alda*

European Association for Local Democracy

A Wealth of Expertise

Toolkit for Local Authorities to successfully engage citizens

Preface: an update of the publication

This is the updated version of A Wealth of Expertise.

The relentless work of ALDA and ALDA's community in fostering civic participation as the fundamental pillar of local democracy, and of democracy in general, made it necessary not only to add new materials to the previous version of the publication, but to collect them in a more structured and scientific way.

The purpose is dual: on one side, to strengthen ALDA's presentation as an organisation with a long-lasting experience in civic participation methodologies and processes; on the other side, to facilitate the internal circulation and capitalisation of knowledge and expertises on the topic, in order to improve our work as a journey with deep roots and a long-term perspective.

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Abstracts

The present document aims to showcase the extensive body of work developed by ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy - in the realm of citizen participation and local democracy over more than two decades. It capitalises on the expertise of ALDA and its members in its attempt to increase citizen participation.

Established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe, ALDA is a global alliance of associations, civil society organisations, and local governments, dedicated to supporting local democracy and citizen engagement in Europe and beyond. Since its establishment, ALDA has implemented hundreds of projects and has engaged millions of citizens, promoting its values and reaching its objectives in good governance at the local level. Throughout its long history, ALDA has produced an extensive body of knowledge and practical tools to engage with citizens.

This publication provides a comprehensive overview of ALDA's contributions. methodology and publications, which are organised into seven thematic hubs. This material reflects ALDA's expertise in developing and implementing innovative tools and methods for enhancing citizen active participation in local governance.

The second part highlights significant initiatives and best practices demonstrating the practical application of participatory democracy and citizen participation activities with the contribution of ALDA members and partner municipalities.

Abstracts

Le présent document a pour but de présenter l'ensemble des travaux développés par l'ALDA - Association Européenne pour la Démocratie Locale - dans le domaine de la participation des citoyens et de la démocratie locale depuis plus de deux décennies. Il capitalise sur l'expertise de l'ALDA et de ses membres dans sa tentative d'accroître la participation des citoyens.

Créée en 1999 à l'initiative du Conseil de l'Europe, l'ALDA est une alliance mondiale d'associations, d'organisations de la société civile et de gouvernements locaux, qui se consacre au soutien de la démocratie locale et de l'engagement des citoyens en Europe et au-delà. Depuis sa création, l'ALDA a mis en œuvre des centaines de projets et a engagé des millions de citoyens, promouvant ses valeurs et atteignant ses objectifs en matière de bonne gouvernance au niveau local. Tout au long de son histoire, l'ALDA a produit un vaste ensemble de connaissances et d'outils pratiques pour s'engager avec les citoyens.

Cette publication fournit une vue d'ensemble des contributions, de la méthodologie et des publications de l'ALDA, qui sont organisées en sept pôles thématiques. Ce matériel reflète l'expertise de l'ALDA dans le développement et la mise en œuvre d'outils et de méthodes innovants pour renforcer la participation active des citoyens à la gouvernance locale.

La deuxième partie met en lumière des initiatives significatives et des bonnes pratiques démontrant l'application pratique de la démocratie participative et des activités de participation citoyenne avec la contribution des membres de l'ALDA et des municipalités partenaires.

Abstracts

Il presente documento intende presentare l'ampio lavoro sviluppato da ALDA - Associazione Europea per la Democrazia Locale - nel campo della partecipazione dei cittadini e della democrazia locale nel corso di oltre due decenni. Il documento si avvale dell'esperienza di ALDA e dei suoi membri nel tentativo di aumentare la partecipazione dei cittadini.

Fondata nel 1999 su iniziativa del Consiglio d'Europa, ALDA è un'alleanza globale di associazioni, organizzazioni della società civile e amministrazioni locali, dedicata a sostenere la democrazia locale e l'impegno dei cittadini in Europa e oltre. Dalla sua fondazione, ALDA ha realizzato centinaia di progetti e ha coinvolto milioni di cittadini, promuovendo i suoi valori e raggiungendo i suoi obiettivi di buon governo a livello locale. Nel corso della sua lunga storia, ALDA ha prodotto un ampio bagaglio di conoscenze e strumenti pratici per il coinvolgimento dei cittadini.

Questa pubblicazione fornisce una panoramica completa dei contributi, della metodologia e delle pubblicazioni di ALDA, organizzate in sette aree tematiche. Questo materiale riflette l'esperienza di ALDA nello sviluppo e nell'implementazione di strumenti e metodi innovativi per migliorare la partecipazione attiva dei cittadini alla governance locale.

La seconda parte evidenzia iniziative significative e buone pratiche che dimostrano l'applicazione pratica della democrazia partecipativa e delle attività di partecipazione dei cittadini con il contributo dei soci di ALDA e dei comuni partner.

Abstracts

Ovaj dokument ima za cilj da prikaže opsežan rad koji je razvila ALDA - Evropska Asocijacija za Lokalnu Demokratiju - u oblasti učešća građana i lokalne demokratije tokom više od dve decenije. Kapitalizuje stručnost ALDA-e i njenih članova u pokušaju povećanja učešća građana.

Osnovana 1999. godine na inicijativu Saveta Evrope, ALDA je globalna alijansa asocijacija, organizacija civilnog društva i lokalnih vlasti, posvećena podršci lokalnoj demokratiji i angažovanju građana u Evropi i šire. Od svog osnivanja, ALDA je sprovela stotine projekata i angažovala milioni građana, promovišući svoje vrednosti i ostvarujući ciljeve u oblasti dobrog upravljanja na lokalnom nivou. Tokom svoje duge istorije, ALDA je stvorila opsežan skup znanja i praktičnih alata za angažovanje građana.

Ova publikacija pruža sveobuhvatan pregled doprinosa ALDA-e, metodologije i publikacija, koje su organizovane u sedam tematskih oblasti. Ovaj materijal odražava stručnost ALDA-e u razvoju i implementaciji inovativnih alata i metoda za unapređenje aktivnog učešća građana u lokalnom upravljanju.

Drugi deo ističe značajne inicijative i najbolje prakse koje pokazuju praktičnu primenu participativne demokratije i aktivnosti učešća građana uz doprinos članova ALDA-e i partnerskih opština.

Abstracts

Цей документ має на меті продемонструвати великий обсяг роботи, яку розвинула ALDA - Європейська асоціація з місцевої демократії - у галузі участі громадян та місцевої демократії протягом понад двох десятиліть. Він використовує досвід ALDA та її членів у спробі збільшити участь громадян.

ALDA була заснована у 1999 році за ініціативою Ради Європи та є глобальним альянсом асоціацій, організацій громадянського суспільства та місцевих органів влади, які прагнуть підтримувати місцеву демократію та залучення громадян в Європі та за її межами. З моменту свого заснування ALDA реалізувала сотні проєктів і залучила мільйони громадян, пропагуючи свої цінності та досягаючи своїх цілей у сфері доброго врядування на місцевому рівні. Протягом своєї довгої історії ALDA створила обширний корпус знань і практичних інструментів для залучення громадян.

Це видання надає всебічний огляд внеску ALDA, методології та публікацій, які організовані в сім тематичних хабів. Цей матеріал відображає досвід ALDA у розробці та впровадженні інноваційних інструментів і методів для посилення активної участі громадян у місцевому управлінні.

Другий розділ висвітлює значущі ініціативи та найкращі практики, що демонструють практичне застосування партиципативної демократії та заходів участі громадян за участю членів ALDA та партнерських муніципалітетів.

Abstracts

Настоящий документ призван продемонстрировать обширную работу, проделанную ALDA - Европейской ассоциацией местной демократии - в сфере участия граждан и местной демократии за более чем два десятилетия. В нем используется опыт ALDA и ее членов в попытке расширить участие граждан.

Созданная в 1999 году по инициативе Совета Европы, ALDA - это глобальный альянс ассоциаций, организаций гражданского общества и местных органов власти, призванный поддерживать местную демократию и вовлечение граждан в жизнь общества в Европе и за ее пределами. С момента своего создания ALDA реализовала сотни проектов и вовлекла в них миллионы граждан, продвигая свои ценности и достигая своих целей в области надлежащего управления на местном уровне. За свою долгую историю ALDA накопила обширный багаж знаний и практических инструментов для взаимодействия с гражданами.

В данной публикации представлен всеобъемлющий обзор вклада ALDA, методологии и публикаций, которые сгруппированы по семи тематическим направлениям. Эти материалы отражают опыт ALDA в разработке и внедрении инновационных инструментов и методов для расширения активного участия граждан в местном управлении.

Во второй части освещаются значимые инициативы и лучшие практики, демонстрирующие практическое применение демократии участия и деятельности по вовлечению граждан при участии членов ALDA и муниципалитетов-партнеров.

Abstracts

تهدف هذه الوثيقة إلى عرض مجموعة واسعة من الأعمال التي طورتها الرابطة الأوروبية للديمقراطية المحلية - الرابطة الأوروبية للديمقراطية المحلية - في مجال مشاركة المواطنين والديمقراطية المحلية على مدى أكثر من عقدين من الزمن. وهي تستفيد من خبرة الرابطة وأعضائها في محاولتها لزيادة مشاركة المواطنين.

تأسست الرابطة في عام 1999 بمبادرة من مجلس أوروبا، وهي تحالف عالمي للجمعيات ومنظمات المجتمع المدني والحكومات المحلية، مكرسة لدعم الديمقراطية المحلية ومشاركة المواطنين في أوروبا وخارجها. منذ إنشائه، نفذ تحالف ألدا مئات المشاريع وأشرك الملايين من المواطنين في تعزيز قيمه وتحقيق أهدافه في الحكم الرشيد على المستوى المحلي. وعلى مدار تاريخها الطويل، أنتجت الرابطة مجموعة واسعة من المعارف والأدوات العملية لإشراك المواطنين.

يقدم هذا المنشور لمحة شاملة عن إسهامات الرابطة ومنهجيتها ومنشوراتها، والتي تم تنظيمها في سبعة محاور مواضيعية. تعكس هذه المواد خبرة الرابطة في تطوير وتنفيذ أدوات وأساليب مبتكرة لتعزيز المشاركة الفعالة للمواطنين في الحكم المحلي.

ويسلط الجزء الثاني الضوء على المبادرات الهامة وأفضل الممارسات التي توضح التطبيق العملي للديمقراطية التشاركية وأنشطة مشاركة المواطنين بمساهمة أعضاء الرابطة والبلديات الشريكة.

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GOOD PRACTICES FROM ALDA COMMUNITY

Introduction

About ALDA

By supporting local democracy and citizens engagement in Europe, the Neighbourhood and beyond, ALDA is a global alliance of associations, civil society organisations and local governments.

Established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe, ALDA coordinates and supports the network of Local Democracy Agencies, be they self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs acting as good-governance and local self-government promoters.

During its more than 20 years of activities, ALDA has developed more than 500 projects and engaged almost 25 million citizens. Thus, thanks to its expertise and knowledge, and by promoting participatory methods and decentralised cooperation, ALDA results to be a strategic and essential stakeholder in the field of local democracy, active citizenship, and cooperation between local authorities and civil society, in Europe and beyond.

