

## ALDA NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2016



### **SAVE THE DATE! GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ALDA, 12-13 MAY 2016, PARIS - Building trust, empowering communities**

We are pleased to inform you that the General Assembly of ALDA this year will be held on 12-13 May 2016 with the support and partnership of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development in Paris, France.

This important event, titled “Building trust, empowering communities”, will be organized in partnership with UNDP ART Initiative, with AFCCRE : Association Française du Conseil des Communes et Régions d’Europe, and with the network of decentralized cooperation France/Balkans.

The General Assembly will elect the new Governing Board of the Association (we will soon send you specific information on the election). The event will be connected to several networking meetings for us and the Local Democracy Agencies - among these, numerous meetings of the project LADDER, including a capitalization event on the European Year of Development 2015. Therefore, mark your agenda for the 12 and 13 May!



### **The European family portrait gets wider: ALDA welcomes the application for EU membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The European Association for Local Democracy – ALDA welcomes the application for EU.

Although Brussels made it clear Bosnia and Herzegovina must carry out a series of reforms before the application can be considered, the event represents a milestone for the country, as well as for the process of EU integration.

“After the accession of Croatia, my country, in 2013, and the progresses of Montenegro, Serbia, and

Albania towards integration, I congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina and all the stakeholders who have made this crucial step possible” said Oriano Otočan, President of ALDA.

“We are all aware that this is the beginning of a long journey of reforms and improvements. However, I would like to quote the words of the High Representatives for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini, who highlighted that this is a great day for the country citizens, who can see that common objectives can be achieved when all levels of governance cooperate” continued Otočan.

ALDA has been working in Bosnia and Herzegovina since its establishment to rebuild trust in the war-torn country. Together with the three Local Democracy Agencies based in Mostar, Zavidovici, and Prijedor, it has accompanied the transition of the country towards democracy, while promoting interethnic dialogue, civic participation, good governance, and development.

**Oriano Otočan,  
President of ALDA**

**For more information:**

About [ALDA](#)

About the [Local Democracy Agency Mostar](#)

About the [Local Democracy Agency Zavidovici](#)

About the [Local Democracy Agency Prijedor](#)

Read the [statement](#) in PDF version.



## Letter to Commissioner Timmermans for the SDGs

On 9 February 2016 a letter for the implementation of SDGs has been sent to Commissioner Timmermans.

“We call on the EU and each of its Member States to develop an overarching Sustainable Development Strategy with a timeline of

2030 and a concrete implementation plan which coordinates the achievement of the 17 goals, 169 targets and their indicators.”

Further to their adoption in New York by the UN, the implementation of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) at all levels are of utmost importance. At the EU level, LADDER consortium (within its EYD2015 & follow up Thematic Path) is part of a wide coalition of CSOs to monitor their implementation.

The LADDER consortium further supports the creation of mechanisms of accountability which would allow CSOs to support and monitor the implementation of the 2030 agenda at the EU level.

**Useful links:**

[Full letter to Commissioner Timmermans](#)

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## First General Assembly meeting of RECRIRE project

From 22 to 26 February, ALDA and its partners of the consortium ReCriRe are successfully holding the first General Assembly meeting of 2016. The event is taking place at the Committee of the Regions and at the office of the Council of Europe in Brussels. The meeting is an occasion to

gather together the sixteen Universities and Research centers, covering 13 European countries, to advance the research on what kind of social identity change is occurring in Europe in time of crisis.

The General Assembly provides the partners with the opportunity to finalize the upcoming meetings of the main body of the consortium and to revise the key tools of the research such as the Communication and Dissemination Plan, the Gender Strategy and Data Management Plan. Participants are also discussing the first results of the Working Package 3 related to the multilevel analysis of the symbolic universe. As action plan for the upcoming 12 months, they are developing the overall approach of the case studies of policies.

The seminar “The socio-economic crisis and its impact on European societies and identities: how to shape social policies in today’s Europe” is a key moment to discuss the assumptions of the project and its current outcomes with policy makers, civil society and social science experts. The objective of the seminar is to identify innovative responses to the crisis through policies able to strengthen the resilience of societies, renew the European integration and identity and at the same time strengthen the sense of solidarity and the public sphere.

The three-year project, funded under the call Europe in a changing world - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies, started in May 2015. It is aimed at analyzing the symbolic background of European societies and the impacts of the socio-economic crisis on them, in order to frame better policies at local, national and European level.

