



**ALDA**  
Association of Local  
Democracy Agencies

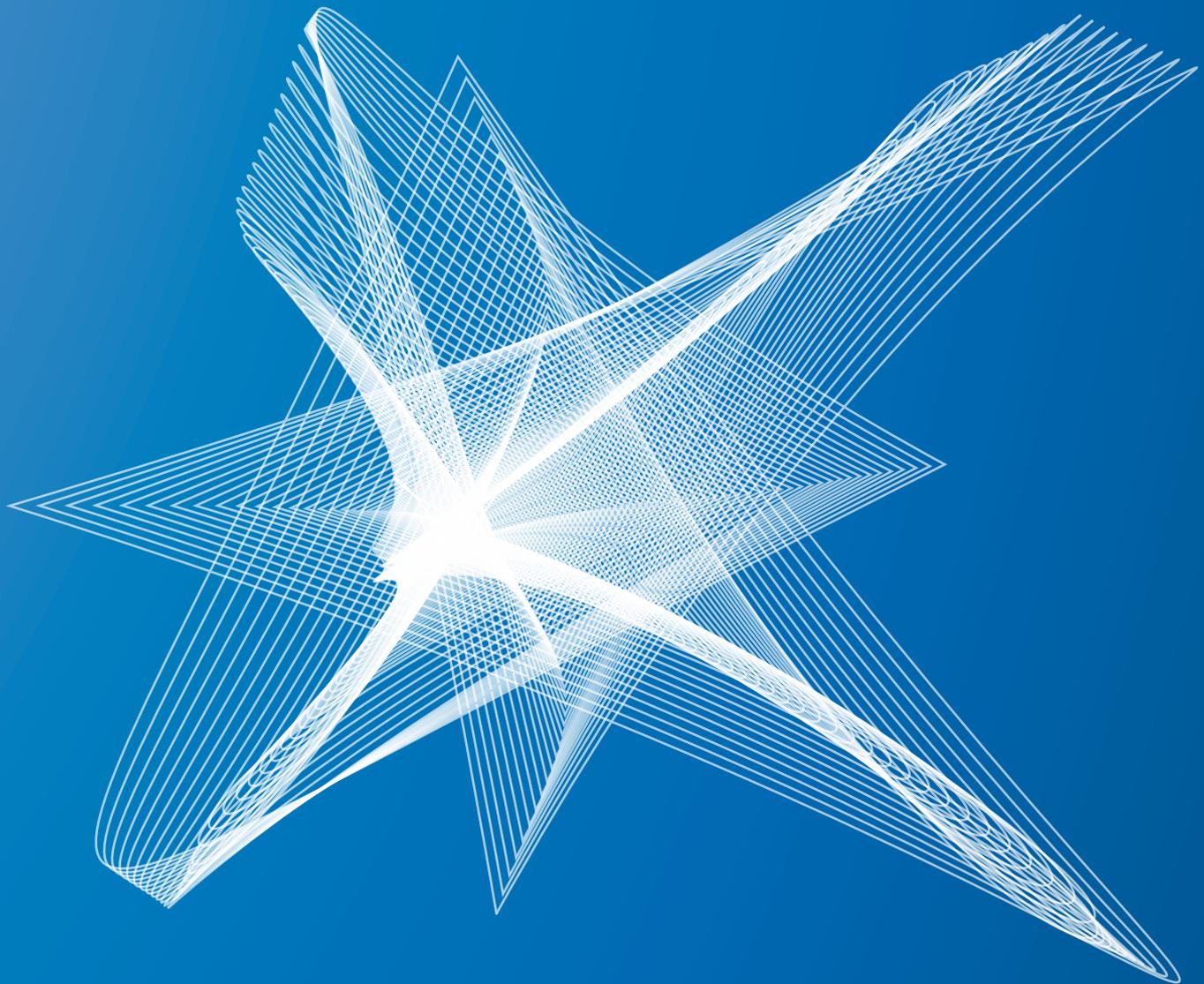
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Europe for Citizens  
Programme



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# **ALDA WORKING GROUPS 2010**

**A participatory plan of actions  
to develop ALDA international network**

## ALDA Working Groups 2010

Formulating qualified project ideas, involving the largest number of ALDA members and producing papers based on their common views on the specific topics: these are the goals of ALDA Working Groups' activities.

ALDA aims to increase its own members' participation and discussion with regard to the different platforms in which the Association is involved.

