



European Support to Local Democracy - ESLD -

Backing resilient communities for
sustainable and fair development

Abstract

WHY WE CAN DO IT 4

- 1. The network 4
- 2. The experience 6
- 3. The technical capacity 7
- 4. A unique methodology 8

WHY WE HAVE TO DO IT 9

HOW WE CAN DO IT 10

PACKAGE 1: Technical Assistance, Expertise and policy making 10

- 1.1 Policy making technical assistance in the field of local democracy, decentralization, participative local democracy and decentralized cooperation 10
- 1.2 ALDA + 11
- 1.3 Support to decentralization, local authorities' empowerment and territorial reforms 11
- 1.4 Support to participative democracy and citizens engagement 11
- 1.5 Civil society empowerment 12
- 1.6 Local Democracy as a basis for local development, empowering social capital 12
- 1.7. Assistance to local government reforms at the local level 12
- 1.8 Assistance to local elections 12

PACKAGE 2: Assessment and evaluation 13

- 2.1. Implementation of a good local governance assessment and monitoring 13
- 2.2. Assessment and mapping of civil society capacities and structures 13

PACKAGE 3: Framework programmes & working together 13

- 3.1. Planning and implementing an Integrated Territorial Development Diagnostic (ITDD) and planning a Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD) 13
- 3.2. Working together and implementing local democracy, regranting schemes and participative urban registration plans 15
- 3.3 Local governance solving local problems 15
- 3.4 Assistance to project development on local democracy at the national and international level 15
- 3.5 Permanent assistance to local democracy thanks to the Local Democracy Agencies 16
- 3.6 DEAR – Development Education and Awareness raising, education to global citizenship 17
- 3.7 Local Democracy and civic initiatives in post Covid-19 17

PACKAGE 4: Networking assistance 17

- 4.1 Assistance to partnership for local governance 17
- 4.2. Assistance to decentralised cooperation & twinning between local authorities & communities 18

PACKAGE 5: Local democracy and digital tools, citizenship in digital era 18

European Support to Local Democracy is ALDA's flagship initiative, kicked off with the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2020-2024. The initiative **includes a panoply of instruments** supporting local democracy through an institutional and civil society viewpoint. It encompasses councillors and local leaders. ALDA knows **HOW** to support local democracy from different aspects with various stakeholders and ALDA **CAN (technical capacity, network and experience)** propose the right path of activities for different situations. **Local democracy means to put local communities at the centre of the attention supporting human rights, democracy and sustainable development.** ESLD comprises hundreds of projects, participants and stakeholders from Europe and beyond. With the Strategic plan 2020-2024, ALDA is ready to bring its long-standing experience and added value globally to accompany countries, cities and communities in solving problems in order for all of us to **reach together the future Sustainable Development Goals.**

THE VISION

*Local democracy is based on empowered **civic initiatives**, working with **local authorities** and it is solving local problems of resilient communities concretely thus contributing to sustainable and fair development.*

THE STRATEGY

Local democracy is a key factor for democratic transition, stabilisation and development. It is fully implemented thanks to empowered local authorities, civil society groups and citizens working together to solve local problems and shape the future through engagement and participation. In this moment, catching up to challenges like the COVID 19 pandemic and other global challenges (environment, democracy, migrations and demography), civic initiatives at the local level are fundamental from a social and economic point of view, building resilient and successful communities. Europe based its development and success in these last decades on decentralisation and subsidiarity, empowering local communities. We want to support communities by sharing our 20 years of experience and our powerful network.