Together with its 300 members from 45 countries and 17 Local Democracy Agencies, ALDA actively contributes to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030.

What we do

To promote good governance and citizen participation at the local level in the whole Europe and beyond, ALDA leads a wide range of actions aimed at supporting local, national and international stakeholders in achieving their goals to promote local democracy . These efforts include different fields such as European integration, decentralisation, human rights, social inclusion, sustainable development, civic initiatives, and more.

ALDA represents a wide network of citizens and local authorities fully committed and engaged to support local democracy and the empowerment of local communities through citizens participation, in Europe and beyond. Since 2020, ALDA has been "going global", by bringing its experience in local democracy beyond the European borders and the neighborhood, reaching out to other regions of the world in need of assistance and support in our field of expertise.

ALDA leads its activities through different forms of actions and channels:

- Conducting projects in the field of good governance and citizen participation at the local level in Europe and beyond, with its members, partners and the Local Democracy Agencies
- Coordinating and supporting the netwwork of the Local Democracy Agencies
- Managing and supporting its wide network of members made of around 300 stakeholders including local authorities, associations of local authorities, provinces, counties, civil society organisations, and academic institution
- Collaborating with European and worldwide networks on campaigns, statements and joint initiatives to let citizens be heard and contribute to the decision-making process of their communities.

- Cooperating as official partners of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.
- Supporting local stakeholders' initiatives by providing ALDA's unique expertise gained during its 25 years of activity in the European Union and its Neighbourhood through the establishment of partnerships and the identification of relevant stakeholders to cooperate with, scouting funding opportunities to implement project ideas, and assuring dissemination and visibility of their initiatives
- Leading advocacy and lobbying activities raising the voice of its members and partners to orient local, national and European policies in our field of activities to make a stronger and more cohesive Europe, based on the principles of equality, democracy and human rights.

ALDA & Citizens Participation

Following its fast growth in recent years, ALDA has become active in many areas, ensuring a more holistic approach in the governance and planning of the Association.

Thus, six **Thematic Hubs** have been created:

Environment and climate

Gender, inclusion and human rights

Youth empowerment and education

Migration

Territorial and local development

Digital and innovation

One of the key priorities that encompasses all activities of ALDA, regardless of the thematic focus, is the promotion of citizen participation to strengthen local democracy, participatory processes, democratic resilience and decentralized cooperation.

Being one of the broadest and multifaceted democracies in the world, Europe is nowadays a leading actor in the promotion of citizens participation and participatory democracy worldwide.
Throughout more than twenty years of activity, ALDA has developed extensive expertise in enhancing citizen participation and creating innovative tools and methods to foster greater engagement in local governance. As a result, ALDA has produced a substantial body of work, including numerous handbooks and recommendations to support the empowerment of local communities all over the world.

ALDA's experience demonstrates that the principle of local democracy transcends geographic boundaries.
The topics and methodologies employed can be effectively applied across various political and social contexts, using similar approaches.

Why Citizen Participation?

Governance is about the interaction between governments and other social organisations in decision-making processes involving different stakeholders and actors. In the realm of good governance, which concerns different levels, from the local to the international, participatory democracy is an essential process to empower citizens in political changes.

Especially in times where democracy is threatened and vulnerable, rebuilding trust in public institutions and create a space for exchange becomes necessary. Engaging the citizens at the local level, raising awareness about current challenges, and giving them voices in relevant debates can benefit all the actors involved and foster a more inclusive, transparent and efficient democracy. Ongoing dialogue and engagement between political bodies and citizens are necessary for responsive and effective decision-making.

Participation by all groups of civil society in decision-making at all levels of government is necessary for a functioning and secure democratic society.

Citizen participation and the involvement of civil society is essential to foster trust in public authorities and encourage further long-term collaboration with the citizens. When the public opinion is involved and different perspectives are considered, the authorities can make better decisions and more effective changes. As a result, the outcomes are more likely to be accepted by the citizens.
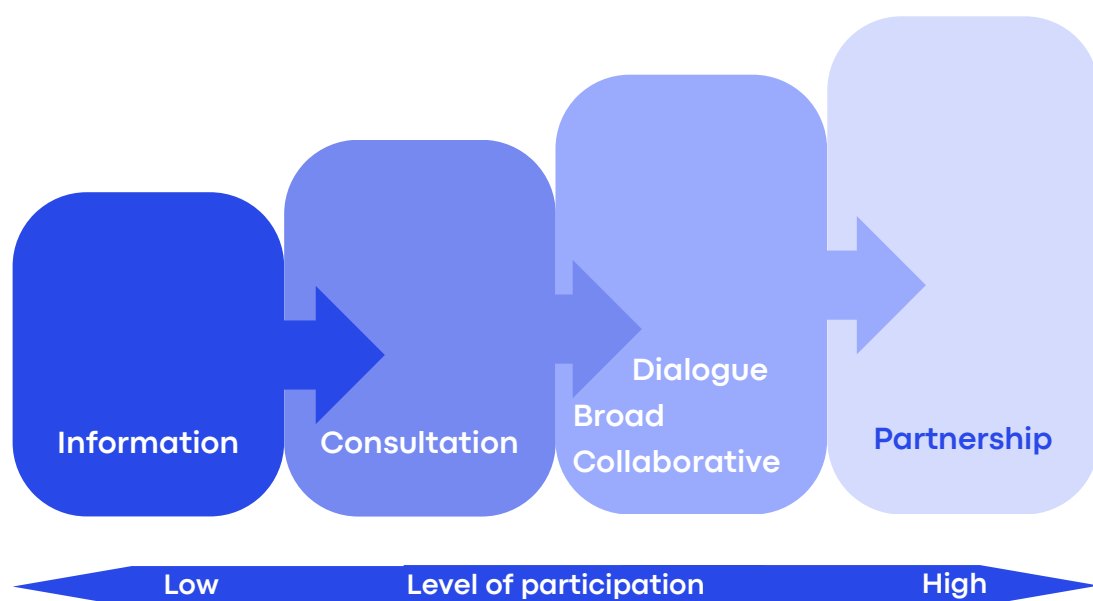
Principles of Participation

The Council of Europe has developed the criteria to define civil participation and achieve good local governance according to which an effective civil participation process must be based on the following key principles:

- Openness and accessibility of the participatory processes.
- Trust between the actors as the basis for honest interactions.
- Independence of the NGOs and the actors involved in their actions and decisions.
- Participation of all groups, including those with particular interests.
- Transparency of the processes, which must be open to scrutiny and available to the public.
- Accessibility through clear language and appropriate use of the means of participation.
- Non-discrimination and inclusiveness of all the voices, including the less privileged.
- Accountability, with any process producing results being open to change and subject to opinions.

Different levels of participation

Be it a citizen assembly, a consultation platform, a participatory budgeting initiative, etc., there are different levels of participatory democracy practices that can be applied at any step of decision-making processes. From the least to the most participative, the levels are:

- INFORMATION: the public authority guarantees the right of the public to access all information during the process, to enable them to react.

- CONSULTATION: it provides NGOs and civil society with the possibility of feedback and opinions on specific policy topics.

- DIALOGUE: built on mutual interests and shared objectives, it consists of an exchange of views to develop a common strategy.

- PARTNERSHIP: it implies shared responsibilities between the parties and collaboration at all levels.

Information → Consultation → Dialogue Broad Collaborative → Partnership

Low ← Level of participation → High

Steps in the political decision-making process

According to the CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, every political decision-making process is characterized by seven steps, each offering opportunities for NGOs and local authorities to interact:
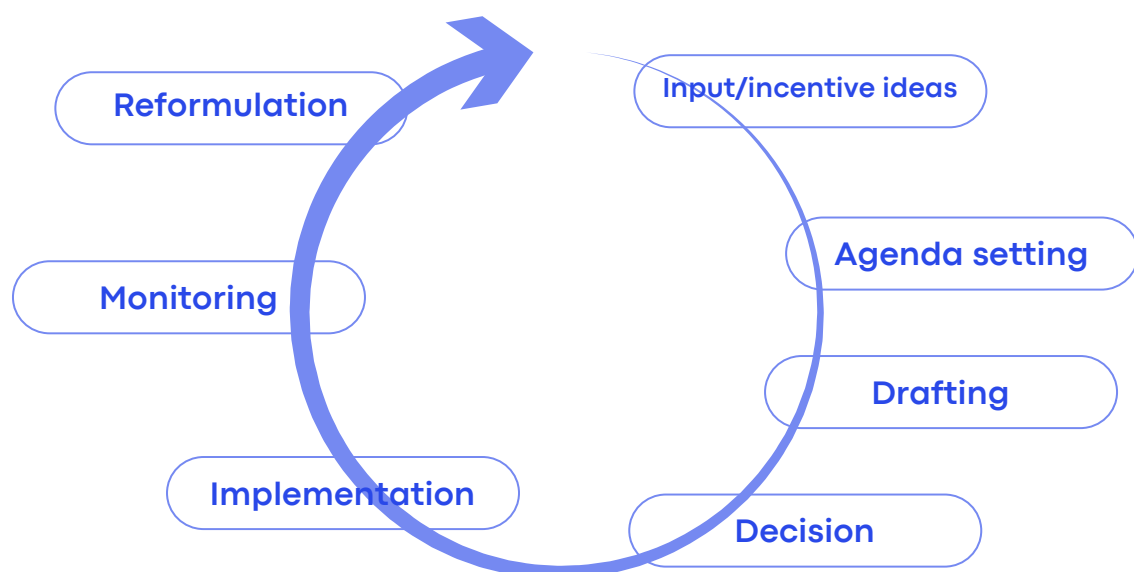
- Input/incentive ideas
- Agenda setting
- Drafting
- Decision
- Implementation:
- Monitoring
- Reformulation

Contributions of NGOs:

- Advocacy; NGOs raise issues, concerns, and needs of specific groups, lobbying for the renewal of policies when necessary
- Awareness building: NGOs share findings with public authorities, inform the public and stakeholders, and raise awareness about policy processes and their impact
- Expertise and Advice: NGOs provide expert analysis, research, and advice.
- Innovation: NGOs develop new solutions to address societal needs and demonstrate how these innovations can be included in policies.
- Service Provision: NGOs deliver services that align with policy objectives, ensuring the meeting of the needs of specific groups.
- Watchdog Function: NGOs monitor the decision-making processes, ensuring transparency, inclusiveness, and the achievement of intended goals.

Responsibilities of Public Authorities:

- **Information Sharing:** Public authorities must provide accurate, timely, and accessible information at all stages of the process, including information on current policies, decision-making procedures, and implementation strategies.

- **Procedures**: Public authorities must guarantee transparency, openness, and accessibility to all processes to allow for the participation of civil society in the decision-making process. This includes organising consultations.

- **Resource Provision**: Authorities must allocate resources to enable active participation by NGOs and civil society.

- **Responsiveness:** Public authorities must engage with NGOs, listen to their input, and provide feedback, responding to the needs and concerns raised by civil society, particularly during the implementation and reformulation stages.

