

LADDER

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS

LADDER BEYOND THE EUROPEAN UNION

LAs & CSOs WORKING TOGETHER FOR DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREAS



SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (SEE)



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (EAP)



MEDITERRANEAN AREA (MED)

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Association agreement
ARLEM	Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly
CLRA	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for relief and development
Conference of INGO	Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CORLEAP	Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership
CSF	Civil Society Facility
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DEAR	Development Education & Awareness Raising
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (EuropeAid)
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
EaP	Eastern Partnership area
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
EYAC	European Year of Active Citizenship
EYD	European Year for Development
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
GENE	Global Education Network Europe
GP	Geographical Path
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
LAs	Local Authorities
LADDER	Local Authorities as Drivers for Development Education & Raising awareness
LDAAs	Local Democracy Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MED	Mediterranean area
PLATFORMA	European platform of Local Regional Authorities for development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEE	South East Europe area
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WB	Western Balkans

FOREWORD



Antonella Valmorbida
Secretary General of ALDA

Since its conception phase, LADDER has been designed as much more than yet one more project. The proof is in the pudding – its three years of implementation, together with its outstanding outputs, recommendations, and follow up are the best measure of our success.

Thanks to jointly coordinated, timely efforts LADDER became visible and present in all the countries included in the project and beyond. We saw it everywhere – and all time. LADDER reached the local communities and – following the spirit and the methodology of the project – it approached many of those who had never been involved in European activities or in development cooperation.

Local governments are at the centre of our approach, working together to promote global responsibility and citizenship. LADDER community has been a key actor at the European level in the definition and strong emphasis given to the localization of the Sustainable **Development Goals (SDGs)**, and our path naturally crosses the UN Agenda 2030. We have been working hand-in-hand with all main stakeholders at the **European Union (EU)** and global level.



Sofia Caiolo
LADDER Project Manager

The three years of life of LADDER confronted all of us Europeans with a set of tough challenges. The sense of economic and political insecurity influences everyone's life and choices, often making people focus on their personal, hyper-local issues. But there is no wall, border, or fear which can make our world better – only through a global vision and cooperation can our main problems be addressed. **LADDER offers a platform of meeting and dialogue** where Europeans and representatives of the Neighbourhood South and East meet and identify together common solutions, using the huge potential of the cooperation between local authorities and civil society.

LADDER is the European platform working on a strong and impact-oriented education towards global citizenship development and responsibility. Thanks to its methodology and cascade effect, it reaches the local communities – where change takes place.

This handbook gathers the work of LADDER's community on advocacy related to three geographical regions: the South East Europe, the Eastern Partnership and the Mediterranean.

As the leader of LADDER consortium, in ALDA ***we believe the voices and outputs of these paths can be extremely helpful in crafting new successful policies and practices, empowering local communities of the Neighbourhood areas and shaping a better future, more inclusive and sustainable.***

We want to share the take-home message that working together, besides all prejudices, threats and fears, is more than an opportunity – it is the solution. Globalisation means also global responsibility, and it affects all the aspects of our living together on this planet, including social and economic issues, environment, migration, demography, and many more.

Let's capitalise on what we have done so far, and move ahead together for even greater results.

“
**THE 2030 AGENDA COMPELS
US TO LOOK BEYOND
NATIONAL BOUNDARIES AND
SHORT-TERM INTERESTS AND
ACT IN SOLIDARITY FOR THE
LONG-TERM.**
”

Ban Ki-moon

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ABOUT ALDA



ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level. It focuses on activities that facilitate the cooperation between **Local Authorities (LAs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**.

ALDA was established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe to coordinate and support the network of **Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs)**, which are self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs acting as promoters of good governance and local self-government. Today, ALDA is a key stakeholder in the field of local democracy, active citizenship, and cooperation between local authorities and civil society.

ALDA is a membership based organisation gathering more than 250 members (including LAs, Associations of LAs, CSOs, and Universities) coming from more than 40 countries. It is funded through membership fees and project funding from

the EU, the Council of Europe, and other public and private donors.

Most of our work is based on the method of multilateral decentralised cooperation. This method involves a multi-stakeholder approach that focuses on partnerships between LAs and CSOs, which creates synergies and helps reaching common goals successfully.

ALDA works in most of the EU and European Neighbouring countries. At the EU level, ALDA's activities focus on the promotion of Active European Citizenship, while the activities run in the European Neighbourhood, namely Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership and Mediterranean area focus on good governance, empowerment of citizens, participation in public life, and decentralisation.

Many LDAs are in the Western Balkans, but ALDA is increasing its activities and projects in the European Neighbourhood. In the EaP countries, LDAs have been established in Kutaisi (Georgia), Gyumri (Armenia), and Dnipropetrovsk (Ukraine). In 2017 three new LDAs have been established in Cimişlia (Moldova), Mariupol (Ukraine) and Kairouan (Tunisia), while the opening of another LDA is foreseen Morocco in 2018. ALDA is also leading several other projects and developing partnerships in other European Neighbouring countries, such as Belarus, Azerbaijan, Algeria and Turkey.

For more information, please visit www.alda-europe.org

OUR NETWORK

COUNTRIES WITH ALDA ACTIVITIES AND MEMBERS / EU MEMBER STATES

UPCOMING LDAs

- MOROCCO

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCIES (LDAs)

- LDA ALBANIA (AL)
- LDA ARMENIA (ARM)
- LDA CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN SERBIA (RS)
- LDA OF DNIPROPETROVSK REGION (UA)
- LDA GEORGIA (GEO)
- LDA KOSOVO (RKS)
- LDA MARIUPOL (UA)
- LDA MONTENEGRO (MNE)
- LDA MOLDOVA IN CIMIŞLIA (MO)
- LDA MOSTAR (BIH)
- LDA PRIJEDOR (BIH)
- LDA SUBOTICA (RS)
- LDA TUNISIA (TN)
- LDA ZAVIDOVIĆI (BIH)

OPERATIONAL PARTNERS

- OSIJEK (HR)
- SISAK (HR)
- VERTENGLIO/BRTONIGLA (HR)

ALDA OFFICES

- BRUSSELS (BE)
- STRASBOURG (FR)
- SUBOTICA (RS)
- VICENZA (IT)
- SKOPJE (MK)



ABOUT LADDER



co-funded by the EU

Among the many activities and projects that ALDA manages, a key part of its work is dedicated to Sustainable Development. This is mainly represented by the LADDER project which stands for Local Authorities as Drivers for Development Education & Raising awareness, coordinated by ALDA and funded by the DEAR Programme of DG DEVCO, under Lot 5 - "Global Learning and Advocacy Projects Led by a Local Authority or Association of local authorities". Its total budget amounts to 3.88 million Euros (€).

LADDER aims to create a multi-stakeholder network of Associations of LAs (both national and European) and alliances of CSOs that can act as multipliers at local level. Launched in 2015 in parallel with the European Year for Development, it addresses major issues identified in the EC Communication "A Decent Life for all: ending poverty and giving the world a better future", thus developing a synergetic and effective programme.

The 3-year project started in January 2015 and it runs until December 2017. The final beneficiaries of LADDER are ordinary citizens across the EU & non-EU countries. The project is meant to raise citizens' awareness on global issues (short-term), to promote their engagement in global challenges & poverty eradication (mid-term) and to lead to a change of attitudes towards global and development challenges (long-term). To do so, the following specific objectives have been identified:

- 1 To strengthen the cooperation between LAs and CSOs and to build their internal capacities to act as "drivers for change" in DEAR;

- 2 To inform and raise citizens and communities' awareness on their role and responsibility on global issues, as well as about the interdependencies between the EU and developing countries, by exploring and testing the most adequate methods of non-formal education.

The project includes a variety of activities that contribute to achieving its mission. Particularly, the project's activities are divided into five dimensions, as described below:

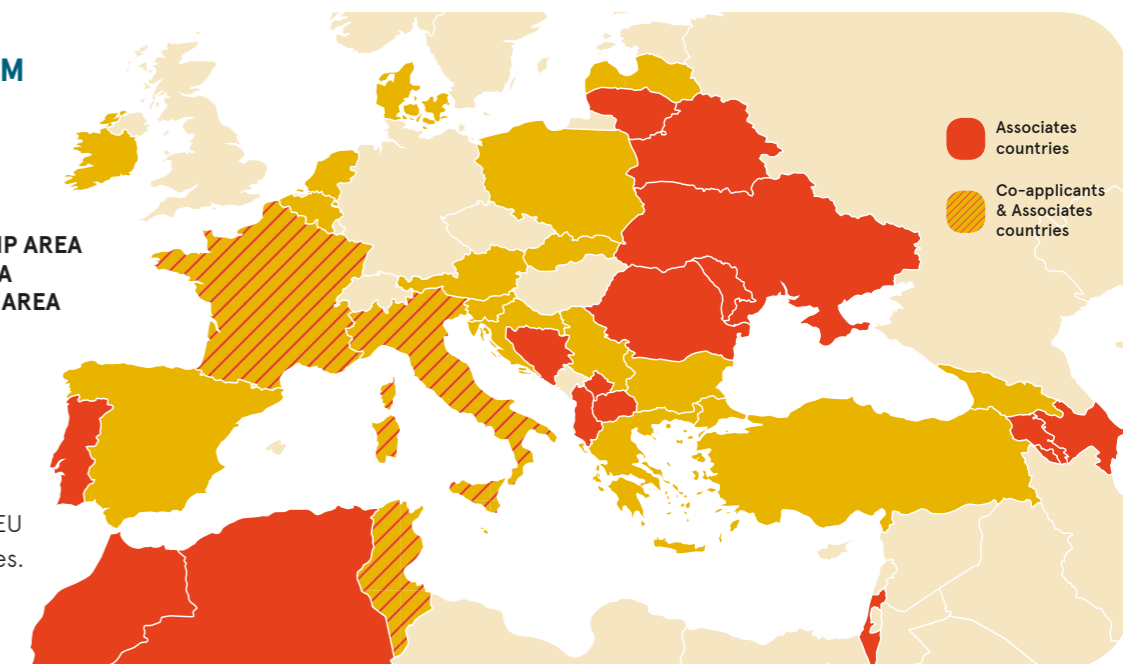
- Research;
- Capacity building & peer-to-peer learning;
- Advocacy;
- Grass-root actions;
- Cultural component.

The strong commitment of the 27 co-applicants and the active involvement of the 19 associates (including their respective networks) ensure the timely implementation of the project and the fulfilment of its objectives. Among the several actions implemented it is important to mention a series of capacity building trainings and focus groups, exchange meetings, conferences and events that have been taking place at international, national and local level. In addition to this, in order to engage the local level and encourage citizens to take part in the project, not only a slogan competition for pupils was launched and a network of citizen journalists willing to write about global issues was established, but also a re-granting scheme has been implemented at the local level for all 28 EU Member States. As the title of the project implies, **LADDER operates in the context of development education and awareness raising, and as such is inherently linked to the Sustainable Development Goals** – the defining framework for global development until 2030.

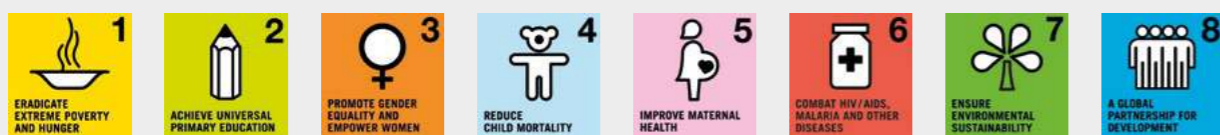
THE CONSORTIUM

EUROPEAN UNION
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AREA
MEDITERRANEAN AREA
SOUTH-EAST EUROPE AREA

27 co-applicants and 19 associates, from 19 EU and 17 non-EU countries.



ABOUT SDGS AND THEIR LOCALISATION



Any mention to the SDGs without reference to the foundation laid before them would be incomplete. As such, the Millennium Development Goals serve not merely as a convenient, but essential starting point. Following a decade of major and unprecedented conferences, the leaders of the world's nations resolved to embark on an ambitious agenda to address humanity's pressing challenges. At the United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2000, 189 heads of state and government signed the Millennium Declaration, outlining a series of 8 goals that ought to be reached in a 15-year timeframe and which primarily set out to half extreme poverty globally. The MDGs encountered major success and largely exceeded expectations, with certain exceptions. Global Poverty has been halved 5 years ahead of the 2015 timeframe, the proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions has fallen by almost half, the enrolment level of children in primary education reached 91 % in developing regions, while disparities between boys and girls have narrowed, etc. (Millennium Development Goals Report 2015)

Riding the waves of this massive accomplishment, world leaders set out an even more ambitious agenda built on the predecessor goals. At a conference held in September 2015 in New York, the leaders of virtually all UN member states agreed on a set of goals that would eradicate extreme poverty, fight injustice and take action against climate in the coming 15 years. They are known as the **Sustainable Development Goals**, or alternatively as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda also addresses issues which were left out of the MDGs, such as effective institutions, good governance, the rule of law and peaceful societies. The sheer scope of the goals demonstrates the level of ambition, meaning that the number of goals and their accompanying targets has more than doubled in comparison to the previous MDGs. Indeed, unlike the original 8 MDG goals, the SDGs encompass 17 goals and 169 targets that address all aspects of human life such as hunger and poverty, environmental aspects, economic

development, equality, good governance, etc. SDGs are also inclusive of the concept of human rights

The consultations in the process of formulating the SDGs were all-encompassing as they included representatives of national governments, the private sector, academic and research institutions, multilateral organisations, as well as **civil society organisations and local and regional authorities**. A 3-year consultation process was envisaged before the MDGs reached its end, in order to make all voices and concerns heard. The process not only took heed of the principle of multi-stakeholder consultation, but also ultimately ensured ownership and commitment to the implementation of the goals from all sides.

