

Association of the Local Democracy Agencies
ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP
CALL FOR PARTNERS TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE ACTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE
POWER OF CITIZENS
- ALDA/02/10 -

CALL FOR PARTNERS TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE ACTIONS
ON THE INITIATIVE POWER OF CITIZENS

PROPOSAL TO ALDA MEMBERS

Deadline for receiving application: the 20th of August 2010

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Vicenza, the 7th of July of 2010

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since the moment it was created in 1999 for managing the network of Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies has been working in the field of the European cooperation, promoting dialogue and partnerships between most of the European Institutions (especially the European Commission), a wide number of local and regional authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities) and civil society organizations in the enlarged Europe.

During the past years, the Association has gained a remarkable experience in planning, managing, administering and reporting projects supported by the EU, by other international, national and regional public Institutions, as well as by other subjects such as foundations, international organizations, etc.

ALDA's projects involvement reaches various topics and many EU Member States, South East European (Western Balkans) and East European Countries (Caucasus), as well as some countries of the Community of Independent States- CSI (Belarus and Russia), working inside the legal framework of the European Union (both internal legislation and bilateral agreements fostering cooperation with third countries).

In recent years, together with its original mission related to the coordination of the Local Democracy Agencies in South East Europe and its mandate to promote local democracy, ALDA got more and more committed at European scale in the promotion of a new idea of active participation and citizenship, This implied involving different stakeholders such as local/regional authorities, civil society organizations, groups of citizens but also national and European institutions and authorities in building what its now called "active European citizenship" on citizens' participation in the decision-making process, participatory process in the enlarged Europe and grass-route activities born from citizens' initiate and their partnership with both NGOs and public institutions.

Nowadays, while experiencing a constant external evolution and self-evaluation and the new challenges of the European cooperation system, ALDA gets even more involved in advocating that European citizens have a key and primary role in building a common future for Europe. For this reason and for now a while, 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 citizens in the life of the community, at both local and European level, aiming at achieving good and improved governance throughout Europe.

Moreover, one of ALDA's goals in promoting effective and sustainable change in neighbouring countries (especially in Western Balkans) is to support them on the road to EU accession. Thus, its mandate also includes lobbying for the integration of the former Yugoslav countries in the EU. For these reasons and for its commitment to build a more inclusive European society, in which citizens' voice is heard and the initiative power of citizens is encouraged, ALDA imposed itself a lobbying charge implying its involvement in European policymaking and its commitment towards deepening the Union as well as enlarging it.

Actors such as ALDA feel the constant need of thinking over the concept of European active citizenship inside a growing Union and the importance of further developing instruments or innovative "tools" to promote citizens' participation, at all levels, in the construction of the future Europe. Considering this, ALDA and its network support the reshaping of the internal legislation of the European Union when coming to the inclusion of its working topics on the highest-level agenda.

Such high level agenda depending the perception and the comprehension of the participatory process at European scale is the Lisbon Treaty that came into force on 1st of December 2009.

The Lisbon Treaty confers to the European Union a single legal personality, that is to say that the Union has a more deep negotiation power and a stronger instrument to operate in its international relations with third Countries and International Organizations.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights is put in the primary law of the EU: it becomes legally binding. Rights and freedoms are reasserted and enforced and the democratic principle is reaffirmed. A principle of solidarity is introduced especially on the subject of energetic resources.

Moreover, the **article 11** enforces the democratic participation of citizens. For the first time, it gives people an “*initiative power*”, because it allows one million people from a significant number of member States to invite the Commission to present proposals on matters in which citizens consider that an action of the EU could be appropriate to implement the realization of the Treaties. The article also states that the Union has to “*maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society*” and that the Commission shall carry out broad consultations with all the parties concerned by each matter, for the purpose of enhancing coherence and transparency of action.

The present document aims at launching a Call for Partners to promote in their local communities the “*initiative power of citizens*” as stated in the Lisbon Treaty and to deepen the comprehension of citizens’ involvement at all decision levels.

2. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

The purpose of this Call for Partners is **to develop innovative actions on the “initiative power of citizens”**. The Association of Local Democracy Agencies, taking into consideration the growing interest in Europe regarding active citizenship and European citizenship in particular, intends to launch the present Call for Partners that will develop innovative actions on the Lisbon Treaty and its article 11, more precisely on what the depending of the European concepts represents for the European co-operation and for the dissemination of active European citizenship.

This call’s specific objectives are:

- a) to encourage local activities that explain and demonstrate the mechanisms enabling good local governance;
- b) to encourage ALDA’s members in a more dynamic dialogue with their local community on citizens’ topics;
- c) to disseminate European realities and European concepts making ALDA’s network more aware of EU evolution;
- d) to encourage actions at local level that prepare local stakeholders and the communities they represent on participatory activities and methodologies;
- e) to disseminate the definition of “the initiative power of citizens” as stated by the Lisbon Treaty and find out how can this affect active citizenship at all levels starting from grass-route level;
- f) to encourage ALDA’s members in developing innovative methods and pilot actions in the framework of active citizenship;
- g) to raise awareness among local communities on what citizens represent in the chain of European power and to raise awareness on their shared responsibility in building a common Europe;

h) to encourage brainstorming among local stakeholders, encouraging regular citizens in a more engaging and dynamic dialogue both horizontally (among themselves) and vertically (with NGOs, or NGOs and Local authorities).

Basically, ALDA's members already interested and working on the development of a dialogue between public structures and civil society organisations, will have the possibility to develop innovative actions at the local level through which they will:

a) familiarise the local community with the Lisbon Treaty and its significance, and especially with the "initiative power of citizens" (art.11) as a theoretical concept that could further help the construction of a pluralistic, multicultural and tolerant European society

b) create innovative actions that through participatory methods and specific activities will show to the local stakeholders and to "ordinary" citizens, in practice, the concept of "initiative power of citizens"

ALDA will give priority to those actions that use participatory means and innovative activities thus disseminating the article 11 of the before motioned European treaty and improving the skills of local stakeholders and "ordinary" citizens on: European citizenship, understanding the differences, understanding the importance of co-decision and co-responsibility at local level, encouraging a dynamic dialogue between citizens-local authorities-civil society organisations.

Interested parties will have to develop an innovative action that fits with the objectives of the call. No predefined methodology is imposed to the candidates, since each candidate is facing different realities and since each community has different perceptions over the past and present of Europe.

3. TIME SCHEDULE

The ALDA Members interested to promote and develop the action must send their applications to the Association of Local Democracy Agency no later than **20 of August 2010**.

Projects must start between 15th September 2010 and 15th October 2010. They will have a minimum duration of 2 months and a maximum duration of 3 months and a half.

All projects need to be concluded by the 31st of December 2010.

Applicants should be notified of the outcome of the selection procedure in September 2010.

It is intended that beneficiaries should receive the agreements for signature in September 2010.

The eligibility period for costs will start on the date specified in the agreement, in other words the starting date of the project.

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies reserves the possibility to consider eligible expenses incurred before the project starts when they are related to the implementation of the activity.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The total budget allocated to the co-financing of projects under this Call for Partners is estimated at EUR 6.000,00 (three-thousands).

Financial assistance from ALDA **may not be granted for more than 50%** of a project's total eligible expenses.

ALDA can pay up to **EUR 1.000,00** (one-thousand) per project that must necessarily be accompanied by a minimum co-funding from the partners of EUR 1.000,00 (one-thousand).

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Only applications that comply with the following criteria will be considered eligible and will be the subject of evaluation.

5.1. Establishments/bodies/types of beneficiaries eligible

- non-profit-making, non governmental organisations

OR

- local authorities

- with legal status and legally established in a **European Union country, Croatia, Albania, FYR of Macedonia**, where the project is to take place.

- only members of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies can apply within the present Call for Partners.

Each applicant may submit only one proposal. Projects may involve partner organisations at the local level. Where appropriate, applicants must provide evidence of the Partnership established to ensure the smooth running of the project by submitting a support letter duly completed and signed. Natural persons may not claim a grant under this Call for proposals.

