDA**

Secretary General of the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)



Democracy is often considered to be at stake nowadays, due to both internal and external factors. On the other hand, Europe remains firmly committed to preserving it as a fundamental aspect of unity and to attracting neighbouring countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina into its community. Despite the numerous challenges we face, ALDA supports this form of governance as the best one to protect citizens and their collective aspirations for a broader good and welfare. We are convinced that if our European model is not enshrined in Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law, it risks losing its very purpose.



Representative democracy and elections represent a specific moment in time, a very important one. They must occur regularly, be well-prepared, and ensure transparency and fairness in a safe environment for all. That already requires significant effort, and we take pride in our Local Democracy Agency in Mostar, which has played a key role in holding both local and national elections by providing information, raising awareness, and fostering open dialogue. The role of the media is also essential in this process. However, democracy extends beyond just elections; we are called to pursue a deeper, more enduring democracy that lasts throughout all mandates! In this context, civil society is essential and should act as a counterpart to elected local leaders. This deeper democracy is embodied in what we call participatory democracy.

Indeed, between two election cycles, there exists a vast potential for cooperation among citizens, associations, various groups, and the teams, councillors, and mayors of our cities. This cooperation is urgent and absolutely necessary. This is the case in Europe, in Western Balkans but it also represents a global trend.

Participatory democracy is essential for several reasons. Resources for local institutions are scarce and in order to address all problems, strategic partnerships and valorisation of various components of communities are



essential. Our societies are more and more complex with different layers of social, economic and cultural levels. In this context, articulated and different forms of governance, in a multistakeholder approach, are essential. The elected leaders can no longer count on a totally hermetically closed mandate for their work. They must engage with citizens and associations to build and adapt their public policies in response to the evolving dynamics of society. We even saw a tremendous speed in changes and events around us, including the impact of digitalisation. That implies not only international developments but also local ones (such as recent effects on climate change in our territories, which impacted Bosnia and Herzegovina as well). Participative democracy, with consultations and various forms of people engagement, allows to seize the momentum. Local authorities have a lot to learn and to earn from ongoing dialogue and policy co-creation with civil society. This is why we strongly advocate for this direction, but also actively engage with our Local Democracy Agencies in Western Balkans, in particular with LDA Mostar, which has been essential in establishing participatory mechanisms at the local level for improving public policies and for solving problems together with the local institutions, such as through citizens' assemblies.

Participative democracy and engagement of civil society gives its best at the local level and it can really change the community to the best.

We wish to continue the endeavour alongside LDA Mostar to support local communities in Bosnia Herzegovina in addressing problems and finding together the solution for both the present and the future.



Find out more on participatory democracy and citizen participation in these publications:

- [Local Democracy will Save Democracy](#)
- [A wealth of Expertise - Toolkit for Local Authorities to successfully engage citizens](#)
- [30 years of Local Democracy](#)



# FEATURED PROJECTS

2011-2013

## **Civil society in action for dialogue and partnership**

- representatives of CSOs from 6 cities in BiH acquired skills in strategic planning, project management, and negotiation
- strengthened networks of CSOs with a focus on financial management and budgeting
- local authorities from 6 cities developed communication skills
- directories of CSOs from [Bihać](#), [Breza](#), [Mostar](#), [Priedor](#), [Tuzla](#) and [Zavidovići](#) created
- [“Challenges and Perspectives of Effective Cooperation between Government and the Civil Sector in BiH and the Region”](#) created
- 4 short films about the non-governmental sector produced
- CSO fair to present the work of organisations and facilitate networking organised

2014-2015

## **Speed Date a Politician**

- young people from Mostar created 36 key questions for representatives of the young candidates of political parties
- at the “Speed Date Politician” event, volunteers from the Youth Council of the City of Mostar asked questions to representatives of 10 political parties
- [the transcript of the answers](#) was publicly released to increase the accountability of political parties and the participation of youth in the political scene of Mostar

2015-2018

### **Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue**

- 16 youth workers and over 70+ young people involved in creating youth policies
- 7 youth info points opened in local communities across the Western Balkans, including Mostar
- 40+ “Youth Taking Over Day” events organised with recommendations from young people for local authorities
- 50+ youth initiatives funded in 5 countries in the region
- 5 [research studies/analyses](#) on youth policies published

2018-2021

### **Regional YOUTH COMPACT for Europe**

- 14 organisations from the WB and Turkey strengthened the participation of the civil sector and youth in EU integrations
- 30 organisations and 800+ young people participated in project activities
- 60 CSOs exchanged good practices through forums and workshops
- 2 [comparative studies](#) published on the EU accession process with a focus on youth
- 14 grants worth over 150,000 KM awarded for youth initiatives from the region
- capacities of the [Balkan Network for Local Democracy \(BNLD\)](#) strengthened