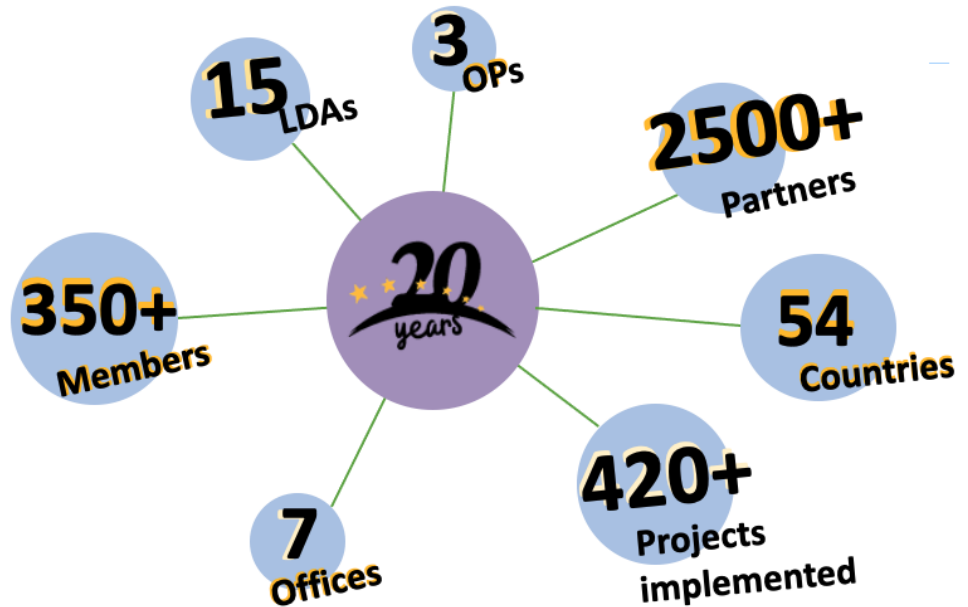
WHY WE CAN DO IT

1. THE NETWORK

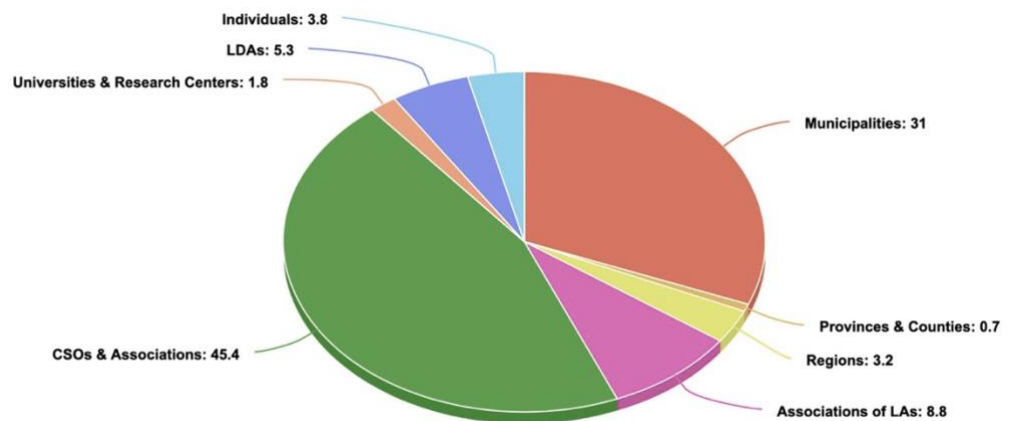
350 members (including local authorities, associations of local authorities, civil society organisations and universities) coming from more than **40 countries**, **thousands of partners** and **15 Local Democracy Agencies** – targeting further development of the network.

ALDA is also part of numbers of civil society and local authorities' network in Europe and in the World.

