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Strasbourg, 5th May 2016

President's Moral Report
2015
Mandate's report (2012-2016)

Dear members, partners, friends and staff of ALDA,

It is a great honour and satisfaction for me to meet all of you today in Paris, in the premises offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France with whom we cooperate for many years. I would like to greet the representatives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the President of the Congress of the Council of Europe, and the representatives of all the other international institutions and international networks. And also, right at the beginning, I would like to greet our LDAs, members, friends and partners. I wish to thank everyone for coming, for their active participation at the General Assembly and for their contribution in the work of ALDA.

This report should not be just a view on the last year of activities, but also an overview of our work from the last Electoral General Assembly in 2012. We can consider it as a relatively short period of time, but a period during which many activities and results have been achieved. The last four years were full of successes and good results, to which you all contributed with devotion and constant commitment. We should be satisfied with the growth of ALDA and the important steps forward, despite many difficulties presented by the general European frame. The European Association for Local Democracy is surely one of such organizations that never give up. We were able to grow thanks to numerous contacts, projects, partnerships and initiatives which were made in very challenging years, due to the long - lasting economic crisis that produces negative impact on the whole society and burdens the activities of regions, cities,

municipalities and civil society organisations. Therefore, an exceptional success was to maintain and, even better, to intensify our activities in such circumstances.

Despite the economic crisis, which has a deep impact on the society, in the last four years, Europe was confronted to different dramatic events that affected the whole continent. We have seen the economic problems of Greece; the wars in Libya, Syria and Ukraine; migration and humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean which left all Europe breathless, questioning the very same stability of the European Union, and consequently the capacity to deal all together with difficulties. Furthermore, worry and concern are still alive from the terroristic attacks that affected Paris and Brussels, our cities in the heart of Europe, and terrorist attacks in the Neighbouring countries. All this created fertile ground for anti-democratic, anti-European political movements and radicalization of the political scene. It is clear that the European geopolitical environment has changed in these last years. This was a challenge for us and our activities and also, unfortunately, new needs emerged where our activities could be helpful.

In accordance with general ALDA's objectives, in the 2012, we have set up a list of our goals to be achieved during the mandate. We have defined strategic documents for activities and have strategically determined ourselves for the period 2013 to 2016. Our desire was to be among mayor supporter of regional and local authorities and the citizens in EU and the neighbouring countries; to strengthen the existing Local Democracy Agencies and to continue to expand activities towards the East and South; to expand and strengthen the membership base; and to reinforce the sustainability of the activities of LDAs and ALDA. Our aim was to find out the new models for better connection and synergy between the LDAs and ALDA. Our desire was also to become more engaged in consulting activities regarding a great experience so far. Our idea was to strengthen the political relevance of ALDA and its visibility in order to have stronger policy oriented dimension.

I should remind here that a previous period was marked by a sad fact since the genuine originator, founder and the one that inspired our activities, Mr. Gianfranco Martini, had passed away. The least we could do to repay him for all of his work was to connect his name permanently with ALDA by establishing an Annual scholarship that bears his name, which is awarded once a year, starting from 2013.

The Year 2013 was particularly important for ALDA, because Croatia completed its accession to the European Union. ALDA and the Croatian Local Democracy Agencies in Osijek, Sisak and Brtonigla are considered to be among the first organisation, that had a significant role in promoting European values in the nineties of the last century at a local level. We have prepared a transitional model for Croatian LDAs. By becoming Operational partners they keep their place in the ALDA's internal organization even after joining the EU. The Agencies in Osijek, Sisak and Brtonigla represent, first of all, a significant added value of our organization based on great experience. These Agencies represent an unavoidable connecting line for partnership with other LDA-s in South Eastern Europe in terms of future pre-accession programmes as well as in terms of promoting the European integration. 2013 has been declared the "European Year of Citizens". ALDA was particularly active in the foundation of the European Year of Citizenship Alliance, a non-governmental initiative at the European level. In some countries such as Croatia and Italy we initiated national coalitions for celebrating and implementing the European Year. But, also, the year 2013 was also marked certainly by the difficulty to obtain the resources for some of our programmes and also a reduced capacity of our members to be involved and support our initiatives.

The year 2014 could be considered as a breaking point for us. The previous years, we established several documents that better regulate our work, we implemented organizational changes, strengthened the outreach communication and we enhanced the cooperation and support to the LDAs. By 2014, however, we had an extremely carefully management of our resources and staff and had to reduce our team due to fewer available funds, in spite of more and more numbers of prepared but uncertain projects and programs. In the second half of 2014 everything changed. Obviously all due to a serious preparatory work that has brought results, and today in many segments ALDA stands better than ever with almost tripled budget and staff.

In 2015 a new Local Democracy Agency has been launched in the Region of Dnipropetrovsk, in Ukraine, and in Albania, the LDA in Vlora, was relaunched as well. In the last year, as in the previous ones, we wrote, submitted and developed several projects with hundreds of partners and numerous people involved. We intensified the collaboration with the countries of the Mediterranean area and Eastern Partnership area, and also the activities related to the citizen participation and good governance in the EU countries become more and more fruitful. Today ALDA is working to open three new LDAs in Odessa, Ukraine, in Tunisia and in Moldova. First steps have been taken for the development of an LDA In Turkey.

