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# SEEDS OF DEMOCRACY

Connecting Places and Communities



**ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy**  
**Seeds of Democracy – connecting places and communities.**

## **Sub-granting Scheme**

### **Call for proposals**

**17/02/2026 - 01/04/2026**

## **1. Introduction and background**

In order to promote good governance and citizen participation at the local level in Europe and beyond, ALDA supports citizens and groups of citizens in their initiatives aimed at improving their local context, building bridges with local authorities in order to make the change real. In this framework, ALDA works through a participatory approach and the method of multilateral decentralised cooperation, always focusing on strong partnerships between local authorities and civil society organisations.

ALDA aims at **strengthening a worldwide global alliance of local and regional authorities and civil society actors working together in local communities**, in order to make them more resilient, socially and economically successful, more inclusive, sustainable and fair. This call for proposals seeks to **support initiatives that are aimed at fostering European Citizenship** and at supporting an inclusive and people-oriented economic local development all over Europe. Additionally, the aim is to cultivate a profound **sense of "local ownership" and engagement within communities**.

### **1.1 The CERV Programme**

The project falls under the umbrella of the **CERV programme**, which seeks to support and develop **open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies** based on the rule of law. That includes a vibrant and empowered civil society, encouraging people's democratic, civic

and social participation and cultivating the rich diversity of European society, based on our common values, history and memory.

## 2. The Call for proposals

The call for proposals will fund different organisations developing their own projects at the local level, widening public knowledge, awareness and interest about the EU key policies and strategies. In particular the thematic focus of the regranted actions should have a clear link to [ALDA's thematic hubs](#).

**ALDA (European Association for Local Democracy)** is a global alliance of local and regional authorities and civil society dedicated to the **promotion of good governance and citizens participation at the local level in the European Union, its Neighbourhood and beyond**. ALDA works **with and for** local communities, to address future challenges and to support them in being more **resilient, inclusive, environmentally sustainable and fair**.

To better respond to today's global challenges, which often require local answers, ALDA organises its **work through Thematic Hubs**, covering topics such as Environment and Climate, Gender Equality and Human Rights, Youth, Digital Transformation, Migration, and Local Development. ALDA operates through a **participatory and decentralised approach**, helping its members and partners become real **change-makers in their territories**.

## 3. Size of the grants

The overall budget amount for this activity sums up to **180.000 Eur**.

The grants awarded will be: **15.000 Eur each, 12 projects** in total.

## 4. Eligible entities

In order to be eligible for granting the organisation must have all the characteristics below:

- Be a **legal entity**;
- Be a **non-profit organization**;
- Be **established in a Member State** of the EU;
- Respect EU values as laid down in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the EU Charter of fundamental rights;
- Commit to ALDA's "[Gender Equality and anti discrimination policy](#)" and to sign the statements for members, if they have yet to do so.
- Be **directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action**, not acting as an intermediary.
- Be a **member of ALDA** before the launch of this call

## 5. Thematic focus

In alignment with its core mission and the CERV Programme, this call for proposals aims to support **initiatives and actions aimed at strengthening local democracy and local communities** and at enhancing **citizens' active participation in democratic life**. Supported actions should promote **inclusive, participatory and community-led processes** that engage local actors and decision-makers, encourage a **sense of belonging and shared responsibility**, and translate **European rights and values** into **tangible local practices**.

Values of non-discrimination and equality, and the promotion of inclusivity must be integrated in all foreseen actions, regardless of their specific objectives. In fact, proposals should clearly articulate how these values will be integrated into the project design, implementation, and outcomes.

The actions must align **with the priorities set by ALDA's thematic hubs**. Proposals should clearly identify **one thematic hub** under which their action falls and how it contributes to the overarching goals within that theme.

### A. [Environment & Climate HUB](#)

The Environment & Climate HUB connects citizens, institutions, and local authorities to address environmental challenges and advance the green transition, focusing on four priorities: climate change adaptation and mitigation, green skills and education, circular economy, and an inclusive transition.

The two key priorities for this year's call are:

- Climate Justice and Inclusive transition: supporting engagement and capacity building that is inclusive and “leaves no one behind”, recognising the role of citizens in shaping environmental policies and actions and ensuring marginalised groups are involved in the green transition.
- Local citizens' engagement in climate action: strengthening cooperation among local actors and promoting community-based climate initiatives and participatory climate activities.

