

ALDA NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2014



Dialogue between authorities and citizens key to address protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and the three Local Democracy Agencies based in Bosnia and Herzegovina are deeply worried about the on-going protests in the country. This situation is a direct consequence of the current economic, social and political difficulties, and at the same time of the lack of actions from the institutions.

We call for a non-violent resolution of the protests, and we condemn the exploitation of citizens' dissatisfaction and rage in the pursuit of political agendas, as well as to heighten ethnic divisions. We strongly encourage the start of a dialogue involving political institutions and the whole civil society.

Since their establishment, the Local Democracy Agencies based in Mostar, Prijedor, and Zavidovići have been supporting cooperation between local authorities and civil society, promoting local democracy, respect for human rights, and sustainable development.

Many say that this is the beginning of something new, but it is not clear how that will look like. We call upon national and local authorities to listen and address citizens' concerns. Citizens have the right to peacefully express their demands and wishes, and political leaders have to get engaged in a two-ways dialogue. We also call upon the European Union institutions to get actively involved in tackling the current problems, and accelerate the integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We hope and work for the current situation to turn into an occasion for increased civic participation and democratic reforms, leading us closer to the European Union.

Association of Local Democracy Agencies

LDA Mostar

LDA Prijedor

LDA Zavidovići

ALDA Working Group Balkans



Gianfranco Martini scholarship 2014 - Apply by 30 April

ALDA set up a scholarship in memory of its Honorary President Gianfranco Martini. University students and researchers can apply by 30 April for the 2014 edition. Focus of their study or project have to be the development of theoretical and practical strategies to promote **local democracy, engagement of civil society and/or interethnic dialogue**.

Further information about application form, candidates selection, projects selection, scholarship amount, can be found [on the dedicated web page](#).

The successful candidate will be announced at the annual General Assembly of ALDA in June 2014, where the scholar will present the results of his or her study, which will be widely disseminated.

Gianfranco Martini, who passed away in October 2012, was among the initiators of the concept of Local Democracy Agencies, and became the first President of ALDA when it was founded in 1999. Throughout his active life he passionately promoted local democracy, civic engagement, and interethnic dialogue, especially in Western Balkans.

[More information on the scholarship Gianfranco Martini](#) (.pdf)



Serbia officially starts the accession negotiation with the EU - History of the EU integration in making

After Montenegro started the negotiations in 2012, and Croatia joined the European Union in 2013, the sequence of EU integration in the Western Balkan continues with Serbia, starting the official accession negotiation with the EU on 21 January 2014.

The accession negotiations have become a more complex challenge with new rules in the enlargement process for the aspiring countries in the region. The so called enlargement fatigue, the economic crisis deeply affecting also the candidate countries have led to new conditionality approaches, more demanding monitoring of the progress made for countries in post-conflict transition to democracy. Lessons learnt from the process of Croatia's accession are an important heritage for Montenegro and Serbia sharing the common historic, cultural, linguistic background. In this way, the experience gained throughout opening and closing the negotiation chapters in one country has become a valuable incentive for bilateral/regional institutional co-operation for two more countries in the Western Balkans.

The ongoing intensive visits including the exchange of the parliamentary commissions for EU integration of Montenegro and Serbia with the Croatian counterparts, an increasing use in public of the EU integration related vocabulary pertaining to the 35 negotiation chapters (what are we negotiating about?) are an evident signal of the

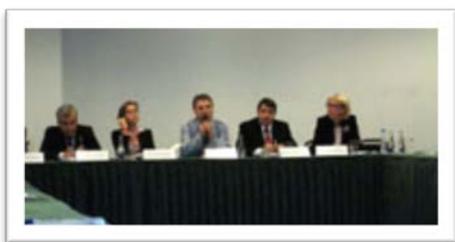
political will to accelerate the reforms needed so much after the years of “postponed transition” in Serbia in particular.

