

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

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! *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).*

PROJECT	
Participant:	1-1.ALDA - ASSOCIATION EUROPEENNE POUR LA DEMOCRATIE LOCALE (ALDA)
PIC number:	963194384
Project name and acronym:	Bridging Beliefs: Advancing Peace, Democracy, and Inclusion through Interfaith Dialogue in Europe— Bridging Beliefs

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	2
Event name:	Bridging Beliefs: Strengthening Interfaith and Interconvictional Dialogue for Democratic Europe
Type:	Capacity Building Event
In situ/online:	In situ
Location:	Italy, Vicenza
Date(s):	10/06/2026-11/06/2026
Website(s) (if any):	
Participants	
Female:	17
Male:	11
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 Italy:	7
From country 2 Portugal:	1
From country 3 Croatia:	6
From country 4 Austria:	1
From country 5 Belgium:	3

From country 6 North Macedonia	3		
From country 7 Greece:	4		
From country 8 Bosnia Herzegovina:	3		
Total number of participants:	28	From total number of countries:	8

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

Introduction

The two-day International Capacity-Building Event on **Inclusive Governance, Intercultural Dialogue, and Community Engagement** took place in Vlcenza on the 10th and 11th June. The event combined theoretical learning with practical, collaborative activities to strengthen participants' capacity to promote interfaith inclusion at the local level. Bringing together participants from several European countries, the programme encouraged the exchange of experiences, dialogue, and the development of locally adaptable solutions. Day 1, 10th of June, focused on building a common understanding of interfaith dialogue and inclusive governance. Following the opening session and an icebreaker activity, participants were introduced to the principles of interfaith dialogue by KAICIID and ISA. The morning continued with presentations of international best practices, providing examples of successful initiatives and encouraging discussion among participants. In the afternoon, interactive workshops explored inclusive governance through the sharing of experiences from different municipalities, followed by practical training on conflict-sensitive dialogue tools and methodologies. The day concluded with a reflection session where participants discussed the key lessons learned and shared their main takeaways.

Day 2, 11th of June, emphasized peer learning and the practical application of the knowledge gained during the first day. After a recap of the previous sessions, participants engaged in thematic peer exchanges on topics such as schools, healthcare, prisons, and local institutions, comparing challenges and good practices from their respective contexts. This was followed by a co-creation workshop, during which participants identified methods that could be adapted and replicated locally. The event concluded with a plenary session where groups presented their proposals and jointly developed recommendations for future project activities, before ending with final reflections and the identification of next steps. The event was coordinated by ALDA, with the support of KAICIID, which contributed in particular as trainers in the two-day event. Project partners also played a key role in outreach activities, especially in Italy, supporting the engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders from civil society, institutions, and local communities. [The agenda](#) was formulated with the active involvement of project partners, ensuring a balanced and inclusive programme that reflects different perspectives and areas of expertise. The following sections provide a more detailed overview of the main components of the conference, as well as the key discussions and results that emerged from the various sessions and thematic groups. The main aim of the training was to share with project partners and their associated local authorities best practices that can help in interreligious and interconvictional dialogue.



Welcome & Introduction

The opening session delivered by ALDA highlighted the importance of as well as the opportunities for a diverse interfaith-based society in Europe. Two introductory lectures were presented by Giovanni Selmo (Municipality of Vicenza) and Don Gianluca Padovan (Bishop's Delegate for Ecumenism and Dialogue). The discussion brought forth the religious diversity of the region of Veneto, with people of different religions and the existence of multiple schools of Christianity, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Baha'is, Buddhists etc. - which makes the region of Veneto particularly suitable for interfaith dialogues. Although the church often offers space to different faiths to organize events and celebrate festivals, there is opportunity to do more. Thus, designing an online course on religious literacy for the municipal authority is a timely initiative. The course would be co-designed by all the partners, and the whole process will be mediated by KAICIID.



