

Statement by ALDA on the EU–Western Balkans Summit 2026

15 June 2026

The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) welcomes the messages and outcomes of the EU–Western Balkans Summit held on 5 June 2026 in Tivat, Montenegro. The visit of European Council President António Costa across the region before the summit was of the utmost importance for exchanging the views on the ongoing integration of the region into the EU. The focus of the summit on shared prosperity and stability between the EU and the Western Balkans reflects values and goals that ALDA has supported for many years together with local authorities, civil society organisations, and citizens across the region.

ALDA welcomes the renewed commitment of EU leaders to the enlargement process and the strong messages delivered during President Costa’s visits to Sarajevo, Tirana, Skopje, Pristina, Belgrade, and Tivat. We believe that EU integration must be based on democratic reforms and real progress. At the same time, the benefits of enlargement must be visible in the daily lives of citizens and local communities.

In this context, ALDA continues to support democratic participation and European integration through several ongoing initiatives across the Western Balkans. ALDA is currently implementing several projects across the Western Balkans that support democratic participation, civic engagement, youth empowerment, and European integration. Through the EU-funded ROOT WB project under the CERV programme, ALDA examines the state of civic space in the Western Balkans, France, and Croatia, identifying both opportunities and challenges for civil society organisations. In North Macedonia, ALDA is implementing the MEDIA4EU project, focused on media literacy and democratic engagement, while in Montenegro the Youth Environmental and Social Innovation Hub (YES iHub) promotes youth participation, social innovation, and environmental action, with both projects funded under the IPA programme. Through the BOOST programme, ALDA also supports local civil society actors and democratic participation across the

Strasbourg

Council of Europe 1,
Av. de l'Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg, France
+33 3 90 21 45 93
+33 3 90 21 55 17
aldastrasbourg@aldaintranet.org
alda@aldaintranet.org

Brussels

26 Rue de la Loi,
Mercator Building
2nd Floor - Salon for European
Civic Organisations
Brussels 1040, Belgium
+32 (0)2 430 24 08
aldabrussels@aldaintranet.org

Vicenza

Corso Palladio 76
36100 Vicenza, Italy
+39 04 44 54 01 46
+39 04 44 23 10 43
aldavicenza@aldaintranet.org

Skopje

Bld. Partizanski Odredi
43B/1-5
Skopje, 1000
North Macedonia
+389 (0) 2 6091 060
aldabalkans@aldaintranet.org

Chisinau

40, Serghei Lazo street
5 floor, office no.3, Chişinău
Republic of Moldova
aldamoldova@aldaintranet.org

Tunis

Rue Brahim Jaffel,
Imm. Azalez
2 floor, Apt 4 El Menzah 4,
Tunis 1082, Tunisia
aldatunisia@aldaintranet.org

Kyiv

3 Triokhsviatytska Street
Immeuble Azalez
02000 Kyiv
Ukraine
aldakyiv@aldaintranet.org



region. In addition, the Shared Horizons project, funded by Expertise France, promotes reconciliation, local development, and EU integration through cultural heritage and dialogue. These issues are important for the future of EU integration, as reforms are not only about institutions and policies, but also about citizens, communities, and democratic participation. As the accession process moves forward, especially with Montenegro advancing in negotiations, ALDA calls on EU institutions and Western Balkans governments to fully involve local authorities and civil society organisations in the integration process, recognising that strong civic participation and open democratic space are essential for a sustainable European future in the region. ALDA and its partners across the Western Balkans remain committed to contributing to a democratic, inclusive, and European future for the region.

Natasa Vuckovic,
ALDA President

Strasbourg

Council of Europe 1,
Av. de l'Europe
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+39 04 44 23 10 43
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Ukraine
aldakyiv@aldaintranet.org