Reformulation

Input/incentive ideas

Agenda setting

Monitoring

Drafting

Implementation

Decision

Transversal Publications on Citizens' Engagement

↘

This section gathers ALDA's work on citizens' engagement and civic participation to foster local development and local governance presented as transversal topics and/or topics which intersect several Thematic Hubs. It also gathers ALDA's contributions to broader programmes and relevant actions from other organisations.

Legend

This icon represents the use of a citizens' participation methodology.

2024 The number refers to the year in which the publication was released.

xxx Project If the publication is accompanied by this sentence, it has been drafted within the framework of a project.

Below each publication you will see this design:

Guidelines & Toolkit Strategic paper	Local Authorities Local Communities

Type of publication   Target audience

→

[A practical guide to engage with the new European parliament & methodological tools on how to get engaged at the EU level](#)

This handbook is a valuable resource for civil society organizations, local authorities, and individuals aiming to engage with the European Parliament and contribute meaningfully to EU policy making. It emphasizes the European Parliament's role as a cornerstone of democratic governance in the EU and offers practical tools to navigate its structures and advocate effectively.

2024

Guidelines & Toolkit

**Local Communities
Local Authorities**

→

[Participatory plan for local communities focused on citizen participation](#)

The presentation provides a useful picture on participatory democracy and good practices of participatory processes elaborated by ALDA members as inspiring experiences. It includes definition and principles of participatory democracy, the key actors involved, and descriptions of tools of participation. The publication was published within the activities of operating grants with CERV.

2024

**Guidelines & Toolkit
Good practices collection**

**Local Communities
Local Authorities**

→

Methodological Handbook: Management of Re-granting Schemes

This article outlines ALDA's approach to re-granting, serving as a bridge between local authorities, institutions, and citizens to address local needs and promote active citizenship. It includes a detailed description of the 5-step methodology on re- granting.

2024

Guidelines & Toolkit

**Local Communities
Local Authorities**

→

Analyses on citizens' awareness and perceptions on the EU Elections 2024

This document is part of ALDA's campaign on EE24. It includes some considerations and data on citizens' participation in European elections, highlighting key challenges; a series of ALDA's initiatives for greater participation and awareness on the matter; and some suggestions and recommendations for policy-makers for a more inclusive democratic society.

2024

**Strategic Paper
Reference context analysis**

**Local Authorities
Research Study**

→

[Challenges and Opportunities on Local Governments in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, and Moldova](#)

This document includes 4 brief studies on the current situation of local self-governments, civil society, and participatory democracy in 4 countries of the Eastern Partnership after the Russian aggression, and some reflections on the EU enlargement.

2024

**Strategic paper
Reference context analysis**

**Local Authorities
Research Study**

→

[Training curricula for local communities focused on citizens participation](#)

This presentation lists key proposals of training modules on citizen participation offered by ALDA to local communities. It includes tools and methodologies developed during various initiatives to enhance citizen engagement and actions at the local level.

2023

**Guidelines & Toolkit
Training Material**

Local Communities

→

[Toolkit for Local Authorities - How to engage citizens at the local level](#)

This document offers practical resources for public officials and civil servants on the local level for implementation of civil participation actions and consultations. It includes an introduction to benefits and the actors involved in participatory processes, as well as the methodology and the relevant steps to involve citizens.

2023

Guidelines & toolkit   **Local Authorities**

→

[ALDA towards 2030 - Localising the SDGs: Good practices from Europe and the Neighbourhood areas](#)

This publication provides an explanation of the 17 SDGs which are part of the Agenda 2030 and have been included in ALDA's strategy. It shed ligths on what ALDA has done in the past 20 years to achieve the SDGs, with best practices elaborated from the field.

2021

**Good practices collection
Strategic paper**

Research Study

→

[Participative democracy in Moldova and Ukraine. Empowering authorities and civil society to deliver solutions at the local level](#)

ALDA's Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida published in English and Russian by SUSIL Edizioni, October 2020, ISDN, 978-88-5550-155-5

This book highlights how local democracy is a powerful tool that allows for people's energies, resources and experiences to emerge with a fundamental pillar that is good local governance. The program in Moldova and Ukraine researched four very different municipalities and communities, both small and big, central and decentralised, and assessed the potential for citizen participation by uncovering existing practices and analysing future possibilities for empowerment. The resulting outcomes are encouraging and pave the way for further support to local participatory democracy. The book presents the research, tools and practical recommendations for development.

2020

Strategic paper
Reference context analysis

Local Authorities
Research Study

→

RePlaY - Active Ageing European Booklet

This booklet was created with the contribution of all partners by the end of the project RePlay. It contains a collection of best practices concerning active aging, intergenerational dialogue and active citizenship in senior citizens, as well as guidelines and tips on how to develop a good project.

2020

Guidelines & toolkit
Good practices collection

Local Communities
Project's deliverable

→

CRISCO Recipes Book

This publication contains 13 good practices shared by the municipalities that were partners in the CRISCO project (Lead Partner Municipality of Etterbeek, Belgium), which aimed to foster the involvement of all citizens in local life. The experiences were exchanged within the CRISCO network during the project's events.

2019

Good practices collection

Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

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2019

Good practices collection

Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

LADDER
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

Promoting Development Education through a multi-topic approach

This Thematic Handbook gathers the work of LADDER's community on advocacy related to 6 main themes, as well as the advocacy actions undertaken by the project partners, a collection of good practices, methodologies, and approaches, serving as a future guideline for CSO and LAs.

2018

Guidelines & toolkit
Good practices collection

Local Communities
Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

LADDER
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

LADDER beyond the European Union: LAs and CSOs working together for development education in the neighborhood areas

This Handbook provides an overview of the different geographical paths of the LADDER project in South-East Europe, the Mediterranean area, and the Eastern Partnership, including contexts, advocacy actions, and recommendations for future work on SDGs in those areas.

2018

Strategic paper
Reference context analysis

Local Communities
Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

LADDER
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

[Decentralised cooperation and community approach as a tool for a strengthened cooperation between the European Union and Eastern Partnership Countries](#)

by Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida

This research paper analyses the level and content of cooperation between local governments and their communities in the EU and Eastern Partnership Countries, highlighting added value and difficulties of cooperation, potential future empowerment of instruments of cooperation.

2018

Guidelines & toolkit
Good practices collection

Local Communities
Research Study
Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

Cooperation with Civil Society to promote Public Administration Reform in the Eastern Partnership countries

by Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida

This document analyses how Public Administration Reforms (PAR) and Decentralization represent crucial and cross-cutting elements among the objectives of the Neighborhood policy in the EaP. The paper aimed to raise awareness on the possibilities and advantages of working together with CSO as stakeholders to support Public Administration reform and decentralization in the Eastern Partnership, and present good practices of CSOs.

2017

Good practices collection
Strategic Paper

Local Authorities
Research Study

→

The actors of decentralized cooperation: Local Authorities and CSOs working together

This publication delves into the roles and governance of CSOs and local authorities in decentralized cooperation and their impact on democracy.

2016

Strategic paper

Local Communities
Local Authorities

→

DECIDE

DEmocratic Compact:
Improving Democracy in Europe

[Democratic Compact: Improving Democracy in Europe](#)

This document is the final publication of the DECIDE project. It is a set of measures to increase the quality of democracy and citizen participation, which are elaborated and tested by all the project partners from 14 different countries, and which can be further disseminated and implemented.

2015

Guidelines & Toolkit
Good practices collection

Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

[Supporting European Active Citizenship (2014-2015)](#)

This publication showcases the key outcomes of the program 2014-2015 within the framework of the project TANDEM. It provides descriptions of a series of activities implemented in Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece and The Netherlands encouraging active citizenship.

2015

Good practices collection
Reference context analysis

Local Communities
Project's deliverable

→

Cooperation for Citizen Participation and Community Development in Belarus

This is the final publication of the TANDEM II project, which aimed at strengthening and inclusive society in Belarus by supporting the Local Authorities, provides an overview of the project activities and 12 civic initiatives implemented by the project partners.

2015

**Good practices collection
Reference context analysis**

**Local Authorities
Project's deliverable**

→

Citizens' Participation at the Local Level in Europe and Neighborhood Countries,

by Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida

By analysing ALDA's 15 years of hand-on activities with its members and partners, this publication contributes to a better understanding of the added value of citizen participation at the local level in Europe and its neighboring countries. It offers conclusions and insightful input for future activities to build a truly democratic local democracy.

2014

**Guidelines & Toolkit
Strategic paper**

Research Study

→

Education for Remembrance - Good Practice in Active European Remembrance

This educational booklet, published by the partners of the project "E-FOR - Education for Remembrance", is a user-friendly tool for developing programs on issues of Remembrance at the local level. It provides guidelines inspired by successful practices among the partners and an example of good practice. This publication can be helpful for teaching professionals, project managers, and citizens concerned by the topic.

2011

Guidelines & Toolkit
Good practices collection

Local communities
Project's deliverable

→

ALL.4.EU: Citizens For Europe

This publication is the final result of the ALL.4.EU project, which consisted in setting-up citizens' panels in 6 different places in Europe. The first provides an explanation of the methodology of citizens' panels as a tool to engage citizens and its application within the project. The second part is a SWOT analysis about the citizens' participation in the partners' countries, and the results of the citizens panels in the different countries.

2010

Good practices collection
Reference context analysis

Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

Citizens' Participation at the Local Level in Europe and Neighborhood Countries,

This publication is the final result of the ALL.4.EU project, which consisted in setting-up citizens' panels in 6 different places in Europe. The first provides an explanation of the methodology of citizens' panels as a tool to engage citizens and its application within the project. The second part is a SWOT analysis about the citizens' participation in the partners' countries, and the results of the citizens panels in the different countries.

2014

Guidelines & Toolkit
Reference context analysis

Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

First Assessment on Active Citizenship in South Eastern Europe

This preliminary assessment of the "Europe for Citizens" program in Southeast Europe, which aims to promote active citizenship and strengthen European identity, discusses activities for promoting active citizenship, country-specific activities that were implemented, and an analysis of the situation of the civil society in the region.

2010

Guidelines & Toolkit
Reference context analysis

Local Communities
Research study
Local Authorities

ALL 4 EU Project

→

Raising Awareness on European Elections: Actions for European Active Citizenship

This publication is the final report of a project conducted by ALDA aimed at raising awareness about the 2009 European Elections. It describes various activities and initiatives carried out in different countries to promote democratic participation and share knowledge on the functions of European institutions. It also presents conclusions and recommendations to encourage greater citizen participation.

2010

Strategic paper
Reference context analysis

Local Communities
Research study
Project's deliverable

→

[ALDA Activity Report: 10 years in the making of a new Europe in support of local democracy and citizens' participation](#)

This report capitalises on the first 10 years of ALDA's activities providing an overview of its path from a window in Europe to a strong network of LAs and NGOs. It provides a detailed description of some best practices and methodologies of citizen participation and final lessons learned.