The European Union is doing its part in the implementation of the SDGs. Thus far, its efforts have focused on greater allocation of development aid (the EU is already the biggest global aid donor), helping the governments of developing countries deal with trade (Aid for Trade) and decreasing risk for private investors wishing to invest in third countries (e.g. European Fund for Sustainable Development Trust Fund). Concurrently, the EU is also active in its own backyard by investing into renewable sources of energy, widening its social and environmental protection programmes and by implementing a variety of other initiatives that aim to achieve the goals. Just recently, it revised its guiding document in international development policy, the **Consensus for Development**, to reflect new realities and changing circumstances in its framework for tackling development issues.

Despite the pledges made at the 2015 Summit, national governments experience difficulties in the implementation of the SDGs, or at least in the formulation of coherent strategies that would steer implementation into the right direction. Thus far, very few have agreed on and released national plans for the implementation of the SDGs.

Having made their input in the consultation phase, **CSOs and LAs will also play a crucial role in the implementation of the**



SDGs. The scope and ambition of the SDGs makes it clear that governments alone cannot accomplish them. Only with the commitment and contribution of governments, the private sector and civil society alike, can the ambitious agenda be accomplished. The role of CSOs during implementation will especially be related to the principle of "Leaving no one behind", which was developed as a guiding principle in response to the weak participation of CSOs and LAs in the previous MDG framework. Namely, the principle of "Leaving no one behind" takes aim at the relative deprivation experienced by the **local level** and certain desolate areas that have taken a step backwards during the 2000-2015 timeframe. Its aim is to make everyone benefit from the SDG initiative. As part of this **"localisation"** process, CSOs and LAs find their natural habitat for expression as they operate on the local level. The role they should take on consists of:

- Listen to people and be aware of what is happening in their respective areas of operation;
- Translate the voices of the poorest and most marginalised citizens into rational and strong arguments that are acknowledged and addressed by the local government;

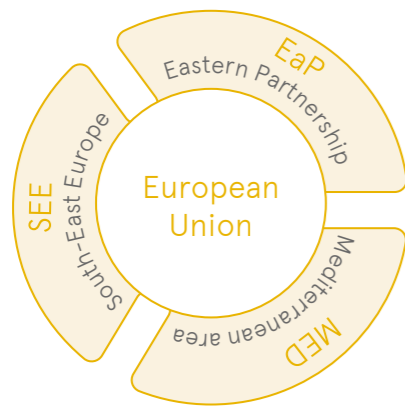
- Develop relationships or partnerships with the local government, and in particular,
- identify the government departments, actors or institutions that need to respond in order to remedy problems;
- Use human rights as a lens of analysis;
- Identify, engage with and learn from other CSOs that interact with these groups;
- Play a critical role as transformers of society by being involved in training and advocacy processes, which build the capacities and knowledge of the general populace towards the achievement of the SDGs.

towards the achievement of the SDGs. It is clear from the analysis above that one of the key aspects for CSOs and LAs is the capacity to listen to the concerns of the citizens in their local context, and advocate on behalf of them for meaningful change on higher levels of government. As part of its effort, the EU also actively supports the greater contribution of civil society and their involvement in the implementation of the SDGs. DG DEVCO aims at empowering CSOs and LAs to be the driver of change on the local level by raising awareness on development education through the

DEAR funding component. The programme is encompassing themes such as climate change, migration and gender equality, worker’s rights, sustainable consumption, as well as all other issues covered under the SDGs. Aside from educational components in non-formal channels of education and capacity-building initiatives in their project activities, the DEAR programme also puts a great emphasis on advocacy activities. CSOs are encouraged to advocate for the policies required, to raise awareness of goals and targets amongst the general public, and to monitor progress in implementing the SDGs and push for action where needed. In that sense, they will assume a watchdog role. No other actor can combine these different and mutually reinforcing roles as effectively as civil society.

ABOUT THE GEOGRAPHICAL PATH OF THE LADDER PROJECT

The LADDER project activities focused mainly on the EU, with the majority of the actions and activities being oriented towards EU citizens and stakeholders in the EU (public & private). However, in line with ALDA’s work, the project also foresees 3 geographical paths, extending the outreach of DEAR towards the enlarged Europe and tackling the Eastern Partnership (EaP), the Mediterranean area (MED), and the South-East Europe (SEE).



This geographical approach allowed creating interdependencies between EU and its Neighbourhood by enhancing the role of LAs and CSOs in development issues, and especially their role as change makers at local level.

Through the creation of a network of stakeholders for each geographical area, the project achieved to raise awareness of different stakeholders (EU, national governments, other institutional and non-institutional actors) on the role of LAs and CSOs in reaching the objectives of DEAR, inside and outside the EU. This became even more relevant following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN in September 2015 and the principle of universality of these objectives.

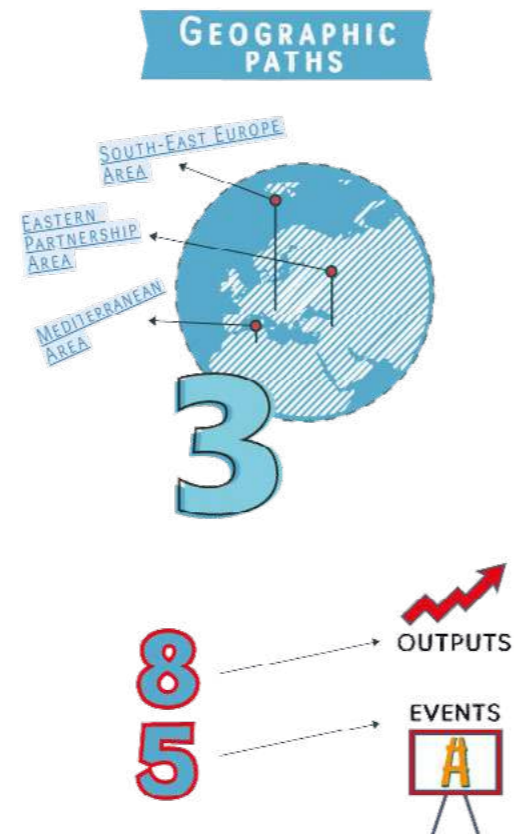
Every geographical path is composed of a network of organisations, which work together to raise awareness on SDGs, advocate and support the role of LAs and CSOs for development and DEAR in the particular area they work on. The advocacy dimension of each geographical path targets different levels and stakeholders at EU, national and local level.

In 2015, the members of each geographical path had the opportunity to discuss, exchange views and agree on a strategic approach. Throughout 2016, the paths delivered outputs based on their strategic plans, and have continued to do so in 2017. Moreover, the final year of the LADDER project also represents an opportunity to reflect on the successes of the advocacy actions, best practices, recommendations for the future, etc.

Therefore, this handbook aims at providing an overview on each geographical dimension of the project. In particular, the handbook:

- Provides an overview of the context in which the path operated;
- Provides an overview of the advocacy actions that were undertaken by the project partners;
- Inform all those concerned about SDG advocacy in those areas;
- Collect and guide CSOs and LAs with recommendations based on the experience of this 3-year project for future work on SDGs in those three areas.

The results of the Geographical Path on a first glance:



GEOGRAPHICAL PATH SOUTH-EAST EUROPE (SEE)



SOUTH EAST EUROPE (SEE) REGIONAL CONTEXT

The EU Western Balkan enlargement policy has dealt with six European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo*) which have historically been affected by serious ethnic, political and economic conflicts and aspire to join the European Union. The other countries encompassed in the SEE region (such as for instance Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia) are countries that have accessed the European Union in the past few years and face similar challenges as the candidate countries. The Enlargement negotiation process has been launched in 2014 and determines the approach of the new Commission in relation with a historic experience of integration achievement and future challenges. The agenda for the Western Balkans once again reiterates a clear European perspective for the citizens of these countries. A time for reflection is needed in order to address the consequences of European crisis but it is also the time for the Balkan countries to strengthen the credibility of the reform process towards accession. **Improving transparency, rule of law, good governance, economic governance and competitiveness remain high on the agenda as the criteria of a tangible progress for both citizens, governments and economies in the region.**

Considering the pace and scope of democratic institution building in both candidate and potential candidate countries, transparency of the negotiation process and in particular the consultation with diverse sections of society in public policy making or introducing legislative changes has become increasingly important. Making the reform process closer and better known to citizens and in local communities in particular, rather than keeping it within the realm of institutions is therefore among the key challenges for the policy and decision makers in the Balkan countries.

Nowadays, more than ever before, engaging both CSOs and local self-governments entails an increasing need for comprehensive cross-sectoral partnership and coalition building, thematic networking, inclusive collaboration at local and regional (Balkan) level.

Since 2003, ALDA regional strategy in promoting EU integration of Western Balkan countries concerns four main pillars or programmes based on substantive approach adjusted to the needs of post-conflict societies striving for comprehensive socio-economic recovery, institutional reform and reconciliation as well as speeding up the pace to the full accession in the European Union.

These can be summed up as following:

- Promote EU standards of democratic governance through international decentralised co-operation programmes;
- Foster conducive environment for civil society development through capacity building and advocacy actions for effective implementation of municipal memorandums of co-operation and establishment of LDAs operating as NGOs Resource and Development focal points;
- Enhance thematic and issue based networking for the promotion civil society and local self-governments as relevant actors of EU integration process through capacity building for EU projects development and implementation, awareness raising and public campaigns in support to deepen understanding of the reform process on the way to EU integration;
- Promote ALDA and LDAs work and contribute effectively to regional initiatives through established regional co-operation platforms including the **European Year of Active Citizenship–EYAC**, participation in dialogue with EU and consultation process within **IPACivil Society Facility – CSFPProgramme**, close co-operation with EU supported Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations – **TACSO Programme** regional and country based offices, consultation process within **IPA 2 – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2014-2020**, contribution to **IPA CBC Programming** and project design within IPA CBC Programmes: Croatia – Serbia, Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia – Montenegro, Montenegro – Albania.

SEE ALDA Coordinator
Mrs. Stanka PARAC DAMJANOVIC
Stanka.parac@aldaintranet.org



“Being the SEE Path Coordinator has been a pleasure, it gave me the opportunity to meet people from different walks of life and it was a great learning experience on how cherishing the culture of dialogue and co-operation can bring forward fruitful knowledge and deepened understanding of the region in which I grew up. Some major economic and social issues our group was addressing, and migration trends and youth in particular, have been a challenge per se, but they were also in many ways inter-connected and inter-dependent. The ongoing transformation of the Western Balkan societies has clearly become a generational opportunity to contribute to the creation of local solutions to global challenges. Once again, it has become more than clear that it is the young people who have the factual transformative potential to make solidarity work, locally and internationally.”

LADDER AND THE SEE PATH

SEE PATH COORDINATORS

- Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM/ SKGO)
- Slovenian Global Action (SLOGA)



Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities – SKGO / SCTM is the national association of local authorities in Serbia. The Association is a place not only for gathering and discussing common issues and problems, but also for formulating and representing joint interests of local self-government units. SKGO advocates for the interests of local authorities and lobbies in relation to central authorities in the process of defining strategic directions and adopting regulations important for local self-governments. To reach those goals SKGO gives also its support to towns and municipalities in order to build their capacities, define and implement their strategic goals, prepare and implement projects, and access financial resources. It keeps members, partners and the public informed about important issues for local self-government.

To know more about SKGO / SCTM: <http://www.skgo.org/>



Slovenian Global Action – SLOGA is a Slovenian platform of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are active in the field of international development cooperation, global education and humanitarian aid. The aim of the platform is to connect and strengthen the partnerships among Slovenian NGOs, which are active in the field of raising awareness about uneven distribution of global wealth and subsequent significance of global solidarity and interdependence among the Slovenian and European public. SLOGA's main action is to monitor and actively cooperate in the design, implementation and evaluation of Slovenian and European policies in the field of international development cooperation. The organisation operates in order to advocate for the public interests on the topics of social balance and responsibility, respect of human rights, equal opportunities, education, solidarity, sustainable development and greater integration of vulnerable social groups into decision-making processes in the context of development cooperation. Thus, SLOGA actively cooperates with political decision-makers and representatives of Slovenian media.