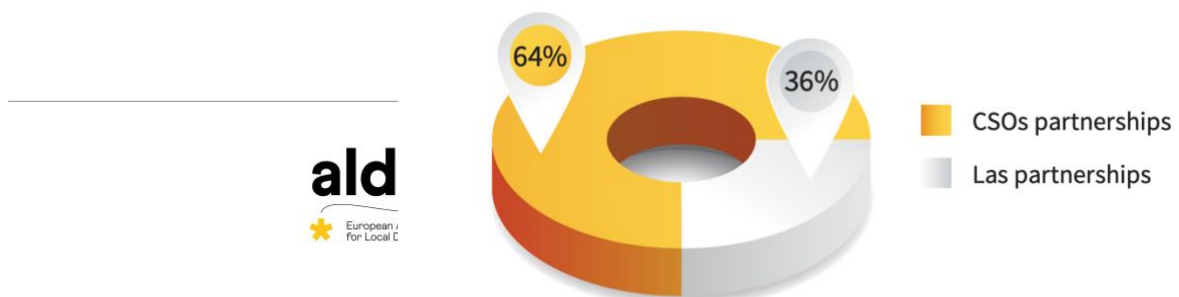
ALDA's Network



Members' composition (%)



Partners' composition

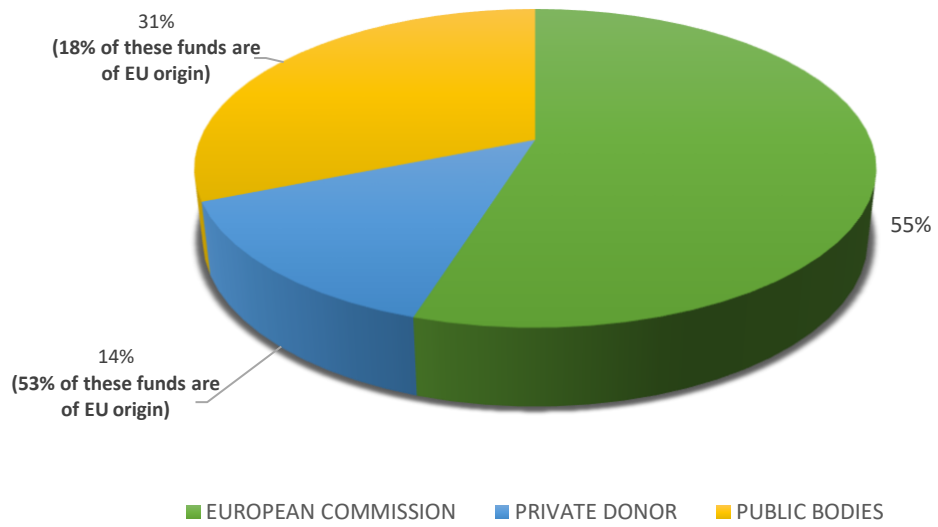


ALDA's networks



2. THE EXPERIENCE

ALDA donors



ALDA's projects



43.203.666,00

3. THE TECHNICAL CAPACITY

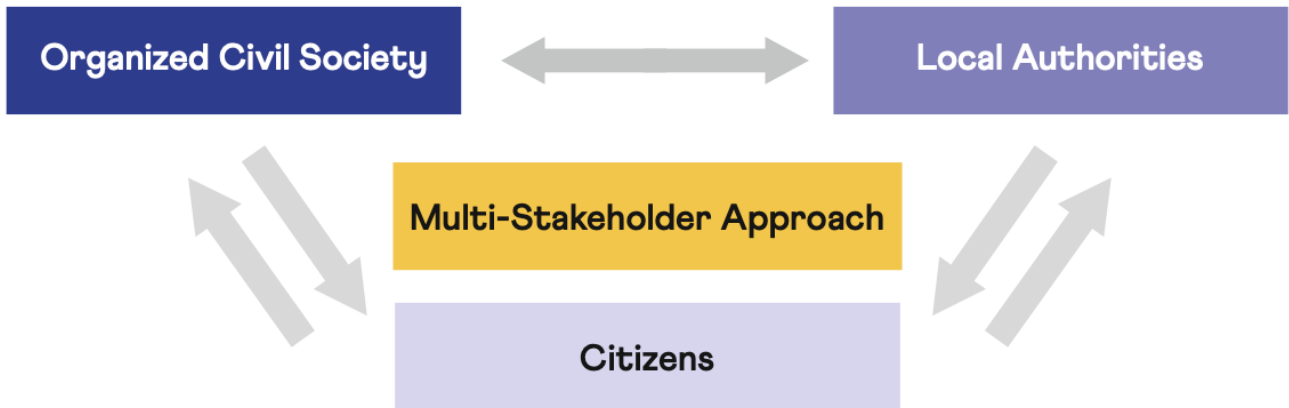
On the financial/management side, ALDA's Project Management Unit is monitored and structured following the objectives below: Reach a coherence among the different projects of ALDA, increase the quality of the project outputs, avoid any financial and narrative issues, ensure projects are well communicated and visible and optimize resources and tools. Since 2000 around 10% of ALDA projects have been submitted to expenditure verification before the submission of the final report to the EC. Only 0,03% of expenditures of the above audited amount were considered ineligible and re-funded to EC.