[Photo gallery](#)

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## New ALDA's Toolkit of good practices on Citizen Participation

Fostering cooperation between local authorities and civil society has been proven to be an efficient tool to create the necessary conditions for political and social development of communities all across the

European Union and its Neighbourhood.

An efficient cooperation brings better results in terms of equality, welfare, security and sustainability. Engaging citizens in all aspects of the life of their community and making their voices heard through peaceful and legal forms of participation is also an antidote to populism and anti-democratic movements that are nowadays raising up across Europe.

Local authorities are called to increase their transparency and accountability as well as to develop mechanisms effectively involving citizens in the decision making process. Civil society organisations also play a key role, they being a unique link between citizens and their local and regional governments. Together they can provide the needed mechanisms towards participatory democracy, and strengthen democratic institutions at the local level.

This toolkit aims at providing local authorities and civil society associations with a set of tested practices promoting the participation of citizens in the public and political life of their community. The collection of good practices is an ongoing process kicked-off within the framework of the two year EU funded project DECIDE – Democratic Compact: Improving Democracy in Europe! Through the establishment of a thematic network of towns and a bottom-up approach, more than 30 measures were identified, exchanged, further elaborated and tested by all 26 project partners. The Democratic Compact will be a permanent tool opened to contributions from all members of the network.

**Useful links:**

[Toolkit of Good Practices](#)

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## ALDA local democracy library - Decentralized cooperation in EaP in the spotlight in the first issue

The new series “Local democracy library” launched by ALDA collects the expertise of the Association in the field of good local governance analyzing specific topics in

cooperation with our members and partners.

The first issue of the series, titled “Decentralized cooperation: an added value for Eastern Partnership countries”, presents the benefits of decentralized cooperation as an instrument for engaging local and regional authorities in the EaP. Written by our Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida, the paper is primarily intended for EU policy makers and practitioners in the field of development cooperation, for staff of national, local and regional authorities of Eastern Partnership countries, and provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities linked to decentralized cooperation in these countries.

**Read the paper:**

[English version](#)

[Russian version](#)

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## First coordination meeting of the Regional Network for Local Democracy for this year in Knjaževac - Dobrica Milovanović, member of the Governing Board, contributes to the event

The first meeting of the Regional Network for Local Democracy for this year in the framework of the project "Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue", took place in one of the host cities of the project – Knjaževac (Serbia), from 8 till 11 February 2016.

The coordination meeting brought together the partners and members of the project from the Local Democracy Agencies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo\* and Serbia, ALDA Skopje and ALDA, represented by the Secretary General, Antonella Valmorbida. The young people and representatives of local authorities from Mostar, Prijedor, Zavidovići, Nikšić, Skopje, Kavadarci, Subotica, Peja and Knjaževac, also joined the meetings and discussed the next phase of the project.

*"This meeting is an opportunity to determine the second phase of this project and how to ensure better participation of the young people in the society. All the representatives of the LDAs, together with the cities and municipalities within the network and the youth in this project are all focused on the youth and their options and opportunities to act on municipal, but also on European level,"* said **Dobrica Milovanović**, member of the Governing Board of ALDA (video [here](#)).

The four working days were packed with numerous meetings of the working bodies of the Regional Network, aimed to evaluate and improve the work within the Network, and strengthen the regional cooperation of the partners.

This event was also an excellent opportunity to attend a side program, designed especially for the representatives of local authorities of the project, in order to boost their further cooperation within the Regional Network for Local Democracy.

The Regional Network for Local Democracy is supported by EU, through Civil Society Facility Operating Grants to IPA CSO Associations.

To learn more about the first year of the cooperation, or to follow the news from the project, please visit the [official site](#) of the Balkan Network and join us on the dedicated [FB page](#).

Also read the publication ["Comparative Overview and Analysis: Policy and Legislative Framework for Youth Participation in the Balkans"](#)

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## Joint Declaration on the ENP by LADDER Consortium and PLATFORMA

The Joint Declaration of LADDER & PLATFORMA on the ENP has been just published.

It includes policy recommendations, further to the open consultation process and the

publication of the updated framework for the ENP by the EU.

PLATFORMA & the LADDER consortium strongly believe that the role of the Local and Regional governments should be reinforced and that the ENP should pay more attention to a series of policy issues, including the process of decentralisation in the Neighbourhood.