To know more about SLOGA: <http://www.sloga-platform.org/>



Members of the SEE Path Working Group

1. **ALDA** – European Association of Local Democracy Agencies (France)
2. **AMR** – Romanian Municipalities Association (Romania)
3. **ENNA** – European Network of National Civil Society Associations (Belgium)
4. **MMU** – Union of Municipalities of Marmara (Turkey)

5. **NAMRB** – National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria (Bulgaria)
6. **PROGETTARTE** – Progettarte Associazione culturale (Italy)
7. **SEEYN** – South East European Youth Network (Serbia)
8. **SLOGA** – Slovenian Global Action (Slovenia)
9. **SKGO** – Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (Serbia)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The priorities of the South East European Geographical Path are:

- **Global Citizenship Education** which represents the main pillar on which the whole work of the SEE Path was built on;
- **Global migration** which causes regional and local challenges;
- **Youth engagement** which needs better promotion of global citizens' education.

While each Western Balkan (WB) country is specific in its own political, economic and socio-cultural context, there are some common issues concerning **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)** that could be shared in order to give a broad overview of the situation in the region. Firstly, none of the WB countries has developed a national strategy on GCE and the level of public awareness on global issues is relatively low. Linked to this, it is important to highlight that the level of public awareness and the level of awareness on behalf of public authorities on the importance of GCE is also generally low, indeed GCE is a relatively new concept for most countries in the region. In particular, there has been no wider campaign to promote GCE in the region and there are scarce or absent national financial resources for implementation of GCE. Additionally, the crisis situation offers an opportunity in the sense of greater interest of teachers/schools for GCE, however with a decrease in the available resources. Schools are considered the best entry point for wide-scale implementation of GCE; however most of the work done on GCE is still through direct workshops run by NGOs and individual teachers. The SEE Path decided to focus on GCE and DEAR in order to raise awareness about these concepts within the region.

Global migration has become increasingly complex, involving not just refugees from different war affected zones, but also millions of migrants in search for a decent work. Although refugees and migrants often travel in the same direction, their circumstances are fundamentally different and, for that reason, they are treated differently under modern international law. On global level, the protection of refugees has been considered within the core mandate of the **United Nations (UN)** and its Refugee agency. The latter was set up in order to look after refugees, specifically those waiting to return home at the end of World War II. In light of this, it can be stated that the international protection of the majority of the world's refugees has traditionally been the domain of the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**. *Even with these regulations taken into account, the global migration issue is increasingly present.* Indeed two parallel processes are constantly ongoing and reported by the European media: the former regularly reports the northwards journey through the Western Balkan (WB) corridor of migrants and refugees, and the latter stresses how the EU member states seem mainly concerned on how to make their border controls more effective and how to engage non-member states in these efforts. In particular, Slovenia was involved in massive organised migrations of refugees from September 2015 until March 2016.

In the first weeks of arrival the situation was chaotic and the conditions for many refugees dangerous and inhumane. Many of them were left stranded and were prevented to continue their travel for extended periods of time without their basic human needs being met. Eventually, the authorities arranged transit centres at the Croatian and Austrian border and transport of refugees by buses and trains. The conditions gradually improved over the following months, including provision of humanitarian aid, protection of vulnerable groups and coordination between Slovenian, Croatian and Austrian authorities. By the closure of the corridor in early March 2016 around 500.000 asylum seekers had transited Slovenia – in average several thousand per day. Slovenia remained a transit country throughout the period of the refugee wave and most people did not stay in the country for more than one or two days. Most refugees were registered and temporarily accommodated in the transit camps at the border with Croatia and at the border with Austria. During the initial stages of the refugee wave, it became clear that rather than lack of material and human resources, *the main challenge of the humanitarian response would have been the coordination between various actors involved* (including the Police, Civil Protection and other government institutions, the UNHCR and other international organisations and the NGOs and humanitarian organisations). In light of this, the SEE Path has decided to focus on this issue and contribute throughout their advocacy actions to a better management of the migration flows.

Additionally, **youth participation** was selected as a focal point of the SEE **Geographical Path (GP)** because of the engagement which characterises younger generations and the incentive they can contribute in the promotion global citizens' education in the SEE region. In order to better understand the perception of young people on the subject of interdependencies between local and global justice issues a survey was conducted among SEE GP partners. The purpose of this survey was to get ideas for enabling young people to become active advocates on global justice issues. The survey also took into account information and data that were already available at European and national level (ex. Eurobarometer studies for EU member countries and – where applicable – national surveys). The core idea of the survey was to monitor if solidarity was still a priority for the young population in the SEE region. The majority of youth resulted to be sympathetic to this topic. However it is important to stress that even if this feeling of solidarity is supported and expressed theoretically, in general they do not feel they have many concrete and real possibilities to interact and change the current trend. Finally, the survey also questioned the attitudes towards global social justice commitments in the light of recent economic and political developments, perceived importance of global and regional development, main perceived causes of social justice deprivation, worldwide priorities for development and other important policies in various fields which affect the countries in the SEE region such as: potential perception of the connections between migration fluxes and attitudes towards poverty in the home country, belief in own ability to take action, etc.

This process was followed by actions which aim at developing critical awareness among citizens in the SEE region enabling them to see the global interdependent context we live in and ensuring that any possible solutions (i.e. Agenda 2030) have a distinctively global dimension with a focus on active citizenship.



10-12 October 2017 – Belgrade, Sremski Karlovci and Zrenjanin (Serbia): Special Initiative "European Local Democracy Week: Youth Participation in Focus"

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LADDER SEE GEOGRAPHICAL PATH (GP)

The SEE path's scope is to reinforce the interdependencies between the EU and the SEE area by tackling challenges such as migration and refugees' flows and by empowering LAs and CSOs enabling these actors to play an active role in protecting human rights and in promoting the integration of migrants. Following the discussion and the plan established in 2015, the SEE Path decided also to focus especially on the decentralisation process as well as the empowerment of youth in development issues. The specific objectives of its advocacy actions are:

- Strengthen the cooperation and increase advocacy capacities of local authorities and civil society organisations at all levels;
- Improve knowledge and inform the citizens of the Western Balkan especially youth on the topic of development cooperation and education through the concrete issue of migration;
- Raise awareness of the interdependencies between the European Neighbourhood and Europe;
- Increase youth participation and foster their role as drivers for change;
 - Raise awareness about the high refugee flow through the Western Balkan corridor.



SOUTH EAST EUROPE GP AND SDGS

The Path has tackled different SDGs during the three years and particularly:

SDG 4: Quality Education and in particular its target 4.7 which states that all learners need to acquire the knowledge and skills in order to promote sustainable development, including, among other, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. This thematic represented the foundation for all the actions of the SEE Path.



SDG 10: Reduced Inequality & SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth– Migration has become a very relevant SEE regional topic after the unpredicted high influx of migrants and refugees travelling through the Western Balkan corridor toward the Western European countries. Maximising the positive impact of migration on development has been recognised as an important policy priority for the EU (European

Commission, 2013). Considering this important priority, the LADDER SEE GP since the beginning of the project decided to coordinate local authorities and civil society organisations in addressing this topic. Migration issues can be identified within several SDGs; however the one that is primarily addressed by the SEE GP is the SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries and especially its target 10.7: "facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies". Given its cross-cutting nature, migration and migration-related considerations are also featured in the action plans addressing many other goals and targets such as eradication of forced labour and slavery (target 8.7), protection of safe and secure environments for all workers (target 8.8) or, again, the reduction of transaction costs for migrant remittances (target 10.C).



SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities; SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – The topic of Youth and their role in the implementation of the Global Agenda was selected as a burning topic relevant for local authorities as well as for youth led and other organisations. The SDGs and the Sustainable development agenda represent a roadmap for changing the way young people in the SEE region are living, the ways they value each other and the ways they learn, consume and grow.



Young people should be seen as drivers of change in the process of localisation of the SDGs which means that they would need to have the assured space and recognition to participate in translation of the Agenda 2030 into local, national and regional policy. They should be active in planning, implementing and in monitoring the implementation of SDGs on national level. Young people would also need structured mechanisms for participation through decision-making, ideally on a co-decision level, and especially in areas that have a clear impact on youngsters.



The theatre play of the LADDER Project "In a better world" performed in Sremski Karlovci (Serbia) on 11 October 2017 during the Special Initiative of the SEE Path

ADVOCACY ACTIONS AND IMPACT

During the 3 years of implementation, the path has systematically advanced the advocacy agenda through the following actions:

- o Outputs: Resolutions, Public Statements and Other actions
- 8 May 2015 – Podgorica (Montenegro): SEE Working Group first meeting
- 5 June 2015 – Brussels (Belgium): SEE Working Group meeting;
- 30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): “Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences” roundtable from which recommendations on migration management along the WB route were developed;
- Organisation of local meetings with the aim of sharing regional best practices on youth involvement in DEAR, promotion with members of different local youth parliaments as well as debates on employment and education, health and social welfare, rural development, culture, volunteering, sustainable development, EU enlargement etc.;
- Organisation of a regional conference of local authorities focusing on the inclusion of DEAR into their everyday work in the area of youth local policies;
- Organisation of meetings and appeals to national authorities (Civil Society Forum in Trieste at the occasion WB Summit) and EU Representatives (DG Enlargement) to bring DC/DEAR more central in different policies in the region;
- Survey addressed to youth in order to understand their perception on the subject of interdependences between local and global justice issues;
- 20-21 June 2016 – Skopje (Macedonia): Working Group Meeting within the framework of the “Cooperation on the governance of Migration in the Western Balkans and Central European Countries”;
- 10-12 October 2017 – Belgrade, Sremski Karlovci and Zrenjanin (Serbia): Special Initiative “European Local Democracy Week: Youth Participation in Focus”.

“Refugee crisis – challenges and consequences”, Serbia, December 2015



30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): “Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences”

From this first starting point the SEE GP members organised the round table “Refugee Crisis – challenges and consequences” in Belgrade on 30 November – 1 December 2015. The aim of this first meeting was opening a regional discourse about migration flows, their perception and their legitimisation. The round table discussion focused on Schengen vs.

non-Schengen regime implications for migrants (“tragedy of Schengen”) and on the increase of refugees influx to Serbia and Macedonia. This meeting marked also an opportunity to exchange best practices and strengthening mutual cooperation in assuring refugees’ rights along the entire Western Balkan route. Questions related to migrants and refugees’ human rights were raised as well as some related to the existing legal norms enshrined in the European solidarity practice. The conclusion of this roundtable was that **within EU, the partner countries in collaboration with local authorities and civil society as well as with other relevant actors should find solutions that comprehensively address these issues and move from the state security approach towards guaranteeing human security of everyone involved.** The roundtable was organised under the European Year for Development 2015 which had as a slogan “Our world, our dignity, our future”. In line with this, the secondary aim of the meeting was to inform citizens about international development cooperation and to underline concrete results and thus shed the light on the relevance of international development cooperation in the inter-dependent world. During this occasion, SLOGA presented the carried out campaign namely “You too are a global neighbour”. The aim of this campaign was to highlight the relevance of international development cooperation and global solidarity in an increasingly inter-connected and inter-dependent world and bring it closer to citizens. The main overall goal of the campaign, which was identified with the communication hashtag #GlobalNeighbour and #EYD2015, was that citizens from different Western Balkan (WB) countries get informed on EYD2015 and got sense of global responsibility and solidarity for global cooperation. The fact that the campaign was implemented during the refugee crisis contributed in the better articulation of the needs for global solidarity and highlighted the importance of development cooperation through this emerging problem. Finally, during the roundtable some advocacy recommendations on migration management along the WB route were prepared to be shared on local, national level (within the WB region) as well as on European level. The Recommendations were also promoted to stakeholders as well as among general public.

SEE working group meeting, Macedonia, June 2016

A working group meeting was held in June 2016, organised back-to-back with a relevant conference on refugee crisis, during which the WG members contributed and presented advocacy inputs on behalf of the Geographical Path. The 2-day conference “Cooperation on the governance of Migration in the Western Balkans and Central European Countries” was organised on the World Refugee Day, gathering 25 partners from 9 countries, involving more than 70 participants, in cooperation with EU programme and international cooperation schemes (Central European Initiative, etc.).

