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## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

ALDA - The European Association for Local Democracy

2018-2021

# “LOCAL DEMOCRACY: OUR COMMITMENT FOR EUROPE”

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**“My motivation to attend the training on Participative Democracy at local level was to learn how to be, how to become and how to act.” - A participant during the training activities on Participative Democracy at local level in Algeria, March 2017**



***Torun (Poland); May 2017. A group of members of ALDA at the General Assembly next to the Copernicus monument.***

## **1. Message from the President**



I am very proud to present to our members the new Strategic Framework for the forthcoming years. The association has been developing immensely during the past few years both in terms of membership and in activities. It has become one of the leading organisations in the field of local democracy and citizen participation. Our wish for the future is to ensure that our activities become even more important and create an even greater impact by mobilising resources and energy so that citizens engaged at the local level, interacting with local authorities, can make a real change for the common good in a fair and sustainable way.

*Oriano Otocan, President of ALDA*

## 2. Message from the Secretary General

Our organisation, based on statutory mandate, is now ready to take on board challenging but crucial new objectives. **The role of local communities, with democratically empowered local governments, committed to working with awareness and responsibility in civil society, is growing and growing.** Global issues need to be answered **through actions at local level** and ALDA, with its members and partners, wants to support local authorities and civil society in attaining better answers and greater solutions.



ALDA aims to be a **pan-European organisation**, composed of a **broad alliance of various stakeholders, aiming to make local communities strong and resilient, sustainable and successful, and more inclusive.** We need to be ready to respond to challenges by being more representative and work with a **coordinated voice to offer more effective action and projects.** We can achieve this thanks to our members and our **impact oriented network of local democracy agencies.** ALDA shall be working to consolidate the role of decentralised cooperation to support local democracy, governance and economic development. Our framework shall be the large Europe model (including the **EU, its enlargement and neighbouring**

**countries**), which aims for strategic and qualified partnership with local authority networks as well as with civil society actors.

*Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of ALDA*

### 3. Our political stand

#### **ALDA is committed to support :**

- **Democracy** in all of its dimensions by supporting the conditions for its fruitful results; with free and fair elections; mobilised and prepared institutions; and, in particular at the local level, informed, prepared and engaged citizens.
- **Decentralisation process and subsidiarity in governance**
- **Participatory governance** engaging elected representatives and civil servants and citizens; strong and free associations in a multi-stakeholder approach.
- **A deep and strong European Union** by increasing input and making it a project for all local communities and European citizens.
- **The full membership of countries from the Western Balkans** in the European Union
- **An even stronger and deeper value-based association with the countries of the eastern and southern neighbourhoods of the European Union**
- **Inclusive communities respectful of human rights and minorities**
- **Synergy and action between democracy and development**

### 4. Achievements of the strategy 2014 -2017

In 2014, the Members and Governing Board of ALDA crystallised their vision in several points which have now been largely achieved. The assessment is a positive one ☺

### **a) Being a sustainable and representative organisation**

i. Despite ALDA basing its sustainability on funding through projects, it managed to achieve a stable and even growing level of funding from alternative sources (more non-EU projects, technical assistance support and **ALDA+ and EGEI Europe**) and also through a considered and strategic approach to action. **It has increased its budget from €1.5 million to an almost constant €4 million per annum. It increased the number of active projects from 20 to now 40.**



ii. ALDA also managed to increase its **membership to 300** (more than what was expected) with greater geographical representation and a balance between civil society and local authorities. It is now a fully fledged European organisation with objectives for those it is representing. We also have developed the concept of Ambassadors, which has created the foundation for the pan European dimension of ALDA.

### **b) Supporting the network of the Local Democracy Agencies**

ALDA managed to support and empower the network of Local Democracy Agencies by (a) supporting projects (b) supporting partnership and by (c) disseminating and encouraging multilateral decentralised cooperation all over Europe.

The LDAs now total **14 in the Balkans, East and MED**, with a potential for enlargement. The partners total **74 with a view for even more partnership.**

The delegates and partners are in touch with ALDA through regional coordinators. The network has a strategy which is transversal and regional.

c) **Being a leading organisation in Europe for local governance and citizen participation**

i. ALDA, through hundreds of partners and projects, is among the leading organisation promoting good local governance. It now includes partners seeking greater representation (**see the list of partners attached and the list of members**) and it is constantly included in advocacy action at the EU and national level. **ALDA promoted and helped its members with dozens of projects and activities and re-granting schemes.**

It has now strengthened its competencies in several specific fields of local governance:

- a) Participatory democracy and instruments for citizen engagement
- b) Inclusion and cooperation with migrant communities
- c) Strengthening local governments, expanding capacities and projects
- d) Strengthening civil society by being part of participative democracy and dialogue
- e) Development with programmes on employability, youth and social innovation
- f) Environment and renewable energies in local governance
- g) Culture and local governance

ii. It remains a partner of the **Council of Europe** institutions such as the **Congress of local and regional authorities** and strengthened is partnership with the **Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform**.

iii. It has established constant and stable partnerships with **European Union Institutions**:

- 1. Strategic partnership programmes with the programme **Europe for Citizens** with a multi-annual framework

2. Strategic partnership and programmes with **DG Near of the European Commission for the Balkans, Eastern Partnership Countries and the MED**
3. Strategic partnership with the **Committee of the Region and the Economic and Social Committee**
4. Constant relationship with the **EEAS**

iv. We are part, and contribute to, the **following networks** seeking to have a coordinated impact by supporting our mission: Concord, the European Movement International; The European Movement Italy and France; Partners organisation of the Covenant of Mayors; Energy Cities; NALAS; Network Like of Cultural Cities; the European Partnership for Democracy; Civil Society Europe; and Civicus.





## 5. Our vision and key objectives

### OUR VISION

**ALDA – The European Association for Local Democracy – aims to become a pan European alliance of local and regional authorities and civil society actors working together in local communities to make them more socially and economically successful, more inclusive, sustainable and fair. Participatory democracy at the local level is key for the improvement of the life of citizens and for achieving the universal sustainable development goals.**

### OUR KEY OBJECTIVES

In order to develop our vision, we are targeting the following objectives

- 1. To strengthen local democracy and citizen participation**
- 2. To empower and develop the network of Local Democracy Agencies in the Western Balkans and the neighbouring South and East**
- 3. To strengthen fair and sustainable local development**
- 4. To strengthen the capacities and longterm sustainability of the association**
- 5. To strengthen the political relevance and visibility of ALDA and to become a pan-European alliance**

## 6. Paths to success

In order to reach these objectives, we have identified **several paths** that can lead us to successfully implement the strategic framework. Briefly outlined are some of the **indicators** that would be essential in ensuring proper monitoring and reorientation of our strategies. These would be evaluated on a regular basis by the Governing Board meetings and during the General Assembly. A **matrix**, with a more detailed implementation plan, shall be submitted by the secretariat to the Board.

The framework of the activities follows the full implementation strategy in the **local level of the UN Sustainable Development Goals**.

## 6.1. To strengthen local democracy and citizen participation

### *Proposed indicators:*

- *Number of citizens and local authorities engaged in collective and shared initiatives on problem solving, as well as the success of problem solving processes.*
- *Indicators of best practices and methodologies*

### *6.1.1. Develop projects that support co-creation and problem solving at local level (practices of local democracy and citizen participation and streamlining opportunities)*

Particular attention will be paid to engaging members, partners and LDAs in project planning and implementation so as to have a collective and harmonised approach to activities. Our geographic scope is the EU, the Western Balkans and also the countries of the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods of the EU. However, case by case, ALDA would also contribute to non-EU/neighbourhood activities when it is pertinent to the scope and aims of the mission. ALDA shall strongly adhere to the Council of Europe

standards and values, such as the European Charter on Local Self Government and the 12 Principle of Good Governance<sup>1</sup>.

*6.1.2. To develop projects that empower local governments, citizens and civil society to expand their role in local democracy and participation processes*

Particular attention will be paid to capacity building initiatives using interactive, educational, and practical approaches. Partnership will be established with other organisations and institutions so as to make the most of our combined approaches and methodologies.

*6.1.3 Actions that promote European values, universal principles of humanity and human society, and a world governed for and by people*

ALDAs place in local democracy in Europe, and its wider neighbourhood, is also engaged in supporting European citizenship and as a result the empowerment of a value based approach. It is fundamental to carry out work in mobilising attention on future EU elections and to be active in supporting democracy in all of its dimensions. We do this for the sake of the European project, based on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and in fighting against undemocratic forms of populism. Projects and campaigns will be organised in collaboration with members and partners.