### Useful links:

[Joint declaration on ENP](#)

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## ALDA and its members coping with the refugee crisis

More than a million refugees fleeing conflict and unstable zones arrived in the EU this year, and the flow is constantly increasing. Great difficulties in managing the situation gave rise to a real humanitarian emergency, accompanied by social and cultural tensions among and within countries

and communities.

In November 2015, ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy – expressed its stand on the matter through the LADDER Consortium [joint statement](#) in the occasion of the Valletta Summit. The publication focuses on the main migration issues, including the treatment of asylum seekers, human smuggling and integration, while highlighting the importance of an effective and genuine aid to be offered by member states in cooperation with civil society and local authorities. ALDA, together with some of its most important members, has shown its willingness to contribute to this common effort by implementing activities to tackle the refugee crisis in the framework of its “Migrants Initiative”.

Please find here [all activities run by ALDA and its members coping with the refugees crisis](#).

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## Slogan Competition Results!

The slogan competition of the LADDER project is over! Congratulations to all participating countries and participants for their inventive, creative and meaning-full proposals! It has been a huge success with more than 750 proposals submitted across participating countries!

A multiple team formed from project partners carefully analyzed the submitted proposals, following a multiple level analysis. All the slogans were evaluated taking into account several criteria, including: the link with the project major theme, relevance to DEAR, the communication strength, originality & creativity. You can find the best 34 slogans selected and the 5 winners on the [dedicated news](#) of LADDER website.

All the winning slogans will be promoted widely, within the project network & during events organized by the project partners. Future promotional materials realized within the project will also make a mention / promote the winning slogans.

To check the indicative list of the schools that participated, please click [here](#).

*We thank again all the participants and all the co-applicants which ran the slogan competition of the LADDER project!*



## "Be active on local level, it's where the democracy begin" - interview to Ivana Dimitrovska, Director of ALDA Skopje

The daily newspaper Vecher interviewed Mrs. Ivana Dimitrovska, Director of ALDA Skopje, on last 2 February 2016.

ALDA is created by the Council of Europe, 15 years ago, aiming to promote local democracy on the Balkans. The Director of ALDA Skopje, Ivana Dimitrovska points out the main objective in exchanging the practices and people in all areas and regions where ALDA is present, in order to exchange experiences in education, local democracy and culture as key for improving the society. "Basically the idea is to emphasize the importance of the local governance, the citizens and the civil society for development of one country, municipality or territory. ALDA provides the opportunity for the local governance to engage in international cooperation. In that manner, we recently held a conference in Tunisia where we presented the Macedonian model for decentralization. In Georgia on the other hand, ALDA organized a training for the civil society. Macedonia is one of ALDA's strategic centres for the entire region and our activity begin with the programme for cooperation with the former Lower Normandy Region in France (now called Normandy). So far, ALDA's activities integrated more than 150 partners both from Macedonia and France in over 60 projects of cooperation, having a various thematic scope such as: ecology, cultural heritage, education..., says Dimitrovska, adding the number of four twinned schools from Macedonia and Lower Normandy. We regularly exchange young interns and artists, given that

ALDA has offices in Strasbourg, Brussels, Vicenza and the Macedonian office became officially active in 2011." says Mrs. Dimitrovska.

**Useful links:**

Read the [full interview](#)

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## **ALDA working on youth E-participation: First partner meeting of the project YouthMetre in Berlin**

How to engage young people in shaping youth policies at local level via innovative ICT tools? This is the challenging objective of the forward looking project YouthMetre, funded

by the Erasmus+ programme.

YouthMetre will be an innovative approach to close the gap between youth and local institutions by collecting the perceived needs of youth in key policy areas and providing guidelines to public institutions that help address them.

The partners reunited in Berlin on 28-29 January to plan the implementation process of the project. Aldo Xhani, Coordinator of the Citizenship programme, brought in ALDA's expertise in promoting community approaches in policy making at local level. The event was an occasion, in particular, to revise and plan deliverables and milestones and define key components such as communication/dissemination and monitoring/evaluation.

The project, expected to finish in December 2017, will be a key instrument of ALDA's Youth strategy. The priority of our action is to provide adequate knowledge, competences and skills to young people in order to train them for the labour market and to increase their possibilities to find a good job; raise youngsters' awareness about local and global issues as well as stimulate their civic participation and social engagement through the promotion of activism and volunteering.

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