Inclusive Governance, Intercultural Dialogue, and Community Engagement

The keynote session was held by Andrew James Boyd, senior programme manager at “The King Abdullah International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue” (KAICIID). The main focus of the speech delved into the need for interreligious and interconvictional dialogue and focused on promoting inclusive governance through interreligious and intercultural dialogue. KAICIID is presented as an international organization that uses dialogue to prevent conflict, strengthen human rights, and encourage peaceful coexistence among diverse communities. The presentation explains that dialogue is a process of mutual learning, active listening, and respect rather than debate or persuasion. Its goal is to build understanding, trust, and stronger relationships instead of convincing others or resolving disagreements. The seminar highlights the importance of dialogue in local governance by encouraging religious literacy, inclusive participation, and cooperation between public authorities and faith-based organizations. A case study from Argentina demonstrates how dialogue can successfully support community integration and social cohesion.

The section concludes by establishing ground rules for respectful dialogue, including confidentiality, active listening, speaking from personal experience, respecting differences, and ensuring equal participation. These principles provide the foundation for constructive and meaningful discussions throughout the seminar.



Interfaith Dialogue: Key Elements

The presentation introduces the work of the **Interreligious Studies Academy (ISA Academy)** and its commitment to promoting interfaith dialogue as a tool for fostering peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and social inclusion. Active since 2007 in Milan and Northern Italy, ISA Academy develops educational initiatives involving representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rather than limiting dialogue to theological discussions, the Academy promotes collaboration across fields such as healthcare, education, economics, the arts, and social integration, demonstrating that religious dialogue can contribute to addressing contemporary societal challenges.

A central theme of the presentation is the importance of **interfaith education**. The Academy argues that widespread religious illiteracy and persistent prejudices prevent religions from being recognized as positive contributors to peace and social cohesion. Ignorance about religious traditions can increase the risk of radicalization and the political misuse of religious symbols and beliefs. For this reason, ISA Academy emphasizes introducing education about religions from an early age, helping young people develop respect for diversity and preventing prejudice. Dialogue is presented not as an

attempt to erase differences but as a way to understand them while preserving the identity and sacred value of each religious tradition.

The presentation also includes extracts from the writings of **Shaykh Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini**, founder of ISA Academy, who reflects on the relationship between monotheistic religions and terrorism. He argues that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share common spiritual principles while maintaining distinct theological traditions that should be respected rather than merged. According to his perspective, terrorism does not originate from religion itself but from individuals who manipulate religious teachings for political, ethnic, or ideological purposes. The text highlights the importance of respecting religious differences while recognizing the shared ethical values that unite believers, warning against both religious extremism and superficial forms of syncretism that ignore the uniqueness of each faith.

The Academy further demonstrates its commitment to dialogue through a range of practical initiatives. One example is **The Wednesdays of Islamic Wisdoms**, an annual series of public meetings in Turin that brings together religious leaders, academics, scientists, politicians, and artists to discuss contemporary issues from multiple perspectives. Another initiative, **Together to Take Care**, promotes interreligious training for doctors, healthcare professionals, spiritual caregivers, and patients. The programme addresses ethical, cultural, and practical challenges in healthcare by encouraging dialogue and a better understanding of different religious practices and needs, including spiritual care and dietary requirements.

Overall, the presentation demonstrates that interfaith dialogue is both an educational philosophy and a practical strategy for strengthening social cohesion. Through education, cultural initiatives, healthcare programmes, and public engagement, ISA Academy promotes dialogue as a means of reducing prejudice, encouraging cooperation, and creating more inclusive communities where religious diversity is viewed as a shared resource rather than a source of division.