European local democracy week: Youth Participation in Focus, Serbia, October 2017



10-12 October 2017 – Belgrade, Sremski Karlovci and Zrenjanin (Serbia): Special Initiative “European Local Democracy Week: Youth Participation in Focus”

The Special Initiative of the SEE GP namely “European Local Democracy Week: Youth Participation in Focus” was held on 10-12 October 2017 in three cities in Serbia: Belgrade, Sremski Karlovci and Zrenjanin. The conference focused on the role and engagement of youth in local policies and the implementation of SDGs. The conference consisted of discussions, workshops in the fields of employment and education, health and social welfare, rural development, culture, volunteering, sustainable development, EU enlargement etc. This event was organised within the framework of the European Local Democracy Week adopting a multilevel approach which provided significant distribution of information and involvement of young people and activists, as well as relevant feedback and concrete proposals for action plan and activities in different sectors. In particular, the path coordinators co-organised the event with three national umbrella associations which gather together different youth NGOs. These were the Serbian Youth Council, National Association of Youth Workers and National Association of Local Youth Offices. Each association had the opportunity to facilitate the workshops implemented and led the discussions on the main topics taken into account. Thanks to the methodology adopted during the 3-day event, over 40 proposals and action plan activities were produced. Additionally, relevant recommendations to foster the role of youth in the regional policies were produced: they were mainly focused on employment and education, health and social welfare, rural development and culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thanks to the work developed and the advocacy actions carried on by the path, the SEE GP drafted a set of recommendations on the two main topics taken into account: Migration and Youth.

Migration:

I. General recommendations

- All transition countries on the migration route within the Western Balkan corridor should endeavour to respect European values, principles of solidarity and specifically human rights of all migrants.
- Consider that Western Balkan route is likely to remain the main route for migration flow in the future; there is a

necessity of joint action at international, regional, national and local level.

- Countries in the region need to prepare for the return of economic migrants to their original countries (in Western Balkan), in terms of reintegration.
- All countries affected by migrant crisis from the region should rethink their international cooperation strategies and strengthen regional cooperation.



30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): “Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences”

II. Cooperation, coordination, legislation and institutional set-up

- Joint planning, strong cooperation and coordination between the countries on the Balkan Route are crucial when dealing with migrants. This should include the establishment of trust and synergy of partners, the support in policy making and standardisation of the legislation for data gathering as well as the unification of the systems for migrants for countries on the Western Balkan route.
- Local governments in Western Balkan countries should upgrade their existing mechanisms of coordination both horizontal (between municipalities within a country and over the borders) and vertical (with national authorities, as well as with the civil society and the media) in order to connect and involve all stakeholders in a coordinated effort.
- Improve vertical communication and cooperation (national-local level) and horizontal level (local level-NGOs – other actors). Moreover, constant communication with general public and with local authorities is necessary in order to raise awareness on global migrations and also help prevent potential conflicts with local population.
- Local operational plans for dealing with migrants need to be prepared at the local municipal level in order to put in place a sound infrastructure. Within this process, contribution of migrants with approved long-term staying permissions should be taken into consideration when planning development strategies for local communities.
- Assure more efficient screening system on the borders where migrants transit (especially in Italy and Greece hot-spots) and establish channels for sharing information. Registration processes in all the countries where migrants are passing through should be respected in order to prevent human trafficking and smuggling. Civil society organisations should be included in the process of monitoring the registration for which the governments are responsible for.
- Increase exchange of lessons learnt between actors on

local level in the hot-spots on the Western Balkan Route.

III. Funding, Resources and Skills

- Joint planning for timely securing of funds for all relevant needs (including earmarked grants for the affected municipalities etc.) needs to be in place in close cooperation with multilateral and bilateral donors as well as with humanitarian organisations present in affected countries.
- A quick-response mechanism is needed to help the local governments facing the influx of refugees and the complexity of the provision of funds' procedure. Therefore, the EU and other multilateral and bilateral donors should consider simplifying the procedures for the provision of funds to national and local governments affected by the refugee crisis.
- The EU should consider the possibility of opening some of the funding mechanisms that are currently available only to member states – also to the candidate countries, affected by migrant flows.
- The EU should start a structured dialogue with national authorities in non-EU countries in order to make them understanding the necessity of taking into account the needs of the affected municipalities when applying for funds related to the refugee crisis.
- Involve the local governments in the programming of EU and other donor funds for addressing the refugee crisis, since only the national governments are eligible to receive such funds.

IV. Integration of migrants and readmission of economic migrants in WB countries

- Raise public awareness about positive contribution of migrants and refugees to society, including providing support to civil society to organise evidence-based public campaigns.
- Share accurate facts and figures about migration and its benefits, and improve public understanding of forced displacement and international protection. Civil society organisations and local governments should be included in the development of post-crisis strategies.
- Ensure that humanitarian and development aid are used to save lives and eradicate poverty (to prevent people immigrate for economic reasons). Special attention should be paid to unaccompanied minors.
- Empower civil society actors and create conditions that enable them to play an active role in readmission, integration and protection of human rights, to combat racism and xenophobia especially in the frame of formal and informal education. Special attention should be paid to unaccompanied minors.
- Ensure that return policies prioritise assisted voluntary return and reintegration. When forced return take place after due consideration of an asylum claim in fair procedures, ensure that it is carried out in a safe and dignified manner in line with international human rights obligations.
- Ensure that future negotiations on readmission agreements do not cover third country nationals as a rule, and are in accordance with the European Commission's evaluation of

EU Readmission Agreements.

- Make all agreements on migration control, including readmission agreements, public and transparent.

Youth engagement

General Recommendations:



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- Encourage EU to keep investing on programme dedicated to youth which include the neighbourhood countries (i.e.: Erasmus + Program, IPA funding, etc.). This is needed in order to build a common ground between European and neighbourhood citizens. The basic principle would be that physical exchange among youth increases the sense of common "European" citizenship.
- EU should invest more efforts on strengthening solidarity between Europe and the WB countries. According to the key findings of the survey implemented by the SEE Path, it is clear that solidarity does matter to the young generations. The majority of young people in the region have expressed empathy and compassion, but in reality they feel helpless to bring the positive change happen. However, they confirm **that working together in a collaborative way is the only concrete and real possibility to interact and to change the worrying trends.**

I. Employment, education and rural development:

On the national level:

- Young people must be included as a priority in all sectoral policies.
- There are persisting issues in the transference of management of the existing measures and implementation of youth policies from the national to the local level. The main emphasis should be on how to implement these actions on local level.
- Young entrepreneurs who use self-employment measures should be relieved of communal taxes in the first two years and lower prices of utility services should be provided.
- It is necessary to actively involve young people in the creation of employment policies to their extent.

Measures and actions:

- Programs should be created in accordance with the needs of young people with an increased involvement of youth organisations in their planning and implementation.
- Better coordination between institutions should be achieved, as well as with active nongovernmental

organisations involvement.

- Provision of accessible and adequately equipped spaces and facilities for young people.
- Increase the number of activities that encourage cross-sectoral and cross-institutional cooperation that will result in concrete strategies.
- Foster motivation of young people to start their own business through concrete and relevant activities, programmes, funds and information.
- Promote global volunteering among youth.

II. Health and social welfare:

On the national level:

- Create policies with proactive measures based on previous fundamental analyses of available resources and long-term effects of proposed measures for systemic reforms.
- Promote activities for young people focused on the development of the following skills: commitment to learning, positive values, social competences, establishment of a positive identity model.
- Development of the competencies of youth organisations: knowledge management, advocacy, capacity measurement, management models (establishing good practices and / or develop case studies for each area).
- Establish mechanisms implemented by institutions and NGOs for regular monitoring and evaluation of the measures taken to ensure that they lead to the promotion of social inclusion of young people and the reduction of social risks.
- Improvement of the unique methodology for developing local action plans for young people, which will define a single list of indicators (qualitative and quantitative) in order to see the trends and effects of the measures and activities undertaken.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, and above all the Ministry of Health, should introduce a regular subject of medical education in schools in order to raise awareness among young people about the importance of prevention.
- Introduce the obligation for medical workers working with young people to take training in the field of the pedagogical approach in providing health services to young people once a year in the framework of the obligation of continuous education.
- Use the potential of local media to increase the awareness of young people about the importance of healthy lifestyles.
- Establish teams of peer educators in the youth centres who will work directly with young people on public health issues, using methods of communication strategy that lead to behavioural change.
- The implementation of the competition for the allocation of funds from the LSG budget must be in accordance with the general good governance standards.



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III. Culture:

- Provision of space for young creators (painters, media workers, artists...).
- Organisation of free fairs and exhibitions for young people in cultural institutions.
- Ensure promotion of young non-affirmed artists.
- Include employment and employment support in public policies at national and local level for all institutions that deal with culture.
- Define financial and non-financial measures through which young people will get support for the implementation of their ideas in the sphere of culture and creative industries.
- Employment of young creative people in the field of culture and creative industries and provide them with the skills to apply and develop further their creativity in those fields.
- Encouraging the development of creative entrepreneurship of young people – creating a formal framework of support such as subsidies.
- Define the creative industry, creative entrepreneurship and acts regulating them and the way they will be supported on national level.
- Regulate the law on social entrepreneurship on national level that would open the space for the development of creative industries.
- Develop cross-sectoral cooperation between institutions, organisations, individuals (creative creators) on local level.
- Launch LAM project – local academic network linking academic artists on local level.
- Enable a greater degree of access to creative content for young people.
- Enable higher level of regional cooperation among young people in the field of culture.
- Foster an enabling environment for participation in culture and creative industries through public policies.
- Affirmation of the culture of volunteering and encouraging awareness of activism and volunteering of young people.
- Defining sustainable measures and instruments for improving cultural participation and a consistent monitoring and research of cultural needs.
- Include young people as active participants in the creation and implementation of policies in culture and creative industries at local level.
- Establish an inter-sectoral team at national level to deal with



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- the improvement of cultural production of young people.
- Alter the education system in order to allow creative-oriented content.
 - Organise festivals for amateur groups in all aspects of cultural creativity based on healthy competition, development and excellence.
 - Reduce the migration and brain drain of young people through the initiation of various cultural and artistic projects.
 - Ensure the creation of an on-line platform of foundations and donors as well as organisations that are active in the field of cultural and creative industries, in order to better network and cooperate on national level.
 - Increase the budget on national level for young people in culture and creative industries.

- Conduct promotional campaigns in order to encourage the inclusion of young people in cultural programs and projects of creative industries.
- Encourage young leaders in the journalism and creative industries.

TIPS AND USEFUL GUIDELINES

The advocacy work of the SEE GP in the field of migration and youth issues wants to represent a convenient starting point and inspiration for those with little experience in the advocacy field. In light of this, please find below some tips and guidelines for your organisation:

Visibility and engagement

The SEE GP identified that a challenge in their advocacy work was to make these subjects feel closer to citizens and other stakeholders as well as susceptible to change. Social networks need to have a central role and to be the most used source of information. Informative strategies should consider especially the use of the social networks and on-line tools for Development Education and Awareness Raising activities. As far as the informative level is concerned, the NGOs are identified as one of the most trusted actors. Therefore, a customisation of information strategy is needed: methods to explain and divulge the meaning of basic concepts, such as 0.7 ODA, Sustainable Development Goals should be identified always keeping in mind the specific targets and starting by their everyday experience.



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GEOGRAPHICAL PATH EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (EAP)



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP (EAP) REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) together with the European Union signed the agreement for the establishment of the Partnership in 2009. They strive to become closer to the EU and discover new possibilities for the business sector as well as for the citizens (such as education, new standards in environmental protection, new laws and rules for managing the private sector and government services).

One of the main problems faced by the Eastern Partnership is the issue of good government and good governance. The fall of the Soviet Union created a great chaos in all the systems and the process of transition is not yet finished. The balance between powers is established in the countries' Constitutions, but often it is not respected in practice. **Stability and economic development requires democratic governance and government, which is hardly achievable in EaP countries.**

In this regard, cooperation aims at improving capacities of local authorities and their relation with local civil society, therefore, decentralised cooperation represents a priority. With the assistance of other partners and local authorities based on concrete projects of exchange of experiences, it is possible to work on improving and on strengthening the self-confidence and responsibilities of local leaders in EaP countries. The list of economic and political difficulties of the EaP countries seems to be extensive. It is hard to identify what is the most urgent issue. Development and support to villages, cities and their communities appears to be one of the first pillars to tackle. Strengthen local community and economy on the territories situated far from the capitals or big cities is a priority in all the countries of the Partnership. Throughout the LADDER Project, the EaP Path has also worked on other three relevant and essential objectives which are:

1. Strengthening the capacity of associations of LAs and CSOs to act in a sustainable way as drivers for development, fostering on their role of multipliers within their countries, communities and networks;

2. Raising awareness and engaging citizens in global issues, global interdependency and development education;

3. Reinforcing the cooperation between LAs and CSOs to lead to winning synergies.

In the majority of cases there is no need of significant investments in the organisation of the work between local authorities and civil society. Indeed, this approach is based on small steps, often turning out to be very successful. People and societies learn to work together, get to know each other, develop relationships of trust and friendship.

