

November 22, 2022

**Antonella Valmorbida – ALDA Secretary General
at the ELOGE award ceremony**

Dear Ministers, dear Mayors, dear participants

I am pleased to be here today with all of you, as Secretary General of ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy, but also having a significant experience working with local authorities in Croatia, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.

ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy, in its over 20 years of existence, has the mission of promoting local democracy, citizen participation, and cooperation through work with local and regional authorities alongside civil society actors. It was created in 1998 by the Council of Europe. It is a global alliance that has undertaken many projects and initiatives, primarily on the local level, and is a key European player, particularly in the Balkans. It has developed a network of local institutions and civil society organizations that includes over 350 members from over 42 European and neighboring countries. ALDA cooperates with authorities on the European and local levels and provides support for them with these projects. We represent a unique organization in the working for and governed by local and regional authorities and civil society groups.

ALDA acts as a coordinator and supporter for a network of 15 Local Democracy Agencies. The coordination of this network of LDAs was the original purpose for its creation in 1998. We celebrate 30 years of activities in the region.

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Local Democracy Agencies are local organisations funded and supported by partners local and regional alike that seek to facilitate democratic support for local authorities, active citizenship and participation, promotion of European values, and encouragement of multilateral, decentralized cooperation. At ALDA, we value a culture of participation and active citizenship and doing what can be done to improve the local context. Our projects are developed and designed alongside our members and partners to encourage cooperation between local authorities and civil society, to unlock potential resources, social cohesion and support sustainable development.

The work carried out by ALDA during the past 20 years has strongly supported the development of the countries and their European perspective. Our action is playing a crucial role to build trust, promote citizen participation and European values, and strengthen local authorities.

Long standing experience of our organisation in local communities has taught us that in the last years support of the Local communities has been the key element for accomplishing the social and economic reforms and sustainable change.

We consider that it is important to develop a participatory democratic culture and active citizenship and we strongly support citizens' participation in decision making. With this in view we encourage all the citizens to take an active role in local policy making.

In that sense, ALDA received in 2021 accreditation from the Council of Europe for the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) implementation in Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo. We are also taking active part in its implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as being partners in the project Link4cooperation.

The European Label of Governance Excellence - ELoGE is an acknowledgement of achievement and a powerful learning and improvement tool. The ELoGE Label is awarded to municipalities which have achieved a high level of good governance measured against a Council of Europe

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benchmark. ELoGE offers a way to measure compliance by a municipality with the Council of Europe 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance.

ALDA, as accredited entity committed to implement ELoGE in a number of municipalities. This means translating the benchmark, making necessary adaptations, identifying the municipalities who wish to implement ELoGE and helping them undertake the different steps of ELoGE.

The accredited entity awards ELoGE to deserving municipalities that have successfully completed ELoGE. This label, which is valid for one year, is a recognition that a municipality has achieved a high level of good governance according to Council of Europe standards. ELoGE is also an instrument for municipalities to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to initiate action with a view to addressing the latter.

We believe that the ELoGE label brings a significant added-value in the promotion of good local governance and will help public administration and relevant stakeholders to understand the importance of sustainable good governance.

Being fully aware of many challenges that Europe and the Balkan region is facing in this moment, we consider that this is a step-in support to both continuing and to the future process of democratic stability, strengthening of institutions, balanced development, fair social policy and economic development.

There are still many challenges to be addressed and it is the belief of ALDA that the implementation of the ELoGE programme is an important step in facilitating good local governance and a culture of participation, and will strongly benefit the participating municipalities in the long run. Even if the label isn't awarded it can still prove to be beneficial to the municipalities that have committed themselves to these standards and shows their willingness. The project can help the

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European Association
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relevant stakeholders to understand the benefits of principles of sustainable good governance. The label acts as a kind of added-value for the participating municipalities that proves their capacities to excel in their local development and policy. The self-assessment protocols and standards set are instrumental in meeting the benchmarks set for an effective, open, and responsive local administration that has greater trust among the constituents.

We hope to contribute with a year 2 in those countries and more. We will assist also the Ministries, if possible, to include the ELOGE principles in their standards and reforms. We may encourage again municipalities awarded and those which started to engage with ALDA with membership and activities. They have the profile to build together a stronger community and alliance, with us.

Antonella Valmorbida

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