



8th of July 2025

Official Statement by ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy Concerning Recent Accusations and Clarifications on Affiliated Individuals

ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy expresses its deep concern regarding the recent media report published by Bihus.info, which accuses our association of being an instrument of pro-Russian ambitions in Ukraine. **These claims are entirely unfounded and misleading, and we reject them in the strongest terms. ALDA and its members have always supported Ukraine in its fight against the aggressor.** We are partners of the key European organisations such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Committee of the Regions, recognised for capacity and ethical approach.

Since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion, ALDA has not only reaffirmed its political support for Ukraine but has also significantly scaled up its operational engagement across the country. Through our network of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), partnerships with Ukrainian municipalities, civil society organisations, and European institutions, we have contributed actively to Ukraine's recovery and decentralisation process, as well as to the country's path toward European integration and raised awareness within EU public opinion on the utmost necessity to support Ukraine.

Considering this, we categorically deny allegations to associate ALDA with pro-Russian positions. The recent investigation by Bihus.info has referenced five names in connection with ALDA: Inna Volkova, Vitaliy Barvinenko, Yuliia Pidhorodynska, Oksana Derkach, and Anzhelika Pylypenko. We consider it is our responsibility to clarify the nature and status of these associations in a factual and transparent manner.

Mr. Barvinenko is the head of the Odesa Rayon Council. The Odesa Rayon Council is currently suspended from membership and so is prior to any media investigation or external pressure. Consequently, Inna Volkova, who had served as the representative of that member in ALDA's Governing Board, is excluded from all ALDA structures.

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This decision was made by our internal governance bodies, reflecting our strong commitment to safeguard the ethical standards and values that define our network. ALDA has an ethics chart and responds to its constituency.

Yuliia Pidhorodynska, despite being discussed as a potential delegate during preliminary talks regarding the establishment of a Local Democracy Agency in Odesa, was never officially appointed to any position within ALDA. She has never participated in any ALDA activity in an official capacity. Therefore, her alleged affiliation with ALDA is entirely unfounded.

The name of Oksana Derkach, a member of the Poltava City Council, has also been mentioned. Mrs. Derkach is a member of the Congress of the Council of Europe in the Ukrainian Delegation and ALDA has a relationship with Mrs. Derkach in this framework. She has never held any function or mandate within ALDA. Occasional public appearances or photographs taken at open events do not constitute affiliation or membership. ALDA maintains strict criteria for official cooperation and does not recognise informal proximity or symbolic gestures as representative of partnership or alignment.

Anzhelika Pylypenko is currently the delegate of the Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Dnipropetrovsk Region. While this LDA operates within ALDA's broader network, it is a fully independent civil society organisation registered under Ukrainian law. ALDA does not have a regional office in Ukraine so far. Each LDA has its own legal identity. However we closely monitor the adherence and the governance of LDAs to ALDA's principles, and we have taken good note of public concerns and questions raised regarding Ms. Pylypenko's political history. Ms. Pylypenko has been selected 10 years ago as an expert in local governance and has been delivering important projects in the field of the neighbourhoods policies and programmes as well as with the amalgamation of programmes. ALDA does not ignore such matters and expects all LDAs and their delegates to act in full accordance with democratic values and the expectations of Ukrainian and international public opinion.

We also stress that ALDA is not attempting to whitewash, cover, or excuse the past or present actions of any individual. On the contrary, we take reputational and ethical risks seriously and take decisive action when our integrity may be at stake. Our internal procedures include regular

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evaluations of our members and partners to ensure alignment with ALDA's mission. We do not hesitate to suspend or terminate relationships with individuals or institutions if credible concerns arise. ALDA is monitoring all sanctions provided against individuals in Ukraine and follows the rules.

This statement is issued not only in defence of ALDA's reputation, but also in defence of the principles of transparency and responsible public communication. In the context of war and disinformation, we believe the role of civil society, including investigative journalism, is vital. Yet it is equally vital to ensure that facts are presented accurately and that reputations are not damaged by unjustified association or misinterpretation. In this context, we would like to reaffirm that the presented information doesn't reflect the action of ALDA in Ukraine.

By this means, we confirm our strong support to our Secretary General, Antonella Valmorbida, who has been targeted in these accusations without any credible ground. Her personal and professional history is impeccable and rather than being accused in this context, her lifelong commitment includes long advocacy and actions against Russia and its repressive system as threat to Europe as a whole.

ALDA has been working in Ukraine since 2012, standing consistently in support of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Our mission has always been to promote local democracy, good governance, and citizen participation – principles rooted in the European values of transparency, human rights, and rule of law. We work with our community made of 300 members, 18 Local Democracy Agencies, and thousands of partners. We have **7 thematic hubs (environment, human rights and antidiscrimination, migration, youth, digitalisation, local economic development, citizens engagement)** that allow us to address different issues and projects, in more than 40 countries, having at the core of our work the community approach.

In line with this vision, ALDA, for example, has recently opened the Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Kharkiv, with the strong support of French partners, marking a new milestone in its commitment to decentralised cooperation and post-war reconstruction. Further demonstrating our engagement on the ground, ALDA supported the establishment of the Veteran's Hub in Poltava,

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an initiative led by one of our members, and funded by the Council of Europe. The centre is dedicated to reintegration and social inclusion of veterans returning from the front, underlining our concrete actions to address the consequences of the war and foster community resilience. In collaboration with German partners such as Blau-Gelbes Kreuz Deutsch-Ukrainischer Verein e.V. (Cologne), ALDA has also contributed to solidarity initiatives like “Invincibility Point”, supporting LDA Dnipro in renovating a shelter space equipped for power outages, allowing citizens to work, study, and rest in safety. These projects demonstrate how European solidarity, local engagement and practical action are intertwined in ALDA’s work throughout Ukraine.

ALDA remains thus fully committed to supporting Ukraine and its people on the path to EU integration. We are proud to work alongside courageous municipalities, local leaders, and civil society actors throughout the country. We will continue to do so with dedication, integrity, and clarity of purpose. We will continue to do so with dedication, integrity, and clarity of purpose.

ALDA, together with its Secretary General, will act in justice for protecting its reputation and will require Bihus.info to refute this information and cancel the video.

We absolutely support Ukraine in its fight for independence and we absolutely condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Ukrainian defenders and all citizens

ALDA President, Governing Board and team

For further inquiries, we remain available at alda@alda-europe.eu

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