Among the different actions of ALDA, it is important to stress the engagement of the association and its continuous work in the EaP countries. Several significant actions undertaken by ALDA are worthy of mention such as the establishment of the LDAs in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova who are working at the local level in order to promote human rights and active citizens participation, but also several European Projects coordinated and developed by ALDA in this geographical area among which:

- **CHOICE – Cultural Heritage: Opportunity for Improving Civic Engagement** which aims at enhancing civil society's role and to build its capacities to develop a heritage-friendly living environment in Belarus, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- **NED – National Endowment for Democracy** which aims at fostering local reforms in Ukraine and Moldova.
- **IDPs SAVE – IDPs' Social Adaptation as a Human Rehabilitation Vital Element** which aims at creating favourable environment for adaptation and integration of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) into Ukrainian local communities. In this way the project contributes to the cohesion in the affected communities and to the stability in the region, which should minimize the possibility of conflict onset and IDPs marginalisation.
- **SPREAD** which aims at strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations and LAs as a pre-condition for a more equitable, open and democratic society through support for their "own initiatives" and actions aimed at promoting an

inclusive and empowered society in Belarus.

- **TANDEM III** which aims at increasing citizen participation and community development in Belarus. This project is the follow up of TANDEM I & TANDEM II which both aimed at strengthening an inclusive and empowered society in Belarus by supporting the development of local communities and strengthening their cooperation with local authorities (LAs).

LADDER AND THE EAP PATH

EAP PATH COORDINATORS

- The National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG)
- Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities (UBBSLA)



The National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia - NALAG is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation which unites municipalities and self-governing cities throughout Georgia and defends interests of self-governmental organisations on local, national, regional, and international levels. The National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia was founded in 2004 by 980 self-governance units of Georgia and is recognised by the Government of Georgia and the Council of Europe as the organisation representing local authorities of Georgia. On the basis of the organic law of Georgia "On Local Self-Governance" the organisation presents the interests of local authority and consults the relevant bodies of the Central Authority of Georgia. NALAG aims at further developing the local self-governance system, developing democracy at the local level, decentralising the government power throughout the country and developing the local self-governance institutions. The main objectives of the association can be defined as follows: defend interests of local self-government bodies at the national and international level; promote development of local democracy in Georgia; cooperate with the central authorities

on decentralisation issues; provide competent services to the member self-government authorities; promote raising the qualification level of civil servants and elected officials at the self-government entities and secure social guarantees; identify problems of the local self-governance and interconnect local self-government bodies, generalise/introduce the existing practical experience and achievements. The Association is a member of the Committee of European Regions and Municipalities. It has sister associations in Norway, the Netherlands, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Armenia.

To know more about NALAG: <http://nala.ge/>



UNION OF BULGARIAN BLACK SEA LOCAL AUTHORITIES - UBBSLA is an independent non-governmental, voluntary, self-governing and non-profit organisation established in 1992. UBBSLA is an organisation uniting the interests of all member municipalities and encouraging strong and effective local self-government and active citizen participation in the Black Sea Region. It coordinates the activities of its members in the sphere of local government, energy efficiency, tourism, culture, transport, environmental and sustainable development. At the moment, the Union of the Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities unites 21 municipalities bordering with the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast, namely: Avren, Aksakovo, Balchik, Beloslav, Burgas, Byala, Varna, Valchidol, Dalgopol, Devnya, Dobrich, DolniChiflik, Kavarna, MalkoTarnovo, Nesebar, Pomorie, Primorsko, Sozopol, Suvorovo, Shabla and Tsarevo, located in three administrative regions – Burgas, Varna and Dobrich.

To know more about UBBSLA: <http://www.ubbsla.org/>

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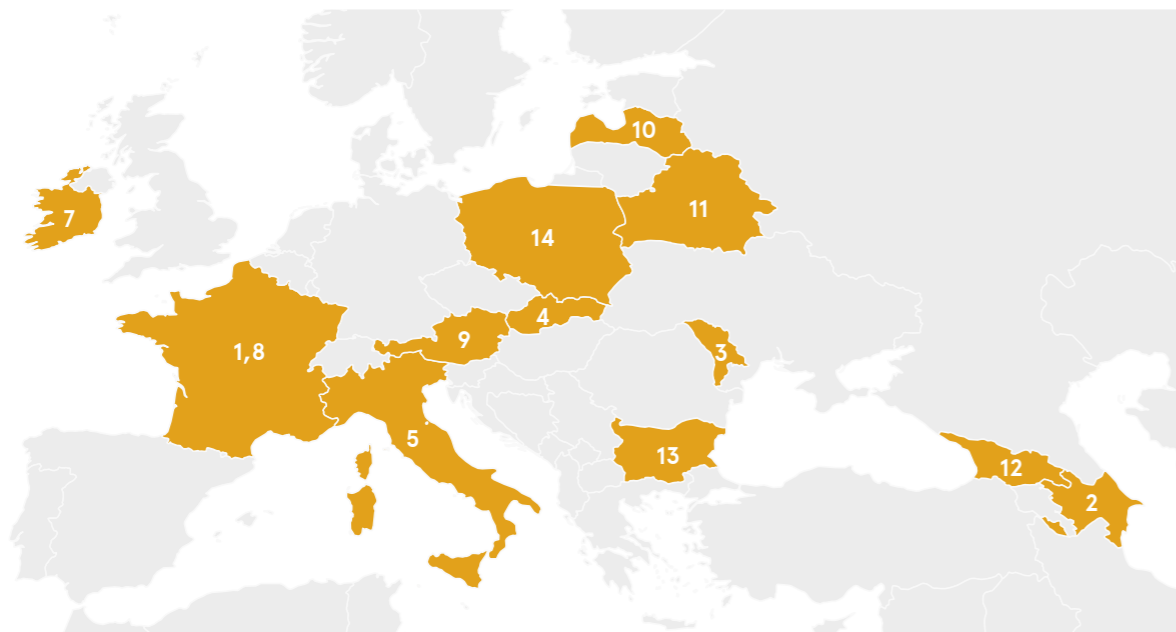


"Nowadays we live in a continuously globalising world where local communities, day by day, play a more important role. Whether we are speaking about global warming, gender equality, youth participation, democracy, conflicts' resolution or any other global challenge, it's the local level actors who most often have the solutions and drive the change. This emerging role of local stakeholders is especially visible in young democracies. That's why we live in an exciting time for community development in Eastern Europe and I'm extremely glad to contribute to this process."

Previous EaP ALDA coordinator (2015 – 2017)
Mrs. Nino TVALTVAZDE



"LADDER created a platform for people and institutions from very different countries and context, but with very similar challenges. It proved that through education Local Authorities and communities can deliver better results. Project enabled us to launch new local democracy agencies in the countries where they were not existed yet, like Moldova and Morocco. We had possibility to raise the voice of Local Authorities and civil society through different platforms, Ladder community -as a consortium of 27 partners & 19 associates, coming from 19 EU and 17 non EU-countries – addressed the 5th Brussels Eastern Partnership Summit and called for Support Strengthening local authorities, Supporting Decentralization process in the EAP per Public Administration Reform Strategies and Strengthening capacities of civil society and its projects as well as opportunities for cooperation with local authorities."



Members of the EaP Path Working Group

1. **ALDA** – European Association of Local Democracy Agencies (France)
2. **BINA** – NGO Alliance for Municipality Development (Azerbaijan)
3. **CALM** – Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (Moldova)
4. **CEEEN** – Central and Eastern European Citizens Network (Slovakia)
5. **CISP** – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (Italy)
6. **CVICUS** – World Alliance for Citizen Participation (South Africa)
7. **DONEGAL** – Donegal County Council (Ireland)
8. **ENNA** – European Association of Local Democracy Agencies (France)
9. **FOSTER EUROPE** – Foundation for strong European Regions (Austria)
10. **LALRG** – Latvian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (Latvia)
11. **LEV SAPIEHA** – Lev Sapieha Foundation (Belarus)
12. **NALAG** – National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (Georgia)
13. **UBBSLA** – Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities (Bulgaria)
14. **URCP** – Union of Rural Communes of the Republic of Poland
15. **UTCS** – Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (Slovakia)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

EAP Geographical path focused on issues that are directly



Special Initiative of LADDER project in the Eastern Partnership "The Role of Municipalities in Promotion of Development Education and Research" – Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Telavi, Borjomi Georgia, 1 – 4 December 2015

connected with local governance, local democracy and decentralisation. Although the Eastern partnership area is very diverse the issues identified are common to all countries. Particularly, the experience of post-soviet countries shows clearly the devolution of state powers in emerging democracies and is among the most difficult processes of democratic transformation. In the vast majority of cases, the decentralisation reform announced by the central authorities is not implemented and does not enable citizens to exert real influence over the local decision making process. In certain cases, decentralisation is reversed after political changes and stricter administrative vertical decision making regenerates itself, as

it happened in Ukraine and Georgia after the change of central government. This reversion of the process of decentralisation becomes possible not only because of the underdeveloped civil society and democratic culture but also because of the inadequate mentoring and guidance from the international community which highly contributes in the process of weakening democratic drivers in the region of ENP-East. In the vast majority of cases, the international organisations do not see the whole picture of the developments, but only the surface of the problems which does not suffice for the elaboration of adequate policy towards particular countries in the region. Therefore, **there is a need of higher contribution on the part of the international actors in terms of sharing experiences and mentoring as well as further raising awareness actions on democratisation on national level.**

As of today the basic instrument for promotion of democracy in the emerging democracies on the European continent is ENPI, which is mostly based on Action Plans (AP) and Association agreements (AA). The aim of the ENPI is to assist the establishment of democratic standards in a particular country and harmonise legislation in target countries with basic European values. However, ENPI's APs as well as AAs are very general in their stipulations on local democracy and local self-governance, using general phrasing such as "strengthening of the foundation of local and regional self-governance by enforcement of relevant European standards as stipulated in the European charter on local self-governance". Such a general wording gives possibility to the National Governments to avoid realisation of commitments taken in the framework of ENP. EU possesses some instruments for monitoring of democratic transformation in ENP region, such as the Expert Panel on Public Administration Reform of the EEAS and others but these instruments have limited ability to provide in-depth observation and monitoring. Therefore, there is a need to re-evaluate the available instruments and propose solutions and efficient adaptations to the needs of the targeted countries. The inadequacy of the proposed instruments is also due to the lack of independent information about the processes in ENP countries. The only information sources available to EU authorities are from their respective embassies, national governments and CoE monitoring missions. Information delivered from these sources are more informative than analytical and in the vast majority of cases they have a simply formal nature. In light of this, there is a need for independent and reliable information about the progress of Decentralisation on the ENP-East region that will be disseminated by independent and reliable CSO actors which will monitor and act in favour of local democracy in the new democracies of ENP-East region.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EAP GEOGRAPHICAL

The Eastern Partnership geographical path sought to foster a comprehensive and ownership-based Neighbourhood Policy in the EaP area by the EU. The path promotes the role of LAs and CSOs, recognising and supporting their capacity to act as change makers for development at local level. The EaP LADDER geographical path lead by UBBSLA and NALAG includes representatives of Moldova, Ukraine, Belorussia,

Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as representatives of ALAs from Baltic States and EU member countries. The general objectives of its advocacy actions were:

- o Support sustainable development of cities and communities through an integrated approach of advocacy and promotion of available tools for local authorities, civil sector and citizens;
- o Raise EU taxpayers' awareness on the current state of affairs of the EaP region in order to adapt and adequate the EU assistance programs to the needs of the regions and municipalities of the area.

The EaP GP is focused on different topics which have impact on the entire region and in particular on:

- DG DEVCO National road maps for assistance to non-state actors and LAs in Development – The EU delegations in each Country developed a roadmap that includes specific measures for promotion and strengthening of non-state actors (including LAs). The relevancy of these road maps was assessed and discussed and recommendations were issued based on this action. The purpose was to contribute in the elaboration of the next bi-annual roadmap and to ensure a transparent process and the needed visibility.
- Implementation of ENP instruments and annual plans – The EaP has engaged in an active cooperation with the National Platforms on one hand and with the CORLEAP on the other in order to discuss ENP instruments and annual plans. Indeed, LAs are not represented in National platforms and the efficiency of these platforms represent a concern. Therefore, this action of the EAP GP contributed for LAs to have better representation, information and cooperation within these platforms.
- New Policy on ENP – The Commissioners Johannes Hahn and Federica Mogherini established a joint consultative panel for the elaboration of a new policy for the European Neighbourhood Partnership, this represented a primary target for the lobbying and advocacy of the EaP GP as well as the provision of recommendations to European Commission on new policy alternatives.

For the EU associated countries two more topics for discussion were added:

- The implementation of chapters on Regional development and Public administration reform of the Association Agreements (AA) – The EY Association agreements signed by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia stipulate specific provisions for regional Development and Public administration reform. The EaP GP monitored the implementation of those provisions and conveyed a relevant message to the European institutions through the LADDER Consortium. NALAG through active communication with the Donors gained their support for regional cooperation and especially for the incentive to involve more national non-state actors (for example association of small towns of Ukraine to be involved in the event in Ukraine). This action gained also

the support of the Norwegian Association of local and regional governments and the Council of Europe for regional cooperation.

