

D2.2 Analyses on citizens' awareness and perceptions on the EU Elections 2024



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Abstracts

ENGLISH

June 2024 may mark a watershed in European Democracy as such. ALDA is particularly keen in creating synergies between civil society and local authorities for having even a strong outreach of information and mobilization about the European Parliament Elections.

The purpose of the document is to deepen citizens' awareness and perceptions related to the forthcoming EU Elections 2024. The document brings to light some considerations in the current debate on this topic and on citizens' perception, but also some to share reflections and suggestions based on our initiatives.

Given the very nature of our organization, ALDA has been promoting awareness and information activities on the topic, within our action, projects and campaigns in order to take steps towards enhancing citizens' involvement and active participation in both civic and political affairs; to impact and promote voters' education to limit mistrust and rejection of politics (at both national and EU level).

A specific point of view from young people will be highlighted. In her 2023 Debate on the State of the Union 2023 (#SOTEU), the President of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen outlined a compelling vision for Europe's future, emphasising the critical role of youth in shaping the future of the European Union. As we eagerly approach the upcoming elections, the message resonates deeply with millions of first-time voters who are preparing to cast their ballots.

Among those preparing to vote are millions of young Europeans who were born in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. These individuals, as they head to the polls, are contemplating the pressing issues that matter most to them: the conflicts at Europe's borders, the devastating impact of climate



change, the implications of artificial intelligence, and their prospects for housing and employment.

The EU will embark on an ambitious transformation journey, with the European Parliament playing a pivotal role. As ALDA we know how to contribute and how to move in everyday life to involve our members, the networks of which we are part and above all the citizens and young people who must be able to be active in this central moment for the democratic life of European society.



Abstract Italian

Giugno 2024 potrebbe segnare uno spartiacque nella democrazia europea in quanto tale.

L'obiettivo di ALDA, in ambito di elezioni europee, è quello di creare sinergie tra la società civile e le autorità locali per avere anche una forte condivisione e diffusione di informazioni e mobilitazione sulle elezioni del Parlamento europeo.

Lo scopo di questo documento è quello di approfondire la consapevolezza e la percezione dei cittadini in merito alle prossime elezioni europee del 2024. Il documento porta alla luce alcune considerazioni sul dibattito in corso e sulla percezione dei cittadini rispetto alle prossime elezioni, ma anche alcune riflessioni e suggerimenti basati sulle iniziative della nostra Associazione.

Data la natura stessa della nostra organizzazione, ALDA ha promosso attività di sensibilizzazione e informazione sul tema, all'interno delle nostre azioni, progetti e campagne, al fine di intraprendere azioni volte a migliorare il coinvolgimento e la partecipazione attiva dei cittadini su questioni civiche e politiche; di incidere e promuovere l'educazione degli elettori per limitare la sfiducia e il rifiuto della politica (sia a livello nazionale che europeo).

In questo documento verrà inoltre evidenziato un punto di vista specifico appartenente ai giovani. Nel suo Dibattito sullo Stato dell'Unione 2023 (#SOTEU), la Presidente della Commissione europea, Ursula von der Leyen, ha delineato una visione convincente per il futuro dell'Europa, sottolineando il ruolo critico dei giovani nel plasmare il futuro dell'Unione europea. Mentre ci avviciniamo con impazienza alle prossime elezioni, il messaggio risuona profondamente con milioni di elettori che si preparano a votare per la prima volta.

Tra coloro che si preparano a votare ci sono milioni di giovani europei nati all'indomani della crisi finanziaria del 2008. Queste persone, mentre si recano alle urne, stanno riflettendo sulle questioni più urgenti che li riguardano: i



conflitti ai confini dell'Europa, l'impatto devastante del cambiamento climatico, le implicazioni dell'intelligenza artificiale e le loro prospettive di alloggio e occupazione.

Nel futuro prossimo, l'UE intraprenderà un ambizioso percorso di trasformazione, con il Parlamento europeo che svolgerà un ruolo centrale. Come ALDA sappiamo come contribuire e come muoverci nella vita quotidiana per coinvolgere i nostri soci, le reti di cui facciamo parte e soprattutto i cittadini e i giovani che devono poter essere attivi in questo momento centrale per la vita democratica della società europea.

Abstract French

Juin 2024 pourrait marquer un tournant dans la démocratie européenne en tant que telle. L'AADL est particulièrement désireuse de créer des synergies entre la société civile et les autorités locales afin d'avoir une forte portée de l'information et de la mobilisation sur les élections du Parlement européen.

L'objectif de ce document est d'approfondir la prise de conscience et les perceptions des citoyens en ce qui concerne les prochaines élections européennes de 2024. Le document met en lumière certaines considérations dans le débat actuel sur ce sujet et sur la perception des citoyens, mais aussi des réflexions et des suggestions basées sur nos initiatives.

Compte tenu de la nature même de notre organisation, l'ALDA a promu des activités de sensibilisation et d'information sur le sujet, dans le cadre de notre action, de nos projets et de nos campagnes, afin de prendre des mesures pour renforcer l'implication et la participation active des citoyens dans les affaires civiques et politiques ; d'avoir un impact et de promouvoir l'éducation des électeurs pour limiter la méfiance et le rejet de la politique (à la fois au niveau national et au niveau de l'Union européenne).

Un point de vue spécifique des jeunes sera mis en avant. Dans son débat sur l'état de l'Union 2023 (#SOTEU), la présidente de la Commission européenne, Mme Ursula von der Leyen, a présenté une vision convaincante de l'avenir de l'Europe, soulignant le rôle essentiel de la jeunesse pour façonner l'avenir de l'Union européenne. À l'approche des prochaines élections, ce message trouve un écho profond auprès de millions d'électeurs qui se préparent à voter pour la première fois.

Parmi eux, des millions de jeunes Européens nés au lendemain de la crise financière de 2008. Alors qu'ils se rendent aux urnes, ils réfléchissent aux questions urgentes qui leur tiennent le plus à cœur : les conflits aux frontières de l'Europe, les effets dévastateurs du changement climatique, les implications de l'intelligence artificielle et leurs perspectives en matière de logement et d'emploi.

