

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS – THE:PLACE PROGRAMME

Türkiye Hand in Hand with Europe: Programme for Local Authorities and Civil Society Exchange

PROGRAMME & OBJECTIVES

THE:PLACE is a collaborative exchange programme designed to establish enduring networks between Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Türkiye and the European Union. Managed by **ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy** and **MAD – Mekanda Adalet Derneği** and supported by the **Mercator Foundation**, the programme aims to empower CSOs and Local Authorities (LAs) as crucial actors in local development.

The programme aims to enhance CSOs' capacity to make a significant impact in their respective work areas, by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and cooperation among those working on local issues. This second edition of the programme wishes to focus specifically on participatory practices and approaches, encouraging partnerships and projects adopting methodologies to involve citizens and communities in decision-making, co-creation and joint initiatives. We specifically encourage projects involving climate adaptation and/or digitalisation. The programme also encourages collaboration with local authorities through quadrilateral partnerships. The programme provides **targeted capacity building, peer learning, and subgrant support on joint partnership projects.**

THE:PLACE will last from **May 2026 to April 2029**, supporting two rounds of beneficiaries (the first from June 2026 to November 2027 and the second from November 2027 to April 2029).

The selection process for the first round of the second edition of THE:PLACE will happen in two stages:

1. By applying through the application form linked below, CSOs can be pre-selected to attend a Networking Meeting planned for July 2nd.
2. Following this networking meeting, the final beneficiaries of the first round will be selected.

More details are provided below at the "Application process" section.

WHO IS THE:PLACE FOR?

We are seeking CSOs which:

- adopt **human rights** or **development based approach** (İnsan hakları veya kalkınma temelli yaklaşım)
- are **non-for-profit NGOs** and **Foundations** (Türkiye için dernek, vakıf ve kar-amacı-gütmeyen kooperatifler);
- are based in **Türkiye**, in the **European Union** or in **EU enlargement countries** (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine).
- are interested in engaging in an **international exchange process**¹ coupled with an enhanced engagement with a **local authority at the city level**, with a specific focus on

¹ For previous participants of THE:PLACE programme: Please note that participants from the 1st round and 2nd round of the first edition of THE:PLACE programme (2021-2026) are **eligible to apply** as individual organisations. The aim of THE:PLACE programme remains to create new partnerships among EU and Turkish CSOs, however the **capitalisation** of previously funded THE:PLACE projects can be carried out by former applicants.

participatory approaches (either municipalities or metropolitan municipalities/district municipalities and metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye)

- have an **experience in project management** and sufficient **stability** as an organisation. The effort expected under THE:PLACE programme is for 2 people per organisation to be engaged for the whole duration of each cycle (June 2026 – November 2027, November 2027 – April 2029).

Cooperatives must be non-profit and meet the following criteria:

- the cooperative doesn't distribute the difference between incomes and expenditures to its members, board members or board of advisors,
- the cooperative doesn't distribute any additional income coming from reserve funds or asset sales to its members,
- in the purpose and activity section of the main cooperative contract, it should be stated that the objectives of the cooperative are to be in the public interest.

CSOs will be **pre-selected** on the basis of their organisational capacity, interest, motivation, and willingness to engage throughout the project. Please note that the project language will be English, and participants are expected to be professionally proficient in this language in order to favour the exchange. For further details about the evaluation criteria, please refer to the section below. We will pay specific attention to the **geographical distribution** of the selected organisation to guarantee wide national and international coverage.

Applying CSOs should indicate their **intended collaboration with a specific Local Authority** and provide a plan or vision outlining the existing or envisioned partnership in the application form. The plan should detail how the collaboration will occur and include expectations and capacity-building needs. CSOs should also elaborate the relevancy of their relationship with the Local Authority, or the wish to collaborate in the application form (for example, the CSO is located in the same municipality, has its secondary offices there, has an already ongoing long-term collaboration through a project or a Memorandum of Understanding...). Previous collaborations with local authorities and possibly following up on a previous project are not strictly required to apply. Local Authorities will be later, in the proceeding phases of the program, invited to join the partnership through the "**associate partner**" formula by signing a letter of intent.

As mentioned earlier, applying CSOs should **apply individually**, without necessarily having in mind a partner organisation in order to apply for the programme. Once the selection process is complete, CSOs will be matched with a suitable partner (from Türkiye if the applicant is based in the EU and enlargement countries, and vice versa). However, if you already have a specific partnership in mind that you would like to bring to THE:PLACE, both organisations must submit separate applications. If both organisations are selected, they may decide for the partnership later, along the process.

WHAT WE WILL WORK ON IN THE:PLACE?

As a general approach, the second edition of THE:PLACE programme wishes to give a stronger focus to **citizens' engagement, participation and democracy**. Citizens participation is here intended in a broader sense than citizens participation with Local Authorities, but also with Civil Society Organisations as a way to represent citizens' voice. These topics are at the core

of the activities of ALDA – European Association of Local Democracy and MAD – Center for Spatial Justice. The selected beneficiaries and the sub-granted projects will be encouraged to enhance participation among CSOs, LAs and citizens and adopt participatory approaches in any field of intervention chosen. [At this link](#) examples of the previously implemented projects within THE:PLACE programme can be found.