2019-2020

### **CLINK – Cultural heritage linking diversities in Europe**

- 300+ representatives of local authorities, institutions, and CSOs gathered to preserve cultural heritage
- 250+ young artists from 6 countries of the region showcased works inspired by cultural heritage at Pop-up galleries to 5,000 citizens
- cultural heritage mapped in 9 local communities with potential for tourism and economic development
- 6 dialogue forums held with 100+ participants for smart preservation, restoration, or transformation of the heritage
- CLINK presented as a model of good practice during EU info days in BiH

2019-2020

### **IMPACT - Inclusion Matters! Using Performing Arts towards Cohesion and Tolerance**

- 15 theatre workshops held with 100+ migrants of all age groups aimed at social integration
- [Publication on the migration process in BiH](#) highlighting the positive impact of the IMPACT project released
- multiple award-winning [theatrical play “GAME”](#) produced in collaboration with the Mostar Youth Theater (MTM), performed 150+ times at national and international theatre festivals

2021-2024

## **Project Mostar – Spaces to Activate and Rejuvenate**

- [Self-assessment analysis](#) of the City of Mostar presented
- 40 City Administration and CSOs representatives strengthened their leadership skills
- 270 citizens' proposals for public spaces interventions collected
- 12 institutions and 5 open spaces (including the recreational site - Bunica) revitalised
- [Recommendations](#) to improve the quality of life for PwD, women, and youth formed (the City of Mostar began removing barriers for unhindered movement)
- local CSOs' needs analysed; 25 grants value of 500,000 KM implementation monitored
- innovative regional conference on responsible influencing "[KOI](#)" and „[Seeing is believing](#)“ regional LAs and CSOs networking conference gathered stakeholders from 6 countries
- 91 students and 25 teachers from 17 high schools in Mostar participated in the program "[What is democracy for youth – Electionville?](#)"

2024

## **Let's Debate Change**

- MoU signed with the City of Mostar, Municipalities of Konjic and Čapljina, and six high schools in these areas
- 120 high school students underwent [training for independent research](#) in local communities using the PAR methodology
- research in three communities resulted in a list of recommendations
- priority challenges in the communities identified through [3 debates](#)
- 18 high school students developed leadership skills during a [Youth Summer Camp](#)
- students gained [project writing skills](#) to address priority challenges
- meetings between high school students and decision-makers to present the recommendations announced
- grant scheme for the implementation of six students project proposals totalling 22,000 KM in realisation process

2024-2027

## **BOOST - Balkans for Optimising Opportunities, Sustainability and Transformation of Civil Society**

- empowering CSOs in the Western Balkans for climate action
- promoting democratic and economic development, focusing on youth and women's entrepreneurship, rural communities, and cultural heritage
- over 15,000 direct and 20,000 indirect beneficiaries from 6 countries are included in the activities
- establishing regional networks of entrepreneurs, leaders, and experts
- funding 6 regional (880,000 KM) and 60 national (3,520,000 KM) initiatives, totalling 4.4 million KM for long-term economic growth



2024-2025

## **Cohesion of Local Initiatives for Community Advancement - KLIN**

- grant scheme program for CSOs and informal groups from Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (HNK) created strengthening the capacity of civil society and collaboration with local authorities
- contracts signed with 21 CSOs and informal groups for implementation of the projects valued over 150,000 KM
- capacities of CSOs and informal groups strengthened in problem detection and solutions advocacy, administration, finance, and project implementation
- networking among CSOs, informal groups, citizens, authorities, and local organisations established to identify and address current issues



# LDA MOSTAR IN FOCUS – COMMUNITY VOICES



*“LDA Mostar has always been the voice of the citizens and reminded us to ask, ‘What do citizens want?’ You are such strong and effective advocates for bringing governments, administrations, and civil society closer together in the interest of citizens and voters. We are proud to be partners in a project that has enabled the formation of a consortium of civil society organisations and resulted in benefits for an unprecedented number of citizens in Mostar. We are especially proud of the collaboration between local authorities and civil society under your guidance, and of your commitment to ensuring that young people are fully included and help improve long-term opportunities for change and reform. I am confident that together we will continue to create positive changes.”*

**H.E. Julian Reilly, UK**  
Ambassador to BiH



*“Twenty years of activity in the field of local democracy should be celebrated. Congratulations to all who are dedicated to the work of LDA Mostar and its noble mission. The Embassy of France in BiH, the French Institute in BiH and the French Development Agency (AFD) are proud to be one of the historic partners of LDA Mostar. Youth and entrepreneurship, rural development and environmental protection, cultural heritage and development of local communities, these are the foundations on which you will be able to work through the Boost program together with the French team.”* “Twenty years of activity in the field of local democracy should be celebrated. Congratulations to all who are dedicated to the work of LDA Mostar and its noble mission. The Embassy of France in BiH, the French Institute in BiH and the French Development Agency (AFD) are proud to be one of the historic partners of LDA Mostar. Youth and entrepreneurship, rural development and environmental protection, cultural heritage and development of local communities, these are the foundations on which you will be able to work through the Boost program together with the French team.”