Best Practice Presentations

In this round the partner organizations of Bridging Beliefs presented their best practices. The presentations highlighted different European initiatives promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, social cohesion, and inclusion. Carlotta Segre from the European Buddhist Union (EBU) presented the EU-funded [SASCE \(Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe\) project](#), which brings together Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities to improve the safety of places of worship. The project develops tools for crisis management, incident reporting, cooperation with authorities, and an interfaith network to monitor and respond to hate crimes and discrimination. Eirini Mastora from Equal Society (Greece) discussed the challenges created by increasing diversity in Athens and the importance of inclusive social structures. In Croatia, Shefkije Doroci from the Center for Cultural Dialogue (CCD) presented a programme supporting migrants in Zagreb through language courses, cultural mediation, employment assistance, and especially the economic empowerment of migrant women. CCD also promotes intercultural exchange through events centred on food, culture, and traditions, helping to build trust between newcomers and local communities. Representatives from LDA Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina shared peacebuilding initiatives that use education, dialogue, and multiperspectivity to overcome divisions rooted in the recent war, while also encouraging youth participation in democratic processes. The Municipality of Centar presented youth-focused programmes that foster intercultural dialogue, cooperation across communities, and active citizenship. Finally, COREIS and the other participating organizations emphasized that dialogue, inclusion, and cooperation are essential tools for addressing social fragmentation, strengthening communities, and building a more cohesive and democratic Europe.

“Incontriamo le Religioni del Mondo”

Dr. Tartaglia from the Municipality of Milan presented the project *“Incontriamo le Religioni del Mondo”* (“Let’s Meet the Religions of the World”), an educational initiative developed in response to Milan’s growing cultural and religious diversity. As one of Italy’s most cosmopolitan cities, Milan is characterized by a complex and multilayered social fabric, where people from different cultural and religious backgrounds live, study, and work together. The project seeks to transform this diversity into a resource for social cohesion rather than a source of misunderstanding or division. The initiative brings representatives of different faith communities into schools to introduce students to the world’s major religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Through interactive activities, presentations, and discussions, children learn about religious traditions, celebrations, values, symbols, and key concepts. The programme encourages curiosity, respect, and open dialogue from an early age, helping young people understand both the differences and common human values shared across faiths. By promoting religious literacy and direct encounters with believers, the project aims to challenge stereotypes and prevent prejudice. It fosters a culture of mutual understanding and inclusion, equipping future generations with the knowledge and skills needed to live together in an increasingly diverse society. The initiative demonstrates how education can play a central role in



strengthening intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Compassionate Listening Exercise by KAICIID

In this segment an exercise of Compassionate Listening was conducted by KAICIID. A workshop on active listening and compassionate listening explored how deeper forms of listening can strengthen intercultural and interreligious dialogue. While active listening focuses on accurately understanding and reflecting what another person says, compassionate listening goes further by seeking to understand the emotions, values, and human experiences behind their words. Participants took part in a storytelling exercise, sharing a real experience of an



intercultural or interreligious encounter that was personally meaningful but not traumatic. After each story, three listeners were assigned different roles: Listener A identified and reflected the key facts, Listener B highlighted the emotions expressed, and Listener C focused on the values underlying the experience. To encourage attentive listening, no interruptions or cross-talk were allowed during the exercise. Following the reflections, participants discussed what resonated with them, what they found surprising, what might have been missing, and whether their understanding of the story had changed. The activity demonstrated that people often focus on facts while overlooking feelings and values, which are equally important for meaningful communication. The exercise showed that compassionate listening creates space for empathy, mutual understanding, and deeper connections. By learning to recognize not only what people say but also what they feel and value, participants developed skills that can help bridge cultural and religious differences and foster more constructive dialogue. Moreover, three tools of discussion were discussed: Dialogue Circle, World Café (to be exercised on Day 2), Fishbowl.

Peer Learning Clinics: Solving Real Local Challenges - A World Café Exercise

On the 11th of June, the day started with an activity in a world café format across four thematic areas: **Local Governance and Citizens' Participation**, **Schools and Youth Engagement**, **Social Cohesion and Polarization Prevention**, and **Culture & Art**. This activity highlighted the important role of interreligious dialogue in building inclusive, resilient, and cohesive communities. Participants agreed that religious literacy, mutual understanding, and genuine participation are essential for overcoming prejudice, polarization, and social fragmentation. In local governance, interreligious dialogue was seen as a tool for strengthening trust between municipalities, faith communities, civil society, and citizens. Good practices included interfaith roundtables, citizens' assemblies, inclusion action plans, and educational initiatives such as Milan's school projects on religious diversity. In education, dialogue was shown to foster respect, tolerance, friendship, and critical thinking through activities such as study visits, role-playing, intercultural exchanges, theatre, and youth leadership programmes.