2009

Guidelines & Toolkit
Strategic Paper

Research study

EURaction Project

→

[EURaction: Citizens acting for Europe](#)

This publication provides the results from a pilot project in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France, which aimed at including ordinary citizens in the debates about Europe. It gives detailed information on the citizens' panels that were set up in these countries, with results and evaluations of this methodology. This handbook was reported back to the European institutions and other European stakeholders.

2007

Guidelines & Toolkit
Reference context analysis

Local Authorities
Research study
Project's deliverable

→

Cities for Peace and Democracy in Europe Project

Local authorities and NGOs together for peace and democracy in Europe

This handbook provides an overview of the project "Cities for Peace and Democracy in Europe" intended to bring LAs, NGOs, and young people together to debate their role in the construction of a democratic Europe. It includes summaries of the main activities and best practice examples of how to foster peace and democracy at the local level.

2007

Guidelines & Toolkit
Good practices collection

Local Communities
Local Authorities
Project's deliverable

→

The ALDA Podcast "Shades of Democracy"

In 2021 ALDA launched a monthly podcast to get closer to people in a more informal way. The episodes give explanations, examples and inspirations on topics such as citizens engagement, crowdfunding, culture, and youth participation. It is available on Spotify, Google Podcast, Spreaker, and Deezer.

2021

Local Communities

ALDA's Contribution to External Actions

→

ALDA's Contribution to the IX Edition of Décider Ensemble "European Gathering on Participation" in Strasbourg

The "European Gathering on Participation" is a major event organised by Décider Ensemble, one of the biggest French think tanks on participatory democracy. ALDA participated in the IX edition of the initiative, sharing some relevant experiences on citizens' participation from its European members' network and lessons learnt from cooperation projects. ALDA is committed to collaborate with Décider Ensemble in the next edition of the European Gathering on Participation, taking place in Dijon in November 2026, by bringing expertise that can efficiently portray the European dimension.

2025

→

ALDA's Contribution to the Implementation of the ELoGE program - European Label of Governance Excellence in Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo

The ELoGE programme is a toolkit created by the Council of Europe to measure good governance and democracy. ALDA has implemented the programme in various municipalities in Croatia, Kosovo and North Macedonia.
The document realised by ALDA provides a general explanation of the programme and the countries' reports with the final results.

2022

**Guidelines & Toolkit
Strategic Paper**

Local Authorities

→

ALDA's Contribution to the Conclusions and Recommendations from the Forum for exchange of best practices- "Partnership as Key for Local Democracy: Rethinking the Cooperation between Local Authorities and Civil Society"

In June 2019 the Forum for exchange of good practices took place in Skopje, North Macedonia. At this international event more than 90 representatives of LAs and CSOs from the Balkans and the EU gathered to discuss best practices for the cooperation between LAs and the civil sector. This document presents the key messages from the speakers and the overall conclusion and recommendation resulting from the event.

2019

Guidelines & Toolkit

Local Authorities
Local Communities

→

ALDA's Contribution to the Code of Good Practice Civic Participation of the Council of Europe

As partner of the Conference of International Non- Governmental Organisations, ALDA has been involved in the drafting of the Code of Good Practice. The document defines a set of European principles and guidelines for NGOs participation in decision-making processes to be implemented at local and national level. It includes a general framework for civil participation and steps, toolkits, and mechanisms to engage citizens.

2019

Guidelines & Toolkit

**Local Authorities
Local Communities**

→

ALDA's Contribution to the Guide for Local Participative Democracy in Algeria

Edited in French and translated into Arabic, programme of the Ministry of Interior and Local Authorities of Algeria, contract AETS France, the document is a guide on the application of local democracy and citizens participation principles and technique for Algerian local authorities and officials. It has been co-drafted by ALDA's Secretary General Antonella Valmorbida.

2018

**Strategic paper
Reference context analysis**

Local Authorities

[ALDA's Contribution to the 2010 International Conference in Skopje- "How Civil Society and local governments are fighting the global crisis. A joint active citizenship: a launch pad for a new future?"](#)

This document from the 2010 International Conference in Skopje discusses the impact of the 2009 financial crisis on local development in Europe, highlighting major challenges faced by the Local Authorities. It includes recommendations and guidelines for the Council of Europe and member states for good governance and advocates for increased active citizen participation.

2010

Guidelines & Toolkit
Reference context analysis

Local Authorities
Local Communities
Research study

[ALDA's Contribution to the 2004 Conference "Participation of civil society in the decision-making process at the local level. A common added value for local authorities in Europe"- Conference and Good practices collection](#)

This publication is a result of the 2004 conference organised by ALDA and the City of Barcelona. It includes the results of a survey on the participation of civil society in the decision-making process, and a selection of case studies of best practices to include the civil society at the local level.

2004

**Guidelines & Toolkit
Good practices collection**

**Local Authorities
Research Study**

Thematic Hubs

This section collects deliverables, resources, methodologies and good practices on citizens' engagement and civic participation to local development and local governance articulated by Thematic Hubs' topics.

→

Territorial & Local Development

Introduction

Territorial and local development are key to democracy, empowering citizens, fostering social cohesion, and ensuring equal opportunities. Decentralising power strengthens democratic foundations and community resilience.

It promotes citizen participation, economic growth, civic education, conflict resolution, and inclusivity for marginalised groups. The Thematic Hub on Territorial and Local Development fosters knowledge-sharing and collaboration to build sustainable, empowered communities.

→

Policy Recommendations

→ **"Decentralised Cooperation: an added value for Eastern Partnership Countries"**

Written by Antonella Valmorbida, the Secretary General of ALDA, this paper deals with decentralised cooperation as an instrument to engage local authorities in international cooperation for development. Highlighting some successful examples of decentralized cooperation and the advantages for EaP countries, the document is intended for EU policymakers in the field of development cooperation of authorities in the Eastern Partnership countries.

→ **The European Decentralised Cooperation: acting for development engaging local authorities and civil society**

by Antonella Valmorbida. This book provides an overview of the processes of decentralized cooperation and their impacts on the local communities, focusing on the neighbouring countries of Europe and those engaged in the process of accession to the EU. Resulting from thorough research and extensive work in the field, this publication gives insights on the process of decentralisation and development through cooperation between local authorities and civil society.

Good practices & Collections

→ **[Resource Anti-Crisis: Town Twinning, Innovation, Openness and Networking 2014](#)**

This publication is the final result of the REACTION project, funded by the programme "Europe for Citizens", which consisted of three events where several municipalities discussed different resources to promote citizen well-being and community development. The publication collects the best practices and specific resources used by the project partners.

Toolkit & Guidelines

→ **[Methodological guidelines for developing town-twinning and network of towns projects](#)**

The document presents a comprehensive analysis of the possibilities offered by cooperation between cities, with particular attention to Town Twinning and Networks of Towns within the framework of the CERV program (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values). It also aims to identify innovative strategies to stimulate dialogue and create synergies among local authorities in Europe and worldwide

Digital & Innovation

Introduction

The Digital & Innovation Hub promotes a digital transformation that is democratic, inclusive, and transparent. ALDA supports the use of digital tools to foster active citizenship, equal participation, and informed communities, ensuring that no one is left behind. The Hub aligns with key European and international frameworks, such as the EU's Europe Fit for the Digital Age, the Council of Europe's AI & Human Rights Convention, and the SDGs. It addresses challenges like AI, cybersecurity, and digital democracy, contributing to Europe's Digital Decade and the localisation of the SDGs.

→

Toolkit & Guidelines

PARTICIPATORY CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Manual for Participatory Context Analysis

The participative context analysis in Rural Areas, developed within OUR DIGITAL VILLAGE project, aims at initiating a self-analysis process in rural areas through Reciprocal Maieutic Approach in order to identify context-specific needs, increase motivation and raise awareness about the importance and potential of digital and transversal competences necessary for the current and future labour market, education and social life.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN METHODOLOGY

OUR DIGITAL VILLAGE Co-Design Activity Kit and Evaluation Tool

The outcomes of the codesign process between RMA experts, ICT experts, teachers and trainers in rural areas, will be an interactive online and printable tool – the Our Digital Village Activity Kit, including practical ICT activities in the form of ICT challenges and pedagogical guidelines for the implementation of those activities in class.

P-CUBE Video Game

This educational strategy game (the Policy Game), created by the Technische Universiteit Delft during the P-CUBE project, was designed to teach the theory and practice of public policy-making to different groups of people to promote good governance. The game is articulated in four different fields. social inclusion, urban innovation, science, and the European Union.

The Mind-Inclusion APP Theoretical Manual and Operational Manual

In the framework of the Mind Inclusion project, the Mind-Inclusion APP was created to promote and foster the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in their community through the Mind Inclusion facilitation methodology.

CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS METHODOLOGY

The APProach Final Publication

In 2018, the APProach project was implemented for European mobile citizens (EUMCs) to better communicate with their welcoming cities thanks to digital tools such as the new APProach online platform. The Final Publication includes the project overview, a description of the APProach online platform, designed for better collaboration between European citizens and project partners, and a detailed explanation of the co-creation methodology implemented during the project to involve different actors around one objective.

Good practices Collections

→ **Online Democracy Guide: Empowering Democracy in the Digital Era**

Within the project EU24 - Engage for the Planet, this publication was created as a resource to navigate digital democracy. Targeting citizens, organisations, and policy-makers, this guide is a library of online democracy tools, platforms, and knowledge, containing best practices on e-democracy, and instructions for events' set-up and for the use of the E-democracy platform.

Environment & Climate

Introduction

Climate change and environmental degradation are global challenges, already affecting biodiversity, health, and livelihoods. The EU Green Deal aims for climate neutrality by 2050, while the UN SDGs call for global action by 2030.

In line with its mission, ALDA places environment and sustainability at the heart of its work, emphasising civic engagement to develop inclusive, effective policies. Through participatory approaches, it fosters collaboration between authorities, institutions, and citizens, supporting EU climate goals and sustainable development.

→

Toolkit & Guidelines

→ [The People's Green Deal: Citizens' Participation in Europe's Sustainability Agenda](#)

Since 2022, ALDA has been engaged in the REAL DEAL project - Reshaping Citizens' Deliberation for the European Green Deal - which aims to stimulate a pan-European debate and reshape citizens' active participation in the green and just transition. This report, available on Solidar webpage, provides an evaluation of the tools for the participation of citizens and CSOs implemented in the European Green Deal's framework. It provides an overview of the instruments and some recommendations for improvement.

→ [The GREY 4 GREEN Handbook for Senior Volunteers in Nature and Senior Volunteers for Nature Implementation Handbook](#)

In the framework of the project Grey4Green, which was initiated in 2022 with the purpose of engaging the elderly in environmental volunteering, these handbooks were produced by the consortium, including ALDA, regarding nature conservation and volunteering for elderly. The former gathers the analyses studied by the various project partners, provides an overview of what senior volunteering is and why it is important in nature conservation, as well as the legal framework of green volunteering programs and information about volunteering in Europe. This document can help to create a working framework for senior environmental volunteering. The latter provides step-by-step guidelines for the implementation of senior environmental volunteering programmes that can be carried out by several stakeholders. It highlights the needs, obstacles, challenges and potential of senior volunteering in the environmental field.

