



Balkan regional platform for  
youth participation and dialogue



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# REGIONAL NEWSLETTER ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION



# NEWSLETTER 1

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## Balkan regional platform for youth participation and dialogue

The *Regional Newsletter on Youth Participation* is the official publication of the *Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue*, presenting various topics, issues and initiatives regarding youth participation and young people in the Western Balkan region, as well as updates on the progress of the initiative itself.

The *Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue* is a joint initiative of Western Balkan non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to establish cooperation and coordination between civil society and public authorities in order to create a better environment for activism and participation of young people

within the region. The platform aims to strengthen the active citizenship and participation of young people in policy and decision-making processes, by raising awareness of decision makers, civil society organizations and youth leaders in targeted countries about the standards, practices and programmes of the European Union concerning youth. The primary objective of the programme is to create a *Regional Network for Local Democracy* that will be composed of civil society organizations and public authorities from eight communities in five Balkan countries committed to promote and practice youth participation at the local level,

while involving youth workers, youth leaders, informal youth groups and young people who have fewer opportunities from non-urban communities regarding these processes.

The programme is implemented locally by Local Democracy Agencies and affiliate entities in *Mostar, Zavidovici, Prijedor* (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Subotica* and *Knjazevac* (Serbia), *Niksic* (Montenegro), *Peja* (Kosovo), and *Skopje* (Macedonia).

Financial support for the programme was provided by the European Union, through the *Civil Society Facility — Operating Grants to IPA CSO Associations (Support to Regional Thematic Associations)*.

## ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCIES

The Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue programme was initiated by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), a European level non-governmental organization established in 1999 by the initiative of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to coordinate and support the already existing network of Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) founded in the early 1990s. At present, there are ten active Agencies based in the Western Balkans and South Caucasus, and three additional operational partner Agencies based in Croatia, that are coordinated by ALDA.



ALDA is dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level, and in particular, focuses on activities that facilitate cooperation between local authorities and civil society. The primary actors of ALDA are locally registered, self-sustainable nongovernmental organization known as Local Democracy Agencies, whose purpose is to foster human rights and democracy

on local level. Through the support of ALDA, the Council of Europe and the European Union, these Agencies develop partnerships and cooperation with local authorities and partners across Europe, giving the whole network direct access to an international framework, which in turn, gives added value to the process of designing projects and implementing activities on local level.

The current membership based network of ALDA enumerates over 150 member organizations, authorities and other entities from more than 30 countries.

You may find more information at: <http://www.alda-europe.eu>.

## LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCY MOSTAR

Local Democracy Agency Mostar is among the 13 Local Democracy Agency members of the ALDA network. It is a European Association that gathers more than 150 local authorities, civil society organizations and individuals from more than 30 countries. The common characteristic of ALDA and its members is the promotion of good governance and citizens' participation on local level.



The citizens association "Local Democracy Agency" from Mostar was established in April 2005. It is a nonprofit organization that aims to promote basic democratic values such as the rule of law, local development, youth, protection of

human rights, minority rights and freedom, support democratization, socioeconomic development, multiculturalism and European integration on local level.

The organization's main focus and activities include:

- Promotion of concrete initiatives to encourage democracy at the local level.
- Building bridges between citizens and governments.
- Development of a pluralistic



civil society and the active participation of all social groups.

- Encouraging reconciliation and human rights.
- Promoting sustainable local development.
- Improving the knowledge of the local community about the processes of stabilisation and accession.



The work of this Agency is supported by numerous partners,

international regions and cities, including the City of Mostar as the hosting partner that provides working space to the LDA. So far, the Agency has implemented numerous projects to support the development of local communities in the process of democratization and European integration, responding to the needs and problems of the same, using the principles of multilateral decentralized cooperation, and involving different actors.

LDA Mostar works in many different fields, with the accent being on the promotion of human rights, cultural heritage and education, primarily towards young people. Since its establishment, the LDA has implemented countless number of projects and activities in the last 10 years, among the most

significant being the establishment of the Centre for Architecture, Dialogue and Art (ADA) within LDA Mostar, an independent platform for dialogue among all users and creators of public spaces and facilities, where art and architecture are means of articulation, where cultural heritage and tradition play the main role, and that involves citizens as main actors in this process of "memory in motion".