On people's side, now ALDA's staff is composed by 40 employees located in Italy, France, Belgium, North Macedonia, Tunisia and Moldova, working supported by a career plan and ethical code, performance oriented.

4. A UNIQUE METHODOLOGY

ALDA bring in its governance and projects local authorities and civil society and it engages in a long-standing cooperation, pragmatically oriented. **ALDA is the only network engaging structurally local authorities, associations of local authorities and civil society groups.** Its projects are impact

evaluated and change people's lives. It engages its networks in exchanges of practices with a multi-stakeholder approach and decentralized cooperation. The multiplicity of actors and its very strong EU presence and experience brings a unique added value. The Local Democracy Agencies represent a unique example of stable support to decentralization.



WHY WE HAVE TO DO IT

In a widely globalised and urbanised world, the local and territorial dimension of public policies have a paramount importance to provide citizens with services, sense of belonging and a community to live in. Throughout Europe and in the world, in pragmatic terms and public policies, **the role of the local**

institutions and decision makers is fundamental to secure welfare, wealth, security, educations and good living conditions.

Local Democracy, decentralisation and citizens engagement are key for development and for generating resources in a fair and sustainable manner.

The strengthening of local and regional authorities (with their real autonomy – as described in the European Charter on Local Self Government of the Council of Europe) and a vivid and strong civil society (articulated in different forms and ways of actions) are the key work of ALDA.

By **strengthening these two stakeholders and letting them work together, the society would benefit** in terms of better, fairer, and efficient solutions adopted. ALDA actions are translating into fact the **principle of localization of the SDGs.**



HOW WE CAN DO IT

Our proposal – the European Support to Local Democracy - is articulated in **actions and examples**, which are the results of our 20th years of experience on the matter. The chapters represent set of actions and different stakeholders that, according to our constant work, are often requested by our partners and members.

Various stakeholders engaged	Local and regional authorities
	National institutions
	Citizens
	Civil society organisations
	Institute of research
Type of activities implemented	Analysis and research
	Training and capacity building
	Local community projects support
	Policy making and advocacy at national and local/regional level
	Best practices exchanges
	Support to local economic development
Possibility to deliver	Planning, programming and strategy development
	Through joint projects with ALDA
	Through technical assistance of ALDA staff
	Through the support of the Local Democracy Agencies
	Through the support of the partnership and membership basis of ALDA
	Through the support of ALDA + Integrated Territorial Development Diagnostic (ITDD)

In order to tackle those actions in a coordinate manner, the ESLD is presenting package of actions.