- Monitoring realisation of conditionality to the instrument for direct budget support from the EU to National budget – this instrument of direct financial donation is used as financial incentive for national governments to proceed with the democratic and structural reforms. However efficiency of this instrument has been widely questioned and criticised on the issue of lack of capacity to meet conditionality by many national and international actors. The topics tackled by this instrument are: regional development, public administration reform, rural development, agriculture, education and environment. There is a natural role of the EaP geographic path to be undertaken in the motioning of the instrument for direct budget support, informing European taxpayers on the efficiency of this instrument and providing recommendations on specific conditionality.



30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): "Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences"

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP GP AND SDGS



Considering the context of the project's implementation, the EaP GP decided to focus mainly on these three SDGs:



SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities– The SDG 11 was taken into account by the path in order to foster the inclusiveness, safety, resilience and sustainability of the cities and communities of the region.



SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions– The EaP Path has focused on the importance of working on good governance and more democratic and transparent cities and institutions, tackling in this way the SDG 16.

SDG 17 – Partnership for the goals – An increase in the coordination actions and policies with the local, national, regional and international level was developed throughout the actions of the path contributing in this way to create coherent policies and addressing the SDG 17.

Additionally to these, the EaP GP during its Special Initiative has also worked on SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries and especially its target 10.7 "facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies"; SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy; SDG 13 – Climate Action; and SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production.

ADVOCACY ACTIONS AND IMPACT

During the 3-year project, the path has systematically advanced the advocacy agenda through the following actions:

- Outputs: Resolutions, Public Statements and Other actions

- 17-18 May 2015 – Dnipropetrovsk (Ukraine): Working Group Preparatory Meeting;
- 18 May 2015: Communication to the Commissioner Johannes Hahn in view of the Riga Summit on Eastern Partnership (EaP) on the subject of the joint communication paper "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy";
- 30 June 2015: LADDER Community recommendations regarding the new ENP targeting the EC – DG NEAR (action implemented together with MED Path);
- 1-4 December 2015 – Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Telavi, Borjomi (Georgia): Special initiative "The Role of Municipalities in Promotion of Development Education and Research";
- February 2016: Joint declaration of LADDER and Platforma namely "The New ENP needs greater recognition of local and regional governments";
- 11 May 2016 – Paris (France): Coordination meeting of the EaP Path as side event of the ALDA General Assembly 2016;
- 4 November 2016 – Odessa (Ukraine): Special Initiative Follow up: Coordination meeting;
- 5 December 2016 – Brussels (Belgium): Statement endorsed by the EaP GP presented at the meeting of the Eastern Partnership on "Democracy, Good Governance and Stability towards strengthening of local and regional democracy";
- July 2017: Paper "Decentralised cooperation and community approach as a tool for strengthened cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership Countries and Russia" distributed at the 5th Assises of Decentralised Cooperation (10-11 July 2017, Brussels);
- December 2017: Reaction to the 5th Brussels Eastern Partnership Summit of the Heads of state or government from the EU member states and the six Eastern Partnership countries.

May 2015 – Ukraine: Working Group Preparatory Meeting

The first meeting of the EaP WG members was held in Dnipropetrovsk in Ukraine on 17-18 May 2015. This meeting allowed the members to reflect and elaborate a common voice to address the ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy) review. Connecting this event to the festivities related to "Europe's day" celebrated on the 18 May in Dnipropetrovsk, the WG meeting matched also with a major event organised by the project coordinator, the Congress of the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions of the EU, seizing the momentum of raising awareness and exchanging on development issues and the role of local stakeholders (LAs, CSOs) for development.

December 2015 – EaP Special Initiative: "The Role of Municipalities in Promotion of Development Education and Research"



30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): "Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences"

The Special initiative of the Eastern Partnership Geographical Path was organised on 1-4 December by NALAG, in cooperation with UBBSLA and other members of the Transnational WG and the support of the project coordinator. It consisted of a 4-day special event, involving a multi-level approach encompassing a high level conference with relevant stakeholders (including the EU Delegation, a number of representatives of Associations of Local Authorities from the EaP region, CSOs and other stakeholders) on the first day in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. On the 2nd & 3rd days, the event was split into a decentralised on-the-ground approach, tackling 3 DEAR-related topics selected by the EaP WG, which were (a) Migration, (b) Sustainable agriculture, and (c) Energy efficiency. 3 different cities of Georgia were then visited by the corresponding thematic group (Telavi – Sustainable agriculture; Kutaisi – Migration; Borjomi – Energy efficiency). In each of them, participants had the opportunity to interact with representatives of the local authority concerned but also other stakeholders as mentioned in the programme. The last day was concluded in Tbilisi, where the participants had the opportunity to exchange and present the conclusions of each of the thematic groups. The event also allowed the EaP WG meeting to meet twice and discuss in depth about the challenges of the EaP area, the state of stay of LAs & CSOs in the area and the next steps & actions for the EaP Geographical path.

February 2016 – Joint declaration LADDER-Platforma: "The New ENP needs greater recognition of local and regional governments"

This paper was issued in February 2016 following the successful links established between the coordinator and Platforma, in continuation of LADDER policy output in 2015 related to the ENP review. Among the policy issues brought to by the joint declaration is the need for further recognition of local stakeholders (LRAs & CSOs) in the ENP implementation as well as the need to support decentralisation processes, the reinforcement of regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, and the added value of decentralised cooperation. Further advocacy actions were carried by the WG during the year concerning the ENP and the role of LAs & CSOs in the framework of the SDGs localisation and awareness raising

in the area. Contacts were established with relevant stakeholders and institutions working on the ENP policies and connecting them to awareness raising and support to local stakeholders.

May 2016 – France: Coordination meeting of the EaP Path as a side event of the ALDA General Assembly 2016



30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): "Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences"

This meeting was organised as a parallel event organized by ALDA in May 2016 in Paris. The meeting was attended by 9 members of the EaP Geo-Path, the main topic of discussion were the possible ways of lobbying interests of municipalities and CSOs from EaP vis-à-vis the European Institutions. Participants formulated several ideas for the development and joint projects and the promotion of cooperation among Local government associations from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.



30 November – 1 December 2015 – Belgrade (Serbia): "Refugee Crisis – Challenges and Consequences"

November 2016 – Ukraine: Special Initiative Follow up: Coordination meeting

The EaP WG held a working meeting on November 2016 in Odessa (Ukraine) to reflect on the progress of the Path and discuss about the next steps. The meeting was organised back-to-back with a conference which was attended by several actors and represented an opportunity of visibility for the LADDER project. The XI International Conference "Self-organisation as the way to the development of reformed local communities", addressed the issue of community self-organisation to develop local communities and increase their engagement in local issues with a global dimension.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Special Initiative of LADDER project in the Eastern Partnership “The Role of Municipalities in Promotion of Development Education and Research” – Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Telvsi, Borjomi Georgia, 1 – 4 December 2015

Thanks to the work developed and the advocacy actions carried out by the path, the EaP GP drafted a set of recommendations, which can be summed up as follows:

- **Strengthening the role of Local Authorities:** The foundation of the EaP GP work is the philosophy that local self-governments can play a significant role not only in the context of regional development but also in the context of strategic communications and people to people communication. The EaP GP work had proven that decentralised cooperation and clear messages from the closest government bodies can make significant changes in the communities.
- **Valorising the local level:** The EaP GP believes that the future of the Eastern Partnership is through the local level. Local authorities together with civil society can significantly contribute to the delivery of the outputs and deliverables of 2020. We see that Public Administration Reform dynamics, especially in these three countries – Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova – lay ground for perspectives of real decentralisation and local development. Strengthening capacities of local authorities should include the opportunities of establishing relations with other local authorities in the EU. This cooperation will be the cause and result of their development.
- **Enhancing the capacities of civil society and its projects** as well as opportunities for cooperation with local authorities. This comprises education of civil society regarding the role of regions and municipalities as well as support for small-scale projects, engaging local authorities and civil society.
- **Strengthen the regional approach** of the ENP to offer the space and ground for the sense of ownership by all partner countries involved, notwithstanding the level of engagement and ensuring an overall coherence of the European policies.
- **Recognising the need to treat each partner country individually**, by adapting the approach to the needs and situation accordingly, providing the opportunities of cooperation for the countries willing to deepen the cooperation through the available tools (Association Agreements, Action Plans etc.) also for the ones not opting for this approach but having expressed a clear political will to develop bonds of cooperation with the EU. At the same time, countries willing to have a closer association with the European Union shall be provided with the possibilities of access to better target

EU programmes such as those of Pre-Accession or an extended version of the programme Europe for Citizens, which is working on strengthening the European Identity and the cooperation between Local authorities and CSOs.

- **Fostering the role of Local Authorities** (and their Associations and networks) in the process of consultation and development of the ENP at all levels of governance in partner countries. Considering that sustainable development & cooperation starts from grassroots, the new ENP should promote active cooperation and partnership between LAs from the ENP countries & the EU, establishing the appropriate funding programmes to further develop the involvement of those actors and enhance their recognition as drivers for change.
- **Recognising, promoting and enhancing the involvement of Civil Society** (and networks of CSOs) in the ENP, widening the scope of actors involved and having access to funding tools as stakeholders acting at grass-root level in their field of expertise and having a key role to play in enhancing the sense of ownership of the ENP in both the EU Member States as well as in the partner countries.
- **Pursuing the inclusion of governance in the ENP**, emphasising it on the local level and its development: the promotion of the ENP activities at grass-root level will enhance the support of citizens to the ENP process and will contribute to them having a spill-over effect on all levels of governance (local, regional, national etc.) in terms of their sense of ownership.
- **Migration was and remains a major issue** for both the EU and its partner countries from the ENP region. Nevertheless, migration pressure must not be addressed from a security point of view but rather tackled as a global humanitarian issue that needs coherent and sustainable action for change.
- **A focus on the work of the EU Delegations** that should pay much more attention to local governments as closest to the citizens: a bottom-up approach is welcomed as well as EU funds available and directly accessible not through central government responding to the citizens’ needs.
- **More targeted and efficient tools** than budget support for central governments should be applied.
- **Local autonomy and decentralisation** should be promoted as one of the key commitments coming from the European Charter of local self-government (and its additional protocol on citizens participation) and from Association Agreements with the EU as well as a major precondition for democracy, justice and anti-corruption.
- **Contribution to the development and assessment of the Association agreements** in the EaP.
- **Contribution and assessment of the development of the Flagship initiative on Municipal Development DEVCO** for EaP.

GEOGRAPHICAL PATH

MEDITERRANEAN AREA (MED)



MEDITERRANEAN (MED) REGIONAL CONTEXT

The MED region as such, seen from the EU Neighbourhood point of view, includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended due to the political situation), and Tunisia. However, it is important to stress that this group is quite diverse and non-homogeneous, neither from a historical nor from a social and political point of view. The cross-border cooperation among the different countries is highly limited and that context is also hindering a true regional approach. This region also endures strong and non-resolved conflicts, such as the permanent conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Territories, which are influencing all the Arab countries, as well as other conflicts. Therefore, a global regional policy seems to be more difficult to achieve than in the East (which still remains complicated as a permanent process of making resuming relationships that are built more on a bilateral approach than a regional one).

The Arab revolutions of 2011 have paved the way for the possibility of democratic reforms nobody could have predicted. Six years later, some opportunities have been seized. However, significant challenges and the difficulties to transform these political and social changes, within the framework leading to the consolidation of a sustainable democracy are obvious. The necessity to meet these challenges along with appropriate means must never be underestimated.

The scope of ALDA's work in the Mediterranean area is especially located in Tunisia, supporting the democratisation process, but also in Morocco and Algeria. The opening of a Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Kairouan (Tunisia) in April 2017 gives ALDA a specific insight of the context because of its permanent presence on the field and strengthens the localisation of its activities in Tunisia. Alongside with the future opening of an LDA in Morocco and potentially in Algeria, the presence of LDAs in the Mediterranean orient their actions by the regional context and needs in order to support the development of local self-governance in the Maghreb region and sharing best practices of

cooperation of local authorities, associations of local authorities, civil society and local communities.

The Local Democracy Agencies function as a support programme to strengthen local democracy, foster respect for human rights and further sustainable development. The most important aspect of the LDAs is the process of **partnership building**. The cooperation and partnership between local and international partners, between local authorities and NGOs, give a consequent added value to the process of designing projects and implementing local activities, multiplying the impact on the field.

The work in the MED region is strongly in line with actions articulated mainly around six Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that ALDA identified as most critical in the region: SDG 1 – No poverty; SDG 5 – Gender equality; SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth; SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities; SDG 11– Sustainable cities and communities; SDG 17– Partnerships for the goals.

Gender equality and women empowerment are at the core of all ALDA's actions in the Mediterranean area, and this engagement for women rights is demonstrated especially by the projects PARFAIT in Tunisia and AVEC in Morocco.

