



Moral report of President for 2017

Strasbourg, 24th of April 2018

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Dear members and partners, dear friends and staff of ALDA,

Last year in May we met in Torun, Poland, and this year we have a chance to be together here in Brussels, for the second time since the 2009. First of all, let me express my gratitude and gladness for being hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee in such an important occasion for our Association.

And also, I would like to greet our LDAs, our members, partners, friends and representatives of all international and European institutions and networks attending our General Assembly this year. I wish you active participation on the General Assembly, and I would like to thank you for your engagement in the work of ALDA, in supporting the development of the local governance as well as the engagement of the civil society.

Since our last General Assembly, when I gladly shared with all of you the news about the opening of the Local Democracy Agency Moldova in Cimişlia as well as the historic event for ALDA which was the opening of the Local Democracy Agency in Kairouan in Tunisia, the first one in the MED Area, I am happy to affirm that our family has been enlarged thanks to the opening of the Local Democracy Agency Mariupol, in Ukraine. The event marked the conclusion of a long process that began last year, which managed under the same common goal ALDA, the municipality of Gdańsk (Poland), the city of Mariupol, the NGO Mariupol Development Fund, and the municipality of Akmene (Lithuania). The event was held in the premises of the hosting city of Mariupol, the easternmost city in Europe.

Furthermore, the process for the opening of the Local Democracy Agency in Morocco, the second one in the MED Area, is still ongoing, and we are moving fast in cooperation with the local stakeholders in order to finalize it, hopefully by the end of this year. This is the natural continuation of our activity in the Mediterranean countries but also represents the will to pursue the values that lie at the heart of Europe on the Southern Enlarged Europe.

The Local Democracy Agencies have been our cornerstone since the 1999 when ALDA has been established, that's why I am particularly proud to highlight some of the most important results achieved by the LDAs Network, that we, as ALDA, are more and more supporting especially through the proposal for a Partnership Support Scheme, that found high support from all the international and local partners of the LDAs as well as from the European Institutions, as demonstrated from the support video-message by Commissioner Hahn, the Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations, who

highlighted the important role played by LDAs in developing and strengthening the Local Democracy empowerment process.

On the 2nd of June, the Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići in Bosnia and Herzegovina celebrated its 20th anniversary by gathering local authorities, citizens, as well as partners and friends from Italy. The event marked a 20-year cooperation journey started before the war, and renewing day after day, long after most the territory disappeared from the priorities of the international community. On that occasion a Memorandum of Understanding renewing the cooperation among the city of Zavidovići, the LDA Zavidovići, and the Embassy for LDA in Zavidovići was signed, thus marking a particularly rooted cooperation, and designing its future.

During the past year, on the 3rd of May 2017, Local Democracy Agency Georgia, which started its activities in October 2006 with the support of European and local partners, celebrated its 10 years anniversary in the host city of Kutaisi. The anniversary event was attended by the ALDA Vice President Imislava Gorska; ALDA Eastern Partnership program coordinator, Nino Tvaltvadze; Kutaisi Mayor and LDA Georgia board members and national and international partners.

Also, the Local Democracy Agency Mostar was the first of 74 civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina to sign a Charter on Cooperation with the BiH Council of Ministers. LDA Mostar actively participated in the consultations, that is definitely one instrument effectively building democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As ALDA, for us the past year was full of activities and results achieved throughout synergies and cooperation with Civil Society Organizations, Local Authorities and European and International Institutional stakeholders, and it is with great pleasure and honor that I would like to seize the opportunity to highlight some of them:

- in the framework of the Partnership Forum 2017 – Strengthening and deepening our Partnership worldwide with Civil Society and Local Authorities – that took place in Brussels in July, to revitalize the global partnership for the sustainable development (SDG 17), we brought our experience on the Inclusive local economic development, highlighting the importance of local democracy to tackle inequalities and to sustain local economic development.

- on the occasion of the European Local Democracy Week, an annual European event coordinated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, that this year intended to pay homage to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, opened for signature in 1985, ALDA has organized a wide number conferences and events in the frame of the MEANING project.

- in July ALDA Skopje implemented its Summer University on “Remembrance and intercultural dialogue” in cooperation with FON University. The event, financially supported by CEI - the Central European Initiative, gathering together more than 30 participants from seven countries in the Balkans and from France to attend lectures, workshops, and field visits in Skopje and was a key step within the cooperation between Normandy and Macedonia.

- the last year also meant the end of the LADDER Project, a three-year project which started in 2015 within the framework of the European Year of Development. One of the most

important features of LADDER was its consortium which is formed by 27 co-applicants & 19 associates from 36 different countries, covering Europe and the Mediterranean area, South East Europe and the Eastern Partnership. LADDER can be summed up in 5 main dimension which are: research, capacity building, advocacy, grass-roots actions and the cultural component.

As the LADDER experience has strongly shown to all of us, it's only together that it is possible to achieve great results, and ALDA is more and more engaged in strengthening its network and partnerships.

For instance, last year, we celebrated our 10 years of cooperation with Lev Sapieha Foundation in Belarus, and Mrs. Antonella Valmorbidia, our Secretary General, has been elected as President of the European Partnership for Democracy, gathering ALDA as an animator in the network of experts that are member of this non-profit organization, which supports democracy worldwide.

Dear members, dear partners and guests,

Let me say how happy and glad I am to share with all of you our experiences and results, that has been achieved thanks to the mutual support and cooperation with all of you. ALDA is growing thanks to the daily work of all of us, but more we are going bigger more it will be our responsibility to engage ourselves in strengthening the local democracy process, the citizens participation and the European values, not only all over Europe, but also wherever our expertise and commitment is required and helpful.

Equality, participation, fairness, commitment, democracy and sustainability are only few of the words that we use in our daily work, but thanks to that, they are going to be more than just words, they are going to be a reality for all European citizens.

Thank you,

The President

Oriano Otočan