PACKAGE 1: Technical Assistance, Expertise and policy making

1.1 Policy making technical assistance in the field of local democracy, decentralization, participative local democracy and decentralized cooperation

Policy making and technical assistance are oriented to **national/regional and local stakeholders** and **international stakeholders** (mainly European Union institutions, European Commission and EUD) . Our work can take the form of **policy papers, analysis, recommendations following projects' activities, Inquiries.**

1.2 ALDA+

ALDA had developed its activities of Technical assistance and expertise through its own resources and networks but also thanks to the development of ALDA +, a company set up in 2018 to address needs of our members and other companies and communities. ALDA + is owned by ALDA and respond to

the need of supporting globally the mandate of the Association. Activities are **training and capacity building, technical assistance, Participatory governance instruments, events, communication and public relations.**

1.3 Support to decentralization, local authorities' empowerment and territorial reforms

The package of support can be multiple:

Accompanying the legislative process towards decentralization at the national, regional and local level, in a participative manner (with commission and consultation and inputs from various level of governance).

Accompanying the territorial reforms process (aggregation/merging or changes of territorial representation).

Accompanying new local authorities to embark on their new responsibilities. ALDA can also assist the new forms of local governance as well the territorial reforms to be put in place.

Accompanying a network of stakeholders. ALDA can accompany the network of national and local stakeholders to support decentralization and to find the best way forward.

Accompanying activities and joint programmes: Implementation of sub-granting programs

1.4 Support to participative democracy and citizens engagement

We focus on dialogue and negotiations groups and mechanisms, with concrete examples and modern ways of engaging, also using media and internet (overcoming the difficult situation of the COVID 19). At the national level, policies should take into consideration citizens engagement in policy making at the local and national level. ALDA knows how to raise the profile at the national level of the request of citizens, by tracing patterns of cooperation and making good practices a more systemized approach. Thanks to its European experience, we have cases and elements with which to share the added value and build the appropriate path for each of the country and community approach.

1.5 Civil society empowerment

ALDA accompanies awareness raising, capacities in engaging in public life through training and practices and it develops skills in lobbying and advocacy. ALDA focuses in particular in engaging disadvantaged groups such as women, minorities and youth in decision making processes. Close the activities of the Council of Europe and other European institutions, it developed – with the Conference of the International Organization – the Code on Best practices of citizens participation, giving useful tips for having a vivid civil society, part of the community and engaging with local authorities.

1.6 Local Democracy as a basis for local development, empowering social capital

ALDA has been involved in numerous programmes supporting local entrepreneurship, based on a framework initiative with local authorities and civil society. It is focusing on corporate responsibility and sustainable and inclusive approach.

1.7. Assistance to local government reforms at the local level

ALDA has been active in supporting changes and institutionalization of those ones at the local level. The practices of participation and citizens engagement becomes part of the community development and plans, securing a long-term impact in the community. We have focused on engaging minority groups, women and youth and civil society in board terms, with the creation of rules and examples to be replicated.

1.8 Assistance to local elections

The programmes are including awareness raising material and dissemination, organization of forums and exchanges about candidates in formal and informal ways, cooperation with the media to have a balanced space for presenting candidates and challenges, education citizens to the civic duty of voting and valorizing their contribution and cooperation with institutions for reaching out the more vulnerable people and give them the possibility to vote and stimulation also of citizens to be engaged in local political life by raising their attention on local issues in particular for women and youth candidates.

PACKAGE 2: Assessment and evaluation

2.1. Implementation of a good local governance assessment and monitoring

ALDA is able to deliver sound assessment on the potential, opportunities and challenges of local governance at the more national or even local level. It has developed number of assessments in the Balkans but also in Eastern Europe and Mediterranean area. The assessment criteria are based on evidences and use methodologies tested on the field. ALDA can run the assessment of the quality and features of local governance using the methods proposed by the Centre of Expertise of the Council of Europe, namely the ELOGE criteria¹. It includes a set of 12 criteria and on interviews and desk work

¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/eloge>

evaluating. It refers to the Strategy for Innovation and Governance at Local Level is the Council of Europe body in charge of examining accreditation requests.

