



ALDA President statement on the accession of Croatia to the EU

The accession of Croatia to the EU marks a turning point for my country, torn by conflict only two decades ago. I think that Croatia is now a stable democracy, capable of taking on the obligations of EU membership and eager to help other acceding countries during their

process. Ahead of us we have a challenging time and we need to be able to grasp as good as possible the opportunities offered in this period, both political and economical. This is a chance that comes only once! The work carried out by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) in Croatia during the past years has strongly supported the integration of the country in Europe. The activities of ALDA and of the three Local Democracy Agencies, based in Verteneglio/Brtonigla, Sisak and Osijek, were important to build trust, promote citizen participation and European values, and strengthen local authorities. They will become now Operational Partners of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies and fundamental parts of our activities in South Eastern Europe.

The main values of Istria, my region, have always been multiculturalism, multiethnicity, tolerance and antifascism, and since the 1990s it has been particularly active in promoting the integration of Croatia in the EU. I am therefore confident that my country and region will concretely reinvigorate the democratic spirit of the European Union.

Oriano **Otočan**

President of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

Head of Department for International Cooperation and European Integration, Region Istria

The meaning of EU citizenship in the spotlight in Zagreb



On 8 July in Zagreb, Croatia, 150 European citizens exchanged views and experiences on the meaning of EU citizenship in a conference entitled: "EU citizenship: Crossing perspectives".

In the context of the European Year of Citizens 2013, the European Year of Citizens' Alliance (EYCA), of which ALDA is a promoter, gathered 150 civil society representatives from all over Europe in the capital city of the European Union's 28th Member State to

debate on EU citizenship and to engage with the core question of citizens' participation in Europe. ALDA was represented by its Director Antonella Valmorbida and its President Oriano Otočan, who highlighted the hard work of civil society during the past years to promote democracy and human rights. The three Local Democracy Agencies (ADL) in Croatia, present to the event, (based in [Osijek](#), [Verteneglio/Brtonigla](#), and [Sisak](#)) have been particularly important, he stressed. Mr Otočan concluded by stating that despite its accession to the EU, there are still a lot of efforts needed to foster Croatia's development and democracy. Being part of the Union will be a challenge for the whole country.

Ms Paula Rauzan, delegate of the [ADL in Sisak](#), represented the Croatian Alliance and reminded the many steps of the long process to join the EU.

During the event a number of issues have been discussed, and the role of civil society in nowadays Europe has been defined as the gatekeeper of human and civil rights, as well as a propulsive force.

On 9 July, the working groups of the [European Year of Citizens 2013 Alliance](#) met and drafted a programme and recommendation document for the European Commission, which will be presented during a key event in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 13 December 2013.



ALDA new office in Vicenza

ALDA has moved to a new office in Vicenza. Our new office is very close to the train station and has a wide meeting room, which will be used for trainings and other events.

In September the premises will be officially inaugurated, inviting ALDA's friends, representatives of local authorities, and civil society

organisations.

Please update your records with our new address, and do not hesitate to visit us should you be in Vicenza: ALDA, Viale Milano 66, 36100 Vicenza – ITALY



Youth and Politics – MY EUROPE event in Strasbourg

From 25th to 27th June 2013, ALDA organised three days of activities in Strasbourg on the topic "Youth and politics", within the project MY EUROPE and in cooperation with the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe (International Non Governmental

Organisations).

MY EUROPE is a 'Europe for Citizens' project, led by the Local Councils' Association of Malta and gathering 14 partners from Albania, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Macedonia, and Malta. It aims at empowering citizens to play a part in the democratic life, with specific reference to active participation in political life of disadvantaged target groups: women, youngsters and immigrants.

"Youth and Politics" was the second international event organised within the project. Its main objective was to give a chance to youngsters to express their needs and interests to local and European policy makers, and to fight against their exclusion from the participation to political life.

These three days of activities were the occasion to discuss youth opportunities and tools for active participation in the decision making process, to exchange good practices and to make [recommendations to improve youth participation](#), which were presented during the plenary of the INGO Conference held on 27th June.

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe welcomed the text of recommendations and agreed to continue to work with young people.

The next event within the project will be organised in November in Macedonia and will focus on women.



Future of 'Europe for Citizens' Programme: Open letter to EU Heads of States and Governments

The European Year of Citizens Alliance (EYCA), of which ALDA is a promoter, started the process of addressing an open letter to EU Heads of States and Governments on the future of the 'Europe for

Citizens' Programme.

The letter aims at publicising civil society organisations' opinion on the Council's proposal of severe budget cuts (a reduction of 23% over the next seven years) in the 'Europe for Citizens' programme.