→ [The ENLARGE Gamebook Choose your own collaborative adventure in sustainable energy](#)

In 2016, the ENLARGE project - Energies for Local Administrations to Renovate Governance in Europe - was implemented to generate and share knowledge on participatory governance in the field of sustainable energy through an intense dialogue between different stakeholders. The Gamebook presents different scenarios and stories that could happen in real life regarding the involvement of citizens in the planning of sustainable energy, highlighting how different choices can contribute or hamper the achievement of policy results. It is a useful tool for all communities wishing to kick off collaborative processes.

→ **[The LADDER guides for LAs and citizens: "26 ways to turn your Local Authority more sustainable" and "32 ways you can change the individual and collective footprint"](#)**

The LADDER project was a 3-year project co-funded by the EU under the Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) program. It aimed at enhancing and increasing the role of Local Authorities in EU DEAR policies, strengthening the cooperation with CSOs, and sensitizing citizens on their responsibility on global issues. The 2 guides were produced within the project implementation.

→ **[TIme to Act - Guide for #ClimateofChange Campaigners](#)**

As part of the #ClimateofChange Campaign, which aims to energise youth to raise their voices on the climate change issues, as well as the ones of forced migrants, this guide aims to support and inspire activists to build a strong climate justice campaign.

Good practices Collections

→ **[The GREY 4 GREEN Collection of Good Practice on Senior Volunteering in Nature Conservation](#)**

This Good Practices Report, produced in the framework of Grey4Green project, collects initiatives and projects from Denmark, Cyprus, Switzerland, Italy, Iceland, and Portugal focused on senior environmental volunteering.

→ **[The FOREST Booklet "Towards and European Standard Forestry Curricula"](#)**

This publication is part of the FOREST project, which started in 2019 to promote the exchange of good practices between different forestry organisations around the discussion of a standardization strategy for the training and qualification of forestry workers. This report provides a summary of the information and a comparative analysis on the state of forestry training in Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, and Romania, as well as some suggestions and best practices.

→ **[The ENLARGE Collection "31 case study reports and case study cross analysis"](#)**

This Collection, produced in the framework of the ENLARGE project, is an in-depth analysis of good practices, projects and initiatives to boost participation in a range of categories of sustainable energy.

→ **[The LADDER Collection "Bringing Global Issues at the Local Level: Raising Awareness About the Sustainable Development Goals Through Grassroots Level Initiatives"](#)**

The Collection, produced in the framework of the LADDER project, presents a detailed and extensive series of initiatives implemented by 25 European countries to raise awareness among citizens on the SDGs.

Policy Recommendations

→ **The REAL DEAL Handbook: Frameworks for citizen engagement in the European Green Deal**

The Handbook, produced in the framework of the REAL DEAL project and available on the WECF webpage, presents general and practical guidance for policymakers and other stakeholders on the existing legal and institutional frameworks for citizen engagement in relation to the EGD. It also includes 13 country profiles.

Research Studies

→ **The ENLARGE report "Manifesto for boosting collaborative processes to achieve relevant results in sustainable energy policies and processes"**

This report, produced in the framework of the ENLARGE project, draws on the findings of one of the project's events, and sheds light on the key ingredients for boosting three main democratic objectives of collaborative processes.

Gender, Inclusion & Human Rights

Introduction

The Gender, Inclusion & Human Rights Hub empowers young citizens, especially those with fewer opportunities, in line with ALDA's mission to promote good governance and active citizenship. At European level, anti-discrimination remains a priority, as reflected in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025. Civil Society Organisations play a key role in advancing inclusion, tackling structural inequalities, and ensuring equal participation. The Hub emphasises the integration of gender equality and anti-discrimination across all initiatives to strengthen impact and foster a more inclusive society.

→

Toolkits & Guidelines

→ ## PARFAIT's "Outils de renforcement de la participation citoyenne"

This document is the final result from the PARFAIT project, which focused on the promotion of citizen participation in Tunisia, especially focusing on gender equality and on women's representation in local authorities. The paper outlines the project's context, strategy, and various methodological tools, including training in participatory democracy and social accountability, as well as initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality.

→ ## SWUP Guidelines for Promoting Physical Activity for Women in Urban Public Spaces

This publication gathers ideas, recommendations and observations raised from SWUP's community of practice on how to enhance women's sports participation in urban places and how to realize women-friendly urban planning regarding outdoor sport facilities.

Good practices collection

→ ### ACSOBE: Acting Social RIghts in Belarus

This book is the final publication of the ACSOBE project. Published in 2008 by ALDA, it highlights the difficult situation of Belarus and the social and cultural rights in the country. It also includes best practices to foster democracy and successful experiences of cooperation in Belarus.

Research Studies

→ ### EXTRA-C study report on the situation of democratic participation of young people with intellectual and physical disabilities

Within the EXTRA-C project - Extraordinary Citizens- which aimed to promote participatory democracy and active participation of young people with intellectual, psychosocial, and developmental disabilities, this report was produced which analyses their democratic rights and active role at the national and international level, and proposes 3 good practices.

Training Material

→ **[EXTRA-C Training Programme "Promoting the Democratic Participation of Young People With Disabilities"](#)**

Within the EXTRA-C project this training programme was realised which provides 6 Modules developed as tools for a better inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the democratic processes.

Migration

Introduction

Migration and mobility continue to evolve globally, with 184 million people living outside their country of origin, often due to poverty, exclusion, conflict, climate change, or rights violations. Many face growing challenges fuelled by misinformation and politicisation, especially in the EU. ALDA's 2024–2028 strategy addresses these issues through projects like EPIC-UP, AMIL, SHAPE, PERCEPTIONS, SMELT, LIME, INCLUDATE, and 3STEPS, promoting rights-based, inclusive, and evidence-informed migration policies. The Migration Hub supports migrants, newcomers, and host communities, connecting grassroots action to policy, and advocating for stronger protection and inclusion across all levels.

→

Toolkit & Guidelines

→ **EPIC-UP Toolkit on Migrant's Participation in Co-designing and Implementation of Inclusive Integration Policies at the local level and the Creation of Community of Practices (CoPs) at the local level**

Within the EPIC-UP project, this Toolkit was developed as a practical, actionable collection of tools and methods to promote collaboration among diverse actors, including Local Authorities (LAs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), migrant-led associations, researchers and other stakeholders, in order to co-create and implement inclusive integration policies for migrant and host communities that can be easily adapted to local contexts, ensuring that integration efforts are both effective and inclusive. The methodology adopted within the project defined clear structures and roles within the CoPs—core teams, core groups, active and occasional members—ensuring inclusivity and differentiated levels of engagement. It also introduced practical tools to support stakeholder mapping, prioritisation, and outreach, with particular emphasis on ensuring migrant participation and balancing representation from different sectors.

→ **3 STEP Policy Brief: "Outlining evidenced-based policy recommendations for the integration and inclusion of young migrants and refugees"**

Produced within the framework of the 3 STEP project, this publication summarises the project's methodologies, some relevant recommendations from the fieldwork, and suggests actions for a more inclusive education, promoting participation and inclusion of young migrants and refugees into the labour market.

→ **The LIME Comic Book**

This comic book was produced by the partners' consortium of the LIME project - Labour Integration for Migrants Employment to raise awareness and fight the stereotypes about social inclusion and labor integration. The project aimed to promote the swift integration of young third-country nationals through the MEIC methodology, and innovative and participatory approach based on the creation of a multi-stakeholder partnership. This book gives a voice to all the people met during the project.

CITIZENS' PANEL METHODOLOGY

→ **The GOAL Final Publication**

Starting in 2011, the GOAL project- Granting Opportunities for Active Learning - was implemented to promote citizen participation in areas where immigration represents one of the main challenges through a series of activities and citizens' panels. This publication includes the methodology of the project, namely the citizens' panels and the results, including recommendations for EU decision-makers in the field of immigration.

Good practices Collection

→ **[EPIC-UP "Taxonomy, Mapping and Benchmarking of Good Practices on Integration"](#)**

This report provides a detailed taxonomy research of migrants' integration practices based on experiences in partner cities (in 6 European countries), emphasizing economic empowerment, political inclusion, service coordination, and social cohesion as critical components of integration, which is understood as a two-way process involving migrants and host communities.

Policy Recommendations

→ **[The GOAL Citizens' Panels Recommendations](#)**

This publication gathers the draft recommendations by the citizens' panels on how to improve the situation of migrants in Europe.

Research Studies

→ **WEMIN Stories of Change**

This booklet is a collection of testimonies of migrant and refugee women who participated in the activities organised within the WEMIN project, which aimed to promote integration and empowerment of migrant women through direct interventions.

Youth Empowerment & Education

Introduction

According to Eurostat (2022), young people aged 15-29 represent 16.3% of the EU population, expected to drop below 15% by 2050. Yet, youth remain key actors, especially in urban areas where they make up a quarter of the population. Recognising their role as future change-makers, ALDA's Youth Empowerment and Education Hub works to empower young citizens, particularly those with fewer opportunities, in line with EU priorities and ALDA's mission.The Hub promotes youth participation through cross-sectoral projects, partnerships, and collaboration with youth workers and educational institutions. It equips young people with knowledge and tools to engage in their communities, strengthen civic responsibility, and foster democratic and sustainable development. Investing in youth is key to building a more inclusive, democratic, and resilient Europe.

→

Toolkits & Guidelines

CARAVAN METHODOLOGY

→ ## [The Future We Want Youth Manifesto and Policy Brief](#)

The Future We Want project aimed at increasing the level of engagement of young Europeans with sustainability and development issues, at creating better ways of living and at providing a meaningful voice to the European youth in setting the EU policy agenda on sustainable development through advocacy on the 2030 Agenda at local and European level. The project implemented the International Caravan Methodology to engage citizens and local stakeholders on sustainability and development issues through a series of initiatives in some of the main public spaces of several European cities. These publications are one of the outcomes of the project, collecting an overview on the sustainability topic from the point of view of the group of young activists involved in the project, and some of their requests to address the topic at European level.

The PACIFY-D Policy Handbook

This publication is the final outcome of the PACIFY-D project, aimed at developing guidance on the organisation and support of youth participation environments. It brings together various aspects of the project: lessons learned, best practices, feedback, and policy recommendations on how to increase youth civic engagement for a more inclusive democracy.

IDEATHON METHODOLOGY

The ADD Something Meaningful "Youth Engagement Through Local Involvement: A Step-by-Step Guide to IDEATHON"

This guide was produced during the ADD Something Meaningful project. It presents the IDEATHON method to foster active participation including objectives, detailed descriptions of the different steps, a SWOT analysis of the method and an example of implementation. During the project, the method proved to be highly effective.

The PART-Y TOOLKIT to build a Communication Campaign for a Young and Inclusive Placemaking

Developed during the PART-Y project which aimed at fostering participation in civic life of young people and their inclusion in the decision-making processes.

Policy Recommendations

→ **The Future We Want Open letter to the European Parliament**

This open letter, produced by the participants in The Future We Want project and signed by several civil society organisations, offers a call for immediate action on the pressing issue of fast fashion addressed to the members of European Parliament.