**H.E. François Delmas, Ambassador of**  
France in Bosnia and Herzegovina







*“I’m always inspired by the work that LDA does, not only here in Mostar but also across the country and the region. To me, LDA Mostar is a beacon of hope. When you bring the right people together, you bring the community together. You’ve shown time and again that real change is possible. LDA is a reminder that democracy thrives in local communities.”*

**Timothy Jenkins, Regional Representative to the WB, People in Need**



*“We extend our deepest gratitude to the dedicated team at LDA Mostar, whose tireless energy, expertise, and constant positivity were invaluable to our project’s success. Through the ‘Project Mostar – Spaces to Activate and Rejuvenate,’ we worked together to make inclusivity for all citizens of Mostar a tangible reality, bringing culture from the margins into the heart of the community. Thank you, LDA Mostar, for 20 years of inspiring commitment that continues to motivate organisations and individuals alike.”*



**Alen Mašić, “Klub Mostrip” president**



*“When we finally reach our end and settle down, we won’t be returning to our birthplace first, but Bosnia, where you are. You gave us hope and faith in humanity once more. Great men live here. Thank you all. We’ll see you next time.”*

**beneficiary of the project  
“IMPACT”**



# ELECTIONVILLE

LDA Mostar is accredited to implement [Electionville program](#) with the consent of the Swedish Institute, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Swedish Embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. LDA Mostar has the approval of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Hercegovina-Neretva Canton (HNK/Ž) to implement the Electionville program in all high schools in Mostar, with the possibility of implementation in all high schools in the HNK/Ž area.

In 2021, LDA Mostar organised three Electionville events in [Mostar](#), [Sarajevo](#) i [Banja Luka](#) with 50 direct and over 150 indirect participants. In 2024, LDA Mostar conducted a series of Electionville events title [“What is Democracy for Youth – Electionville?”](#) involving 17 high schools in the Mostar area, with over 90 students and 25 teachers-mentors participating, significantly raising awareness among youth about the importance of active participation in local decision-making.

*“ ‘Welcome to Electionville’ allows participants to learn how the local government and democratic process’s function. It is also a tool for practising fundamental democratic rights and values. This is something we should all continuously practise because: Democracy is worth protecting – every day and by all of us. The freedom of choice, speech, opinion, and love can never be taken for granted. The same goes for every person’s right to make an impact, vote, and be treated equally under the law.”*



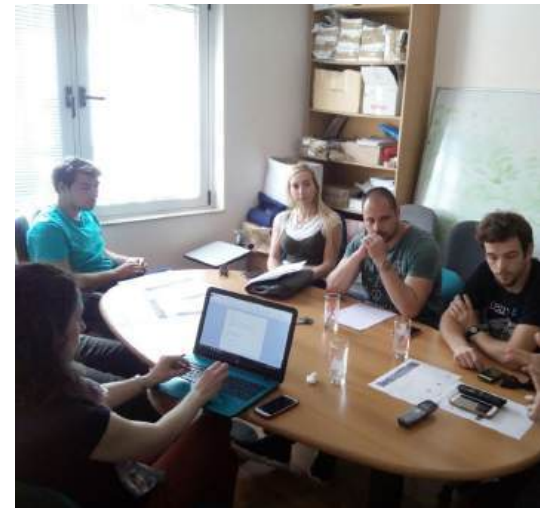
**H.E. Helena Lagerlöf,**  
Swedish Ambassador to BiH



# ELECT MOSTAR

Driven by the fact that local elections had not been held in Mostar for many years, and that its citizens were denied the right to vote and to run for local office, LDA Mostar organised an initiative in 2016 titled “[Elect Mostar](#)” collecting votes from citizens on issues important to them and their city. The goal was to restore the fundamental democratic right of the citizens of Mostar to choose and to be chosen. The action was highly recognized by local and regional media, as well as by the international community and foreign representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The absence of a response from political actors and leading political options in Bosnia and Herzegovina was evident.