In a time when citizens are expressing a growing distrust in EU Institutions and policies, and while the EU celebrates the European Year of Citizens in 2013 - with the lowest ever dedicated budget for a European Year, we believe this proposal is a counterproductive response to budgetary challenges.

Only a properly funded 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the 2014 – 2020 timeframe would serve to properly recognise and support the role that civil society organisations play in the construction of the European project as envisaged in article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty.

[See the open letter and all its signatories \(.pdf\)](#)

Below are ALDA's stakeholders who decided to support this initiative and sign the letter:

Prahova County Council – ROMANIA

Consorzio per lo Sviluppo del Polesine – ITALY

Consorzio di Cooperative sociali Onlus – ITALY

UNISCO Network per lo sviluppo locale - ITALY

City of Kragujevac – SERBIA

Zamenik generalnog sekretara SKGO – SERBIA

Horizont Ngo – ALBANIA

Forum Algérien pour la Citoyenneté et la Modernité (FACM)

International Platform For Citizen Participation (IPCP) - BULGARIA

Diego Bottacin – ITALY

Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governemnts – LATVIA

NGO "Terra-1530" – MOLDOVA

Lda Albania – ALBANIA

Lda Montenegro – MONTENEGRO

Lda Mostar - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Coalition of youth organizations SEGA – REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

CRCD-Center for Research Cooperation and Development – ALBANIA

Municipality of Vejle – DENMARK



Local government and NGOs – Making the local coalitions work

The opening conference of the project Local Coalitions for Community Development was held in Kotor, Montenegro, on 31 May 2013. Its focus was "Local government and NGOs – making the local coalitions work".

The project runs from December 2012 to November 2014, and it aims to promoting good practices in the cooperation between local authorities and civil society organisations, as well as fostering their active involvement in the process of EU integration of Montenegro. Its activities will involve the six municipalities of Kotor, Niksic, Bijelo Polje, Rozaje, Danilovgrad and Ulcinj.

Kerim Medjedovic, Delegate of LDA Niksic, highlighted that the conference was an important opportunity for exchange of experience and presentation of good practices in cross-sectorial co-operation, promoting

dialogue and partnerships between NGO-s and local authorities thus contributing to the promotion of European standards of democratic governance at local level.

Radovan Zivkovic, assistant to the Mayor of the Municipality Medijana in Nis, Serbia, gave an overview of development and implementation of the co-operation programme with local NGOs resulting in transparent criteria for local financing and for effective provision of services in public policy measures in Medijana, an urban community located in the downtown area of the city.

Veran Stancetic, expert and senior trainer of PALGO Center, Belgrade, highlighted the key challenges related with consultation process and achievements in public administration reform process in Serbia, with particular emphasis on local self-government system.

Stanka Parac Damjanovic, ALDA Regional Programme Coordinator, presented the Subgranting Programme designed as a specific component within the project for non-governmental organizations operating in the six municipalities involved in the activities.

Information sessions and trainings for potential applicants have been organised to encourage their active participation.

[Read more about the project Local Coalitions for Community Development Photogallery](#)



Belarusian Civil Society in 2013

The meeting of the Civil Society Communication Platform 'Belarusian Civil Society in 2013' was held in Warsaw, Poland, on 14th and 15th June 2013.

Antonella Valmorbida, Director of ALDA, represented the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe during the opening

remarks of the conference.

Mrs Valmorbida stressed how important the presence of a Belarusian delegation is during the plenary meetings of the Conference. Being aware of the difficulties encountered by professionals engaged in the promotion of civil rights and democracy in the country, the meeting in Warsaw represented a needed platform for debate and best practices sharing among different stakeholders, as well as for the promotion of the Code of Best Practices for Citizens Participation elaborated by the Conference.

In her capacity of Director of ALDA, Mrs Valmorbida highlighted the good collaboration carried out in collaboration with Belarusian partners during the past years, especially with Lev Sapieha Foundation and EuroBelarus. Empowering local stakeholders and fostering participation is key to effective development, she continued, and good cooperation with the stakeholders involved in the Eastern Partnership is also crucial, she concluded.

The two days conference consisted of different panels covering several topics related to the Belarusian society, including the importance of international networking, the role of blogosphere and social media for the civil society, and the promotion of civic activism.

Read Antonella Valmorbida's full opening speech (in [Russian](#) or [Italian](#))

Read more on the [Casimir Pulaski Foundation](#) website

NEWS FROM THE LDAs



A step forward the Local Democracy Agency in Dnipropetrovsk

The Vice President of ALDA, Imislava Gorska, and the Director of ALDA, Antonella Valmorbida, met the International team of the Region Lower Silesia in Poland to further agree on the establishment of the future LDA in Ukraine, in Dnipropetrovsk. The meeting, in Wroclaw on 4 July, set the ground for identification of partnership, actions and future steps. The LDA in Dnipropetrovsk would be the first one in Ukraine and is expected to open in early 2014. ALDA delegation was received by the Head of International Department of Lower Silesia, Mr. Bartolomiej Ostrowski.