Twenty-first January 2014 is therefore even more a historic event, since the start of official negotiation process leaves behind the phase in which the EU integration was largely located within the government institutions. The compulsory screening process within each of the chapters indicates a need for introducing a wide consultation with all the relevant stakeholders of EU integration process – local authorities and civil society in particular, since some 70% of the implementation of evolving *acquis* is taking place at the local tier of government. The development of sufficient administrative capacity at local level, full implementation of key reforms and legislation in the areas of the rule of law, reform of the judiciary, effective implementation of legislation on the protection of minorities, the non-discriminatory treatment of national minorities, tackling discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity are some of the key challenges of the IPA 2014-2020 Programming phase requiring much more effective planning and coordination with the local authorities and civil society sector.

This is exactly the area for further actions planning for both ALDA and LDAs in Serbia and Montenegro is extremely important, as already included in the SECO network (Sectoral CSO coordination process) of NGOs involved in public administration reform and CSOs development. Participating in continued dialogue between the EU and civil society in these two countries is more than necessary so as to contribute to realization of the basic mission of ALDA and LDAs in the region: bringing people in local communities together to help ensure the support of citizens for the accession process.

Stanka Parac Damjanovic

ALDA regional Programme Coordinator



Working Together for Development – Recommendations for development

Liaising with the results of the European Year of Citizens 2013 and looking ahead at the 2015 the European Year of Development, there is an urgent need for joint efforts in promoting citizens’ empowerment and supporting Civil Society and Local Authorities.

ALDA being particularly active in both active citizenship and development cooperation with its partners, is happy to share with you the **Final recommendations for development** ([English](#) and [French](#)) that resulted from the fruitful exchanges and discussions held recently in Vilnius, during an international event organised in the framework of the [Working Together for Development](#) (WTD) project, a multi-partner EU funded project for development currently being implemented.

The recommendations deal with the important role of Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations, and the synergies that need to be established when it comes to development issues at local level. We feel that those recommendations present an important framework within which we should all, including the EU and other stakeholders, be working within.

We also invite you to take a look at all the [projects which have been implemented in Latvia](#) within the re-granting scheme of WTD, to deeply impact at local level by strengthening cooperation among LAs and CSOs.

More information:

Final recommendations for development in [English](#) (.pdf) and in [French](#) (.pdf)

[Website of WTD project](#)



Towards the final event of the project COHEIRS – Active citizens for health and environment

After the 'Citizens Manifesto for Health and Environment' was adopted during the national event at the Seat of the European Parliament in Rome on 24 January, the project COHEIRS is heading towards its final event.

From 13 to 15 March, all the partners of the project will meet in Brindisi, Italy, and discuss the outcome and best practices of the project, started in April 2013.

The project COHEIRS – one of the most significant for ALDA in the last years – gathered 17 partners from all over Europe and promoted the active participation of citizens on health and environmental issues by establishing citizens' panels.

Funded by the European programme 'Europe for Citizens', it originated from the article 191 of the European Treaty, stating the Prevention principle which institutions need to use in case of "expected" risks, even if not fully supported by scientific data.

"The cooperation with ALDA has been a fantastic instrument to give practical tools and expression to our ideas and needs", stated Professor Alessandro Distanto, Chairman of ISBEM, the main partner and scientific support of the project COHEIRS.

[Read more about the project COHEIRS](#)

[Website of ISBEM](#)



EPAN Group of Concord - Now chaired by the Director of ALDA, Antonella Valmorbida

CONCORD is the European NGO confederation for relief and development, and it represents the major stakeholder on policy making as for the European association working in this field.

ALDA has been associated member for many years now and since the beginning of February our Director, Antonella Valmorbida, is chairing ad interim the EPAN Working Group. This position was approved by the Steering Committee of the Working Group and will be ratified at the next Plenary Meeting. The EPAN group is composed of 70 NGOs from all over Europe engaged in Development cooperation and interested to strengthen activities and knowledge as for Eastern and South Eastern Europe is concerned.