L'UE va s'engager dans un ambitieux voyage de transformation, avec le Parlement européen jouant un rôle central. En tant qu'ALDA, nous savons



comment contribuer et comment agir dans la vie de tous les jours pour impliquer nos membres, les réseaux dont nous faisons partie et surtout les citoyens et les jeunes qui doivent pouvoir être actifs dans ce moment central pour la vie démocratique de la société européenne.

Abstract Serbian

Jun 2024. godine može predstavljati prekretnicu u okviru evropske demokratije. ALDA posebno teži stvaranju sinergija između civilnog društva i lokalnih vlasti, kako bi se ostvario snažan uticaj informacija i mobilizacije u vezi sa izborima za Evropski parlament.

Cilj ovog dokumenta je produbljivanje svesti građana i njihovih percepcija u vezi sa predstojećim izborima za Evropski parlament 2024. godine. Dokument ističe određena razmatranja o mogućim trenutnim raspravama na ovu temi i percepciji građana, ali takođe deli i razmišljanja i sugestije zasnovane na našim inicijativama.

S obzirom na prirodu naše organizacije, ALDA promoviše svest i informacione aktivnosti na ovu temu unutar naših akcija, projekata i kampanja kako bismo preduzeli korake ka jačanju uključenosti građana i njihovog aktivnog učešća u civilnim i političkim pitanjima; kako bismo uticali na obrazovanje birača i smanjili nepoverenje i odbacivanje politike (i na nacionalnom i na evroskom nivou).

Posebno će biti naglašen specifičan pogled mladih ljudi. U svom govoru o Stanju Unije 2023. godine (#SOTEU), predsednica Evropske komisije, gospođa Ursula fon der Lajen, predstavila je uzbudljivu viziju budućnosti Evrope, ističući ključnu ulogu mladih u oblikovanju budućnosti Evropske Unije. Dok s nestrpljenjem očekujemo predstojeće izbore, poruka duboko odjekuje kod miliona birača koji će prvi put glasati.

Među onima koji se pripremaju za glasanje su milioni mladih Evropljana rođenih u posleratnom periodu nakon finansijske krize 2008. godine. Dok odlaze na birališta, razmišljaju o aktuelnim pitanjima koja su im najvažnija: konfliktima na granicama Evrope, razornom uticaju klimatskih promena, implikacijama veštačke inteligencije i perspektivama za stanovanje i zaposlenje.



Evropska Unija će krenuti na ambiciozno putovanje transformacije, pri čemu će Evropski parlament imati ključnu ulogu. Kao ALDA, znamo kako doprineti i kako se kretati u svakodnevnom životu kako bismo uključili naše članove, mreže kojima pripadamo, ali pre svega građane i mlade ljude koji moraju biti aktivni u ovom ključnom trenutku za demokratski život evropskog društva.

Abstract Russian

Июнь 2024 года может стать переломным моментом в европейской демократии как таковой. ALDA особенно заинтересована в создании синергии между гражданским обществом и местными властями для обеспечения равномерного распространения информации и мобилизации в связи с выборами в Европейский парламент.

Цель документа - повысить осведомленность и восприятие гражданами предстоящих выборов в ЕС 2024 года. В документе представлены некоторые соображения, касающиеся текущих дебатов по этой теме и восприятия граждан, а также некоторые размышления и предложения, основанные на наших инициативах.

Учитывая саму природу нашей организации, ALDA содействует повышению осведомленности и информированности по данной теме в рамках наших акций, проектов и кампаний, чтобы предпринять шаги по расширению вовлеченности и активного участия граждан в гражданских и политических делах; воздействовать на избирателей и способствовать их просвещению, чтобы ограничить недоверие и неприятие политики (как на национальном уровне, так и на уровне ЕС).

Особое внимание будет уделено точке зрения молодежи. В своем выступлении "Дебаты о состоянии Союза 2023" (#SOTEU) председатель Европейской комиссии г-жа Урсула фон дер Ляйен изложила убедительное видение будущего Европы, подчеркнув важнейшую роль молодежи в формировании будущего Европейского союза. Сейчас, когда мы с нетерпением ожидаем предстоящих выборов, это послание находит глубокий отклик у миллионов впервые голосующих избирателей, которые готовятся отдать свои голоса.

Среди тех, кто готовится голосовать, - миллионы молодых европейцев, родившихся после финансового кризиса 2008 года. Идя на избирательные участки, эти люди размышляют над насущными проблемами, которые волнуют их больше всего: конфликты на границах Европы, разрушительное воздействие изменения климата, последствия



искусственного интеллекта, а также перспективы получения жилья и работы.

ЕС начнет амбициозный путь преобразований, и Европейский парламент будет играть в нем ключевую роль. Мы, как ALDA, знаем, как внести свой вклад и как двигаться в повседневной жизни, чтобы вовлечь наших членов, сети, в которые мы входим, и, прежде всего, граждан и молодежь, которые должны быть активны в этот центральный момент демократической жизни европейского общества.

Abstract Arabic

قد يمثل شهر جوان/يونيو نقطة مفصلية للديموقراطية الأوروبية بشكل عام. إذ تهتم "ألدا" بشكل خاص بتعزيز الروابط بين منظمات المجتمع المدني والسلطات المحلية لانتشار أوسع للمعلومات وحملة تحشيد أكبر بمناسبة انتخابات البرلمان الأوروبي.

وتهدف هذه الوثيقة إلى تعميق وعي المواطنين ووجهات نظرهم المتعلقة بانتخابات البرلمان الأوروبي المقبلة خلال سنة 2024. إذ تسلط الضوء على بعض الاعتبارات المتعلقة بالجدل الراهن حول هذا الموضوع وعلى وجهات نظر المواطنين. حياله، كما تهدف لمشاركة هذه الأفكار والاقتراحات القائمة على مبادراتنا.