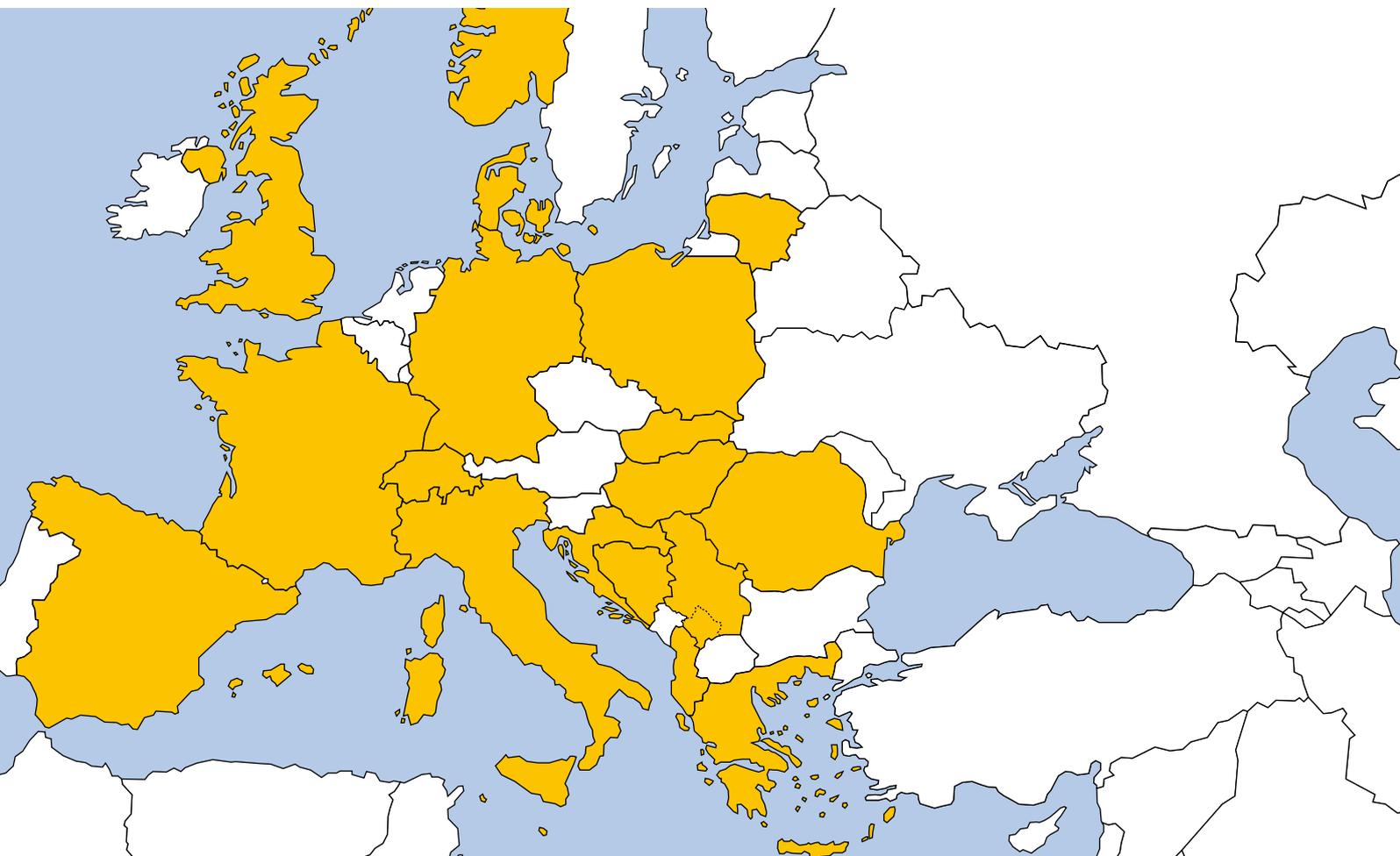
In 2010 the Working Groups are being relaunched starting from the results achieved in 2009. From a pilot activity in 2008, ALDA Working Groups in 2010 became an interesting platform for ALDA members both to know each other and to discuss the chosen topics.

The participant members had the opportunity to exchange views and personal experiences on the following topics:

- European Union enlargement, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership;
- Human rights protection and awareness, including women's and youth's rights;
- Local development issues, good governance, decentralization;
- Active citizenship, participation of civil society and civil society empowerment;
- Situation in South- East Europe and in Caucasus;

The actual objectives of ALDA members in the framework of this initiative are:

- to provide a beneficial platform of debate, by promoting mutual exchange of experiences among the members as well as in-depth understanding of the above mentioned topics;
- to enhance the knowledge on the specific topics as identified and shared by both the ALDA members and the LDA's.



*The map shows the countries of origin of the participants*

## European Union enlargement and active citizenship

The Enlargement of the European Union, as the process of expanding the European Union through the accession of new member states, is a great opportunity and also a great challenge. Of course, in order to be successful, enlargement of the Union must meet with the approval of the citizens of it.