The organization empowers youth in their capacities to build a more sustainable world through exchanges, trainings, seminars, conferences and tribunals and other awareness-raising events.

For more information on LDA Mostar visit:

- [www.ldamostar.org](http://www.ldamostar.org)
- [www.cadamostar.com](http://www.cadamostar.com).

## LOCAL DEMOCRACY CENTRE KNJAZEVAC

Local Democracy Centre Knjazevac was established in 2001. It was officially registered as a citizens association in 2003. The Agency has the aim to support democratic, social, economic and cultural development of local communities, build civil society and promote European standards of governance, decentralization, regionalism, interculturalism, rule of law, international integration and cooperation.



In line with its mission, LDA Knjazevac implements activities at the local level in *Knjazevac*, *Nis*, *Kragujevac*, *Kraljevo* (Serbia) and activities at the international level through the ALDA network. These activities have a common focus on

four main topics: citizenship, culture, education, volunteering.



More information about LDA Knjazevac you may find at: [www.ldacss.tumblr.com](http://www.ldacss.tumblr.com).

## REGIONAL YOUTH WORKING GROUP



The Regional Youth Working Group is comprised of appointed youth engagement workers from the altogether eight participating communities of the programme Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue. The members of the group represent

youth on regional level and coordinate youth on local level.

The primary responsibility of the Regional Youth Working Group is to provide support to young people involved in local and regional activities of the programme, and to coordinate their work both locally

and regionally through their LDAs.

The Regional Youth Working Group also produces newsletters on the topic of youth participation and activism, and coordinates online awareness raising campaigns concerning young people living in the Western Balkan region.

### ***We can change the world, and we will!***

*We are a group of young people from 5 countries of the Balkan region, gathering ideas and working together to contribute a better position of the youth in this region. We are active, hardworking, optimistic, but we also know how to enjoy ourselves and have fun with new friends! That's what makes us a strong group!*

## FIRST MEETING OF REGIONAL PLATFORM

In January 2015, ALDA and the Western Balkan Local Democracy Agencies started with the implementation of the operating grant Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue. The first joint meeting of the project partners was held in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January.

During these sessions, the representatives of the Agencies, local authorities and youth had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the objectives of the project, define a bearing for

future development, as well as to prescribe the mechanisms of their cooperation. The main occasion of the meeting was a strategic project planning for the activities of the new platform developed in the Western Balkans.

In order to evaluate the general situation and define common priorities that will determine the successful construction of this regional platform, the partners used the opportunity to present the situation in their local communities in relation to youth policy, along with the local priorities of young

people as well as examples of good practices on youth participation at the local level.

In addition to these sessions, a meeting was conducted by the youth engagement workers part of the Regional Youth Working Group, who will actively work together with representatives of LDAs and municipalities in order to achieve the project objectives. This was a unique opportunity for them to meet, acquire basic information about the project and participate in the planning of future activities.

## FIRST TRAINING OF YOUTH WORKING GROUP



In Knjazevac, Serbia, a training course on Volunteer Management was held for the Regional Youth Working Group between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March.

The training course was part of the annual activities of Balkan

Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue, and gathered youth workers from 5 Balkan countries: *Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina* and *Kosovo*.

The topics covered by the course

were recruitment, selection, supervision, monitoring and management of volunteers, and analysis of local legal framework on volunteering.



## NIKSIC, MONTENEGRO



Niksic is one of the largest industrial centers in Montenegro. The 2065 km<sup>2</sup> area of Niksic covers the central and western part of Montenegro. Niksic is a very important industrial centre of Montenegro, and it has the brewery "Trebjesa", famous for the legendary "Niksic beer", as well as Steel Plant, which produces crude steel and high quality steel sheets. Niksic is a city with a rich cultural and historical heritage on the territory of which there are many cultural and historical monuments from Illyrian and Roman times.

In the Niksic area the most important sacred objects are: the Ostrog Monastery, the Cathedral, the Hadzi Ismail's mosque, the Catholic Church, which indicates a long and traditionally good coexistence of all nations and religions in this city.