Over time, this initiative grew into a coalition and became a platform that amplified the voices of disenfranchised citizens. Through a series of discussions and negotiations with international actors, four years after the launch of the “Elect Mostar” initiative, the voting rights of the people of Mostar were finally restored. Based on this initiative, the Council of Europe, in collaboration with LDA Mostar and other local partners, organised the first Citizens’ Assemblies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically in Mostar, which became a successful example of implementing a deliberative democratic process.





### III. POGLAVLJE

# ACTIVE YOUTH

## Active Youth - the Driving Force of Community Development



Over the years, we have focused on strengthening the capacities of young people through non-formal education, entrepreneurial initiatives, and civic education, providing them with the skills and knowledge to drive positive change.

In the area of non-formal education, LDA Mostar has implemented tailor made programs, training sessions, workshops, and youth exchanges aimed at building critical thinking, leadership, and social responsibility among youth. A key part of these efforts is civic education, which encourages young people to take an active role in their communities. By learning about democratic processes, rights, and responsibilities, youth become empowered to participate in local governance, advocate for change, and lead community initiatives.

LDA Mostar also strengthens the capacities of young people through art and culture, which are powerful tools for social engagement and community building. By implementing creative programs, workshops, and organising cultural events, LDA Mostar provides young people with a platform to

express their ideas while addressing social issues. These initiatives foster a sense of belonging and empowerment, enabling youth to take an active role in shaping the cultural landscape and contributing to the overall well-being of the community.

Recognizing the importance of youth entrepreneurship, LDA Mostar has also focused on developing business skills through tailored training, mentoring programs, and networking opportunities. Our initiatives equip young individuals with essential entrepreneurial skills such as business planning, project management, and digital literacy, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the modern labour market while nurturing the spirit of innovation.

Through these capacity-building efforts, LDA Mostar has been pivotal in creating a generation of young people who are not only ready to contribute to the local economy but are also dedicated to leading social and civic transformation through active engagement in their communities.



# NOTHING ABOUT YOUTH WITHOUT YOUTH!

INGA KOTLO

Professor of Bosnian and English / project coordinator / activist/ Fronterra Program project manager (LDA Mostar, 2016)



“Nothing about youth without youth!” is a motto that the Local Democracy Agency Mostar has been striving to implement for 20 years, continuously and consistently. This motto is both a call for young people to engage in political action and civic activism, and a warning to decision-makers that any issue concerning youth (and which issue does not concern future generations?!) should be proposed and developed in collaboration with young people and/or accepted by them. Under such guiding principles, the chances for the existence and survival of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina are increased (the issue of brain drain and the overall emigration of young people from BiH has long been recognized), and their goodwill and capacity for building and long-term nurturing of the local community for the benefit of all its citizens are

developed.

However, in Mostar, the situation in this area has not been encouraging over the past two decades—young people are often not even asked for their opinions when important decisions are being made, and in the rare cases they are consulted, they frequently do not respond. In other words, a significant percentage of youth feels they have no impact on important decision-making, even regarding issues that concern them directly. They also do not believe that meaningful change is possible, and as a rule, they do not inform themselves or engage in social processes (i.e., they do not contact politicians, do not attend public meetings, do not participate in public protests, budget discussions, etc., do not sign petitions, do not gather signatures for petitions that interest them, do not engage in political





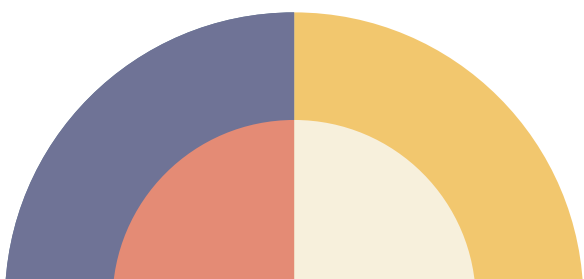
discussions online, do not write articles in newspapers or online portals about issues and problems that affect them, and do not even exercise their civic right (and fulfil their civic duty) to vote in elections). Thus, we have witnessed in Mostar for many years that silence is not, after all, golden.

Bearing in mind the layered, complex, and long-lasting nature of this social problem, the role of the Local Democracy Agency Mostar is extremely important—this tireless team (primarily capable, energetic women) has been steadfastly steering and adjusting its course to respond to the changing winds of social pressures and challenges for 20 years. Therefore, this chapter offers a brief overview of numerous notable projects and initiatives that LDA Mostar has successfully implemented—independently or with partners—contributing to the development of youth capacities by providing opportunities for non-formal education in various fields: democracy and human rights, entrepreneurship, art, culture, and the environment, as well as through study trips and networking with youth from BiH, the region, and around the world, through the exchange of experiences and constructive ideas, and by



providing training and opportunities for active youth participation in various social processes in their local community.