The Working Group elaborate ideas and policies to share with the policy making processes established by Concord. This role will be of particular importance in 2014 while preparing the European Year on Development in 2015 and the Post MDGs. The Convener of the group is Nafisa Hasanova, from the NGO Aprdev.

[See the website of CONCORD](#)



MY EUROPE final event - Making European politics more inclusive

The final conference of the project MY EUROPE took place from 29 to 31 January in Mellieha, Malta. Hosted by the Local Government Association, leading the project, it gathered some 40 Maltese and international representatives of local authorities and civil society organizations.

Recommendations on how to improve the access and participation in politics by less advantaged groups of citizens - migrants, youngsters, and women - have been finalized in Malta, and will soon be ready to be presented to the European institutions. The conference was also the occasion to showcase the Political report on "[The involvement of young people in democratic life at regional level](#)" that ALDA has contributed to draft under the lead of the Assembly of European Regions and the Region Alsace.

The project started in October 2012 and was aimed at providing a well structured dialogue among twinned or keen-to-cooperate towns, with specific reference to active participation in political life of specific target groups: women, youngsters and immigrants. Fourteen partners from all over Europe were involved, namely from Albania, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Macedonia, and Malta.

Its first event held in February 2013 targeted migrants. It raised awareness about immigration policies in different European countries, and showed the importance of political rights to favour own migrant integration and, in the end, their commitment to policy-making process of their country of residence. Youth and politics was the focus of the event held in Strasbourg in June, organized by ALDA. In November the third event on Women and politics took place in Skopje, and ALDA brought the 30-years-experience of its Swedish partner BalticFem to the conference.

Read more about the [project](#)



The Italian Alliance for the European Year of Citizens will continue in 2014! From Recommendations to Implementation

The Italian Alliance for the European Year of Citizens, established in 2013, will continue its activities in 2014. It follows the suggestion of the European Alliance which, during its last plenary meeting in December 2013, decided to go on with its activities.

The EU did not decide a new Priority in 2014 and there are now negotiations for having a full recognition for the year 2014 being recognised the YEAR OF THE IMPLEMENTATION. The Italian Alliance had its first meeting on 24 January 2014 in Rome, at the headquarter of the [CIME](#). The first priorities will be to disseminate widely the IT and EU recommendations of the EYCA 2013. It will also strongly support the campaign of awareness for the European Parliament elections in May. Italy will also chair the European Council from 1st of July 2014. The Alliance will request a specific meeting with the team preparing the priorities of the Presidency. 2013 is over but there are still plenty of things to do!

See the website of the [Italian Alliance for the European Year of Citizens](#)



DECIDE - Identifying and collecting measures promoting citizen participation: 24 partners at work in 14 EU and non-EU countries

As many as 24 municipalities, associations of local authorities and civil society organisations from 14 different countries in wider Europe are now identifying and collecting good practices promoting citizen participation at local and regional level. The activity has been taking place within the framework of the [project DECIDE](#) whose aim is to develop, through the establishment of a thematic network of towns and by adopting a bottom-up approach, a democratic compact, namely a set of measures that are needed in Europe to increase the quality of democracy and citizen participation.

A set of tailor-made activities such as workshops, phone interviews, questionnaires, etc. are being organised by each partner in order to collect the feedback of citizens and stakeholders on all the measures proposed. IT tools, open polls in particular, are being strongly promoted in order to also reach young people and all those who usually do not participate in local gatherings but are willing to have a say on measures affecting their involvement in public life. As final result of this process, more than 40 measures, as good practices promoting citizen participation, will be brought for discussion into the second international meeting in Bulgaria. The measures will be further analysed and systematised, as an additional step to setting the Democratic Compact.

More than 1400 persons will be directly involved in providing their feedback on the measures collected. By participating in this process, the project will promote and valorise citizens' role in the construction of a better governance both at local and European level.

ALDA, as leading partner of the project, is now completing the identification and collection of measures promoting citizen participation at local and regional level, mainly within the Alsacian borders, and will shortly invite all stakeholders and citizens to have a say on what better transfers the principle of participatory democracy into practice.