Training Material

→ **Youth Empowerment to build local democracy in Tunisia "Facilitator's Kit – Youth Committee"**

This manual for facilitators developed in 2021 within the project "Youth Empowerment to build local democracy in Tunisia" is intended for young people, community leaders, and organisations involved in a youth committee. It provides tools, methodologies and resources necessary to engage in participatory democracy and develop participatory projects. It includes training modules on various topics such as project development and advocacy techniques.

YouthMetre Training

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The training is a free-to-access set of resources developed in the framework of the YouthMetre project exploring innovative and creative ways to empower young people and promote their engagement in policy making, in particular through the use of the YouthMetre e-tool and the advocacy toolkit. The training is available in three forms: online as an e-toolkit; as an open Moodle course; as three downloadable files.

Hub's contribution to External Actions

→

Contribution to the Assembly of European Regions Political Report: The Involvement of Young People in Democratic Life at Regional Level

This report was published in 2013 by the Assembly of European Regions with the contribution of ALDA, and presents good practices and recommendations on hot to integrate young people in democratic life in Europe. It addresses decision-makers who want to achieve a high youth participation rate.

Local Democracy Agencies

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This section collects methodologies, good practices and outputs/ material on citizens' engagement and civic participation from the point of view of LDAs approach and work seen as a catalyst for civic activation at local level.

Introduction

Initiated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) have been an instrument to rebuild trust between citizens and local authorities since their creation in the 1990's. If their history is rooted in the war in the Balkans, the LDA methodology has been adapted to other contexts and geographies, such as Georgia, Ukraine, Tunisia and Türkiye.

The approach of LDA relies on international cooperation and good governance. Their specificity is their multilevel and multi-stakeholders approach. Indeed, the LDAs are locally registered NGOs, hosted by a local or regional authority and animated by civil society. They are supported by European partners both from local and regional authorities and civil society organisations. They are leading initiatives aiming at strengthening local democracy and good governance, notably through citizens participation. This specific approach allowed some LDAs to be active for more than 20 years and to develop meaningful relations with their partners both locally and internationally.

In the context of the full scale invasion of Ukraine, LDAs have demonstrated once again their added value by the rapid response they were able to support in the face of extreme events, contributing to strengthening the resilience of Ukrainian civil society.

LDA Edremit

Strengthening Women Participation in Local Administrations in Edremit

"Strengthening Women Participation in Local Administrations" is a project founded by the Embassy of France in Türkiye and implemented by LDA Edremit.

The project idea is based on the results of a nationwide analysis concerning the low participation and especially the level of representation of women within decision-making mechanisms at local and national level. The low presence of women in municipal councils and other decision-making bodies means that most of the policies dedicated to women and gender equality are purely developed by male decision makers. The project intends to work on this specific contradiction by inviting women, young people, to learn about the decision-making dynamics of local administrations and to raise awareness of their civil rights, which place them at the centre of the debate as main actors.

LDA Edremit operates in a social context which hosts several disadvantaged and vulnerable realities. Many of the organisations animating the LDA are committed to defending the rights of certain particularly disadvantaged groups, such as the Roma women and people with disabilities.

The Roma community in Edremit, for example, struggles for its integration both in social context and in participating in decision-making mechanisms. They face social prejudices and cultural differences which inevitably marginalise them.

The aim of LDA Edremit is to create new spaces, at local level, for Roma community members to make their voices heard. The group targeted is composed of young Roma women who will take part in a series of trainings in order to shape together with other young women of the local community a Women Policy Paper to be addressed to the City Council of the Municipality.

Participants are being engaged through an online application form and through the help of the Citizens' Council Women's Rights Group.

LDAs Georgia, Armenia & Dnipropetrovsk Region

Survey on Development of Active Citizenship: A Way to Strengthen Local Democracy in Eastern Partnership Countries With the Support of Local Communities

On the initiative of the Mayor of the City of Gdànsk, ALDA was asked to conduct a survey that revealed local issues and opinions with the help of the Local Democracy Agencies in Georgia (Kutaisi), Armenia (Gymuri), and the Dnipro region in Ukraine, aiming at reflecting local perspectives on a number of issues.

The questionnaire was distributed via ALDA's network in the Eastern partnership countries, and the consultation included local Civil society organisations and representatives from Local authorities as well, who shared their opinions on issues that address their countries' development.
This report presents the results and findings from the survey.

LDA Armenia

Strengthening Local Democracy in Armenia: Guidelines on citizens' participation

This document is a contribution to the project "Support for the consolidation of local democracy in Armenia" (Line of Action III "Strengthening leadership capacities of local, elected representatives in Armenia") implemented by the Council of Europe with the support of the Government of Denmark. The document aims at presenting standards, reference texts, best practices, participation techniques and useful ideas on citizen participation, as discussed during the regional seminars held in Armenia in July 2015.

Among the participatory techniques analysed, there is a Focus on participatory budgeting and a Focus on Community Council methodologies with reference to concrete experiences implemented in Armenia, and challenges and opportunities met during the implementation of these methodologies.

LDA Central & Southern Serbia

Manual for peer educators

Basic workshop techniques and good practices for peer education by LDA Central and Southern Serbia. Publication in SRB.

Youth in Niš - Situations and Perspectives - Analysis of the Position of Youth"

The document provides a study conducted by the Local Democracy Agency in Niš, Serbia. It analyses the status, challenges, and prospects of youth in the city, highlighting issues such as unemployment, lack of local youth strategy, insufficient activism, and poor access to information. It offers insights into young people's needs and suggests
establishing an Info Center to improve access to education, employment, and cultural opportunities.

Good Practices from ALDA Community

This section gathers good practices, methodologies and outputs/ deliverables on citizens' engagement and civic participation from ALDA community, members and networks, selected on a strategic basis.

Methodologies and Good Practices on citizen participation

As a key stakeholder in local democracy and active citizenship, ALDA supports local, national, and international actors in promoting initiatives aimed at enhancing and encouraging civil participation. ALDA and its members have implemented and developed various forms of citizen participation locally on various themes and topics. Participatory processes give citizens the possibility to take part in decision-making fostering a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient democracy, which benefits the local authorities, CSOs, citizens, and the entire population.

The next section shows some successful methodologies and good practices of participatory processes implemented by ALDA and its members. It includes a description of the initiatives and their concrete application.

Youth Participation

The IDEATHON method: Empowering Youth to Drive Change and Innovation in Local Communities

The IDEATHON method is a practical tool to encourage youth participation in their local communities by generating and implementing ideas that address specific challenges. This method encourages young people to think about the changes for their communities and to take action to implement them. It consists of a series of sessions where groups of participants collaborate to identify challenges, ideas, and needs, find solutions, and put their ideas into action.
The winning ideas receive funding for the implementation.

Given its practical characteristics, this method allows young people to become agents of change and receive the necessary financial support to implement their ideas. The purpose of this method is to activate and empower young people and local authorities in all stages, from conceptual design to implementation.
Within the ADD Something Meaningful project, sixteen IDEATHON events were carried out in four partner countries, involving more than 480 young people, strengthening social and political participation. The sessions in each country were divided into a pilot 2-day IDEATHONs event, and 3 follow-up 2-day events, which allowed the participants to apply the knowledge previously gained.
The 16 winning solutions were implemented in the local environments and impact evaluation reports were produced.

This method involves partnerships with local organisations, municipalities, and other stakeholders who help with the support and implementation of the winning ideas. Each partner organisation has specific tasks and responsibilities, from cooperation with local authorities to impact Evaluation.

The IDEATHON at Litija Grammar School in Slovenia serves as an example of a successful implementation of the method. The challenge, proposed by the school itself, was to create a student-oriented social space within the school. A group of 32 third-year students participated to develop some ideas and vote for the winner project in collaboration with local organisations. The outcome was the creation of a library and a gallery with the necessary materials and equipment, fostering a dense pride and sense of belonging among participants. Moreover, a partnership was established between the school and the local authorities, laying the foundation for future collaborations

Valongo Children Council: Fostering Youth Participation in the Democratic Process

The participation methodology of the "Children's Council of Valongo" project is based on the principles of deliberative and consultative participation, grounded in education for active citizenship and the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, notably Article 12, which recognises children's right to freely express their views on all matters affecting them.
This methodology can be described as follows:

- Establishment of a permanent advisory body composed of children representing different schools and parishes within the municipality, with regular meetings and its own agenda.
- Consultation and co-construction processes, where children identify issues, formulate proposals, and contribute concrete solutions to local public policies.
- Use of age-appropriate methodologies (participatory dynamics, educational games, social mapping, among others).

The Children's Council of Valongo is an initiative that integrates the international programme "La Città dei Bambini", created with the aim of giving children a voice and, above all, listening to them attentively and intentionally. The Council is composed of children aged 8 to 9, selected by lottery to ensure balanced representation in terms of gender and the diversity of parishes within the municipality. Meetings are held biweekly, providing a safe and participatory space where councillors are challenged to reflect on the municipality, identify needs, and present suggestions for improving their city.

The adopted methodology is non-hierarchical and promotes equality in dialogue. Sessions are facilitated by specialised monitors who encourage communication, active listening, and collective idea-building.

One of the main challenges encountered during the process was implementing an active participation model that encourages children to reflect on the territory and present concrete proposals in response to challenges posed by different municipal departments.

Another significant challenge was managing expectations regarding the immediate impact of the proposals presented. Since many suggestions require time to be analysed, evaluated, and eventually implemented, it is necessary to clarify from the outset that results are not necessarily guaranteed or immediate.

Despite these challenges, the Children's Council of Valongo has shown positive evolution, and we continuously reflect on various measures to ensure the continued engagement of children and guarantee a truly inclusive, respectful, and participatory environment.

The proposals submitted by the Children's Councillors are forwarded to the relevant municipal departments, analysed, and implemented where feasible. Some of these proposals have already been translated into concrete actions, such as improvements to public spaces and sustainability-focused initiatives. The proposals demonstrate increasing awareness of the territory, social sensitivity, and proactive engagement.

Over the course of the three terms, more than 60 children from all parishes of the municipality have participated directly in the project. The Council's impact has extended to families, schools, and local communities, who have come to place greater value on the role of children as agents of change.

In 2021, Valongo became the first Portuguese municipality to join the international network La Città dei Bambini ("The City of Children").

STUDENTS' COUNCIL

Common Student Council in Denmark: Raising Student Voices in Municipal Governance

The Common Student Council in Denmark is a practical tool to encourage student participation in their local communities by representing their interests at the municipal level. Through debates and workshops, this method allows students to become active participants and empowers them to have an influence on education policies.

The aim of the council is to encourage students to engage in democracy by raising their voices on issues that affect their school life in order to safeguard their interests and connect with local politicians, officials, and the press.

The Common Student Council in Vejle established in 2008 is an example of how students work democratically and independently to promote their interests.

The target group includes individual student councils in schools within a municipality, which join the common student council to ensure representation at school, municipal, and national levels.

The Student Council works independently and freely, organising events like theme days and workshops to discuss school policies. By cooperating within the council, students can write letters to the Municipality, hold meetings with school officials, and organise conferences.