### B. [Digital and Innovation HUB](#)

The Digital & Innovation Hub focuses on the intersection of digital technologies and democratic processes. It advocates for an ethical, inclusive, and accessible approach to digital transformation, ensuring that new tools strengthen rather than undermine local democracy and citizen engagement.

The two key priorities for this year's call are:

- Online participation and e-governance to make local decision-making more transparent and inclusive.
- Media & information literacy, including prebunking/debunking disinformation.

### C. [Gender Inclusion & Human Rights HUB](#)

The key priorities for this year's call are:

- Advancing **gender-responsive** civic participation and governance. Support initiatives that enhance women's, young girls' and marginalised group's representation and participation in politics, leadership roles and society as a whole.
- Promote and foster **human rights and social justice initiatives** that protect and advocate for fundamental rights, combat discrimination and support marginalised communities through education, dialogue and community-based initiatives that challenge stereotypes and systemic exclusion.
- Countering **hate speech and gender-based violence**: campaigns, training and advocacy efforts that challenge harmful narratives and promote safe, respectful environments.

### D. [Migration HUB](#)

The key priorities for this year's call are:

- Support **active meaningful participation** and local inclusion of people with migrant backgrounds (immigrants, refugees, undocumented, diaspora, on the move with living migration experience) **in decision-making processes** starting from the local level.
- Promote **innovative community-led initiatives** at the local level that foster inclusion and bring benefits to both migrant and host communities.
- Capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, combat mis/disinformation, de-centralized and decolonized approaches toward integration, advocacy activities that promote **positive narratives** for key actors working in the migration sector.

### E. [Youth Empowerment & Education HUB](#)

The Youth Empowerment and Education hub's activities include capacity building and training activities for young people and youth workers, advocacy for the benefits of young people and their meaningful participation in political life and society.

The key priorities for this year's call are:

- Advance the capabilities and political education of young people to ensure their meaningful participation in political life and society.
- Encourage and support local democratic actors working with and for young people.
- Ensure the representation of these local democratic actors at the European level.

### F. [Territorial and Local Development HUB](#)

The key priorities for this year's call are:

- promoting concrete initiatives about SDGs localisation, in particular focused on SDG11 - **make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable**
- increasing knowledge or experimenting **citizens participation** on urban regeneration and common uses of public spaces
- contributing to **territorial promotion and cultural heritage**, especially enhancing local productive, economic, and cultural chains (for instance, sustainable tourism, historical/cultural routes)

## 6. Eligible activities

The activities foreseen by the applicants must actively engage local communities and the target groups. **Participatory methods will be promoted in order to involve citizens, LAs and CSOs in the process, encouraging synergies among different actors on the territory.** Alda will share its knowledge and expertise on participatory processes in order to support the beneficiaries in the implementation of their actions.

The activities funded must take place in the **European Union**.

The type of activities eligible for this call are listed below (the activities can be local, cross-border and transnational):

- **Awareness raising activities:** e.g. street actions, shows or workshops, focus groups.
- **Creative and cultural actions:** e.g. exhibitions, film festivals, theater performances, art contests, artistic installations, street art initiatives, artistic residencies.
- **Exchange of good practices:** e.g. study visits, field visits, exchange events, networking/partnership building activities.
- **Promotion and dissemination activities:** e.g. activism, information campaigns, publications of manuals, audio-visual productions.
- **Training and Capacity-building activities:** e.g. thematic seminars, workshops, conferences, working camps, voluntary activities, training courses, thematic visits, webinars and digital workshops.
- **Initiatives of collaboration with local authorities facilitating the integration with local authorities and universities** - creation of opportunity at local level, citizens
- Activities that increase the **involvement of citizens and Civil Society Organizations** with local, regional, and national governments, with a focus on shaping policies that foster sustainable, inclusive, and resilient communities.

With the aim of ensuring maximum visibility to the proposed activities, the creation of **synergies with international events or international communication initiatives**, as well as with **international networks**, is strongly encouraged.

Implementing the proposed activity within an initiative that is already established in the territory is encouraged.

Re-granted projects will be invited to **establish strategic connections with ALDA's activities**, such as:

- By proposing to host, co-host, or support the organisation of Hub related events.
- By actively participating in ALDA's General Assembly 2026, where a dedicated marketplace space will be made available for showcasing the beneficiaries of this call.

Sub-grantees are also **encouraged to foresee a specific budget allocation to support the participation of ALDA representatives** who may be invited to take part in one or more activities implemented by the sub-grantees.