In our mandate we have succeeded to stabilize the financial performance of ALDA and to improve its internal structure. We have adopted strategic guidelines that enabled further development, have prepared a number of documents regulating our activities and set up internal relationships that allow the initiative and creativity of our employees. We had to decide whether we will continue to act in the current framework or will act more proactively developing ALDA, with openness for the new geographical areas and new themes. There were a lot of discussions about that. Our choice to adopt Strategic points 2013-2016 where ALDA has been ambitiously focused to new areas of work has been a correct decision. Nowadays, it is important to be open and to adapt to new ideas. Remaining fixed, and without new ideas on how to work and how to develop, means stagnation and inevitable decrease of activities. Our goal was to strengthen the support to the LDAs and to expand its network. The priority was to engage all LDAs in ALDA strategies and projects. We have started to develop the concept of the third generation of LDAs in the Western Balkan region. We have increased our visibility especially on the social networks and created new visual identity. We have increased our membership and strengthen relations with the EU institutions and other international institutions and organizations like EU Commission, Congress of the Regional and Local authorities of Council Of Europe, Committee of the Regions and

others. Hundreds of projects have been prepared and implemented in order to promote and to deliver the values that we stand for, ensuring also sustainability of the organization. Regarding project activities we have strengthened the project development team with a capacity in the EU and non EU countries, and strengthened the project management capacities. In this regard we developed office an ALDA Skopje as one of the main offices and support of projects in area. Such a work in which over hundreds of projects are annually applied and several dozen projects are implemented, represents one of the values which makes ALDA different and this makes us so specific in relation to other similar organizations.

In order to improve internal governance, better management of the staff and improve our efficiency, we also strengthened the role of the Working Groups in the decision making of ALDA, introduced the new position of Secretary General of organisation, developed the role of the Advisory committee and created internal subdivision of our work (ALDA Europe, ALDA Cooperation and ALDA Plus). One of the activities, which have been started previous years, with the aim to activate big internal resources of our membership, was the cooperation and the establishment of network of representative offices in Brussels.

It is necessary here to mention particularly important projects that had and have a particular impact on ALDA's development and strength, financially speaking but also because they create a fundamental institutional link between us and the supporting Agency :

- ALDA has been a beneficiary of the Operating Grant of the programme Europe for Citizens for more than 6 years now. Our contribution is focusing on local governance at the local level building European Citizenship. ALDA is among the effective support of the development of the programme Europe for Citizens in South Eastern Europe

- We have established an Operating Support from DG Near for all the Local Democracy Agencies in South Eastern Europe, developing a strategic Youth Platform working with local authorities.
- The LADDER community, working on Awareness and Education for Development is a unique opportunity for mobilizing local authorities and civil society working together for a global citizenship and development in the EU and in the Neighborhood
- The research programme Re.Cr.Re (Horizon 2020) is a the centre of a big and relevant programme of research addressing societal changes and identifying the new policy framework for engaging citizens and in particular youth
- The work we have done with the Region Basse Normandie (now Normandie) in the Republic of Macedonia remains a master piece of Decentralised Cooperation having an impact in both the communities for local better governance. We have now launched for 2016 the first summer school, within the frame of this project, to discover a piece of the European history, discovering the Eastern Front of the first World War.

Today ALDA has 11 Local Democracy Agencies and 3 Operational Partners in 9 countries of which 11 in the Western Balkans, 2 in South Caucasus and 1 in Ukraine, comparing to 11 LDAs in 2012. Today ALDA is proud to manage a network of more than 200 members from over 38 countries with particular attention to the local authorities, comparing to 160 members in 2012. Our budget for 2016 is 4,5 millions of Euro (almost 5 millions consolidating the capacity of self fundraising of the Local Democracy Agencies) compared to 2,1 millions of Euro in 2012. In ALDA today 24 employees work, compared to 12 employees in 2012. Despite difficulties, rapid growth and annual budgets, ALDA has been able to accumulate some reserves and to close this year, again with a slight benefit, due a very careful management of resources, followed not only by our staff and Secretary General but also by our Treasurer.

To mentioned our effort here our effort in communication by increasing resources for staff and for constant and innovative instruments In particular we have a monthly newsletter sent to over 10,000 contacts in 6 languages: English, French, Italian, Serbian, Russia and Arabic – this last language since last month. Those are “little” things – done every month – with great results but with the need of immense efforts and resources. With great satisfaction we can say that ALDA has never been in a better situation than it is today.

ALDA was established 16 years ago. In this period we developed countless ideas, initiatives, projects, and relationships with partners and members, contacts among people involved in our activities. ALDA has grown into a respectable international organization that successfully cooperates with European and international institutions, international and national organizations. ALDA has been recognized as a serious stakeholder for NGOs and local and regional level of government, as well as a serious stakeholder at European level. ALDA proved to be strong and essential partner to develop democratic processes from the bottom, with local stakeholders and for bringing decision-making, including the European, closer to citizens. ALDA is a key stakeholder at EU-level for citizens' participation, where we are part of the structural dialogue of the European Commission on the programme Europe for Citizens. ALDA succeed to deliver ideas of local democracy, citizen participation, decentralisation and subsidiarity, cooperation between civil society and public authority's, human rights, tolerance, European values and others in all parts of the Europe and neighbouring geographic area. We have been working in numerous EU and non EU countries: in Southeast Europe, in the east and on the south in the Mediterranean area. All this has been possible, and it is particularly important to emphasize the support and cooperativeness of all our members and partners, and also, the seriousness, professionalism, commitment and success of people involved in our work.

Dear members and dear friends,

We have to be proud of ALDA's work! I would like to remember all those who constantly participate in our work: our Local Democracy Agencies and Operational partners, our members and partners, our staff, Secretary General and my colleague's members of the Governing Board. From all of this, we can conclude that it is worth to continue. I'm sure that we have more to say and more to succeed. Once again thank you for your contribution!

Oriano Otočan

President of ALDA