2.2. Assessment and mapping of civil society capacities and structures

Local Governance is based on a vivid, democratic and representative civil society. Associations of citizens and other forms of aggregation represent a condition since qua non for a good local governance, being able to be resilient to the crisis and difficulties. Mapping the civil society landscape of a community is very important and it can unveil possibilities non expected at a first glance: Associations, their missions, format and representation, their projects and ways of working together; Civil society leaders and their capacity of representativity and in the community; Other forms of aggregation linked to history and traditions (the tribes or community groups) and innovative ways of citizens aggregation.

PACKAGE 3: Framework programmes & working together

3.1. Planning and implementing an Integrated Territorial Development Diagnostic (ITDD) and planning a Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD)

Local development accompanied by support to local democracy is powerful to bring sustainable and fair development. Local participation in a project, elaborating the needs and plans and being part of the implementation could improve the quality of the project oriented to development. It would improve local public good. It is therefore important to strengthen local institutions and make them more democratic and inclusive, by involving minority groups, so to enhance the capacity of communities to engage in collective actions.

3.1.1. ITTD

Through this instrument ALDA knows how:

- To assess the nature and progress of the decentralisation process, taking into consideration the extent to which decentralisation reforms have (or have not) created space for local authorities to play a developmental role on their own.
- To assess the existence of relevant national urban, regional and/or rural development policies in a given country to gauge the impact of this national policy framework on the ability of local authorities to operate as developmental actors.
- In view of the above, to assess the prospects and limitations for promoting territorial development and/or decentralisation.

- To formulate the relevant recommendations to support the full implementation of existing regulations.

3.1.2. TALD

Through this instrument ALDA knows how to evaluate the **multiple roles of local authorities – a go-between for the State and the citizens, at the heart of regional development**. ALDA, through ALDA, looks at local development, economic diversification and job creation. TALD implements the two processes (development and decentralisation) in parallel so as to make them work coherently.

TALD is a policy framework providing the key ingredients to translate decentralisation reforms into development outcomes. Under this framework, the primary responsibility **for planning, financing and managing local development stands with local authorities. These must be accountable and autonomous, “empowered with the ability to improve the efficiency of national resources and generate new ones”**. TALD builds on the **inclusiveness of citizens as key democratic and development actors**, on local **resources’ mobilisation**, on the role of **autonomous and accountable** local authorities as catalysts for development. It also tackles the unbalanced development, like regional differences.

An example of completely decentralised processes and competences to the local authorities is provided below:



3.2. Working together and implementing local democracy, regranting schemes and participative urban registration plans

ALDA’s fundamentals are grounded on the fact that collaborative decision-making is more effective than a top-down approach; this is because a cooperative approach takes into consideration all the actors affected by a problem into a collective analysis and elaboration of a creative shared-solution.

ALDA is devoted to promoting this approach across Europe and its neighbouring countries mainly

- a) by empowering local stakeholders through capacity building on how to use participatory methods – with the final goal of improving the good local governance, and
- b) by implementing tailor-made projects that take into consideration the local assessment of needs and a solid dialogue with local stakeholders.

3.3 Local governance solving local problems

Local authorities nowadays have the difficult role to **deliver solutions** for their communities with **limited resources** (human and financial) in a complex society (economic and social challenges, environmental issues, radical changes in jobs and economy). Together, local authorities and civil society, can identify better solutions for their own common living thanks to implementation of simple and efficient tools and instruments. Thanks to participative processes, it is possible to find ways to address community problems and challenges.

3.4 Assistance to project development on local democracy at the national and international level

ALDA is supporting members and partners to elaborate plans and ideas for future funding. With its team of development, ALDA is able to organize a process for identifying potential sponsors for local authorities and civil society groups, working together and improving life in the communities.