Nowadays, European citizens have a key and primary role in building Europe and should be encouraged to become actively involved in the process of European integration, empowering them to develop a sense of European identity, and enhancing mutual understanding between Europeans.

For this reason, ALDA has been promoting and implementing projects, actions and debates regarding the future of Europe, the necessity to get Europe closer to its citizens and the importance of a wider involvement of them in the life of the community, both at the local and at the European level, with the aim to promote good governance throughout Europe.



### Caen, France, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2010

**Partner:** Regional Council of Lower Normandy

*During the final steering committee of the programme of Decentralised Cooperation between Lower-Normandy and Macedonia, aiming to create and develop links between different stakeholders from both sides and create a sustainable long-lasting cooperation by exchange of best practices, a Working Group on European enlargement and active citizenship take place.*

*In terms of specific objectives, the project is highly ambitious and its main purposes focused on: developing opportunities for international cooperation for both territories involved promoting also the local governance by reinforcement of local authorities' capacities to implement decentralization.*

*The promotion of active local and European citizenship by mobilization of citizens in local initiatives and decision-making process was also among the main aims, as well as help preparing the Republic of Macedonia for EU accession by providing support in adopting the *aquis communautaire*.*

*In occasion of the Working Group "How Civil Society and Local Governments can contribute to the enlargement process?" participants (30 people from ALDA members and from other stakeholders from France, Switzerland, Austria, FYROM) discussed about the present situation of the Republic of Macedonia and the pre-adhesion process.*

*The country needs reforms in public administration, judiciary system and strategies to fight against*

*corruption. Moreover, even if a law about anti-discrimination was approved, it was object of a wide debate since it did not follow the European Union recommendations.*

*In this context, it would be significant to underline that all the participants consider that the role of local and regional authorities is essential. Since most of the EU legislation is put into practice by local governments, they play a fundamental part in preparing a country to join the European Union and so their capacities should be reinforced. Moreover, it has been underlined that the local and regional authorities should be involved in the EU accession process at an early stage.*

*One of the main conclusions drawn from the participants of ALDA's working group involved the fact that also the role of civil society is crucial since it gets its finger in the pulse of the everyday life of people. It can give an important contribution to the enlargement process. Therefore, strategies and instruments in order to make effective the civil society's participation and to make their voice heard at top level, are more and more needed.*



## Human rights protection and awareness and participation of civil society



Migration has been at the centre of reflection of this working group session. A human rights approach to migration has to be set at the centre of migration policies and at the centre of the Euro-Mediterranean Agenda.

In the Preamble of the Barcelona Declaration for an Euro-Mediterranean partnership the parties declare themselves “convinced that the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity requires a strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights” and, in the section dedicated to the political and security partnership, this conviction is exemplified through the recognition of the important of exchanges information about fundamental rights and human rights education.

Furthermore, the essential contribution that civil society can make to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is emphasised as well as the need to strengthen the instruments of decentralised cooperation.

### Palermo, Italy, 28<sup>th</sup> October

**Partner:** Sicily Region

*On the occasion of the final conference of “Capitalizing Migrant Capacities – Algeria”, an international cooperation project among ALDA, Sicilian Region, IPRES, Municipality of Lecce and FACM (Algerian Forum for Citizenship and Modernity) and funded jointly by the European Commission and the UNDP, ALDA working group had the opportunity to discuss about human right protection and awareness in the field of migrations and the role of civil society and local authorities.*

*All the participants agreed that the phenomenon of migration, which cyclically comes back under the spotlight of the media, in reality won't never stop and it needs structural assistance as well as information and training to be managed as a resource and*

*not tackled as a problem, as shown by the conference.*

*Therefore, the main instrument to achieve these goals is undoubtedly the cooperation, as demonstrated in the final considerations on the experience of this project, whose aim was to transform in human and economic capital brains and men fleeing from Algeria towards Italy and Europe, creating real prospects for improving social and economic conditions.*

*In the framework of this general idea as explicitly expressed and developed by all the participants of the meeting, another suggestion involves the need to give a special leadership to local authorities and civil society.*

*“Indeed, only through engagement of local authorities in the process, peace and development will be able flourish in this part of the world”, confirmed M. Lombardo, President of the Region Sicily.*

*Furthermore, many participates expressed the importance of strengthening the euro-Mediterranean partnership for the promotion of human rights and participation of all citizens in the life of local communities in which they live.*

*Greater partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination as well as the full integration of the migratory dimension in development policies and dialogue on all levels are crucial steps in enhancing the development potential of migration.*



## Local development issues, good governance, decentralization

The definition of good democratic governance, incorporated in the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level of the Council of Europe, is organized around twelve Principles. In the first principle "fair conduct of election, representation and participation", citizens has been put at the centre of public activity and they should be involved in clearly defined ways in public life at local level.