There is hope that LDA Mostar will continue its dedicated and successful work in the coming decades, in an increasingly favorable social context, and be a support for young people in co-creating a society of equality and inclusiveness in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where young people will be empowered, educated, perceptive, responsible, productive, media and administratively literate, and motivated citizens who think globally but act locally, consistently striving to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.



# FEATURED PROJECTS

2005-2008

## Fostering interethnic dialogue in the secondary schools of Mostar and its region

- dialogue with principals and teachers of secondary schools in Mostar initiated regarding curriculum reform
- 140+ professors, students, and representatives of institutions discussed improving curriculum focusing on democratisation and human rights
- study focusing on the need to integrate values of democracy and human rights in curriculums conducted
- handbook with recommendations for incorporating democracy, human rights, and dialogue into the curricula published

2009-2011

## MO.START-V – MOstar.STRategies and Activities to Realise Training in Videojournalism

- 40 young people improved their knowledge and skills in independent video journalism
- 20+ representatives of the City of Mostar enhanced skills in participatory planning of public spaces
- 40+ young people acquired skills for starting a business and creating a business plan
- Centre for independent video production established, and equipment donated
- documentary film on contemporary Mostar produced and showcased locally and regionally

2016-2017

## Fronterra Program in Mostar

- 4 training sessions on starting a business for young entrepreneurs conducted, including business plans creating
- 8 grants awarded to young entrepreneurs for starting businesses, totaling 10,000 KM
- grant recipients connected with relevant institutions and businesses for networking and consulting

2017-2019

## WomCom – Women’s Communication for Solidarity

- women and girls from rural areas of Europe enhanced their skills in assertive communication through 60 workshops
- 30 young women from 6 countries built awareness of solidarity among women through art and intercultural learning
- visual solutions created, resulting in 6 murals depicting the role of women in society
- [Art performance and video guide “Remember”](#) produced to condemn violence against women through assertive communication



2018-2020

### **BRIDGE – BeRlin cultural Intervention – Differences Grow Equal - part I / II / III**

- platform for connecting and empowering artists from BiH and Germany through street art and urban music created
- 15 young street art artists and musicians contributed to the Street Arts Festival in Mostar
- highschool students from Mostar educated about German culture and art, participating in mural creation at the Festival
- an exhibition showcasing the work of German graffiti artist Stefan Paganni (SubO) titled “Everything will be OK” organised

2019-2022 / 2023-2025

### **YAMNFL - Youth Ambassadors of Non Formal Learning - phase I and II**

- [Comparative analysis](#) of non-formal education conducted in 11 countries published
- 250+ participants gathered views on youth mobility within 26 focus groups
- 22 young people acquired skills for promoting non-formal education, forming a network of “Ambassadors of Non-Formal Education”
- [Catalogue of Inspiring Stories on NFL](#) published
- within 44 workshops, 1,000+ young people familiarised with non-formal education opportunities
- 18 youth workers certified „[Design Thinking](#)“ methodology for creative planning
- 120 young people/youth workers developed skills for the job market
- 6 job fairs for networking with entrepreneurs announced
- production of 18 TEDx videos on successful stories of non-formal education underway

2019-2020

### **Monumental 9 / WB CulTours – Cultural tours in Western Balkans**

- 30 young greeters and vloggers from 4 WB countries gained skills in producing creative narratives about cultural-historical heritage
- [Guide for vloggers and greeters](#) developed
- 3 virtual tourist tours developed, focusing on 9 historical monuments to promote youth employability and tourism development
- [Online platform](#) for promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the region created
- mobile application the promotion of cultural-historical heritage developed (CulTours App)

2022-2023

### **YECW - Youth Empowered to Change the World**

- 6 organisations strengthened their capacities for socio-political and psychological empowerment of youth
- 500+ young people from 6 countries educated to explore their community using Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology
- 18 youth workers certified as educators of PAR methodology
- 6 “PAR corners” opened promoting PAR methodology among young people
- [PAR sessions Manual](#) produced

2022-2023

### **BTT - Beyond the Tales**

- 5 organisations strengthened their capacities regarding the impact of climate change on migration
- qualitative study on climate change and its effects on migration and youth activism conducted
- youth from 4 European countries created an online module for youth and education workers on climate change-induced migration, global education, and the active role of youth
- Booklet of stories from around the world “Where once was home” showcasing the impact of climate change on people’s lives in local communities published

2022-2024/ 2025-2026

### **PIROUETTE - Performative aRts fOr yoUth Engagement and commu-niTy rEgeneration – phase I and II (2022-2024/ 2025-2026)**