The Common Student Council foster a sense of inclusion and participation in decision-making processes, improving the well-being of students and their democracy at the municipal level.

Use of Public Spaces

Valongo's Participatory Planning: Engaging Citizens in Shaping the Future of Territorial Development

In 2020, the municipality of Valongo has initiated a participatory process for the elaboration and revision of the Plano Diretor Municipal (PDM), a fundamental instrument for defining the strategic framework for territorial development of the municipality and its organisational model.

A set of initiatives open to all citizens has been launched to stimulate the active involvement of the citizens in the elaboration of the PDM. The process was organised in different stages:

1) Expectations: during this stage, experts and technicians presented the expectations and the proposals related to territorial planning and the citizen participatory process. This served as a starting point for the construction of a common vision of the future of the territory of Valongo;

2) Diagnosis: this stage consisted in online and face-to-face meeting where citizens could raise memories they have about their territory in order to produce a shared vision of the different problems and potentials. During each session, a map of collective memory was produced;

3) Proposals: at this stage, different thematic sessions were organised to design proposals from citizens and local actors for experimental actions related to topics such as environment, mobility, housing, etc. Citizens were invited to collaborate to produce a set of proposal to be included in the PDM;

4) Experimental actions: this stage consisted in the design of micro-actions to test the proposals in a collaborative, low-cost manner.
Of the 50 actions identified, 8 were selected for experimentation;

5) Public presentation: this stage consists in the publication and dissemination of a final non- technical report to facilitate citizens' understanding of the plan, as well as the support in the public presentation of the PDM.

PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING

The Scintilla Participatory Process: Social and Urban Regeneration of Viale Milano, in Vicenza

The Scintilla group is a citizens' committee active in the neighbourhood of Viale Milano, Vicenza, Italy. The group was operationally supported by the former ALDA structure in Viale Milano and the Pampas association, also based in Viale Milano. A participatory process for the urban and social regeneration of the neighbourhood was carried out, in order to make it possible to better experience the common space in the immediate future and to define the future objectives of this crucial area for the city of Vicenza.

The current situation presents critical issues of both traffic and urban decay that require public and citizen intervention. The participatory process, which involved about 300 people (inhabitants, owners and traders and other 'users' of the district) on various occasions, identified some points on which this proposal is based.

Support and work on a positive and constructive slogan for the neighbourhood: THE PLACE TO BE

In short, the path proposes to positively orient this neighbourhood by enhancing its positive aspects and also trying to mitigate its challenges. Being a popular context of the city in its heights and features, its food district with its multi-ethnicity and large presence of people and activities, represents a possibility of growth and meeting between urban populations and different cultures.

The Scintilla Group aims at a redevelopment of the area from which the Quadrilatero but also the whole of Vicenza can benefit, in terms of social, labour and building heritage enhancement. It proposes a plan of social activities and interaction to build a pleasant and constructive living environment.

The Scintilla Citizens' Committee and the Municipal Administration of Vicenza, through a memorandum of understanding, committed to pursuing the common objective of regenerating the Viale Milano quadrilateral, enhancing its qualities and addressing its challenges. The proposal is to accompany and share the Scintilla Group's vision around the theme of 'The Place to Be' and new forms of work. Together, the Scintilla Group and the Municipal Administration of Vicenza have initiated a dialogue and joint work to achieve a better quality of life in the district today and to define a future that includes the community and makes it a pole of positive attraction in our city.

Vejle Mobile Urban Gardens: Cultivating Community, Sustainability, and Green Spaces

The Vejle Mobile Urban Gardens project aims to enhance the recreational and environmental value of Vejle, Denmark, through citizen-run urban gardens. Initiated in 2013 with 14 gardens, this initiative is managed by the Grow Vejle association to promote mental and physical well-being, healthy food, and social cohesion. An urban garden consists of a euro pallet with pallet sides and soil to grow in. The gardens are available for rent for a season and can be cultivated by individuals, families, schools, and other groups. This initiative aims to revitalize local neighborhoods and enhance social cooperation through shared activities.

Local residents and organisations work daily in these gardens like communal meals, garden days, reading sessions, and competitions, developing community spirit and self-sufficiency in food production. Alongside, the project hosts public lectures and cultural events on green transformation, sustainability, and recycling.

In 2014, the project grew including other facilities such as outdoor kitchen, greenhouse, sensory gardens and rainwater collection. The green corridor of edible crops "Eat the City" was built in 2015, connecting the gardens to the city center and converting unused industrial areas into greenhouses.
The impact of the project is evident in increased local engagement and ownership, contributing to the development of local networks.

Participation of marginalised groups

Commission for Disabled Persons of Sisak: Promoting Rights and Inclusion in Croatia

The Commission for Disabled Persons of Sisak, Croatia, was established in 2013 and aims to create and implement a local strategy for the rights and opportunities for disabled people. Its mission is to monitor and advocate for disabled individuals' rights in Sisak.

The Commission is composed of representatives from public institutions and CSOs focusing on various disabilities of all ages, which are divided into three working groups to address the specific needs of different disabled groups. The goal is to improve and ensure their inclusion in public, political, and cultural life, including education and employment. The Commission meets quarterly, with monthly sessions to monitor and discuss the strategy. Activities include interviews, focus groups, round tables, and reports to raise awareness and gather data.

CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

In' Etterbeek: A Study Case for Resident and Non-Resident People Participation to the Local Governance

A striking feature of Etterbeek, a Municipality of Brussels, is that 49.73% of its residents do not have Belgian nationality. Of these, 36.15% come from European countries and 13.58% from non-European countries.

This cultural diversity is an asset, but also a challenge in terms of integration and social cohesion. The diversity of languages, customs and expectations of local residents represents an opportunity for openness, but also a responsibility for the Municipality, which is striving to create spaces for exchange and dialogue.

To encourage inclusion and citizen participation, the Municipality put in place a number of tools. One of these is the Thematic Consultative Councils, which give residents the opportunity to express their views on specific issues and make an active contribution to local decision-making. These councils include: Mobility and Road Safety, Seniors, People with Disabilities, Ecological Transition, Families, Animal Welfare, Health, as well as in'Etterbeek- the Consultative Council and the Community of European and Non-European Residents. These councils are open to all Etterbeek residents, whatever their age, nationality or background. They enable everyone to get involved in community life according to their interests and concerns. Whether you're young or old, Belgian or non-Belgian, every voice counts in shaping the future of the municipality together.

In'Etterbeek is a unique study-case, consisting of two main participatory tools: the Consultative Council and the Community.

The Council: It debates local issues, advises the authorities on the actions to be taken and guides the choice of projects and activities proposed by the municipality according to the needs of foreign residents. It also participates in the implementation of these projects through a participatory budget, the allocation of which it decides. Councillors are appointed for a three-year term. The council plays an essential role in building a city that is more inclusive and adapted to its multicultural population.

The Community: beyond the council, in'Etterbeek is also a place for foreign and Belgian residents to meet and exchange ideas. Throughout the year, the program organizes a variety of activities aimed at strengthening social ties and cohesion between residents. These include cultural visits to get to know the municipality better, talks and debates on topical issues, visits to Etterbeek businesses and sporting activities: all these events are accessible to all, encourage conviviality and the active participation of residents.

Q-AGEING in Ujbuda: Empowering Seniors Through Engaging Activities

Q-AGEING is a project aimed at encouraging and facilitating activities for people over 60 years old to improve their mental health and strengthen social cohesion, and it covered local communities in Hungary, Germany, Poland, Italy and Slovenia. It included special activity groups like crossword solving and photographing; organised programs such as excursions and theater visits; and voluntary activities. These activities aim to enhance the sense of belonging to the local community.

The program included the participation of elderly through public opinion polls and focus groups meetings to map the sociological landscape of this demographic and understand their preferences and expectations in relation to their government. They were asked for example what kind of program they would be interested in, and how much they would pay for it, as well as their preferences for hobbies, and they could also recommend events to be organised. Their willingness to participate in the implementation of the programs was also surveyed. In order to advertise the programs, a group of volunteers was involved, who regularly passed on information about the opportunities in their local communities, and reported back to the local government about the interest for the different programs. With the help of their work the local government was able to get a more authentic picture about the needs and the necessary circumstances they have to ensure.

By involving senior citizens in the planning and implementation of programs, Q-AGEING encouraged active participation and new social connections, improving mental health and satisfaction with community projects.

Information & Media

"Hello, this is a reader fo Dolenjc!": Engaging Citizens through News Participation

The newspaper column "Hello, this is a reader of Dolenjc!" is a feature in the local newspaper "Dolenjski list", which comes out every Thursday and covers the area of South Eastern Slovenia.

Newspaper readers have the opportunity to call the newspaper's journalist on duty every Thursday between 6 and 7 p.m. They can express their opinion about something, ask a question, praise or criticize someone or something and express their observations when they notice that something is wrong, or give their approval on something.

The objective of the column is to give readers the opportunity to say what they think, what they notice and what they would like to alert the competent and local authorities about. The column promotes the activity of citizens to pay more attention to their environment and for them to have the opportunity to speak out and to get a quick response from the competent authorities.

The influence of the column "Halo, tukaj bralec Dolenjca" is a long term one that has, according to results of questionnaire, a great influence in the region of Dolenjska. Answers to almost all questions in the questionnaire suggest that most of the people think that the column has a positive influence in shaping the political, cultural, economic and social life of the region.

The column provides a quick response from the competent authorities and readers. It offers a fast reply, comment, feedback that relevant to the question and to the expressed opinion. The column encourages citizens to be more aware of what happens around them, to be more critical, to they think more about things and be reminded that they have the ability to deliver their opinion and to get a quick response from the competent authorities or if not from journalists or the media.

E-participation

Decidim Barcelona: a Digital Open-Source Platform for Democratic Participation

Decidim is a digital participation and democratic platform designed to facilitate collaboration and collection of ideas among citizens, so it can be easily used by institutions and organisations. As a free open-source platform, Decidim can be used and implemented by anyone. Nowadays, more than 200 local and regional governments and more than 100 organisations are using this platform.

Launched in 2016, its most notable version is Decidim.barcelona, which among other projects allowed the city to be nominated European Capital of Democracy in 2023. The platform gives citizens' voices the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and debates, where they can discuss issues related to the city and make new proposals.

The platform is open to any citizen regardless of their legal status and serves as a democratic tool where they can make new proposals, debate and comment on existing ones, give arguments for or against, or make general reflections and recommendations. After the implementation of a proposal, citizens can find out the details and trace their path. This fosters transparency and accountability of public institutions, a collaboration between the city and its citizens, and active participation. Examples of citizen proposals include the designing of green areas and the planning of play areas in public spaces.

Through Decidim, citizens can also consult the several participation bodies' meetings and channels of dialogue between citizens and the City Council. If these meetings are open, people can participate in several ways: attending, adding points to the agenda, or commenting on the proposals.

The success of this initiative is evident in the increased amount of information available to the citizens and their increased participation and proposal deliberation. More than 110,000 participants are registered, almost 30,000 ideas have been proposed and around 15,000 proposals have been accepted.