Niksic is known for its "sea" — as Niksic people otherwise call the artificial lake Krupac. In this area every year in July the "Lake Fest" rock music festival is held.

According to census from 2003, Niksic has 75,282 inhabitants, of which 23% are young people

between 15 and 29 years. In addition, most young people live in cities 79% while 21% is settled in suburban and rural areas.

Niksic is called the city of youth, culture, cheerful and creative spirit. However, the huge potential of Niksic, because of stagnation and its underutilization, and above all, failure to develop, returns as a boomerang shot. Instead of being personally and socially engaged, interested in helping growth and change, and spending their time meaningfully, the opposite of these things is the case with young



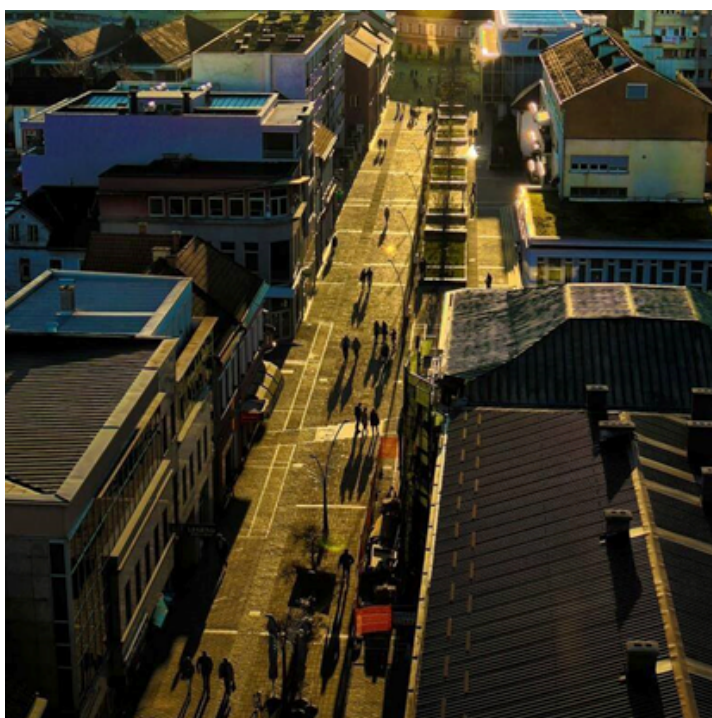
people. Young people move away from Niksic being dissatisfied with the situation, and those who remain get caught in the vortex of bad habits.

Young people generally have few opportunities for quality programs

to spend their free time on, as well as for education and recreational activities. Mobility of youth is very low. Young people visit cities within the region most frequently, and almost exclusively through school excursions.

Niksic is considered to be a city of young people, in it lays a huge potential, a large number of young people can get out of apathy and engage personally and socially.

## PRIJEDOR, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Prijedor is located in northwestern Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is believed that its name originated from the word "Pridor" or "Prodor". According to folk tales, the river bed of Sana used to be more to the south, but with the passing of time it has changed its flow and penetrated (prodrla, prijedrela) into the fields on the northern side, an area called Pridor or Prodor.

Very soon Prijedor became an important economic and trading centre, thanks to the Roman roads and buoyancy of the Sana river, as well as the railroad in Bosnia and Herzegovina, built in 1873.

Today, Prijedor has circa 10000 inhabitants, including surrounding villages that belong to its territory. It is very important to mention that the Kozara national park is located

near the town itself, which is an important tourist, cultural and historical site.

Regarding the position of youth, it is rather difficult to animate young people to do creative work, volunteering, or anything useful for themselves and the community in general. There is little initiative to improve the status of youth in communities around Prijedor. Most of the young people today are afraid to be involved in any kind of activities, due to the fear of being judged by their uninformed surroundings.

But the city still offers lots of possibilities. Special parts of the city are the murals, two of them having been painted over tall buildings, and most of them over small ones. Creating a "city of murals" represents the colorful nature of the people and the town. In general, young people of Prijedor believe the city has a lot of unused potential, but are hopeful to change that.

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