"The LDAs in Eastern Partnership countries are a very important part of our strategy since they aim at consolidating a democratic approach and decentralisation in these countries. The role of local and regional authorities working with civil society is a fundamental approach for ALDA. The engagement of an important region like Lower Silesia is extremely important to increase our partners and members for our work in Poland", confirmed Mrs. Gorska, Vice President of ALDA.

A study visit to a well established LDA (in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina) is expected in early September, and a preparatory partner meeting will be organised in Ukraine in October.

Read more

[ALDA at the Assembly of European Regions' Eastern Partnership conference in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine – 30 April 2013](#)

[Meeting at the Council of Europe to prepare the establishment of a Local Democracy Agency in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine – 26 March 2013](#)

[ALDA's strategy and activities in the Eastern Partnerships](#)



Partners meeting of LDA Armenia foundation

The partners' meeting of Local Democracy Agency Armenia foundation took place on 19th June 2013, hosted by LDA foundation in Gyumri, Armenia.

The Association of Local Democracy Agency was represented by its Director Antonella Valmorbida, Vice President Alessandro Perelli and Policy Officer Peter Sondergaard; the representatives of local partner organizations, (Levon Barseghyan -"Asparez" Journalists' club, Armine Tukhikyan-Urban foundation for sustainable development, Vahan Tumasyan-"Shirak" Centre NGO), the Head of Projects and Analysis Department of Gyumri municipality, Hayk Sultanyan, and the Acting Director of LDA Armenia foundation Lusine Aleksandryan were present. The meeting was of vital importance for the functioning and future perspectives of LDA foundation Armenia. The present partners nominated their representatives in the Board of Trustees, consisting of 12 members, and the first composition will be finalized in July. The president of the Board of Trustees is the

lead partner, the Region of Rhone-Alpes Region.

The acting director Lusine Aleksandryan was appointed as a new delegate for LDA foundation. During the meeting, several important matters were discussed, including the possible cooperation with the new communities of Armenia and the French Embassy, the recruitment of other partners and how to strengthen partnership, the participation of LDA Armenia foundation in the meetings of the Council of European Movement in Armenia and EAP CSF Forum, future projects and projects with the region Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

As now LDA Armenia foundation is operational and has a legal status, concrete steps can be made towards the promotion of democracy and citizens participation at the local level.



Final event of the project 'Mountain areas, value and cooperation' in Montenegro

The final event of the project 'Mountain areas, value and cooperation' (Aree di montagna, valore e cooperazione) took place on 7 June in Rozaje, Montenegro. The project was financed by the Italian Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, with LDA Niksic as partner.

Adem Fetic, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry in Montenegro, and Nusset Kalac, Mayor of Rozaje participated to the event. Alessandro Perelli, Vice President of ALDA, and Kerim Mediedovic, delegate of the ADL in Niksic, were also present. Numerous people attended the meeting, including administrators, technical experts and citizens.

Alessandro Perelli highlighted that the initiatives of the ADL in Niksic and its joint actions with other NGOs not only have involved the promotion of democratic rights, key element for a quick conclusion of the pre-accession period for Montenegro. They have also addressed social issues such as the creation of the first employment office for disabled workers in Niksic, and economic ones such as the certification of forest, which was concluded on the occasion of the event.

Kerim Mediedovic pointed out the importance of this project, involving a mountain and forest area of Montenegro, which deserved to be fostered.

A short speech by the President of the cooperative CRAMARS from Tolmezzo, High Friuli, concluded the event by announcing a new initiative: in cooperation with the Entrepreneurs Association of Podgorica, the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia will finance a training course for young entrepreneurs.

CALL FOR PARTNERS

We kindly invite those who are interested in one or more of the following calls, to contact us as soon as possible to the email addresses provided in the calls description

[Developing Civil Dialogue among CSOs – II \(DCD-II\)](#)

Deadline of the call - 29/07/2013

Location – Turkey

[Programme Active Citizenship and Inclusion – NGO Programme – EEA grants Iceland Liechtenstein Norway – Call announcer Ekopolis Foundation](#)

Deadline of the call - 31/07/2013

Location – Slovakia

[Cultural activities 2013 – Lebanon](#)

Deadline of the call - 05/08/2013

Location – Lebanon

[Contracting Authority: Delegation of the European Union to Belarus - Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development \(NSA&LA\) 2013, Belarus](#)

Deadline of the call - 05/08/2013

Location – Belarus

NEW MEMBERS OF ALDA

Vodnjan municipality, Croatia

Flemming Meyer, Denmark