This tool can be used for democratic inclusion since it allows the participation of groups of people who have difficulties in attending face-to-face meetings, people without the right to vote in electoral processes, and people with disabilities.

Sustainability & Environment

Polish Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy: EngagingPublic Participation for a Sustainable Food Future

Citizens' Assemblies are temporary decision-making bodies where randomly selected citizens make political decisions representing the society. During the meetings, participants gain knowledge on the topic to be addressed, listen to experts, and collectively deliberate on important issues.

In May and June 2024, a Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy took place in Poland as part of the European REAL DEAL project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020, to which ALDA participated and which aimed to reshape citizens' participation in the debate of the European Green Deal and green transition. This assembly is part of the participatory processes and techniques that are being tested as part of the project.

The Citizens' Assembly consisted of 65 participants above 18 who discussed the future of food policy in Poland, in particular how to improve access to and consumption of healthy and environmentally friendly food. Participants were randomly selected according to criteria such as gender, age, education, and place of residence, and didn't need any prior knowledge on the topic, as experts imparted the necessary information related to food policy and presented the proposed solution during the educational part.

Afterward, the deliberation phase consisted in a discussion among the participants about the recommendations that were put forth in the previous part. This part aimed to an effective exchange of argument, encouraging attentive listening and the understanding of various perspectives. Participants collaborated to assess and refine suggested solutions, or present new ideas. Finally, a list of recommendations was published and distributed to politicians and media.

Participation through Art

EU24 Poster Competition: Fostering Climate Action Through Creative Engagement

A poster competition is an event where participants are invited to create posters on a specific topic, which are then judged, displayed, and/or distributed. They are a valuable tool for promoting participatory democracy as they serve as a platform for individuals to express their ideas, raise awareness on specific issues, and foster creativity and inclusivity.

Within the EU24 - Engage for the Planet project, a poster competition was launched in 2023 on four different topics related to climate change: energy, food production, mobility, and climate justice. The aim of the project was to narrow down the democratic participation gap among citizens in a gender-balanced way, empowering their voices and fostering dialogue and action in the realm of climate change and sustainability.

The poster competition served as an awareness-raising tool among the participants through a participative and creative format to mobilize the citizens and encourage their participation and engagement for the planted in the EU24 elections. Each poster competition preceded one of the debates which were part of the project and which took place in Strasbourg, Groningen, Gothenburg, and Berlin, and each was linked to the specific theme addressed at each event.

The competition targeted individuals with diverse backgrounds, under and over 18 years old, artists and creative individuals, but also local communities, youth organisations, and schools, including minorities and marginalized groups. Participants could submit up to four posters via the website or post them on their social media accounts. The posters were then evaluated and the four selected winners were invited to the final event in Brussels. All the submitted posters were disseminated through various channels such as online platforms, debate events, and the press.

The competition was a crucial initiative in the context of youth activism, empowering youth voices in larger societal debates and giving them the possibility to express their concerns and solutions. Encouraging the active participation of young citizens brought fresh perspectives and ideas, and fostered their sense of responsibility. The diversity of perspectives enriched the wide debate on social climate justice and environmental issues.

Strengthening CSOs & NGOs Engagement in Local Governance

The NGO Center in North Macedonia: Strengthening Civil Society and Building Strategic Partnerships

The NGO Center in Skopje, North Macedonia, was established in 2009 to support and develop the capacities of the NGOs within the city. Funded by the Swiss Agency of Development, the center is part of a broader initiative to enhance the development of Macedonian NGOs in various cities in the country such as Veles, Prilep, Stip and Kicevo. After many years of strategies and cooperation with several NGOs to strengthen the capacity of civil society, this center was established in the City of Skopje. The main objective is to help associations and foundations in their work by providing logistical support, counseling, consultation, adequate training, and grants that focus on establishing partnerships between NGOs, NGO and local government, media and business sector, and their involvement in public policy creation. The center offers free resources such as computer equipment, meeting spaces, and rooms for training and presentations, as well as professional assistance and training sessions.

The target groups include associations of citizens and foundations in Skopje, with the Center offering tools such as the NGO Gate Portal for the needs of associations of citizens, an electronic register for associations and foundations, and the NGO Forum, which provides regular meetings and direct contact opportunities for NGOs.

The NGO Center has been successful in helping over 200 associations and foundations to achieve their goals, propose new ideas, and address citizens' problems. An average of 30 meetings, 20 workshops, and 15 presentations are held monthly.

Citizens' Participation in Decision-Making

LABSUS and the Shared Administration of Common Goods in Italy

LABSUS is a cultural association founded in 2005 by a heterogeneous group of subjects belonging to the world of volunteering and civil society. Its aim is to promote the implementation of the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, enshrined in the Italian Constitution in art. 118, last paragraph, since 2001.

The collaboration pacts are local legal agreements that signify an unprecedented opportunity for citizens and public administrators to address pressing societal challenges collaboratively by co-creating means and rules for collective action. The main goals include the regeneration and co-management of 'common goods' such as abandoned buildings, gardens, rivers, parks, and cultural heritage assets, as well as the design and implementation of 'collaborative services,' such as establishing food redistribution networks and repurposing public schools into vibrant civic centers.

The model LABSUS refers to is that of 'shared administration of common goods', initially theorized by Gregorio Arena in 1997 and then tested throughout Italy starting in 2014, when the first "regulation on collaboration between citizens and administration for the care and regeneration of urban commons" was adopted in Bologna.

Bearing this idea of shared administration, the principle of horizontal subsidiarity became tangible in the Collaboration Pacts.

One of the most important initiatives by Labsus was the drafting, together with the Municipality of Bologna, of a municipal regulation entitled "Regulation on collaboration between citizens and the administration for the care and regeneration of urban commons". On 22 February 2014, the text was officially presented in Bologna, the first Italian municipality to approve it. This pioneer text has been donated to all Italian municipalities with the possibility to adapt it to their needs and characteristics. Since then, over 320 public bodies (municipalities, unions of municipalities, provinces, and metropolitan cities) have adopted or are adopting it. The list, which stretches every day, can be downloaded from the Labsus website.

Since 2014, the commitment to the territories has become increasingly rooted in various areas of Italy through awareness-raising events and projects to promote the culture of shared administration. Today there are more than 7.000 pacts of collaboration in Italy.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING METHODOLOGY

Gdansk's Civic Budget and Green Civic Budget: a Tool for Collaborative Decision-Making

Participatory budgeting is a participatory democracy tool through which individual citizens, groups, and associations contribute to decision-making on how to spend part of the public budget by proposing project ideas to then be translated into concrete actions.

The city of Gdansk, Poland, has been implementing participatory budgeting continuously since the establishment of its statute in August 2013. The initiative has always had successful responses from the public, with more than 933 projects implemented for a total amount of PLN 177 million (41 million euros). The Civic Budget assumes the cooperation of residents and local authorities in public activities, and the active participation of many agencies in implementing the projects. The process consists of open assemblies in the different districts of the cities, where every citizen over 16 years old can participate in voting for projects and proposing new ones in their neighborhood and the city. After filling out the application form including a list of supporters, the project proposals are evaluated and approved by the City Office, and finally submitted to the vote of the population in online form.

People with no access to the internet at home can vote in public spaces such as city libraries. All residents can vote regardless of their attendance at the assembly. The projects that receive the highest number of points will be implemented. All the winning projects are available on the Municipality's website. The regulations of the civic budget in Gdansk change regularly to meet the people's requirements. Due to a change in the residents' priorities and the increased number of projects concerning the environment, since 2021, the civic budget has been divided into the regular participatory budgeting and the Green Civic Budget, which is dedicated to projects on environmental protection and ecology, such as the construction of new green spaces and the renovation of existing ones, as well as educational activities concerning this matter. The amount allocated to the Green Citizens' Budget every year is around PLN 5 million (EUR 1.1 million). From its implementation until 2023, 492 projects were submitted, and 144 were selected to be implemented. Most of them include planting new trees and planning new green areas. The successful impact of the Green Civic Budget does not only concern the wider number of green areas in the city but also a much higher awareness among citizens regarding the environmental policy and willingness to actively participate when the construction works are carried out. The residents are also increasingly interested in the city's activities.

CITIZENS' PANEL METHODOLOGY

EURaction Citizens' Panels: Empowering Ordinary Citizens on European Issues

Citizens panels are structured discussions where groups of ordinary citizens can deliberate on specific issues. The aim is to encourage active citizens participation in decision-making processes, especially for those citizens who would not have spontaneously participated in projects of that nature.

Within the project "EURaction - Citizens acting for Europe" five citizens' panels were set up in Lithuania, Poland, Cyprus, Italy and France. The aim of the pilot project was to promote the participation of citizens in European issues, encourage a bottom-up approach to allow citizens to raise their voices, and promote trans-national mobility opportunities among the citizens of the countries involved. Each panel was designed to consist of at least 60 ordinary citizens, specifically targeting those who usually don't engage in European projects. Each partner was encouraged to organise two meetings and a final conference adapting the guidelines for the sett up to fit their local context.

The participants were selected through a strategy designed to ensure diversity and inclusivity: each partner identified five or six "key citizens" to motivate and recruit other participants. This allowed for the inclusion of participants from different backgrounds.

The method used for the panels was the "Open Space Methodology" to facilitate debates and encourage open dialogue among the participants. This method consists in sitting in a circle without an agenda or a table, so that the participants feel more comfortable to contribute to the discussion. Participants could discuss their insights and propose meaningful ideas to improve communication between citizens and European institutions. Several recurring themes concerned education, environmental issues, youth, mobility, participation, and European identity.

The results from the citizens' panels were gathered and reported to the European institutions and stakeholders aiming to influence European policy and improve citizens' participation in European issues.

Citizens' Science Initiatives

Our Digital Village: Developing Digital Skills in Rural Areas through Collaborative Workshops

The Participatory Context Analysis consists of nine national workshops organised within the project Our Digital Village to foster a self-analysis on the conditions of the rural areas where the participants live.

The project, launched in 2023, brings together Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Romania in the common effort to intervene in rural areas by co-creating high-quality educational content that respond to the local needs, and promote the acquisition of digital skills in the long-term goal of digitalization by raising awareness among the society.

The self-analysis workshops aimed at identifying the intrinsic motivations and needs of each local context to be taken in mind while co-designing the educational material and used for the following training for teachers and trainers. After creating the 'Digital Village Communities' composed by educational institutions, local authorities, and policy makers in the rural areas, and after a series of informative sessions to underscore the importance of digitalization, nine self-analysis workshops were implemented with specific target groups composed of: at least 10 educational teaching staff, 10 school students, 10 adult learners, and 1 policy maker in the field of education. In total, 276 participants from diverse backgrounds were engaged. For the self-analysis process, the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach was used to promote a sense of responsibility in the groups and individuals. The workshops consisted of cycles of discussion on the living conditions in the rural areas, the current state in terms of digital skills development.

Facilitated by twelve trainers equipped with the needed skills, the participants collaborated to identify common needs in the light of an open dialogue.

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