The following types of actions are **ineligible**:

- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses.
- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses.
- Actions supporting political parties.
- Actions intended to raise funds or promote the visibility of the applicant or its partner(s).
- Actions consisting mainly of research or of study.
- Actions which consist exclusively or primarily in capital expenditure, e.g. land, buildings, equipment and vehicles, except in special circumstances.
- Actions which discriminate - either directly or indirectly, against individuals or groups of people based on any ground such as sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, disability, race, color, religion, political beliefs, national origin, age, language, membership of a national minority and ethnic or social origin.
- Actions including proselytism.
- Core funding of the applicant or (where relevant) its partners.

## 7. Eligible costs

Eligible costs are **actual costs** incurred by the beneficiary which meet all of the following criteria.

The form of the grant will be a **mixed-budget based**, and the reimbursement is foreseen on the basis of actual eligible costs plus a percentage for the personnel costs.

The costs that will be considered as "eligible costs" are actual costs incurred by the beneficiary which meet all of the following criteria:

- They are incurred during the lifetime of the submitted proposal and partnership agreement.
- They are indicated in the estimated overall budget of the submitted proposal.
- They are necessary for the implementation of the project which is the subject of the grant.
- They are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of

the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary.

- They comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.
- They are real costs, reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.
- They are not covered through EU grants in the form of contribution to unit costs, lump sums or flat-rate financing.

The costs for flat-rate contribution that will be considered as “eligible costs” are all costs incurred by the beneficiary which meet all of the following criteria:

- They must be declared under the budget line *Personnel costs* set out in the application phase
- They must not cover other kind of costs apart than *Personnel costs*
- They must fulfil the general eligibility conditions for the type of cost concerned
- The cost accounting practices must be applied in a consistent manner, based on objective criteria, regardless of the source of funding.

The work of the staff for the action can be declared as personnel costs, as declared eligible in the call conditions, if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are calculated as the percentage in accordance with the method set out: out of the total grant, the staff costs budget line can be considered up to a maximum of 30% of the grant. Applicants can also decide to lower the percentage from 30% to 20% or 10%, or - in case they consider to have no need for the staff costs - to 0% and use the whole grant as a budget based on actual costs incurred.

Please note that the Value Added Tax (VAT) will be considered as an eligible cost only if it is **not recoverable** under the applicable national VAT legislation, a declaration to prove it needs to be attached in the reporting phase.

## 8. Duration

The beneficiaries of the sub-grants will sign a partnership agreement with ALDA. The implementation period of the Partnership Agreement, and thus of the regranted actions, will be **from 16th of April 2026 to the 23rd of October 2026**. The beneficiaries can implement their activities within the scope of the Partnership Agreement. The implementation of the granted activities will start after the signature of the **partnership agreement and the correct reception of the needed documents**.

## 9. Location

Activities must take place in an **EU Member state**.

## 10. Target

The **target groups** of the Re-granted projects can be **one or more of the following**:

- Citizens and the local communities;
- Young people between 18-30 years old
- Marginalised Communities (people with a migrant background, Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities, girls and women, LGBTIQ+ people, gender minorities, people with physical/mental/sensorial barriers);
- Local Authorities.

Each action should have 2 types of target:

- **Direct beneficiaries:** individuals who are involved and/or reached directly by the action including both who played an active role and who was exposed in person to the action (eg: consumers who see an installation, students who see a street painting, workshop attendees etc). The direct beneficiaries have to be directly involved in the project activities and their involvement has **to be possible to count and demonstrate**.
- **Indirect beneficiaries:** individuals who do not have a direct connection with the project activities but they could potentially benefit from them through knowledge transfer from the direct beneficiaries (friends, family members, colleagues) or through articles, social media posts, videos, pictures etc.

## 11. Coverage of costs

The sub granting scheme will cover **100 % of the total project budget**.

**All expenses must be reported within the implementation period and together with justificatory documents** (contracts, invoices, proof of payments etc). **The contract agreement and reporting to ALDA will only concern all expenses (details on the report will be shared in the financial guidelines) till the threshold amount of 15.000,00 EUR.**

## 12. Payment

The payment will be realized in two instalments:

1. The first instalment of **60% of the grant contribution** will be submitted after the signature of the Partnership Agreement and upon submission of the corresponding Request for Payment and Financial Identification Form.
2. The final settlement of **40% of the grant contribution** will be paid upon submission of the second Request for Payment and the submission of the final report, within thirty days from the **approval** of the final report (narrative and financial reports, accompanied by all

justificatory documents and attachments in originals), duly completed according to the clauses of the Partnership Agreement.