5.2. Non-eligible activities

Profit-making activities of whatever type shall not be eligible.

5.3. Eligible proposals

Only proposals submitted using the official application form, completed in full, signed and received by the deadline specified in Section 3 of this Call for Partners will be considered.

6. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be assessed on the following main criteria:

Quantitative criteria

- number of Partners' organizations involved
- expected number of participants/target groups reached by the activity
- capacity to co-fund the initiative
- number and variety of media supports used during the project

Qualitative criteria

- originality and innovation of the proposal
- capacity to reach those who are not usually reached by other project of European nature
- sustainability of the action
- relevance of the activity for the local community

7. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

The grants are based on the principle of co-financing. They complement the applicant's own financial input and/or national, regional or private assistance that has been obtained elsewhere.

Acceptance of an application by ALDA does not constitute an undertaking to award funding equal to the amount requested by the applicant.

The awarding of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

The amount allocated may not exceed the amount requested.

7.1. Methods of payment

If the application is finally approved by ALDA, a financing agreement, expressed in euro and specifying the terms and the level of financing, will be entered into between ALDA and the beneficiary.

The original version of this agreement must be signed and returned to ALDA immediately. ALDA will be the last party to sign.

Decisions are unilaterally signed by ALDA.

A pre-financing payment of 80% will be transferred to the beneficiary within 45 days of the date on which the two parties sign the agreement. ALDA will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the final report.

7.2. Double financing

Projects funded may not benefit from any other Community funding for the same activity. Applicants have to co-fund the activity with other resources than out of the budget of the European Institutions.

7.3. Eligible costs

Eligible costs are the costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred during the action or work programme
- they are necessary for performing the action or work programme for which a grant has been

awarded;

- they are identifiable and verifiable, and are recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the applicable accounting principles of the country in which the beneficiary is established and with the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices;
- they comply with the requirements of the applicable tax and social security legislation.

Eligible direct costs for the project are those costs that, with due regard for the eligibility conditions set out in the previous paragraph, can be identified as specific costs with a direct link to the project's realisation and directly chargeable to it.

In particular, the following direct costs are eligible, provided they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph:

- costs for personnel assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in their remuneration,
- travel and subsistence costs for personnel participating in the project, provided they do not exceed the scales approved annually by the European Commission
- costs of consumables, materials, supplies, provided that they are identifiable and earmarked for the project.

8. PUBLICITY

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all the outputs or on the occasion of activities for which the grant is used.

Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to clearly show the name and emblem of the European Commission on all publications, posters, programmes and other products produced under the co-financed project.

To that end, they shall use the logo of the „Europe for Citizens” programme and the European flag. Furthermore, beneficiaries are required to clearly show the name and emblem of ALDA. If this provision is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

Applicants selected shall pay particular attention to the confidentiality of the data. Copyright on all reports and other materials prepared and produced – such as training methods, tools, handbooks, etc. – under the contract between the two parties shall reside with the Association of Local Democracy Agencies. With prior written authorization, the materials prepared may be used, reproduced, photocopied, recorded and disseminated by third parties.

10. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

This Call for proposals is published in the official website of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies at the following address: www.alda-europe.eu

Grant applications must be drawn in English using the application form specifically designed for this purpose.

Please note that only typed applications will be considered.

Application forms can be obtained from the following website: www.alda-europe.eu

Only applications that are submitted using the correct form, duly completed and dated, sent within the deadline of 20th of August will be accepted.

Applications which have not been submitted within the specified deadline will be disregarded.

Applications must be sent by e-mail to the following address:

- Marco Boaria at marco.boaria@aldaintranet.org

Applicants will be informed of the receipt of their proposals within 3 working days. Only applications that meet the eligibility criteria will be considered for possible award of a grant.

All unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing.

11. CONTACT

For information, please contact:

Maro Boaria at marco.boaria@aldaintranet.org

Or

Alexandra Petcu at alexandra.petcu@aldaintranet.org

In either case, our Vicenza phone number is: +39 0444 540 146