*6.1.5. To raise education and awareness of global citizenship*

Activities shall empower our members and partners through global citizenship. As part of an overarching approach to local economic development, ALDA, thanks to its projects on local democracy and citizen participation, has a broad outreach to members and partners. We shall follow up on the identification of possible areas for joint initiatives, on implementing the specific and relevant Sustainable Development Goals of ALDA (relevant for the mission), and on projects such as WTD and LADDER.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/12-principles-and-elope>

## 6.2. To empower and develop the network of Local Democracy Agencies in Western Balkans and Neighbouring South and East

### **Proposed indicators:**

- Number of partners engaged with the Local Democracy Agencies and regular evaluation of their work
- Number of Local Democracy Agencies attaining confirmation of the label
- Number of projects and beneficiaries of the Local Democracy Agencies' programmes
- Indication of best practices and methodologies
- Balanced geographic coverage
- Numbers of joint cooperation and decentralised cooperation projects and evaluation of the quality of the action
- Indicators reviewing public image and visibility

### 6.2.1. Supporting the partnership of the Local Democracy Agencies and achieving the Partnership support scheme

The Partnership support scheme aims to identify areas of support for multiplying the partnership among the Local Democracy Agencies. A first kick off of the concept was presented in 2017 and is progressing into 2018 and onward.

### 6.2.2 Coordinate and empower the work of the Local Democracy Agencies to make them agents of change and support for local democracy and citizen participation at the national, regional and global level

The quality and the work of the LDAs shall be reviewed in the strategy thanks to the constant capacity building processes and joint activities of the ALDA team.

*6.2.3 Coordinate and empower the role of ALDA at the regional level MENA, South Eastern Europe and Eastern partnership (completing LDAs presence in the MED and strengthening the existing regions)*

ALDA is mainly active in these regions through the LDAs and their members or through the projects implemented by them or their partners. The strategy aims to implement the mission of ALDA with greater focus and determination on the quality and the numbers of initiatives. It seeks to consolidate the actual geographic coverage, realise its presence in the Magreb, and to expand activities and an LDA presence to the Middle East.

*6.2.4 Empower through actions the role of local democracy and citizen participation in local development (inclusiveness, social innovation and social cohesion)*

The Local Democracy Agencies shall work on local democracy and citizen mobilisation by empowering social innovation, social cohesion, inclusiveness, and local fair and sustainable development. Projects dealing with social and economic innovation, investments, and support shall also be targeted and proposed.

### **6.3. To strengthen fair and sustainable local development**

***Proposed indicators:***

- *Numbers of projects in local development*
- *Results measured in terms of job creation and activities*

*6.3.1 Introduce a strong narrative between local democracy and local development and social innovation*



A particular innovation of the present strategic framework will be to link clearly the role of local democracy and citizen participation to sustainable and fair development so as to have a joint understanding and goal. This new narrative will be created utilising actions focused on social innovation and job creation.

**6.3.2 Empowering the capacity of acting in investments and structural activities at the local level**

ALDA and the LDAs will also be more engaged in supporting activities that directly encourage investments and the structural activities of our members and partners. ALDA and the LDAs will also strengthen the possibilities of orientating them into fair and sustainable development. These activities will be identified through participative local processes engaging citizens and associations.

## 6.4 To strengthen the capacities and longterm sustainability of the Association

### **Proposed indicators:**

- Sustainable multiple year budget and development plans utilising a variety of income sources
- Increased turn out of ALDA+ and stable partners
- Stable and empowered staff, annual interview of staff
- Improved risk management
- Increased percentage of success of projects presented
- A multiple entry database for the implementation plan – numbers of partners and members involved

### 6.4.1 Supporting the Development of projects

The structure of incomes of ALDA will remain the same with a focus on projects, since the organisation is perceived as key stakeholder in actions that support local democracy and citizen participation. We shall focus on substantially improving the successes of developed projects in order to increase the rate of income as well as the variety of donors, and so as to reduce the risks linked to relying on a limited number of sponsors.

### 6.4.2. Developing corporate, crowd funding and private support

In order to target new possibilities in gaining support for ALDA's mission, dedicated action aimed at reaching out to private supporters will be put into place. It may require specific organisation. It will also aim to develop and strengthen crowd funding and alternative funding policies. The new sources of funding will be used to support small community projects dedicated to local development as well as social issues.

### 6.4.3. Empowering ALDA+ (lists of experts by country, training and activities)

The activities of ALDA+ will certainly be a substantial help for the synergy of ALDA. The programme for its empowerment will also include a development plan that reaches out to strategic and stable partners and organisations that develop a competitive set of offers where ALDA+ has qualified added value. It will also create proposals and offers (with experts) in languages including EN,FR, IT, Arabic and Russian.

#### *6.4.4. Empower strategic partnerships*

Identification of stable strategic partnerships with institutions and donors that encourage longterm dialogue and support.