وتبعا لطبيعة عمل منظماتنا، فقد سعت لنشر الوعي والنشاطات التوعوية المتعلقة بهذا الموضوع ضمن نشاطاتها ومشاريعها وحملاتها لأخذ خطوات تجاه تعزيز الانخراط المواطني والمشاركة الفعالة في كل من الشؤون الجمعياتية والسياسية، وذلك عبر تعزيز تعليم أصحاب الأصوات ودعمه للحد من انعدام الثقة في المجال السياسي والتي تؤدي إلى رفضه على المستويين الوطني والقاري على حد سواء.

وسيستمّ تسليط الضوء بالخصوص على وجهات نظر الشباب. وضمن فعاليات "نقاش حالة الاتحاد لسنة 2023" (SOTEU#) فصلت رئيسة المفوضية الأوروبية السيدة "أورسولا فون دير لاين" (Ursula von der Leyen) رؤية طموحة لمستقبل أوروبا وذلك عبر التشديد على مركزية دور الشباب في تشكيل مستقبل الاتحاد الأوروبي.

وإذ نقترح بتطّلع من الانتخابات القادمة، تلقى هذه الرسالة قبولا واسعا لدى ملايين من المصوتين لأول مرة الذين يستعدون للإدلاء بأصواتهم. ومن بين أولئك الذين يستعدون للإدلاء بالأصوات، نجد ملايين الشباب الأوروبيين الذين ولدوا خلال الأزمة المالية العالمية لسنة 2008. وإذ يتوجه هؤلاء الأفراد إلى مكاتب الاقتراع، فإنهم يتأملون في المسائل الحارقة ذات الأهمية الأكبر بالنسبة لهم: النزاعات على حدود أوروبا والآثار المدمرة للاحتباس الحراري واستتبعات الذكاء الاصطناعي وآثاره في مجالي الإسكان والتشغيل.

وسينطلق الاتحاد الأوروبي في رحلة تحوّل طموحة يلعب فيها الاتحاد الأوروبي دورا محوريا. ونحن في "ألدا" نعرف كيفية المساهمة وكيفية النشاط ضمن الحياة اليومية لإدماج أفرادنا وإدماج الشبكات التي ننشط ضمنها وخاصة كيفية إدماج كل



المواطنین والشباب الذین یجب أن یكونوا قادرین على المشاركة الفعّالة فی هذه الحركة المركزية بالنسبة للحياة الـدیـموقراطية للمجتمع الأوروبي.

Abstract Ukrainian

Червень 2024 року може стати переломним для європейської демократії як такої. ALDA особливо зацікавлена у створенні синергії між громадянським суспільством та місцевою владою, щоб забезпечити ще більш широке інформування та мобілізацію щодо виборів до Європейського Парламенту.

Метою цього документа є поглиблення обізнаності та сприйняття громадянами майбутніх виборів до Європейського Парламенту 2024 року. Документ висвітлює деякі міркування щодо поточних дебатів на цю тему та сприйняття громадянами, а також ділиться роздумами та пропозиціями, заснованими на наших ініціативах.

З огляду на саму природу нашої організації, Асоціація сприяла просвітницькій та інформаційній діяльності на цю тему в рамках наших заходів, проєктів та кампаній, щоб зробити кроки до посилення залучення громадян та їхньої активної участі як у громадських, так і в політичних справах; впливати та сприяти освіті виборців, щоб обмежити недовіру та неприйняття політики (як на національному рівні, так і на рівні ЄС).

В аналізі буде висвітлено особливу точку зору молоді. У своїй промові "Дебати про стан Союзу 2023" (#SOTEU) Президентка Європейської Комісії пані Урсула фон дер Ляєн окреслила переконливе бачення майбутнього Європи, наголосивши на вирішальній ролі молоді у формуванні майбутнього Європейського Союзу. З нетерпінням чекаючи на майбутні вибори, це послання глибоко резонує з мільйонами виборців, які вперше голосують і готуються віддати свої голоси.

Серед тих, хто готується голосувати, мільйони молодих європейців, які народилися після фінансової кризи 2008 року. Ці люди, йдучи на виборчі дільниці, обмірковують нагальні питання, які мають для них найбільше значення: конфлікти на кордонах Європи, руйнівний вплив зміни клімату, наслідки розвитку штучного інтелекту, а також їхні перспективи щодо житла та працевлаштування.



ЄС розпочинає амбітний шлях трансформації, в якому Європейський Парламент відіграє ключову роль. Як ALDA, ми знаємо, як зробити свій внесок і як діяти в повсякденному житті, щоб залучити наших членів, мережі, частиною яких ми є, і, перш за все, громадян і молодь, які повинні мати можливість бути активними в цей ключовий момент для демократичного життя європейського суспільства.



1. ALDA's commitment: #DemocracyBoost. Road to the European Elections 2024

ALDA - The European Association for Local Democracy promotes good governance and active citizen participation at the local level by focusing on activities that facilitate cooperation between local authorities and civil society. When we speak about civil society the scope is very wide and includes diverse kinds of organizations, change-makers, every organization and every person that could drive change and activate a positive impact in our societies.

ALDA, established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe to coordinate and support the network of Local Democracy Agencies, self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs. ALDA is a membership-based organisation with more than 300 members (including local authorities, associations of local authorities, and civil society organisations).

Its members, local and regional authorities, associations of local authorities, civil society organizations, individuals, organization and authorities with experience, knowledge, skills and heart to make participative democracy possible and create stable, diverse and dynamic societies with responsible, responsive and Democratic Governance.

Since its establishment in 1999, the European Association of Local Democracy has operated in a rapidly changing contexts of decentralization, increased attention for good local governance and active citizens participation which influenced the work of ALDA in the first 10 years to respond to those changes and evolving issues.