- 36 youth workers gained skills for promoting social and civic engagement through street art
- [Study on stakeholder needs regarding street art as a form of non-formal education](#) conducted in 4 European countries
- mural created in Mostar (BiH) within the youth exchange program
- Educational tool [“Youth Engagement in Local Communities through Street Arts”](#) developed
- creation of training format in 6 countries announced
- mobility of 84 youth workers, youth, and unprivileged young artists announced
- creation of 6 final performance(s) to address global issues via art announced

2023-2024

### **REST\_ART – Raising Environmental Sustainability Through Art**

- 60+ participants exchanged experiences on utilising renewable materials for creating environmentally sustainable solutions through 3 study visits
- 12 young people created a mural in Zagreb (Croatia)
- 16 young people from 6 countries developed advocacy skills for raising awareness about environmental preservation through art
- 24 young people educated on using renewable materials for recycling through artistic forms
- handbook on best practices for using renewable materials publication announced

2023-2024

### **DiSPLAY – Digital Serious Play za razvoj poslovnih ideja mladih**

- 8 organisations built capacities in the field of non-formal education through developing entrepreneurial skills for youth
- 400+ young people/youth workers enhanced their entrepreneurial skills through local workshops
- 4 youth exchanges on LEGO Serious Play methodology
- 16 young people certified to transfer knowledge on the LEGO Serious Play methodology
- [Handbook on Digital LEGO Serious Play methodology](#) published





# LDA MOSTAR IN FOCUS – COMMUNITY VOICES



*“After completing my studies, I worked as a youth worker with LDA Mostar on the project “Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue”. In addition to regional activities, I would emphasise the establishing and co-leading the Local Advisory Group in Mostar. Through this project, we collaborated with young leaders from the city and representatives of the relevant institutions, actively contributing to proposal development and activity planning. At that time, Mostar hadn’t held elections for years, and I felt especially proud of LDA’s activism in pushing for the electoral process to be re-established”*

**Vlatka Lučić**, Youth Worker, “Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue” project

*“Through years of involvement and volunteering with LDA Mostar, I’ve gained valuable experience in both formal and informal education. These experiences have enriched not only my academic journey but also my personal life in countless ways. Above all, I’m grateful for the friendships and connections I’ve made with young people from diverse cultures, which have broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding.”*



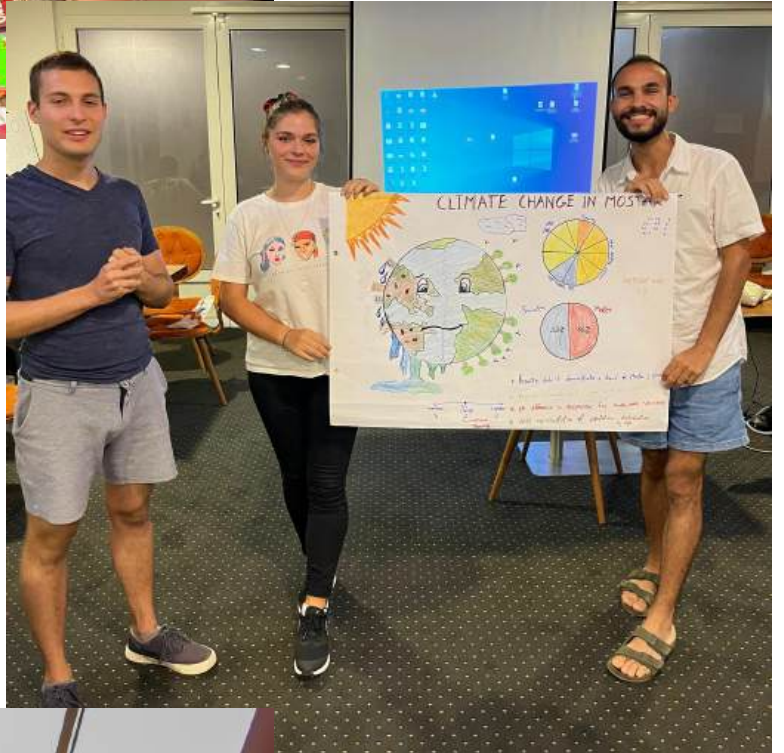
**Tarik Kreso**, participant of several Erasmus+ projects of LDA Mostar and certified trainer for PAR methodology