Read more about the [project DECIDE](#), within the programme Europe for Citizens



Youth employment and social-inclusion for Azeri youth - Project YES, TODAY kicking off

Azerbaijan

During the European project FUNNY - Fighting UNemployment through Networking for Youth, from 2-7 December in Baku, Azerbaijan, the launching conference of the project "YES, TODAY!" was organised by ALDA. Several seminars

and workshops took place during the week, which targeted young Azeri people (students, youth workers, unemployed), to promote debate and increase their knowledge on the topics of youth employment, and to increase their participation in the local community.

Through these activities, young Azeri participants were informed about the upcoming launch of the youth centre, which is the core of the project YES, TODAY!, and of its objectives. Furthermore, they developed skills and knowledge on their country job market and employment. Thanks to the interaction with the international participants from other 16 states in the enlarged Europe, they also got in touch with a variety of youth workers, setting the basis for international cooperation and joint activities.

The Youth Centre will provide a wide range of activities. First of all, it will provide information, training, workshops and professional assistance in the employment field to young Azeri people. At the same time, its activities will enhance social commitment and fight exclusion. The centre will also function as an incubator of innovative ideas and initiatives and develop international projects, thus ensuring its internationalization and financial sustainability.

The project YES, TODAY! is co-founded by the Waldensian Evangelical Church. For more information and upcoming news, follow ALDA's website and social networks.



"The role of citizens in Building Open and Plural Societies"

The Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) hosted a meeting entitled 'The Role of Citizens in Building Open and Plural Societies' in Tunis. Hundreds of civil society leaders and experts, representatives of ALF National Networks, and key partner institutions coming from 18 countries took a closer look at the challenges that Arab countries have to face three years after the begin of the Arab Spring. Mr Andreu Claret, ALF Executive Director, declared "the exercise of dialogue and participation is in line with the values and objectives of the Anna Lindh Foundation, an institution that promotes intercultural dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean space".

ALDA fully supports the ALF approach as it is convinced that the participation of social society at the process of political and social change in some Arab countries, can reinforce the euro-Mediterranean cooperation process.

Since 2012, within the "Programme Tournesol" (Sunflower), ALDA decided to strengthen its activities towards South and East of the Mediterranean bank, particularly in Tunisia. By reinforcing its relationships with the ALF France Network and future joint project, ALDA aims at supporting the participation of civil society to local decision-making processes, by also helping local authorities to be more open and transparent, and encouraging them to take into account the needs of the civil society and of the citizens.

See the website of [Anna Lindh Foundation](#) and [read more about the meeting](#)



Conference "Populism and Democracy in Europe"

On 31st January, a conference on "Populism and Democracy in Europe" took place in Vicenza, hosted in the City Hall.

ALDA's Director **Antonella Valmorbida** and the Secretary of the European Federalist Movement **Fabio Pietribiasi** opened the discussions, enriched by several experienced speakers' contributions.

Lucio Battistotti, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Italy, analysed the evolution of the federalism – both in Italy and in Europe - and underlined the importance of the principle of subsidiarity in creating a deeper commitment between the State and the European Union.

Read the [full speech of Lucio Battistotti](#) (in italian, .pdf)

The sociologist **Alessandro Cavalli**, Professor at Pavia University, shared his views on the populism, and its development and impact on society. He highlighted the main features of this phenomenon, mentioning the differences and the points in common of the various populist movements.

The President of the European Federalist Movement Lucio Levi spoke about the cleavage now existing between the global economic market and democracy, which is still local and national. According Mr. Levi this is the main cause of nowadays economic crisis, and the solution should be a deeper political commitment by the States. Giving to the European Union more competence and jurisdiction should be the correct answer to tackle the crisis. In fact, trying to recreate a national and isolated state would not be the solution, even if political Eurosceptic movements are insisting more and more.

NEWS FROM THE LDAs



LDA Osijek is active for the European Parliament elections

LDA Osijek, our Operational Partner and former Local Democracy Agency in Croatia, is ready for the European Parliament elections in May 2014.