ALDA's values are deeply rooted in all ALDA's projects, no matter if ALDA is a project partner or project leader/coordinator. In each ALDA's initiative the value of partnership and exchange of knowledge and experience and respect for basic principles of "living together":

"The value of links and exchanges between countries at the local level by promoting the sharing of the knowledge and best practices and committing to the fact that the activities and the programs are developed and



implemented in the respect of those founding principles which are the basis and the reason for being of ALDA. The value of Europe as a peaceful and constructive space of cooperation among citizens respecting their diversities” are strongly present and create an open space for dialogue, support and development.

After +20 years of consistent growth and recognition among stakeholders and beneficiaries, ALDA continues its mission to support and build capacities of authorities and civil society aiming to provide citizens with knowledge and skills needed for building and living in a society based on participative democracy.

Working with and for local resilient communities is necessary to address the future challenges from a democratic, environmental, social and economic point of view. Democracy and citizens’ engagement are and will be a key factor for unlocking positive and constructive proposals for the future and ALDA, together with its members and partners, should be at the center of concrete proposals and activators of positive changes, based on the main political trends as follows:

- DEMOCRACY in all of its dimensions by supporting and creating the needed conditions for developing fruitful outputs for the whole society; with free and fair elections; implementation of the rule of law; fair and effective institutions; and, in particular at the local level, informed, prepared and engaged citizens.
- PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE engaging elected representatives and civil servants and citizens; strong and free civil society in a multi-stakeholder approach.
- The RESILIENCE OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES towards the crisis, respectful of human rights and minorities, promoting and “activating” SOLIDARITY in all its forms.



- The role of a DEEP AND STRONG EUROPE, contributing to shaping the FUTURE OF EUROPE, by increasing inputs and making it a project for all local communities and EU citizens, fostering economic and social cohesion and being an actor of peace and fair development in the World.

In this framework, the **European Parliament Elections in 2024** may mark a watershed in European Democracy as such.

ALDA is particularly keen in **creating synergies between civil society and local authorities** for having even a strong outreach of information and mobilization.

Europe must lead in democracy and must be able to stand in difficult scenarios. We support civil society and democratic engagement (especially youth and women) all around the globe as key stakeholders demanding and implementing democracy. We aim at having a European Parliament Elections driven strongly by the need of having democracy at the center of visions and plans of the future candidates and then institutions that will lead the EU in the years to come.

The threats are internal, with polarization and extreme narrative looking for immediate and simplistic answers to complex questions, and external with wars and instability and with a *relativisation* of democracy on behalf of a “possible” autocratic model coming from Russia or China. Europe needs to stay firm and needs to confirm its value based approach to democracy, whatever it takes. The next elections will be difficult and extremely important.

Engaging citizens would be the key to success. It would mean to present Europe for what it is able to do and to make it understandable by every European citizen. Let's not speak only about institutions but rather let's focus on how **Europe is able to overcome multiple crises**, like energy and health but also handle inflation and propose alternative sustainable systems of development. We call for a campaign that will be able to talk and communicate to youth with their own means and words and engage them. Preparing a high turn out for the European elections is a must and we need

to engage civil society organizations and networks as partners. We need to focus “out of the bubble” and reach the corners of Europe with a particular attention on low turnout countries and also especially on rural areas, with dedicated programmes of mobilization.

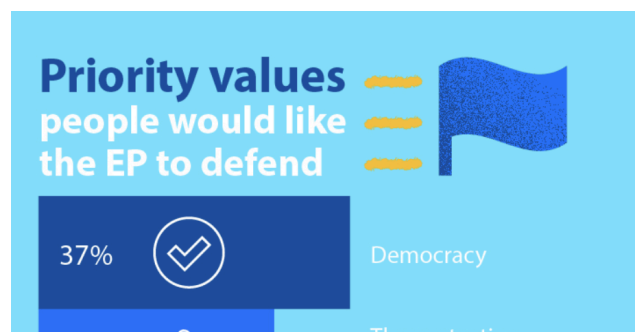
For members and partners of ALDA from the Enlargement countries, European accession policies are often described as a “transformative” process, setting rules and adapting to better governance and economy. The future European Parliament would need to prove that it is able to deliver on those very same targets. We advocate for a strong commitment for completing the membership of Western Balkans countries in the EU and for a brave and solid engagement in this sense with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

2. Analysis of citizens’ perception

According to the EP spring survey (2023) “one year before the European elections” carried out by Eurobarometer, Democracy is the core value that citizens want the European Parliament to defend. With 37% mentioning this overall, it is also the leading value in 14 EU Member States.

Source: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3093>

Interest in the next European elections is at 56% among citizens, six



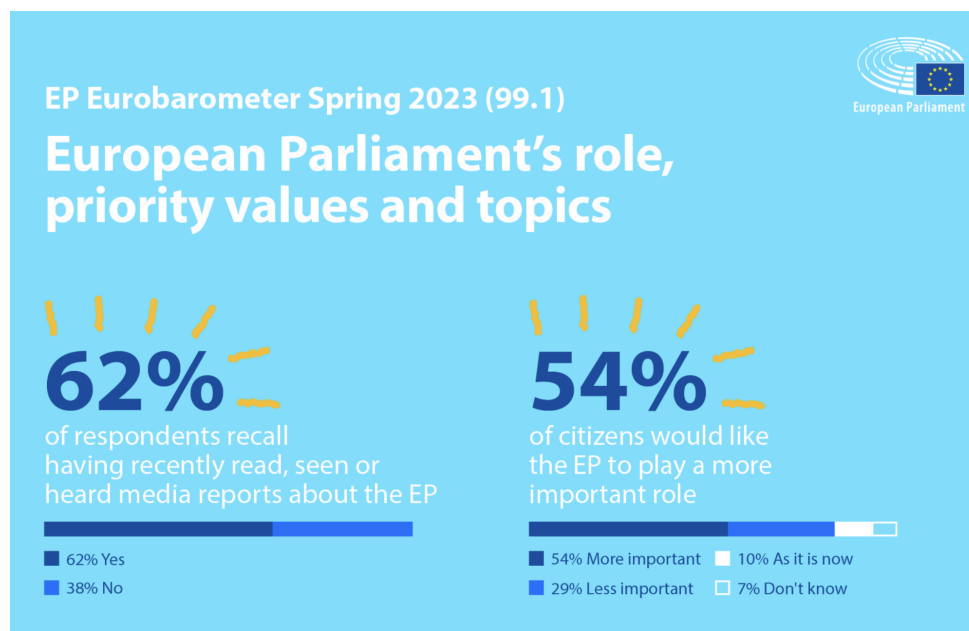
percentage points higher than one year before the last European elections. What is more: two-thirds of citizens (67%) say they are likely to vote, when 58% said so in 2018.