### **13. Application process and deadline for submission**

The call is open **from February 17th until April 01st. The proposals must be submitted in English by the 1st of April 2026 at 23:59 CET** filling in the Online Application Form **with all the required information and attachments**. The attached documents shall contain ALL relevant information concerning the action and no additional annexes should be sent.

On **04th March at 12:00 CET** ALDA will host a webinar to present the call and to answer some questions related to it. Please make sure to attend, by registering [here](#).

**Any error and major inconsistency related to the application instruction and the documents required may lead to the rejection of the application.** Applicants must verify that their application is complete using the checklist at the end of the application form. Incomplete applications may be rejected.

Taking into account the limited duration of the submission phase, the ALDA team reserves the right to extend the above-mentioned deadline.

### **14. Application Package**

The applicant will be required to upload the following documents before submitting the application:

- [Annex I. Budget proposal](#) correctly signed
- [Annex II. Declaration of Honor](#) correctly signed

**The Application Form shall be filled-in in all its parts in English.**

### **15. Support sessions during the writing process**

The applicants will receive support by the Alda Team during the proposal writing process. The questions have to be sent to the following email address: [regranting@alda-europe.eu](mailto:regranting@alda-europe.eu)

### **16. Evaluation criteria**

The projects to be awarded and the exact amount of financial support will be decided by the **Selection Committee (SeC)** following the principles of sound financial management, namely value for money and costs/effectiveness. Upon completion of the **Administrative and Eligibility**

**Check**, the applications that meet all the eligibility criteria will be evaluated by the **Selection Committee (SeC)**, composed of at least 5 ALDA people, identified by the ALDA Coordination Board. A Secretary of the SeC will be appointed and they will oversee the evaluation process.

To safeguard fairness and transparency, the SeC will be divided into Selection Teams, coordinated by the SeC Secretary.

The evaluation process will be realised following an **Evaluation Grid**, based on a series of quantitative and qualitative award criteria.

### COMPULSORY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The applicant is a <b>Member of ALDA before the launch of this call</b>	✓
The applicant is a legal entity, private non-profit organisation (private body)	✓
The target of the action is one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Citizens and the local communities;</b></li> <li>• Young people between <b>18-30 years old</b>;</li> <li>• <b>Marginalised Communities</b> (people with a migrant background, Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities, girls and women, LGBTIQ+ people, gender minorities, people with physical/mental/sensorial barriers);</li> <li>• <b>Local Authorities.</b></li> </ul>	✓
The applicant is directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action, not acting as an intermediary.	✓
The applicant is legally established in one of the <b>EU Member States</b>	✓
The applicant respects EU values - as laid down in Art.2 of the Treaty on European Union and the EU Charter of fundamental rights and ALDA <a href="#">“Gender Equality and Anti Discrimination Policy”</a> .	✓
The action will be completed before the 23rd of October 2026	✓
The applicant is not the beneficiary of any other ongoing 2026 Operating Grant funded under the CERV program (call for proposal CERV-2025-OG-SGA).	✓

## RELEVANCE OF THE ACTION

The project objectives are clearly defined, realistic and address the needs and goals of the applicants	(1-7 points)
The project proposal is relevant to the call objectives and addresses the key thematic focus of the action.	(1-7 points)
The target group is clearly identified and the expected results meet their needs.	(1-7 points)
The profile, experience and activities of the applicants are relevant for the field of the application	(1-5 points)

## QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The proposed methodology is clear, adequate and feasible and the project work plan is clear, complete and effective	(1-5 points)
The activities that applicants commit to carry out satisfy the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness	(1-5 points)
The activities are designed in an accessible and inclusive way, with regards to racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, (dis)ability, age, gender, sex or sexual orientation	(1-5 points)
The project incorporates the use of digital tools and methods	(1-5 points)
The project is designed in an eco-friendly way and incorporates green practices in different project phases	(1-5 points)

## IMPACT

The project proposal includes concrete and logical steps to integrate the project results in the regular work of participating organisation;	(1-5 points)
The project has the potential to positively impact its participants and participating organisations, as well as the wider community;	(1-5 points)
The project proposal includes an appropriate way to evaluate the project outcomes;	(1-5 points)
The project proposal includes concrete and effective steps to make the results of the project known within the participating organisations, to share the results with other organisations and the public and to publicly	(1-5 points)

acknowledge the European Union funding (e.g. the communication & dissemination strategy is clear, the communication tools and channels are clearly identified)	
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**ADDITIONAL POINTS - COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS, POTENTIAL COLLABORATIONS**