They share ALDA's view and think is time to "think and act for Europe", to be active and disseminate as much as possible the campaign for the European Parliament Elections. The campaign to get us "out of the sofa and vote for the European Parliament" in May starts now. We need to be active and request our parties and stakeholders to satisfy our expectations in bringing good, capable, and reliable candidates, who will be able represent and work for all European citizens.

Useful links:

[LDA Osijek](#)

[European Elections campaign Website](#)



Participants in the project POPEYE visited an organic producer

Within the project POPEYE - "Promoting Organic Production, Enhancing Youth Employment", funded by the European programme Youth in Action, the Local Democracy Agency Osijek is implementing activities in the area of Osijek-Baranja County and Vukovar-Srijem County.

On 23 December the participants, youngsters aged 15 to 25 from two Croatian counties who had attended the educational seminar on sustainable development, ecology and organic food production, visited a farm of the Trampus family from the city of Belišće, primarily engaged in organic production of agricultural products, agricultural seeds, vegetable transplants, flowers, medicinal and aromatic plants and in the cultivation and processing of lavender and tansy.

This field visit was a chance for the participants to see organic production in practice. Mrs Vera Trampus, the owner and manager of the organic farm named "Lavanda Vera", briefly introduced the farm, its history of development and instructively introduced the participants to different sorts of herbs which she cultivates at her farm, speaking about different ways of their cultivation and about their processing and use. She also introduced the visitors to different products which are a result of the processing of these interesting and useful herbs and encouraged the participants to cultivate it themselves and to continue to study different medicinal herbs.

The Project POPEYE continues with the mapping of organic farmers in the region and with the publishing of the collected data on the [webpage](#) which is designed to be a contact point between the youth and organic producers. Ten participants from Osijek-Baranja County and Vukovar-Srijem County will participate at the final international event which will be held at the end of February in the city of Strasbourg, France. Croatian representatives at the event will have a chance to meet international participants and partners, to exchange their experiences and practices and to make contacts with international entrepreneurial world of organic agriculture.



Croatia-Serbia 2007-2013: Closing conference of the project SNET.EU

The closing conference of the project "Support for networking and twinning at European level – SNET.EU", funded by the European Union within the Cross-Border Co-operation Programme Croatia-Serbia 2007-2013, was held in OSIJEK, Croatia, on Friday 21st February 2014, organised jointly by the applicants LDA-s Subotica and Osijek.

Around sixty representatives of 12 municipalities from the border area included in the action were present in the concluding event of the eighteen month of extensive capacity building and networking activities aimed to help create a cross-border co-operation platform for follow-up project development. During the project implementation three trainings on EU public policies were held, whereas the most visited were the twelve Cross-border cafes hosted by each of the municipalities. The LDAs Osijek and Subotica marked their twentieth anniversary while jointly implementing the project and have established the LDA Resource and Training centres for promoting cross-border co-operation initiatives that have been hosting a wide range of both local and cross-border project activities.

During the closing session, a joint Declaration of Intent was signed by the representatives of twelve municipalities from border area of Croatia and Serbia: Beli Manastir, Apatin, Vukovar, Ruma, Erdut, Indjija, Stari Jankovci, Drenovci, Bac, Nijemci, Stara Pazova and Subotica:

„Considering that the convergence of local self-governments in border area of the neighboring countries is an important element in the framework of the European integration processes and policies of the European Union, the representatives of the cities and municipalities included in the project: Support to networking and cooperation between European cities and municipalities SNET.EU within the Cross-border Co-operation Program Croatia – Serbia, express their intent to promote good neighborly relations and the promotion of active European citizenship, thus contributing to the development of local communities in the border areas of Croatia and Serbia.“

The publication containing the written contributions made during the project activities is now available at the websites of ALDA, LDAs Osijek and Subotica, while the infosheets containing key development priorities of the newly established cross-border network of municipalities will be available soon on our websites.