The heart of the matter.

Democracy is the core value that citizens want the European Parliament to defend. With 37% mentioning this overall, it is also the leading value in 14 EU Member States. The majority of citizens are also satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union (54%).

Democracy is what makes us.

An absolute majority of EU citizens are satisfied with seven of ten different aspects of democracy. Free and fair elections (70%), freedom of speech (70%), and respect for fundamental rights (66%) are the aspects that generate the most satisfaction.



Young respondents (aged 15-24) are of particular interest for the Eurobarometer, as their attitudes and opinions foreshadow future trends and developments. A few key findings:

- The ranking of values the European Parliament should defend as a matter of priority is similar to the one observed among all respondents. Democracy tops the list of values for both groups (32%; all respondents: 37%), but for young people, freedom of speech and thought is regarded equally important (32%; all respondents: 27%).
- The priorities the young would like to see addressed by the European Parliament differ slightly from those of the general population. While the fight against poverty and social exclusion still ranks on top (40%; all respondents: 38%), it is joined by action against climate change, which is significantly more likely to be mentioned by 15-24 year-olds than by the general population (40% vs 31%).
- 42% of the respondents aged 15-24 say it is of high importance for them personally to vote in the European elections - they are slightly less likely to say so than the average (48%).
- Making a change matters for the young. Asked for reasons to vote, it being a civic duty (35%; all respondents: 38%) and wanting to support a political party (35% vs 36%) are the top two reasons for both the young and the average. However, the desire to change things (33% vs 29%) follows in third place for young respondents.

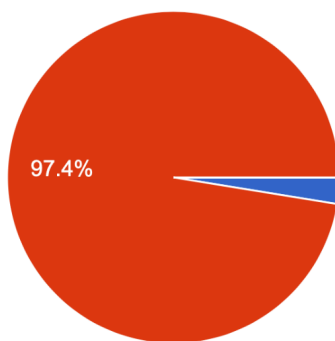
Starting from this framework, ALDA carried out a simple **survey**, which could delve deeper into the level of citizens' awareness and perceptions related to the forthcoming EU Elections 2024 is foreseen.

The questionnaire had been submitted in an online format to be more easily disseminated at events and/or trade fairs. The questionnaire had also been used in presence, for suitable environments/types of activities, in paper format.

The data collection and processing aimed at gaining an informative picture of citizens' basic perception and knowledge of the European elections. To this end, the questions developed are simple and easy to understand.

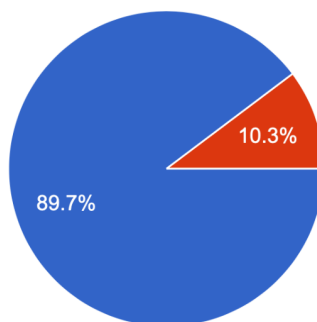
For each question, the correct answer displayed after the user answered so that the questionnaire was a basic tool as well for information purposes.

Considering the questions we developed, which are generally very simple precisely because our organization does not present itself as a research body, we want to highlight some elements that can constitute more relevant food for thought.



DO YOU KNOW WHEN
THE NEXT EUROPEAN
ELECTIONS WILL BE?

WHAT WILL BE VOTED
ON?



Young people usually have a minor participation in the elections, both national and European; thus, they are consequently less represented in the political arena, leading to lower levels of trust in the system and institutions of representative democracy, and high levels of political inequality.

Some **key elements** can be highlighted, aiming at better understanding the absence of a high participation of youngsters in politics:

1. The first aspect explores the distancing of young people from institutional politics, which can be explained by the non-investment of political parties in mobilisation and grassroots activities. A larger effort is needed by the political parties to bring youth back into the mainstream political process.
2. The second aspect involves a broadened definition of politics, as the political imaginary of youth has changed and evolved, extending beyond traditional survey methodologies, recognizing a diverse range of agents, repertoires, and targets.
3. The third aspect challenges the classical liberal distinction between public and private spheres, highlighting the fusion of politics into the daily lives of young people.
4. The fourth aspect is about the growing complexity of youth transitions into adulthood, marked by high uncertainty, and vulnerability. According to recent studies, traditional factors in political socialisation are diminishing in importance, while peers and social media play a more significant role, resulting in diverse and non-exclusive forms of political engagement that deviate from traditional modes, a fact that

raises the importance of enhancing the engagement of this group in democratic processes.

Some key Challenges.

Compelling evidence demonstrates that youngsters are more motivated to vote for specific priorities and concrete actions having a clear impact on their lives. It is therefore not the act of voting that prevents their participation, but rather their lack of trust, representation and inclusion in structures of representative democracy.

Nowadays, youth in Europe is facing a series of **challenges and concerns** that can be directly affected by the voting for representatives who are aligned with your priorities. One of these challenges is related to **unemployment** and **economic opportunities**, that can be addressed by supporting candidates who prioritise job creation and career prospects for youth.

A second concern for youth is **education accessibility**, since many young people struggle to afford higher education, and **educational quality**. Other topics such as **climate change, sustainability, and affordable housing** are also crucial for young people.

Another key issue for youth in Europe is **mental health and well-being**, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, since many people suffer from mental health disorders, and are still struggling to fully recover.

Finally, **inclusivity and equality** should also be quoted as two major concerns for young people in Europe nowadays. To approach these topics, social policies can be created in the areas of diversity, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender equality, but first, it is imperative to vote for candidates that support these areas.