Discussions on social cohesion emphasized that polarization is rarely caused by religion itself, but rather by religious illiteracy and the politicization of identity. Effective responses include youth engagement, safe spaces for encounter, mixed-group activities, and community-based dialogue. In the field of culture and art, music, exhibitions, theatre, photography, storytelling, food, and festivals were identified as powerful ways of connecting people across religious and cultural differences. Across all themes, participants stressed the importance of starting with young people, creating opportunities for meaningful encounters, and integrating interreligious dialogue into long-term policies. Common challenges included stereotypes, lack of political support, fear of the "other," language barriers, and limited engagement from key stakeholders. The report is available [here](#).

Co-Creation Workshop: Local Replication Canvas

The final activity of the training was the Co-Creation Workshop: *Local Replication Canvas*. Participants worked in groups to design how the knowledge and methods learned during the seminar could be adapted and implemented in their own local communities. In this session project partners and their fellow local authorities worked together for the implementation of the local workshop that will take place in September.

The exercise encouraged participants to reflect on the specific needs of their local contexts by identifying key challenges, the stakeholders who should be involved, and the activities that could

promote interfaith inclusion. Groups also discussed which dialogue methods would be most appropriate, considered possible risks or barriers to implementation, and developed practical next steps for replicating the training in their municipalities or organizations.

Overall, the exercise aimed to transform the concepts explored during the seminar into concrete local action plans, ensuring that the principles of interfaith dialogue and inclusive governance could be applied effectively within different social and cultural contexts.

Evaluation Summary – Bridging Beliefs Capacity Building Workshop (10-11 June 2026)

The evaluation results indicate a generally high level of satisfaction with the training and suggest that the event successfully achieved its main learning objectives. Most participants reported that they learned what they had expected, with many answering “Yes” or “Yes, very much” to the question regarding their learning outcomes. Ratings for the relevance of the training, the quality of the content, the methods used, and the performance of the training team were predominantly positive, with most scores ranging between 4 and 5 out of 5. Participants particularly appreciated the practical dimension of the training. Concrete examples, storytelling, experience sharing, and the presentation of different dialogue methods were frequently mentioned as the most valuable aspects. The opportunity to exchange ideas with participants from different countries and organizations was also highly appreciated. Several respondents highlighted the World Café methodology as especially effective, as it allowed for meaningful discussions in smaller groups and encouraged active participation. The facilitation team received consistently positive feedback, with participants praising its professionalism and ability to manage the sessions effectively.

At the same time, the evaluation identified several areas for improvement. The most common concern was the duration and intensity of the programme, particularly on the first day. Many participants felt that the sessions were too long and demanding, making it difficult to maintain concentration throughout the day. Respondents suggested shorter sessions, additional breaks, and a better balance between presentations and interactive activities. Another recurring recommendation was to increase the level of participation and peer learning. Participants expressed a desire for more interactive exercises, role-playing activities, simulations, group discussions, and opportunities to experience each other’s methodologies directly rather than primarily through presentations. Many also requested a greater number of concrete case studies and success stories from different countries and contexts, which would help them better relate the content to their own professional realities.

Overall, the training was perceived as relevant, useful, and inspiring. It strengthened participants’ understanding of interfaith and interconvictional dialogue, facilitated the exchange of experiences and good practices, and provided practical tools for community engagement. Future editions could build on these strengths by placing greater emphasis on interaction, experiential learning, and time management while preserving the strong peer-learning dimension that participants valued most.

Did you learn what you expected to during this training?