- The two-year project "PARFAIT – PARTICIPATION des Femmes pour l'Avancement et l'Innovation de la Tunisie", co-funded by the European Union and implemented in cooperation with EPD – the European Partnership for Democracy and "la Coalition pour les Femmes de Tunisie", aims at increasing women participation at local level by giving them the means to fully access the public sphere – as voters, and candidates, but also as empowered, informed and involved citizens in order to make the implementation of decentralisation a success for all citizens, women included. This project fits the Tunisian current political context as much as the future one, since the local authorities will gain skills in self-governance and responsibility with the implementation of decentralisation before the next local elections. Every citizen, and women especially, should be encouraged to be more involved within the local affairs. Those changes represent keys opportunities that need to be seized by Tunisian women.

MED ALDA Coordinator
Mrs. Anne Laure Joedicke
Annelaure.joedicke@aldaintranet.org



"I had the pleasure to coordinate the Med Path during the 3 years of the project. It has been a deep source of self-enrichment, for me but also for all the members of the group. Strong links have been built between them. In a context of suspicion and considering the continuing closure of borders, the Med Path has been a valuable place of exchange and dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean. It highlighted how much we share, in terms of history, culture and values, but also in terms of common challenges that our region is currently facing, such as immigration. The Med Path has been a concrete good practice of how CSOs and Local authorities from both shore of the Mediterranean can conduct common actions for promoting development in their communities, proving that they can be real actors of change."

- ALDA, in partnership with ARDES – l'Association Régionale de Développement Economique et Social (Morocco), is also working in the rural region of Tiddas in Morocco, on the creation of AVEC – Villages Associations of Savings and Loans for the Economic and social empowerment of vulnerable women. The principal outcome of the project is contributing to a local economic development based on gender-equality, strengthening the social inclusion of marginalised women, through the institutionalisation of a new form of mutual assistance adapted to the most vulnerable people. Thus, this project aiming at empowering vulnerable women in a specific rural area of Morocco is also linked directly to the objectives of **ending poverty, reducing inequalities and contributing to decent work for all and local economic growth**. Indeed, by becoming member of an AVEC, women gain access to micro-credit and control the resources generated by their Income Generating Activities, gaining financial independency and being consequently more and more involved in the decisions of their families.



19-21 October 2016 – Tunis (Tunisia): Special Initiative "Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean"

In the Mediterranean area, ALDA has developed strong partnerships with numerous Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations but also with several institutional actors. ALDA and UNDP Art Programme signed a Memorandum of Understanding, highlighting the common features of the programmes. This agreement allowed the development of synergies in fostering cooperation at the local level between local authorities and civil society and aims at the implementation of further common projects and strategies, especially in the Mediterranean area.

The intrinsic link between the different themes and SDGs is obvious and very relevant in the context of the MED region. Indeed, ALDA understood that in order to achieve the SDGs, it is crucial to translate them into country-specific targets that will be integrated with existing priorities and processes, by taking into account the local, national and regional context.

LADDER AND THE MED PATH

MED PATH COORDINATORS

- LAM ECHAML, Tunisia
- COPPEM, Italy



LAM ECHAML is a Tunisian association encompassing CSOs and independent citizens working together to create a strong, open and effective movement to move forward together in the construction of a modern, republican and democratic Tunisia. Since its creation on 29 April 2011, LAM ECHAML is committed to design and develop projects that strengthen the capacity of the association members of its network. It also works for the promotion of citizenship in the different regions of Tunisia through actions that make the citizen an actor in the city. The association has become an information and training space for human rights, civic education and active citizenship and a place of cultural exchange. LAM ECHAML shares and defends the following values: a Republican regime, total equality between women and men, respect of individual and public freedoms and the right to difference and freedom of conscience, separation between religion and politics, attachment to the Tunisian heritage and civilization, commitment to the culture of non-violence and to the defence of the environment.

To know more about LAM ECHAML:

<http://www.lamechaml.org/>

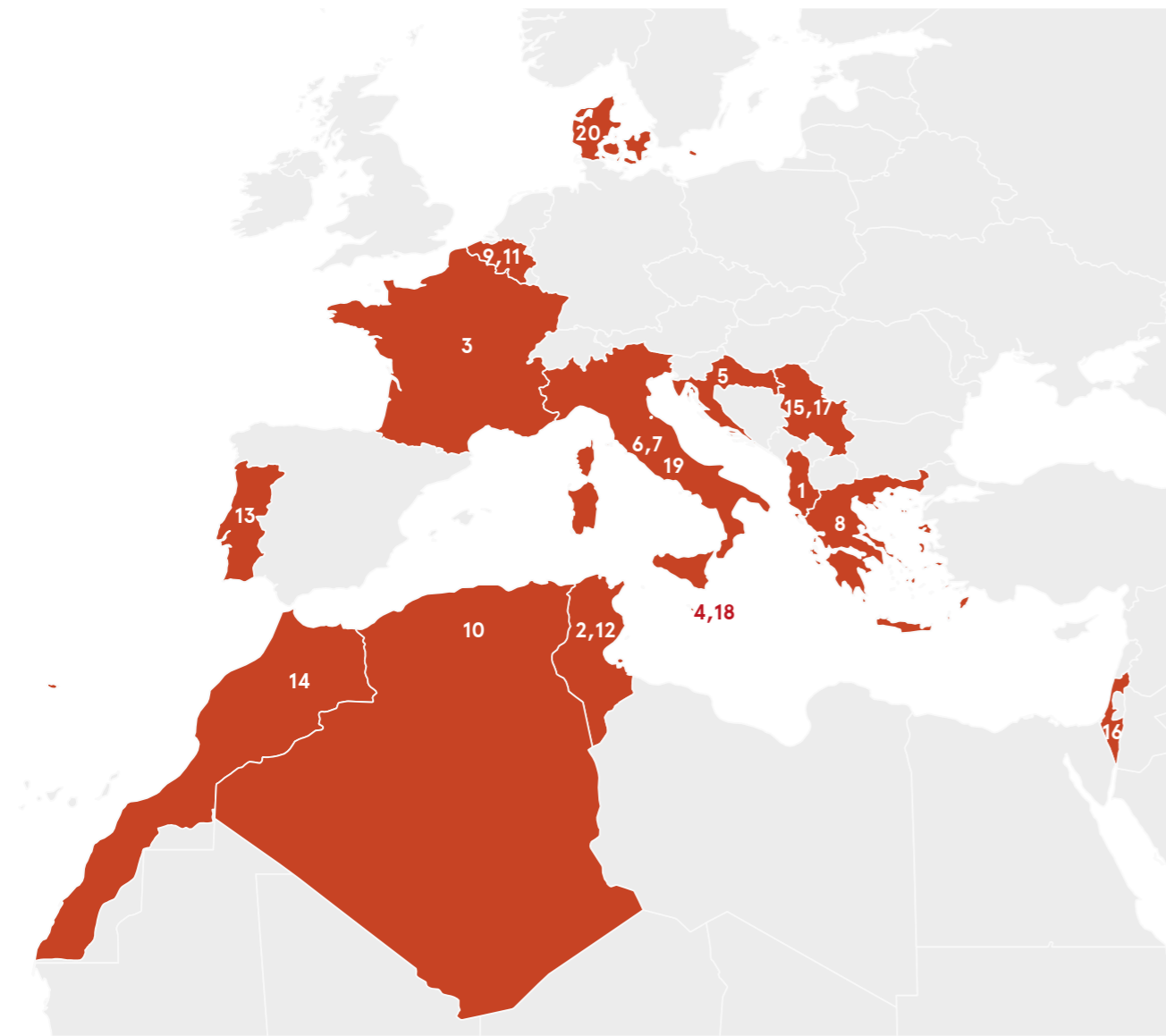


Standing Committee for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

of the Local and Regional Authorities – COPPEM(Comitato Permanente per il Partenariato Euromediterraneo delle Autorità Locali e delle Regioni) is a network of Euro-Mediterranean Local Authorities and National Associations of Local Authorities, based in Palermo, Italy. It promotes dialogue and cooperation for local development between Local Authorities of the member countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Union for the Mediterranean, and their active and concrete participation in achieving the objectives established within the Barcelona Declaration of 1995. Thus, COPPEM works on five priorities for its action: political and institutional cooperation, cooperation between cities and regions, economic and financial cooperation, cultural and environmental cooperation and cooperation for peer opportunities, Human Rights and youth.

To know more about COPPEM:

<http://www.coppem.org/default.asp>



Members of the MED Path Working Group

1. **AAM** – Albanian Association of Municipalities (Albania)
2. **ADD-MEDENINE** – Medenine Association pour le développement Durable (Tunisia)
3. **ALDA** – European Association for Local Democracy (France)
4. **BIRGU** – Birgu Local Council (Malta)
5. **CAC** – Croatian Association of Counties (Croatia)
6. **CIME** – Consiglio Italiano del Movimento Europeo (Italy)
7. **COPPEM** – Comitato Permanente per il Partenariato Euromediterraneo delle Autorità Locali e le Regioni (Italy)
8. **EGTC AMPHICTYONY** – European Groupement of Territorial Cooperation Amphictyony (Greece)
9. **ENNA** – European Network of National Civil Society Associations (Belgium)
10. **FACM** – Forum Algérien de la citoyenneté et Modernité (Algeria)
11. **JEF** – Young European Federalists (Belgium)
12. **LAM ECHAMI** – Association Lam Echami (Tunisia)
13. **NSC** – North South Centre of the Council of Europe (Portugal)
14. **REMESS** – Réseau Marocain de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (Morocco)
15. **SEEYN** – South East Europe Youth Network (Serbia)
16. **SHANTIL** – New Israel Fund (Israel)
17. **SKGO** – Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (Serbia)
18. **SOS MALTA** – Solidarity Overseas Malta (Malta)
19. **TECLA** – Associazione di Enti Locali per la Cooperazione Territoriale (Italy)
20. **VEJLE** – Vejle Municipality (Denmark)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The MED Path identifies its role in the Euro-Mediterranean policy framework started in 1995, when 27 Heads of state and government joined the new "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership" in Barcelona, sanctioning the start of the so-called "Barcelona Process". For the first time the States of the North and South shores of the Mediterranean cooperated "equally", as partners. This process was built upon three fundamental pillars:

- Institutional, with the main objective of peace-building in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
- Economic, aimed at implementing a free trade area in the Mediterranean starting in 2010;
- Cultural and social development.

In parallel, the European Union kept gaining prerogatives and the European External Action Service was created and the

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched in 2004 to help the EU support and promote stability, security and prosperity in the countries closest to its borders. However, this ENP soon demonstrated the need to take a new approach and redefine priorities.

The Arab revolutions of 2011 especially changed the geopolitical balance of the region, paving the way for the possibility of democratic reforms nobody could have predicted but also leading to alarming situations, civil wars and human rights abuses, forcing populations to migrate inside or outside their country. In front of these dramatic challenges happening at the borders of the EU and the urgent necessity to re-think its external action, the European Commission launched in 2015 a public call in order to collect contributions for a new ENP. The LADDER consortium, the MED GP included, replied to this call for contributions, insisting on the importance of giving more space for civil society, permanently paying attention to the human rights dimension and to not create an external policy essentially based on security and closing borders.

However, significant challenges and the difficulties to transform these changes within the framework leading to the consolidation of a sustainable democracy are obvious and the necessity to meet these challenges along with appropriate means must never be underestimated.

Therefore, the MED GP considers essential to boost cooperation between European countries and those of the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, and especially between local authorities and CSOs, taking into account the causes of the crisis and the identification of common interests. The MED GP also fits the framework of the European Year for Development and its follow up.

In this multiple policy framework, the MED GP mainly targets the EU institutions but also local authorities, CSOs and citizens from both shores of the Mediterranean, to raise awareness on the common challenges and the impact of local actions, encouraging each other to cooperate and exchange.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE MED GEOGRAPHICAL PATH

The MED path aims at promoting the role of LAs and CSOs, supporting a decentralised and ownership-based Neighbourhood Policy in the MED area. The instability that the Mediterranean basin has gone through and the geopolitical circumstances have required actions to be taken by the project in order to support local actors in getting engaged in development education actions in their countries.

The MED Path aims at:

- Strengthening the capacity of LAs and CSOs on both shores of the Mediterranean to act in a sustainable way as drivers for development, fostering their role of multipliers on national and local level but also for their communities and networks;
- Informing, raising awareness and engaging in global issues, global interdependency and development education;
- Developing and reinforcing the cooperation between LAs and CSOs;
- Improving DEAR methods including them in the non-formal

education system, through the development of new and innovative methods and tools addressed to a wide range of stakeholders (including educators, civil servants, NGOs, youth leaders, etc.);

- Connecting the EU with the European Neighbourhood South.