The European Strategy aims at stimulating co-ordinated action by national and local stakeholders, so that citizens in all European countries benefit from good democratic governance at local level, through the continuously improved quality of local public services, engagement of the population, and policies that meet their expectations.



### Brindisi, Italy, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2010

**Partner:** Municipality of Brindisi

*The conference on "The Lisbon Treaty: a second look at the institutional innovations. Trends and Perspectives, 2020 towards Europe", organized by the International Co-operation and active citizenship Department of the Municipality, in collaboration with ALDA, has been the opportunity to organize a side ALDA working group discussing about local development and good governance.*

*Speaking guest was Piotr Maciej Kaczynski, representative of the CESP, the Centre for European Policy Studies, leader Institute on European think tank, and one of the "top 10 global think tanks".*

*Lisbon Treaty and its innovations has been discussed and it has been linked with the local experience of the cooperation between ALDA and Brindisi Municipality.*

*Advantage granted by the agreement made between these two actors is given by "Active Citi-*

*zens", a pilot training/action course which is addressed to both the Municipality institutional bodies and citizens.*

*The objective of this project, based on the necessity to build a social and political community identity with a full contribution by citizens and to promote their involvement starting from the local level, is to create training opportunities and related participation processes. A practical course of lessons, evidence, research and target groups is therefore aimed to turn into collective actions of processing, dialogue and co-operation, in other words into an actual practice of active citizenship.*

*"Our aim is to open the City Hall to citizens – Councillor Giacomo Massimo Ciullo stated – in a new dimension founded on a continuous dialogue meant to give the Municipality the chance to know the citizens' opinions and needs punctually and, at the same time, to give citizens deep knowledge of how a local authority, the rights and the opportunity it grants".*



## Active citizenship, participation of civil society and civil society empowerment



### Zagreb, Croatia, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2010

**Partner:** Zagreb Municipality

ALDA working group took place in Zagreb on the closing conference of the E-panels Project with the subject "Fostering citizens' participation and volunteering in a wider Europe".

e-panels is an innovative project designed to address the issue of bridging the gap between citizens and the European Union in an innovative way.

Electronic panels ("e-panels") has been created to increase the number of citizens from different ages, nationalities and backgrounds who could finally find an opportunity to express themselves on matters related to EU policies that affect their daily life by these online panels. The aim is to test this new dimension of the citizens' panels' methodology to see if it is a relevant instrument to foster citizen participation.

The working group focused on two topics regarding "Young people, Internet and civic participation" and "Active Citizenship and volunteering in the Balkans" with the assistance of two external experts, Mr. Sašo Brlek-Slaček, researcher and teacher at Ljubljana

University and Mrs. Ingrid Charlotte Baken, UNV Programme Officer Albania.

New technologies have given a new ground for citizens participation. Many young people have become active in social network and other forms of communication on line and share their views on blogs and websites of their interest. This new kind of active citizens have used these new tools to build critical mass in order to reclaim their rights back.

Active citizenship has still to be reinvented in European countries and our belief is that it can be linked to volunteerism.

na University and Mrs. Ingrid Charlotte Baken, UNV Programme Officer Albania.

Mr. Brlek-Slaček presented the "Civic Web" research programme on the role of the Internet for young people's interest and involvement in politics and in civil society. Generally, the research suggested that the Internet could be a valuable tool for young people who are already engaged in civic and political activity. However, policy-makers and practitioners should beware of assuming that the Internet will be a very effective means of engaging young people who are currently disengaged.

The intervention of Mrs. Baken gave a general introduction to volunteering, getting more into detail concerning volunteering in Albania, like its still negative connotation since it was used as a form of punishment during the dictatorship.

Generally, citizens' participation is born from a concrete local problem. To have this fact benefit to e-panels, one should get into contact with existing local groups, find out what they are concerned about and encourage their connections to a higher political level.

In this specific framework, one of the main conclusions as explicitly expressed and developed by all the participants of the working group is that there is a little awareness among citizens that volunteering is a responsibility towards communities in Europe. And where there is, one can not notice the discrepancies between European countries in promoting volunteerism as a tool for active citizenship.

However the working group conclusions highlighted that there is a strong link between the citizens' capacity to be engaged in volunteering and the democratic level of the countries.



## Future developments

ALDA Working Groups intend to focus on new perspectives:

- to enlarge the participation to the Working Groups also to interested participants outside ALDA network;
- producing qualified project ideas involving members of ALDA and other stakeholders;
- originating strategic studies, position papers and publications based on shared common views of the participants, exchanges, case studies, researches.

More information and documentation are available on ALDA website: [www.alda-europe.eu](http://www.alda-europe.eu)



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**INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING?**

To participate please register, and express your choice for the Working Group you are interested in, sending an e-mail to:  
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