Overall, taking action and voting on the elections can address all the relevant issues mentioned above, by supporting candidates who prioritise environmental protection, education accessibility and quality, and fair economic opportunities, also advocating for policies that improve housing affordability, sustainable communities and well-being.

3. Starting from the ground: ALDA's action for greater participation and awareness of the EU Elections

Considering the relevance of reaching and involving citizens, especially youth in the upcoming EU elections, the European Parliament co-funded and supported concrete initiatives, targeting young voters or led by youth organisations.

Hence, taking action into voting can ensure that young citizens' voices are heard by politicians and policy creators. But, in addition to that, young people can also engage in EU politics in other ways, such as:

1. **Join Youth Organisations:** Connect with like-minded peers, discuss policies, and influence party platforms by joining youth organisations within political parties.
2. **Attend Political Events:** Participate in rallies, town halls, and debates to ask questions and understand candidate positions.
3. **Volunteer in Campaigns:** Gain hands-on experience by volunteering in political campaigns, working closely with candidates and mobilising voters.
4. **Youth Initiatives:** Support or create youth-led initiatives, conferences, or educational programs focusing on EU institutions and policies.
5. **EU Youth Consultations:** Participate in consultations and surveys organised by EU institutions to influence policies.
6. **EU Projects:** Get involved in EU-funded programs like Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps to promote youth participation.
7. **Write to Representatives:** Contact Members of the European Parliament and EU officials to express your views and concerns, making an impact on policy decision

Staying informed is also crucial for informed decision-making and active civic engagement. By diversifying sources, fact-checking, following



international news, subscribing to newsletters, setting up alerts, engaging in discussions, considering traditional and government sources, supporting quality journalism, cross-checking information, managing time, and enhancing media literacy, young people can stay informed and engaged effectively.

Our initiatives

1. “Road to the 2024 European elections: Exploring European Institutions through Study Visits and ALDA’s Events” (FONS TRIENNAL)

Eager to be part of a transformative event that promises to shape the future of European democracy? 4 days of capacity building and informative sessions in Strasbourg, from September 26 to 29, 2023..

Participation was open to a diverse range of individuals and groups, including French and international NGOs, Local Authorities, associations of Local Authorities, committed Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), passionate activists, and engaged citizens mainly based in Strasbourg, including ALDA’s member network and, especially, from the following countries: Spain, Belgium, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Ireland, Luxembourg, Finland, Czech Republic.

This inclusive approach underscores the event’s dedication to fostering collaboration and empowering local democracy advocates.

Road to the 2024 European elections

Exploring European Institutions through
Study Visits and ALDA's Events

**26 to 29 September
Strasbourg, France**



The event took place within the framework of “Local democracy responding to global challenges – an alliance between local authorities and civil society at the heart of a Europe of rights” an ambitious project, which operates as part of the three-year contract “Strasbourg, European Capital 2021-2023” and is funded by five institutions dedicated to strengthening democracy, stimulating citizen participation, and promoting good governance. These institutions are: the Bas-Rhin Prefecture, the Grand Est Region, the European Community of Alsace, the City of Strasbourg, and the Strasbourg Eurometropole.

At its core, this event is driven by two paramount objectives that intertwine to shape the future of European democracy. Firstly, it seeks to strengthen the bedrock of European principles and values, including democracy and active citizenship, with a laser focus on the local level. Through dynamic cooperation and the exchange of invaluable experiences, the aim is to enrich the very tapestry of European democracy.

Secondly, this event serves as a platform to further cement Strasbourg's standing as a true European capital of democracy and an open forum for robust democratic discourse. Strasbourg's influence on European democracy is poised to expand, solidifying its central role in shaping the trajectory of European democracy on both local and global fronts. Together, we forge the

path toward a future where Strasbourg's influence knows no bounds in the realm of European democracy.

2. **TALE - TAke the Lead in the EU elections**

The objective of this project is to design and implement tailor-made communication strategies and activities to reach and engage a greater number of possible voters and, through participatory processes, activate and empower them to play an active role and thus vote in the next European parliamentary elections in 2024. The communication will focus on giving new trust to the EU info channels and platforms, using them to promote a voting campaign filled with correct, reliable and accurate information and news against the spreading of distrust. The campaign will also focus on raising awareness about the importance of voting to live in structured representative democracies. At the same time, the project will give main importance to the training of (mostly) young change-makers that will support the communication objectives capitalising the results of the awareness campaign. This will help reach the target in a better way: the change-makers can be an example for other young voters, becoming truthful leaders and for older generations as a vehicle - through a peer to peer approach - of what they will learn in the training.

a. Partners

ALDA

<https://www.alda-europe.eu/>

UBBSLA (Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities)

<http://www.ubbsla.org/en/>

Leader France

<https://leaderfrance.fr/>

Foster Europe

<https://www.foster-europe.org/>

DYPALL Network (Associação Para O Desenvolvimento Da Participação Cidadã)



<https://dypall.com/>

DRPDNM (Association for developing voluntary work Novo Mesto)

<http://www.nevladnik.info/si/>

ECHO (Udruga za promicanje aktivnog gradanstva)

<https://echo-udruga.hr/>

Innovation in Politics (= subcontractor)

<https://innovationinpolitics.eu/>

b. Countries covered

- Bulgaria
- Italy
- Austria
- Portugal
- Slovenia
- Croatia
- France

d. Activities and budget managed by ALDA

- . Coordination and management of the action, to be implemented with the involvement of the affiliated partners and the subcontractor (M1-M18)
- . Co-design the capacity building training package for the future change-makers (M1-M3) (WP1)
- . Support to the organisation of the onboarding events (M4-M5) (WP1)
- . Co-organisation of interactive webinars and online workshops on concepts and techniques related to political activism, including campaigning around the European elections 2024, with the support of ECoD-Innovation in Politics (M6-7) (WP2)
- . Conduct the online campaign "My European highlight" (M14-17) (WP3)
- . Create the visual identity of the project (M1-18) (WP5)

e. Needs and opportunities in the context of the EU elections

Need analysis:

It is necessary to act on citizens who did not vote, involving the hard-to-reach groups (marginalised) in order to confirm the positive trend of the last EU Parliament elections; this will positively affect the democratic setting in the national contexts

too. Based on these considerations, the main objective of this project is to **reach and engage a greater number of voters, reduce the gap of voters turnout among the various EU member states, and, through participatory processes, activate and empower them to play an active role and thus vote in the next European parliamentary elections** in 2024.