*“Aside from the necessary knowledge and skills we have acquired, I dare say that the Fronterra program was an eye opening experience encouraging us to be proactive, to connect with each other, and to create our own career paths. This program enriched me personally and professionally. I met my colleague, and now my friend as well, psychologist Vedina Ajanović. After our first meeting, we combined our individual ideas related to psychology and nutrition, resulting in the Multidisciplinary Center for Healthy Habits. Throughout our journey, up to today, LDA has been our companion and support. Thank you for everything, and I look forward to seeing what innovative ideas you have prepared for us in the next 20 years.”*

**Nevena Pandža**,  
Fronterra Program participant





# CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE, ART AND DIALOGUE ADA

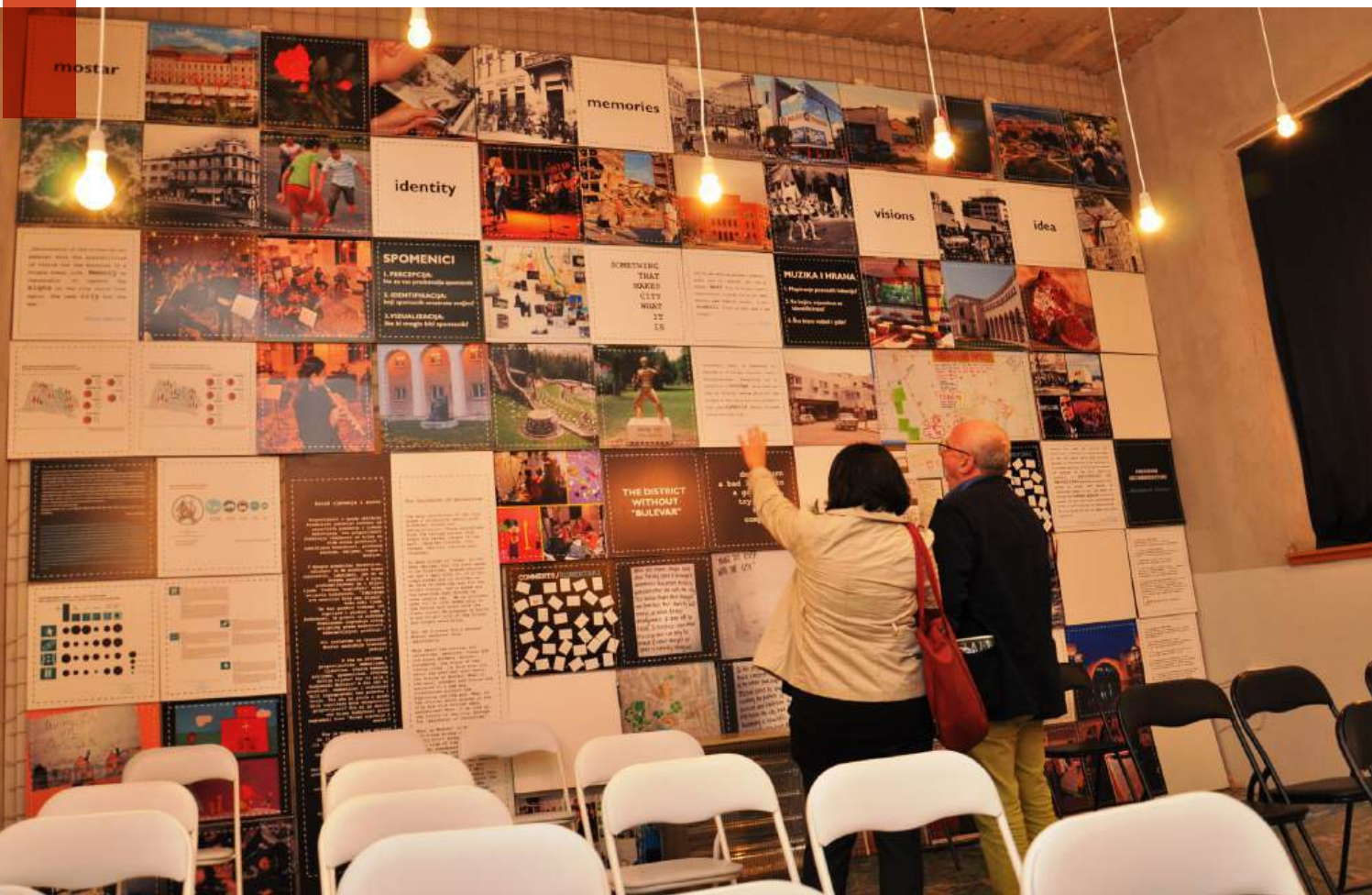
The ADA Center was established within LDA Mostar as an independent platform where citizens can consume the city as a cultural expression through architecture and art beyond theory. It was created in response to the absence of local governance in the city of Mostar and served as a tool through which the processes of democratising society are facilitated via art, culture, and architecture. With the projects and activities realised through the ADA Center, LDA Mostar educated citizens and relevant actors of the city in an imaginative and inventive way about the importance of active participation in the creation of common narratives, participation in decision-making, and participation in the development of democratic processes.



