

Speech of ALDA Secretary General, Antonella Valmorbida, at the Open Government Partnership Global Summit on 8 October 2025, held in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain.

Good morning, everyone.

I'm pleased to share a few reflections on the work and vision of **ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy**. We represent more than **300 members** – local authorities and civil society organisations from Europe, the Neighbourhood, and beyond – all united by one mission: **to strengthen local democracy** through the empowerment of local governments and citizens alike.

At ALDA, we are convinced that **strong local democracy means strong communities**. It means giving local authorities the powers, competences, and resources they need. But it also means enabling citizens to engage, to participate, and to become full counterparts in shaping local policies.

After 30 years of experience, we have seen that **good, accountable, and participatory local governance** truly improves people's lives. Local governments cannot succeed alone. They need the involvement and trust of citizens. Because a participative community is a successful one — both socially and economically.

The **local level** is where democracy happens every day.

Not everyone becomes a member of parliament — but many more can join citizen councils, take part in consultations, or contribute to deliberation in schools, neighbourhoods, and communities. It's also where we can open space for those often underrepresented — **women and youth** — and give them a stronger voice in public life.

Local governance is also a **space for innovation** — where citizens and institutions can co-create solutions to concrete problems. It values local resources, people, and traditions, and provides a less polarised environment, where cooperation is possible beyond political divides.

This **multistakeholder approach** — bringing together local authorities, citizens, and the private sector — is what ensures sustainability, inclusion, and trust. And for that, **transparency, openness, and accountability** are essential.

ALDA promotes these values worldwide.

- In **Ukraine**, we support local communities facing the challenges of war, building resilience against the illegal Russian aggression.
- In **Türkiye**, we work with women to strengthen their engagement in local elections.
- In **Africa**, through the *Our Space* and *WYDE* projects, we empower youth and women to take part in civic life and local governance.
- In the **Western Balkans**, we help prepare local communities for EU integration and counter brain drain through youth participation.
- And across regions, we fight **disinformation**, helping local governments and citizens develop the tools and awareness to protect democratic life.

We also continue to promote the **Local Democracy Agency model**, where local authorities and civil society cooperate in a bottom-up approach for dialogue, peace, and democratic resilience.

But while local democracy is increasingly recognised as a **pillar of democratic resilience**, it still receives **limited political and financial support**. That's why it is essential to:

- Support **decentralisation**, accountability, and transparency;
- Empower an **active civil society** that can interact with institutions;
- And create genuine **spaces of cooperation** where citizens, authorities, and communities can work together.

Because local democracy is not just a level of governance — it is where **trust, participation, and democracy itself begin**.

Thank you.

More info on the event here: <https://www.alda-europe.eu/antonella-valmorbida-at-the-ogp-global-summit/>