The consortium of 7 countries created for this project involves countries that have showed not only various EU integration processes, but also different turnouts during the last EU Parliament elections: in Italy, France and Austria more than 50% of citizens voted confirming the positive trend, while in Croatia, Bulgaria, Portugal and Slovenia the turnout went below 35%. The consortium set-up will ensure an appropriate knowledge exchange so that countries with good practice and better turnout results can positively influence the future turnover of others and at the same time foster deliberative democracy and help to reach higher turnout levels.

Opportunities for young voters:

- To benefit from an online capacity building programme for a selected number of (mostly) **young people**, chosen through a specific selection process, that will come from youth associations or from the formal education sector (schools and universities); they will be a vehicle in order to **spread the knowledge** they get from the training. The training will be related to **EU values, institutions, EU Parliament elections and the importance of clear and transparent news**. Both the communication and theoretical skills that will be provided to the change-makers will allow them to be more effective in reaching large numbers of citizens and raising awareness about the EU Parliament elections that will take place in 2024.
- To create a **communication campaign** that will be supported by the change-makers and will allow **citizens to get reliable information, debate about the next EU Parliament elections and get closer to the every-day life of the European institutions**. Through the campaign - that will be realised using online and offline tools - people will have the opportunity to learn how to use the together.eu platform and actually use it to get in contact and exchange with each other, creating a cooperative environment, in line with the EU values and the objective of this call.

3. Ideas for Europe (I4E)

The project aims to boost political participation by developing solutions for and with citizens living in peri-urban and rural areas.

Disenchantment with politics and abstention are a growing concern in democracies, with more and more Europeans blaming democracy itself for their social and economic problems. This issue is particularly acute in peri-urban and rural areas, where the Commission warns that 40% of surveyed citizens feel left behind by society and politicians. This phenomenon is accentuated by the speed and targeted manner in which disinformation spreads.

I4E will combat the feeling of disenfranchisement by promoting European values and inviting the public to contribute their ideas. The project focuses on Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Poland, yet will also engage citizens in other Member States. The consortium will identify a group of multipliers in its existing networks with access to citizens in peri-urban and rural areas who will collect suggestions that emerge from the project's activities.



I4E will take a threefold approach, focussing on education, empowerment and engagement. The first track aims at generating ideas that further citizenship competencies. The partners will organise capacity programmes on European citizenship education for local actors. Virtual media literacy

workshops, where participants learn how to handle disinformation, will complement the former. The second track seeks ideas that do not only empower the educated. Partners will invite citizens to discuss ways to promote active citizenship. These will be put up for feedback at inclusive demonstration debates and shared in trainings with local authorities. Inspired by the diverse set of ideas, multipliers and citizens will finally co-create prototypes strengthening democratic participation, thereby fostering the understanding that citizens can make an impact on politics and social issues.



Partners

[The European Forum Alpbach \(EFA\)](#) - Leader

[The Alliance 4 Europe \(A4E\)](#)

ALDA (the European Association for Local Democracy)

[The Dandelion Group \(TDG\)](#)

- Countries covered

Austria, Belgium, France and Germany

Activities managed by ALDA

WP10 - Local Academy Training.

The training was developed for representatives of five European countries with the lowest participation rate in the European elections. The training is expected to offer an intensive and strategic learning environment through thematic modules articulated as follows:

- First Module: Good Democratic Governance. Participants will tackle the definition of participative democracy and focus on the 12 principles of Good Democratic Governance outlined by the CoE.

- Second module: Participatory instruments. Participants will illustrate the participatory tools already implemented at local level to engage other parties in the process (participative budget, committees of citizens, committees of migrant citizens etc.) and analyse their effectiveness. Some best practices at international level will also be described. Finally, the module will focus on how to better communicate rights, opportunities for citizens, and their active participation.
- Third module: Local Context. It will tackle specific local needs identified by participants with particular referral to their participation in the EU policies. A moment will be dedicated to a simulation of an inclusive decision-making process with the local community, defining key points and strategies for innovative solutions following the methodology illustrated in the previous modules.

4. EU24-Engage for the Planet

EU 24 – Engage for the planet will implement gender-balanced blended exchange events between domestic and mobile union citizens in the fields of climate justice, climate change and sustainability - in 5 European countries (Sweden, Poland, Germany, Netherlands and France) over a period of 20 months. The project aims to decrease the democratic participation gap of young citizens, citizens of diverse backgrounds, mobile union citizens in a gender balanced way by showing them their voices matter. While the turnout in the last EU election was the largest in 25 years, citizens of diverse backgrounds and mobile union citizens remain underrepresented among active EU voters as well as democratic engagement. As a central topic climate change is the biggest threat to humanity today and it needs transnational and multinational solutions. We therefore contribute in this field to the

creation of a strong European political community which is (inter-)active, diverse and able to form and express opinions in political debate.

- Partners

Lead Partner: [Comparative Research Network](#)

Other Partners: ALDA, [Stichting EGEA Alumni](#), [Fundacja Otwarty Plan](#)

Associated Partner: [Changemaker AB](#)

- Countries covered: France, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, Sweden.
- Activities managed by ALDA

WP4 - Engage for the Planet Debate, Straßbourg, France (ALDA)

Preparing, Conducting and Documenting Debate



- Needs and opportunities in the context of the EU elections

Needs.

The needs on European, national and partnership levels have been investigated according to the objectives and target groups of EU24-Engage for the planet.

Objective 1: Gender-Balanced and diversity-oriented Mobilisation and Engagement for the EU24 Election Following an overview of the needs for the objective of mobilising and engaging groups of citizens so far underrepresented in voting turnout and political engagement with the EU elections.