Selected CSOs will be able to propose a topic of their choice to enhance their capacity when developing a joint initiative with their partners, however the programme is particularly interested in supporting projects targeting **climate adaptation** and **digitalisation**.

All proposals should anyway align with the general framework of the **Human Rights Based Approach** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. And, of course, CSOs are expected to be motivated to collaborate with local authorities and actively engage in international exchange with their counterparts through those topics.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

The first round of the second edition of the THE:PLACE programme will run from **June 2026 to November 2027**, consisting in 5 main phases:

→ an **online networking event** on **2nd July 2026** open to the 20 pre-selected CSOs (10 based in Türkiye and 10 based in the EU + enlargement countries): this event will start as a basis to assess the potential interaction among the candidate CSOs.

→ an **online matchmaking event** in **September 2026** open to the selected CSOs (6 based in Türkiye and 6 based in the EU + enlargement countries): an interactive session of presentations will be organised to start imagining potential joint projects.

→ an **intensive coaching** in Brussels (TBC) of 4 days in October 2026 focusing on team building through interactive sessions to get to know each other and reflect on the two main axes of THE:PLACE programme: CSO-LA collaboration and EU-Türkiye cooperation. The coaching will also be aimed to introduce the partnerships to the insights of project development.

→ an **online learning and mentoring programme** with a peer-based approach (September 2026 – February 2027) to delve on the specific topics chosen by the participants themselves during the intensive coaching event in accordance to their interests and needs;

→ a **project development phase** (September 2026 – December 2026) with the support of the programme, **6 partnerships** will be created (1 Turkish CSO associated with 1 Turkish LA in partnership with 1 European CSO associated with 1 European LA). These 6 partnerships will work together to co-develop a project with coaching provided by ALDA and MAD.

→ a **project implementation** period of up to 12 months (December 2026 – November 2027) will engage the partnerships in local activities, capacity building activities, meetings, events, job-shadowing among staff, in-presence studies and help them in co-develop an action plan laying the ground for their future collaboration with the support of a grant of **32.000€ per partnership** (16.000€ reserved to the Turkish partner and 16.000€ to the EU/enlargement partner);

→ a **closing event** in November 2027 Türkiye or in an EU enlargement country (TBC), aimed to project dissemination and follow up, as well as celebrating the achievements of the whole THE:PLACE programme.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

To be in THE:PLACE:

1. Check the eligibility criteria
2. Fill out the Google form at this link: <https://forms.gle/mtG6VdC6gpgyqzS46>
3. Ensure you have uploaded relevant documentation:
 - a. Statute of the organisation,
 - b. Latest activity report or certificate of activity from the Directorate of Civil Society for Turkish applicants,
 - c. Latest budget or financial report of the organisation,
 - d. Additional documentation proving the collaborations with Local Authorities can be added if relevant.
4. Submit your application by 5th June 2026.
5. If pre-selected, you are required to participate in the Networking event on 2nd July and interact with other pre-selected applicants.

Pre selection

Please note that the application to join the second round of THE:PLACE programme will consist of two stages:

1. Pre-selection of 10 CSOs based in Türkiye and 10 CSOs based in the EU + enlargement countries, who will be invited to attend the Networking event on 2nd July 2026;
2. Following the event, the interactions between the 10 & 10 pre-selected CSOs will be assessed, and 6 CSOs based in Türkiye and 6 CSOs based in the EU + enlargement countries will be selected as final beneficiaries of the programme, therefore having access to the rest of the aforementioned activities.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications that are submitted will be reviewed to ensure they meet the technical requirements outlined in this Call for Proposals. The shortlisted applications will then undergo evaluation by the Selection Committee of the programme. The Selection Committee consists of representatives appointed by ALDA, MAD, and Mercator Stiftung, who are members of the committee. The evaluation will be based on the criteria specified below

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Technical Capacity | %30 |
| Project Management Experience | %10 |
| Technical Expertise | %20 |
| Operational Capacity | %30 |
| Financial Capacity | %10 |
| Human Resource Capacity | %10 |
| Impact Capacity | %10 |
| Match&Relevancy | %40 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Motivation&Interest of Applicant | %15 |
| Expectation&Targets of Applicant | %15 |
| Relevancy to the Programme Objectives | %10 |
| Total | %100 |

THE:PLACE OPENING TIMES

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| Publication of the call and opening of Q&A | 5th May 2026 Send your questions to: info@theplaceprogramme.org |
| Infoday | 18th May 2026 14:00-16:00 CEST / 15:00-17:00 TRT Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Lbmzd5M_R9yix7YG9Rfkng |
| Closing Q&A period | 18th May 2026 |
| Publication of the FAQ | 20th May 2026 FAQ will be published here (ALDA): https://www.aldaeuropa.eu/progetto/theplace/ and here (MAD): https://mekandaadalet.org/en/theplace-homepage/ |
| Closing of the application period | 05th June 2026 Apply here: https://forms.gle/pKwNwBrgNRxHmC7BA |
| Information of applicants on the pre-selection results | Until 26th June 2026 |
| Networking event | 2nd July 2026 |
| Final selection | Mid-July 2026 |

APPLICATION FORM

The call is open until **5th June 2026**