#### *6.4.5. Improved implementation plans*

The number of projects implemented by ALDA and the LDAs is growing and needs a stricter implementation process and monitoring of results in order to achieve the most from the harmonised approach and reduce the number of mistakes (time and resources). A dedicated implementation plan will be identified and made operational so as to create an accessible means of monitoring activities. Project managers shall be engaged in training and interacting continuously with colleagues.

#### *6.4.6. Improved management*

Sustainability is down to management qualities and could be improved by having a more careful and empowered system of staff management (coordination, annual performance interview and careers plans) as well as of finances and risk management. A dedicated plan shall be established on this matter.

#### *6.4.7. Improve engagement of political bodies in the work of association*

In order to create a more efficient and result driven organisation in accordance with future qualitative and geographic growth, ALDA should continue to strengthen the interaction and engagement with political representatives and political bodies when carrying out the work of the association.



## 6.5. To strengthen the political relevance and visibility of ALDA in order to become a pan-European Alliance

### ***Proposed indicators:***

- *Numbers and balanced representation of members in all the EU member states and neighbourhoods*
- *Joint activities with the members*
- *Activities and networks of members on a national basis*
- *Numbers of inputs and advocacy actions and follow up*
- *Numbers of newsletters/publications and quality*

### 6.5.1. Active search for new members and animation of the network

Seeking to become a broad alliance, ALDA will invest in increasing the number and quality of its members in Europe and its neighbourhood. Specific strategies and action plans will be developed so as to coordinate this action with members through search and follow ups. A particular effort will also be made in recognising the partnerships established during projects and efforts made to be ensure that partners could join ALDA as members thereafter.

### 6.5.2. Focus on animation in countries where we have ALDA's office (members and networks)

A specific effort will made – in developing the number and quality of members and partnerships – in the countries where ALDA has currently offices in order to grow new and better collaborations (France, Italy, Belgium, Republic of Macedonia).

### 6.5.3. Ambassadors of ALDA

The plan for Ambassadors of ALDA should be embraced and improved further. It proved to be excellent and needs greater efforts and strategies so as to be involved in national issues in most of the EU and neighbourhood countries where there are the relevant number of members. The LDAs will also be engaged in this effort with specific plans and agreements.

#### *6.5.4. Empowerment and new orientation on communication*

Considering the new orientation of ALDA, aiming to reach new targets (private, corporate, crowdfunding) a dedicated communication action plan should be developed, completing the more institutional one currently in existence. The focus on multiple languages will also be enhanced (thanks to the liaison with the Ambassadors). New instruments and an empowered methodology of reaching out to other sources will be identified through partnerships.

#### *6.5.5. Development of an ALDA's Policy Research Unit*

As for the considerable competences and experience of ALDA in local democracy and participative governance, the development of an ALDA policy and research unit is to be considered so as to share and grow our relevance in the EU and at a global level.

## Annexe : ALDA SWOT ANALYSIS 2018

Opportunities (external positive)	Threats (external negatives)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a great demand from the EU and at a global level for good governance</li> <li>- resources available among donors focused on such topics</li> <li>- resources available in corporate sector on these topics</li> <li>- cooperation with EU which is supporting local governance and no sign of decreasing interest</li> <li>- cooperation with the Council of Europe working on the topics</li> <li>- strong credibility of ALDA in the EU and beyond</li> <li>- board network of partners supporting ALDA</li> <li>- good response to membership development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- decreased resources in particular in local governments</li> <li>- decreased resources in civil society sector</li> <li>- priority is on local development rather than governance</li> <li>- problems with democratic setting in countries where we work</li> <li>- numerous networks at the EU and global level working on the same topics (therefore increased competition with us)</li> <li>- difficult to place our topics in communication and broader information</li> <li>- difficulties in supporting the LDAs</li> <li>- management associated risks in the projects and reduction of resources from the donors</li> </ul>
Strengths (Internal positive)	Weaknesses (internal negatives)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong team prepared for project development and implementation</li> <li>- strong governing board and visibility</li> <li>- strong governance</li> <li>- good management at ALDA</li> <li>- multilevel and multistakeholder approach on the topic of good governance</li> <li>- extremely broad network of members and partners</li> <li>- system of ambassadors and constantly promoting membership</li> <li>- good contacts with members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- overloaded and overstretched activities</li> <li>- difficulty of following up with all of the members properly</li> <li>- too many topics to follow</li> <li>- weak advocacy capacity</li> <li>- difficulty to link all the projects</li> <li>- risks in implementation and financial management</li> </ul>