Objective 2: engaging citizens & communities in discussions & actions related to our climate & environment Across the EU the most prominent reasons for voting in the EU elections were the economy and the threat of climate change.

Objective 3: innovative democratic approaches and tools to help citizens make their voices heard and publicly exchange views on all areas of EU action, notably digital tools ('e-democracy'). It has been suggested that E-Democracy or online tools for political exchange are a viable solution in combating the EU democratic deficit, especially among younger demographics (EPRS 2018). The report highlights the general need for more structured and understandable tools and processes of E-Democracy, accompanying the overall phases of policy decision making including voting. Our consortium will contribute to the main questions formulated by this document, such as the involvement of citizens at different stages of decision making.*

Opportunities.

Blended debate events across Europe will be conducted that are framed by an innovative E-Democracy platform and will:

1. bridge the language barrier between participants between & within countries bring together citizens from diverse backgrounds in debate;

2. utilise wide reach & playful content for facilitating political debate & engagement for the EU 24 Election;
3. enable participants to link local issues of climate change, climate justice & sustainability to EU policies & policy recommendations;
4. stimulate gender-balanced & diversity-oriented participation of young (16-25) & younger citizens (26-39), citizens with migrant background, mobile union citizens.

4. Key challenges and suggestions

With the ultimate goal of creating an active and informed citizenship, a set of reflections and recommendations has been outlined. Collectively these proposals address specific aspects of civic engagement, especially of young people, urging policy-makers to set priorities and implement measures that can contribute to a more active, well informed, and inclusive democratic society.

What strategies do you consider to be effective in mobilizing voters?

- o To **start as early as possible** with information about challenges that Europe is facing today and therefore the importance of the elections. Citizens participation and mobilisation within the civic space is a learning process that must go on constantly, and not the week before the elections.
 - We are starting a **campaign of mobilisation for all our members**
 - We need to **make elections accessible to all** (including disabilities and those who are less prepared because living in difficult conditions, including economically) Europe should go to them and not the other way round.

- Referring to the European State of the Union of Civil society presented by Civil Society Europe in September focusing on what Europe is able to deliver in terms of social and economic terms.
- o **To focus on grassroots organisation or networks of networks that will be able to reach those who are not approached “by Europe” with its communication tools**
 - Implementing **regranting schemes for events** on citizens engagement civil society or civil society and local authorities and connect to it to debates to prepare and inform about the EU – we will be using all our programmes supported by CERV, and not only, since now and up to 2024 with a cross cutting information on the EP elections.
 - Focus on **particular remote and provincial, rural areas** with dedicated instruments of communication (areas which often those which are less inclined to vote or are Eurosceptics) – using/selecting networks that have access and dissemination to rural areas. We also presented this part of our work in the Civil Society Days of the EESC in 2023.
 - Use **local governments networks** (regulations, proposals) to be disseminators of information – we also work with municipalities for example to reach mobile citizens through a project of support of registration and facilitating registration lists (project APProach)..
 - Using the **Training of trainers methodology**, empowering intermediary bodies or people that are going to help us to disseminate, we have the project TALE supported by the EP, that will focus on 56 multipliers in 7 countries which are usually low in turnout. The TOTs help our multipliers to address questions and to explain Europe, in a more accessible way,

and the challenges at stake. They are therefore trained to answer questions.

- **Work with schools and universities** – they could really mobilise a lot of people. Regular presentation in school classes the months before the elections, with possible information and multipliers. We need to talk about topics and not about the political system. We do that among our members and we are very busy visiting high schools around Europe before those dates.

What are your views on the use of new technologies and better messaging to promote electoral participation?

- Absolutely useful and positive. Most of the people are using ONLY the socials for information
- Using **influencers** (we are more and more working them for sharing campaign, for example for a project raising environmental awareness, Climate of Change programme)
- Regional and local authorities are using not only website and socials, but also having **whatsapp channels** for information
- Focus on digital education and maybe using the **digital hubs** that now all municipalities have to promote the message and inform. New technologies offer important **tools to transmit messages**, (video pills, video messages, Interviews/Reels on social media? short, easy, friendly), DIRECTLY FROM institutional representatives, EP, **to get closer** to the eu citizens.
- **Political distrust among young people and lower social classes !!**
Some people still struggle to understand how parliament works, to feel it is an institution that can represent them -> therefore draw attention to the relevance of conveying with more continuity (and

through less formal means such as the new generation, new digital “languages”) what the Europe project really means to citizens

- Any form of **mass information**, concerts (which are able to bring thousands of people together) where the info on the momentum could be passed in a modern and contemporary way, approach youth again

How do you see the role of grassroots actors to support electoral participation?

Very important because they **reach the unreached** and address those who are also away from good information, with more opportunities to be exposed to different proposals.

- **Mapping of partners** (like the European movements or other European oriented organisation which have a great outreach)
- They can also **help the day of the elections** (some people need help for voting, for example driving to the poll station, etc), verifying the ballot votes still valid
- **Focusing on difficult areas or countries**
- **Activate the associations more grass roots**, volunteering sector (mobilizing for example non usual partners, charities, environmental organisations)
- **Once again partnering with local governments**

What is your view on engaging citizens between elections to support turnout?



Supporting local participative democracy is key for us, it creates **attention to public affairs** and practice of **deliberation and engagement** – locally but also by definition also to a more national and European level. It rebuilds trust and enchantment to democracy and participation. **From our projects, we see that we need to create a channel of communication and work with citizens that feel alienated from public affairs.**The risk that people don't go to vote any more.

This is the mantra of our organisation. **Building Europe, identity and sense of belonging, is a day to day activity.**

Through our projects, we could raise the attention on the importance of the elections and their impact on daily life, in a multitude of ways. The elections determine the course of policies and regulations that influence various aspects ranging from economy (EU Stability and GROWTH PATH) to environmental protection and climate impact,...

ANNEX - Informative key messages. Alda' campaign on EE24



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