MEDITERRANEAN AREA GP AND SDGS

In the framework of this MED Path two initiatives have been initially proposed: the elaboration of a "Mediterranean Charter of Democracy and Local Autonomy" and a strategic document, giving clear directions and context to the MED Path. These two documents needed to take into consideration the context of CSOs and LAs in the Mediterranean as well as their link with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, the MED Path strategic paper tackles several SDGs identified as priorities in the Mediterranean area, such as:



The MED Path is a region located at the meeting point of North and South, East and West, embracing the common values of equality between countries and generations, mutual respect between people, solidarity and peace. At the same time, sustainable development has to be fostered, starting with a greener economy, an increased job market towards more justice, social cohesion, more effective environmental protection and a more sustainable management of natural resources, in order to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the well-being of future ones. Education also needs to be strengthened through the introduction, into curricula, of concepts of sustainable development and through a holistic approach, from primary school right up to universities and graduate schools.

Indeed, **education, in addition to being a recognised human right, is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and an essential tool for good governance, informed decision-making and the promotion of democracy.** Sustainable development education can influence a shift in the way people think, eventually enabling them to make our world better, safer, healthier, more prosperous and with more possibilities for employment, thereby improving the quality of life and equity in different countries and generations. Development education can raise critical reflections and a greater awareness and empowerment so that new visions and concepts can be explored and new methods and tools developed.

Migration is also one of the main topics tackled by the MED Path. Thus, on the occasion of the Valletta Summit of 11 and 12 November 2015 of EU and African Leaders, the MED Path extensively contributed to the declaration of the LADDER consortium to implore ministers and leaders to address the

multifaceted challenges brought about by increased global migration.

ADVOCACY ACTIONS AND IMPACT

During the 3-year project, the path has systematically advanced the advocacy agenda through the following actions:

Outputs: Resolutions, Public Statements and Other actions

- 25-26 June 2015 – Palermo (Italy): MED Working Group preparatory meeting;
- 30 June 2015: LADDER Community recommendations regarding the new ENP targeting the EC – DG NEAR (action implemented together with the EaP Path);
- 11 – 12 November 2015 – Birgu (Malta): MED Working Group meeting;
- February 2016: Contribution to the joint declaration LADDER-Platforma: “The New ENP needs greater recognition of local and regional governments” carried on by the EaP Path;
- 14 April 2016: Strategic paper on Mediterranean Cooperation;
- 15 May 2016: CHARMEDAL – Mediterranean charter for local democracy;
- 19 – 21 October 2016 – Tunis (Tunisia): Special Initiative “Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean”;
- 27 – 29 April 2017 – Tunis (Tunisia): MED Working group meeting;
- 11 May 2017 – Torun (Poland): MED Working Group Meeting;
- 15-17 June 2017 – Napoli (Italy): Participation at the “5° Salone mediterraneo della responsabilità sociale condivisa” and presentation of LADDER and of the CHARMEDAL;
- 24-25 June 2016 – San Giuseppe Jato (Italy): “Ripensare lo sviluppo II edizione: Valori, identità e innovazione sociale nell’area Euromediterranea”;

June 2015 – Italy: MED Working Group preparatory meeting

A first preparatory meeting of the MED Path WG was held in Palermo (Italy), on 25 – 26 June 2015. The meeting was organised in the frame of an important event organised by COPPEM on the eco-museums concept. This concept initiated by UNESCO promoting the involvement of citizens, the community, Civil Society & Local Authorities for a given territory and project at local level that embraces the principles of development education. The MED Path delegation had the opportunity to reflect on the concept of eco-museums as a concrete application of the DEAR concept as well as the ENP review (refer to “outputs” for the final recommendations).

November 2015 – Birgu (Malta): MED Working Group meeting Declaration on the Valetta Summit

The MED Path has extensively contributed to the declaration of the LADDER consortium presented on the Valetta Summit of EU and African Leaders held on 11 – 12 November 2015. It addresses ministers and leaders in order to invite them to tackle the multifaceted challenges brought by increased global migration. Together with the LADDER consortium, the Med Path also called on EU and Africa leaders to take heed of the

Sustainable Development Goals framework (including the SDG 10.7 on fair, safe and responsible migration) that EU Member States have unanimously committed to, and on the Treaty for the obligation of policy coherence for development. The flow of people fleeing conflict zones and unstable countries, in particular Syria, is constantly increasing and unless immediate action is taken at both European and international level, lives will continue to be lost. Hosting countries, transit countries and final destination countries of persons seeking international protection must all work together to find and agree upon common actions and plans.

April 2016: Strategic paper on Mediterranean Cooperation

The Strategic paper on Mediterranean Cooperation is a document which aims at engaging LADDER partners to help countries of the Mediterranean region to redirect their development to meet the significant economic and social needs in the South and East without intensifying the process of environmental degradation. The LADDER MED Path members promoted concrete actions in order to ensure policies, legislation and other regulatory and operational frameworks in support of DEAR. Particularly, the MED GP invites the LADDER partners to promote concrete actions in order to:

- Ensure that policies, legislation and other regulatory and operational frameworks support DEAR;
- Promote development through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- Equip educators with the competences to include development in their teaching;
- Ensure that adequate tools and materials for DEAR are accessible;
- Promote research on and development of DEAR;
- Strengthen cooperation on DEAR at all levels, including exchange of experiences and technologies within the Mediterranean region.

May 2016: CHARMEDAL – Mediterranean charter for local democracy

One of the main achievements and tools for the advocacy actions of the Med Path was the drafting and adoption of a Mediterranean Charter of Democracy and Local Autonomy. This Charter aims at affirming the role of Local Authorities at the local level, in countries on both sides of the Mediterranean, within the construction process of a Mediterranean space having as main values peace, prosperity and diversity.

October 2016 – Tunisia: Special Initiative “Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean”

The MED GP special initiative “Local democracy and good practices tested in the two shores of the Mediterranean” gathered 134 participants and it was held in Tunisia on 19 – 21 October 2016. The conference was organised by the coordinator of the MED GP (Lam Echaml and COPPEM) together with ALDA and ARLEM and it offered an insight into the role of local and regional authorities in the field of “Circular migration”.



19-21 October 2016 – Tunis (Tunisia): Special Initiative “Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean”

The conference informed about the latest activities related to migration implemented by the Committee of the Regions and ALDA. These were presented from the perspective of the European local and regional authorities and the partner countries from the Mediterranean region and discussed the pragmatic cooperation among the stakeholders of this policy area. In the framework of the Special Initiative an international meeting was also organised on the topic of “Local democracy and good practices tested in the two shores of the Mediterranean”. The participants discussed on the best way to introduce deep changes in the Government’s way of work with new roles and competences division between central administration and local communities. The ultimate objective of the action was to provide better inclusion of citizens’ problems and demands. Many of the LADDER partners who are acting on this field presented their experiences of good practices on the local level which enable and provide good governance, sustainable development and efficient public services performance. The LADDER partners noted that “acting locally” has a certain impact on the “global” level in terms of economic, social and cultural context. An exhibition of slogans concerning development was also organised.

April 2017 – Tunisia: MED Working group meeting



April 2017 – Tunisia: MED Working group meeting

The meeting aimed at gathering together the MED WG members in order to further disseminate and plan a dissemination strategy for the “CHARMEDAL – Mediterranean Charter of Democracy and Local Autonomy” and the “Strategic paper on Mediterranean Cooperation”, key documents of the MED Path. The MED Path meeting was also the occasion to inaugurate the first Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in the Mediterranean area, the LDA Tunisia. The inauguration of the LDA Tunisia

marked an important step for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, and reinforced ALDA and its partners’ efforts for democracy and good governance in the country and in the region. Contributing also to the achievement of the LADDER’s goals, the LDA represented the starting point of a work dedicated to capacity building of local authorities and civil society, the increase of the involvement of youth and women, the exchange of good practices between local actors, and the promotion of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

June 2017 – Italy: Participation at the “5° Salone mediterraneo della responsabilità sociale condivisa” and presentation of LADDER and of the CHARMEDAL



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This conference represents a unique event in Italy in which a multi-stakeholder dialogue was achieved through the inclusion of institutions, academia, enterprises and civil society of the Euro-Mediterranean area. This approach strengthens the cooperation for the growth of a fair, cohesive and inclusive society in the full implementation of the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy, in the light of the European Charter on Shared Social Responsibility, in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promoted from Agenda 2030 and the OECD Guidelines and the Guidelines on Enterprise and Human Rights promoted by the United Nations. A representative from COPPEM (coordinator of the MED GP) together with one of CIME (Coordinator of the Public-Private cooperation LADDER Thematic Path) were present at the event, they presented the LADDER Project, and they focused particularly on two initiatives of the project: the launch of the Permanent Platform for Structured Dialogue between Local Authorities and Civil Society Organisations in the Mediterranean and the theme of “Protecting Territories and Valorising Cultural Heritage: New Public-Private Collaborative Processes, Profit-Non Profit”. The former is a process which intends to involve local development actors in the implementation models of the United Nations SDGs in the Mediterranean. The latter aims at fostering Global Development Education and Citizenship Processes in the Mediterranean, where Local Communities are called to play the role of indispensable actors in the processes of valorisation of the Local and Territorial Heritage. The emblem and model of this approach is the Eco-museum, a social-bottom-up, community-led and social-driven dynamic. It envisages the construction of a “community pact” among all citizens and local stakeholders.



19-21 October 2016 – Tunis (Tunisia): Special Initiative "Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean"

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thanks to the work developed and the advocacy actions carried out by the path, the MED drafted a set of recommendations, which are summed up as following:

- Citizens and all levels of government of the Mediterranean area need to commit to strengthening the processes of decentralisation and devolution of power in order to formulate concrete answers to the needs of a larger participation of men, women and young people in national and local democratic life.
- CSOs and Local authorities need to be fully supportive of all actions aimed at sharing acquired experience, spreading good practices for each country and promoting cross-border cooperation between local bodies within the Mediterranean area.
- The objectives and the challenges of the post-2015 development agenda at community, national and regional levels in the Mediterranean area, can be met only with a wide participation of CSOs, local and national authorities, as well as national and international institutions of development along with more transparent and responsible governance;
- Women and young people should be considered as priority groups in any decision making in order to make possible all commitments mentioned.

Additionally, the MED GP Members agreed on some commitment and recommendations which are represented under the six topics below.

The MED Path members assert their commitment and their willingness to contribute to:

Peace, security and tolerance

- Make the Mediterranean area a space of peace, security and solidarity by acting: for a just and sustainable peace in the Middle-East on the basis of the recognition of the Palestinian's right to have an independent sovereign state.
- Stop war and any other forms of violence and terrorism in all the region's countries, particularly in Libya and Syria by preventing all forms of ideological, political and military instrumentation, whose victims are innocent non-combatants, women and children.



19-21 October 2016 – Tunis (Tunisia): Special Initiative "Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean"

Migration

- Raise awareness about the fact that, for many years, the Mediterranean area has been the stage for an on-going humanitarian disaster, which has resulted in thousands of deaths and missing people amongst migrants.
- Call for the respect of refugees' and migrants' fundamental rights and dignity everywhere.
- Insist that violations of human rights need to be punished, and that victims should have the right of appeal and the right to be compensated for damages.
- Ask for the establishment of a unified European policy for asylum and residence rights pursuant to international standards, in particular, the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the ILO Conventions on migrants' rights and the United Nations Conventions relating to the Status of Refugees.
- Ask for a more respectful approach towards the countries of the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, and greater responsibility from governments, to promulgate policies aimed at greater democratisation, with the aim of ending marginalisation, and ensuring a more equitable sharing out of common resources.



19-21 October 2016 – Tunis (Tunisia): Special Initiative "Local Democracy and best practices developed in the two shores of the Mediterranean"



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Women and gender equality

- Urge the local and regional communities of the Mediterranean area to support and foster an educative, social and economic policy for the promotion of gender equality.
- Underline the vital role that women play within all local structures through their equal participation in the whole decision-making process.

Unemployment

- The economic and social conditions in which the population lives, especially young people, affects their ability to participate in local life. That is why local employers, local authorities and civil society should devise policies and programmes aimed at tackling the reasons for unemployment and promoting job opportunities, particularly for young people.

Environment and sustainable development

- The protection and preservation of the Mediterranean Sea as a resource, natural heritage and an environment requires urgent action.
- Call all actors at local and regional levels to act so as to provide adequate conditions to develop policies for the urban environment that promote conviviality and enable the development of high quality public areas.
- Urge governments and international institutions to implement the 2030 Agenda and the COP21 for sustainable development by taking into consideration the local and regional dimensions of the Mediterranean territories and their cultural, social and economic characteristics.

Young people as fully fledged actors of governance

- Structures and mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making should be identified and promoted and their potential and challenges on public governance should be debated.
- Develop more inclusive approaches to foster the participation of young people into spaces such as local youth councils and youth fora.
- Develop the capacity of their members on issues such as advocacy, policy making, partnership, participative and representative democracy.
- Allow youth organisations and municipalities to share their best practices in terms of cooperation between local authorities and civil society.



April 2017 – Tunisia: MED Working group meeting



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