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Workshop Agenda

The CoE and the Modalities of Civil Society Involvement



14 July 2025

Villa Fabris, Thiene (Vicenza)

Hybrid Event

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About the project

The **BRIDGE to the CoE — Building Resilience and Independence for Democratic Governance and Engagement with the Council of Europe** — is a European initiative led by ALDA to combat democratic backsliding by strengthening civil society participation. Focused on both Southern and Eastern Europe, the project enhances citizens' engagement, fosters dialogue, and builds capacities to ensure democratic resilience. It leverages ALDA's extensive experience and partnership with the Council of Europe to bridge civil society and democratic institutions, fostering trust, participation, and active governance.

Objectives

- Increase **awareness about the role and standards of the Council of Europe** in promoting democratic governance and enhancing civil society representation.
- Foster dialogue on the **evolution of civic space and the challenges to democratic resilience** in Southern and Eastern Europe.
- Enhance **civil society capacity to participate in Council of Europe processes** and engagement opportunities.
- Build **connections between civil society, public authorities, and institutions** to promote citizens' active participation in governance.

Challenges

Across Europe, democracy is under strain due to declining civic engagement, rising populism, polarisation, and erosion of the rule of law. In Eastern Europe, countries like **Moldova and Ukraine** are working to strengthen democratic institutions amid conflict and societal division, while civil society faces legal restrictions and political pressure.

In Southern Europe, even long-established democracies such as **Italy** are seeing a shrinking civic space, where NGOs—especially those focused on human rights and migration—face bureaucratic hurdles and institutional disengagement.

These challenges reflect a continent-wide democratic backsliding. To counter this, there is a pressing need to empower civil society, boost citizen participation, and uphold Council of Europe standards.

The “BRIDGE to the CoE” project responds to this by raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and **enhancing civil society's capacity to engage in democratic processes**.

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Agenda

Time	Programme
9:00	Registration
9:15	Welcome Remarks Antonella Valmorbida, ALDA, Secretary General
9:30	Institutional Greetings Representative of the Municipality of Thiene
09:30 - 11:00	Shared Struggles, Shared Strength: Italy and the EaP Civil Society <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Antonella Valmorbida, ALDA, Secretary General• Andrea Rilievo, Cooperativa Studio Progetto, President• Nicola Marolla, Thiene Municipality, Director for Institutional and Population Services Moderator: Elisabetta Uroni, ALDA
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 - 12:00	Presentation of the Council of Europe tools and the Reykjavik Declaration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lotta Valtonen, Council of Europe, Policy Advisor
12:00 - 12:45	Working Groups (online & offline)
12:45 - 13:00	Conclusions

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