The project clearly commits to cooperation with ALDA's thematic hubs (e.g. Co-creation of HUB event or outreach of HUB activities)	+ 3 points
The project clearly commits to participation to ALDA's GA in 2026	+ 3 points
The project demonstrates exceptional strategic merit - considering elements such as innovation, coherence with ALDA's strategy and outreach and invitation of ALDA to one or more of their events.	+ 3 points

**16. Evaluation process**

The results will be sent by email to every applicant and will be published on the website of the project **by the 16th of April 2026**.

The projects to be awarded and the exact amount of financial support will be decided by the **Selection Committee (SeC)** following the principles of sound financial management, namely value for money and costs/effectiveness. A minimum and maximum score will be foreseen. The **SeC** will have the final decision on the selection of the re-granted projects and **its verdict will be un-appealable**.

The SeC may reject an application if it has selected another that is of a similar nature but has been awarded a higher score.

**If there are proposals that demonstrate exceptional strategic merit** - considering elements such as innovation, coherence with ALDA's strategy, and outreach - **they may receive additional extra points during the evaluation process**. These proposals might be identified by a SeC member or by the SeC secretary and brought to the attention of ALDA's coordination board.

A minimum and maximum score will be foreseen. The SeC may decide not to allocate all the available funds if it finds that there are too few applications of the quality required to receive a grant. In other words, the mere availability of funds should not lead to the award of contracts for applications that do not reach the necessary level of quality. **The SeC may reject an application if it has selected another that is of a similar nature but has been awarded a**

**higher score.** In addition to this, **the SeC may draw up a list by subject or geographical area according to the guidelines for applicants.** The latter will not be a cause for potential discrimination of applicants but on the contrary it will ensure that there is not an excessive disparity among funded geographical areas.

**Each SeC member is responsible under the jurisdiction of equitably and impartiality for assessing the quality of all proposals received.** From the time they receive the proposals to be evaluated, the member reports immediately to the Secretary of the evaluation committee **any link or conflict of potential interest** with a bidder. In such a situation, the member will not evaluate the submitted project and the evaluation will be carried out by other evaluation teams.

Additionally, a beneficiary's ability to produce the final financial and narrative report - in a timely manner - will be taken into account, with repeated delays potentially resulting in exclusion from future calls.

Within **five working days from the date of receiving the email** informing about the application being non-eligible or not passing the evaluation steps, the applicant may submit a **request for redress** if they believe the applications have not been correctly assessed. In such a case, an ALDA internal review committee, led by the SeC secretary, will **examine the applicant's request for redress**, checking the evaluation process in order to verify any formal errors. On the basis of this review, the ALDA committee will make assessments to take appropriate action in accordance with the circumstances.

The review will not concern the subjective judgment of the evaluators.

All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and must be sent to [regranting@alda-europe.eu](mailto:regranting@alda-europe.eu).

## **17. Reporting**

The beneficiaries will provide the necessary **narrative and financial reports in English** accompanied by the justificatory documents (invoices, receipts etc.), using the templates provided, including photos/pictures and its outreach (online links, publications, lists of participants etc).

**The justificatory documents must be provided for the funding expenditures.**

The reporting of expenditure must be carried out by means of real-cost reporting, the related expenses must be effectively incurred and substantiated by means of appropriate expenditure and payment documents.

**In order to avoid double funding, all expenditure documents must allow direct traceability to the project by reporting, in general and where relevant, the title of the Project "Seeds of Democracy: Connecting people and Communities"**

Additional details will be provided during the online webinar that will be recorded.

## **18. Communication & visibility**

The selected re-granted projects must fully respect the **visibility and communication requirements**, including the **logos of ALDA and of the EU emblem** (and the reference “Funded by the European Union”, and the reference “Funded by the European Union”. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CERV Programme. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”) in all publications, references, documents, news and any other visibility and communication action regarding the project, in line with the [Communication Guidelines of the European Commission](#).

## **19. Contacts**

All the questions related to the present call for proposals and the participation modalities have to be addressed exclusively to the following email address: [regranting@alda-europe.eu](mailto:regranting@alda-europe.eu)