## REALISED PROJECTS

- [NUT – New Urban Topologies – Mostar and Beirut \(2013-2015\)](#)
- [Mostar LAB \(2015\)](#)
- [”Urban Synapse” Summer School Mostar 2015 \(2015\)](#)
- [Building Blocks \(2015 - 2016\)](#)
- [INCOME – INovating CO-working Methods through Exchange \(2017-2019\)](#)
- [Days of Oris Mostar \(2019\)](#)





# LDA MOSTAR'S IN SUPERVISORY AND ADVISORY ROLES

LDA Mostar has been recognized as a reliable partner to local authorities and the non-governmental sector, contributing significantly to the development of key strategic documents, including:

- The Development Strategy of the City of Mostar 2022-2027
- The Social Cohesion Action Plan for the City of Mostar 2024-2025
- The Gender Action Plan for the City of Mostar 2023-2027
- The Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for the UNESCO World Heritage Site "The Old City Area around the Old Bridge in Mostar" (2019)
- The Code of Ethics for Civil Society Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2017)
- The Development Strategy of the City of Mostar 2016-2020
- The Communication Strategy of the City of Mostar 2016-2020
- Initiating the signing of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life in Mostar and drafting the Implementation Plan for the Charter and the Gender Action Plan for the City of Mostar 2013-2015
- The Youth Strategy of the City of Mostar 2012-2016
- Initiating "Open Days" of the City of Mostar's department responsible for youth and NGOs

LDA Mostar is an active member of numerous management and advisory boards, including:

- The Supervisory Board of Network for Building Peace
- The Supervisory Board for Anna Lindh Foundation
- The URBACT Local Working Group of the "METACITY" project, implemented by the City of Mostar and NGO "Garaža" Mostar (2024)
- The advisory team for the "PRAGG" project (Helvetas) (2023-2027)
- The Cultural Heritage Hub for Southeast Europe and the Caucasus "Europa Nostra" (2024)
- The Supervisory Board of the Citizens' Assembly of the City of Mostar within the Council of Europe project "Building Democracy in the City of Mostar" (2021-2024)
- The project selection committee for "ReLOaD" (UNDP)
- Advisory bodies for EU integration, signing the Civil Society Declaration on the opening of BiH's EU membership negotiations
- The Local Dialogue Platform of the City of Mostar, initiated as part of the UNDP MAKERS project (2021)
- Cross-sector advocacy networks in the fields of education and employment in the EU project "General Mobilization" (2021)
- The "SuperCitizens" coalition, initiated by OSCE (2018-2019)
- The ICCB / Advisory Body among Communities, alongside local authorities – established by the "CSSP" project for integrative mediation from Berlin (2013)
- The Commission for Cooperation with NGOs of the City Council of Mostar (2008-2012)
- The working group of the City of Mostar within the USAID "Pro-budućnost" project







LDA Mostar has significantly contributed to numerous processes of broader importance for the NGO sector and citizens:

- Advisory and logistical services as a local strategic partner in preparing BiH for chairing the EU DANUBE program (2024-2025)
- Recognized as one of the top NGOs for implementing projects under the EU Erasmus+ program (2024)
- Contributor of best practices in citizen participation on the “Be Part” platform of the Council of Europe
- Contribution to TACSO’s consultation activities (EU Technical Assistance to Civil Society

Organizations in the Western Balkans and Turkey) (2021-2024)

- Recognized as the best national NGO for project implementation under the EU “Europe for Citizens” program (2020)
- Participation in drafting the Cooperation Agreement signed between the BiH Council of Ministers and NGOs, also signed by LDA Mostar (2017)
- Participation in drafting the Cooperation Agreement between the City of Mostar and NGOs operating in the city, also signed by LDA Mostar (2012)



# NETWORKS

- [European Association for Local Democracy \(ALDA\)](#)
- [Balkan Network for Local Democracy \(BNLD\)](#)
- [Anna Lindh Foundation \(ALF\)](#)
- [Network for Building Peace](#)
- [Border Towns and Islands Network \(BTIN\)](#)

# SUPPORTED BY

European Union

- Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)
- Erasmus+ Programme
- Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)
- Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Programme

Council of Europe (CoE)

United Kingdom Government

United Kingdom Embassy in Sarajevo

Swedish Embassy in Sarajevo

German Embassy in Sarajevo

Swiss Development Organisation „Solidar Suisse”

France Development Agency (AFD)

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)



Local Democracy  
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