ALDA is able to plan a constructive process for identifying:

- a) Needs of the community (by using methods of inquiry online and on the field)
- b) Stakeholders (identifying those who are directly and indirectly affected by the problem and the topics, through a mapping of actors)
- c) Resources (identify the possible resources, financial, social capital, human resources and skills, time and energy available)
- d) Partnership (other groups or stakeholders useful for supporting the project proposal, institutional, private and citizens partnership)

3.5 Permanent assistance to local democracy thanks to the Local Democracy Agencies

Even considering that in the past 20 years ALDA has changed its role and extended its way of actions, passing from being the umbrella organization for the Local Democracy Agencies to its current status of an International organization working on the field of local participatory democracy and good governance, the LDAs are still nowadays a very important part of the ALDA's network and fundamental implementors of ALDA's mission in the neighbourhood countries.

The LDAs partnerships by means of multilateral decentralized cooperation were developed on the basis of two main lines of action:

- **Territorial based approach**, involving all the actors of the communities of interest on a geographic base.
- **Thematic networking** focused on specific, commonly determined issues connecting different local communities.

● COUNTRIES WITH ALDA ACTIVITIES AND MEMBERS / EU MEMBER STATES

● LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCIES (LDAs)

- LDA ALBANIA (AL)
- LDA ARMENIA (ARM)
- LDA CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SERBIA (RS)
- LDA OF DNIPROPETROVSK REGION (UA)
- LDA GEORGIA (GEO)
- LDA KOSOVO (RKS)
- LDA MARIUPOL (UA)



Education to global citizenship

TI ... of the world at the same level of responsibility, anywhere in the world.

ALDA is promoting:

- Training and capacity building for awareness raising and changing peoples' habits and systems of living
- Building partnership between local authorities, civil society and private sector in order to put in place sustainable plans in development, social issues and business
- Working with schools and institutions so to change curricula and introduce a global approach to sustainable development
- Create ad hoc programmes for working together and creating platforms of support

3.7 Local Democracy and civic initiatives in post Covid-19

In such a situation of reduced mobility and in sanitary emergency, ALDA has planned several alternative plans for activities and for making possible citizens participation, while local authorities are even more at the centre of the attention.

ALDA aggregates and strengthens participation even during the lockdown and self-isolation imposed by the virus which have been so challenging for all us. Resilient communities will be the basis for a future relaunch of our common mission, and their role is currently more crucial than ever for all of us.

PACKAGE 4: Networking assistance

4.1 Assistance to partnership for local governance

ALDA can support contacts and exchanges of best practices with more than 350 members and thousands in partners in Europe, identifying best practices for all topics of local governance, for local authorities and civil society groups. ALDA can create platforms for raising campaigns and advocacy for national and international networks. ALDA can also building multi stakeholders alliances in order to advance complex and multi-level policy and programmes.

4.2. Assistance to Decentralised cooperation & twinning between local authorities & communities

ALDA and in particular the Local democracy Agencies are based on the concept of Decentralised Cooperation². In recent years, local and regional authorities - or more broadly referred as “communities” - became themselves actors of cooperation, initiators and implementers of development policies³.

What can ALDA do:

1. Identify potential partner and long-term town twinning between EU local authorities and local authorities from cooperation countries.
2. Map stakeholders in both communities and develop partnership as well as ground of cooperation (education, job creations, urbanisms, etc)
3. Identify and put in place partnership projects
4. Develop a long-standing strategic plan of cooperation
5. Fundraise for partnership and project

² See, European decentralized cooperation : working for development engaging local authorities and civil society, Author Antonella Valmorbidia, Peter Lang Edition, 2018

³ More on this : Hafteck, P., “An introduction to decentralized cooperation: Definitions, origins and conceptual mapping”, Public Administration & Development, 23(4), 333, 2003

PACKAGE 5: Local democracy and digital tools, citizenship in digital era 13

No one should be left behind⁴. Every citizen should be involved in this digital revolution.

ALDA develops technological tools for participation and it helps local government and civil society to be prepared and active in digital era. It is working on digitalization proper equipment and for literacy on the matter. It develops support for educational institutions and CSOs to develop participative digital tools.

⁴ Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>