



Working group: Migration

Anna Ditta, Project Development Officer in ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy, is going to lead the group working on migration.

Mattia Brazzale, assistant to the Secretary General's Office of ALDA, will support the moderation of the group.

Although the phenomenon of migration is not new, neither to Europe, nor specifically to Danube region, it has currently become one of the “hottest” topics discussed on a daily basis by politicians, EU institutions, national governments, international organizations. Specific ad hoc meetings are being called on this issue, and also media and citizens all over Europe engaged a vivid discussion about it.

While Europe has been previously dealing with migration flows from North Africa to Spain and Italy and further on continent, developments of recent years in the region of the Middle East have led to the establishment of a new migration route and also to a change in migration patterns. Economic migrants are no longer the prevailing group in hundreds of thousands of people who have arrived to Europe in these last years. The majority of those who reach the European shores are refugees escaping from Syria, wartime failed state ruled by different actors, but also from still unsecure Afghanistan or the dictatorship of Eritrea.

Unprecedented migration flows represent a real challenge for predominantly transit countries in the Balkans and the Danube Region, which are having a hard time in dealing with people crossing the new established Western Balkan Route. But it is also a challenge for main destination countries like Germany, Austria or Sweden. As a consequence of the ongoing European Union resettlement, aimed at “allocating” people in need of international protection (asylum seekers), also countries outside of main migration routes, like Czech Republic, Slovakia or Poland, will be affected. It seems clear now, that the issue of migration is not, and should not be, a problem of few countries since the European integration stands on mutual solidarity and cooperation.

Therefore, a comprehensive strategy has to be adopted to deal with the current situation and in order to develop capacities needed for resilience at all levels. While most of policies are created at European and national level, it is at local level that authorities deal directly with the people arriving to their territory. Only forward-looking approach bringing practical solutions and perceiving migration as a window of opportunity for European development rather than insoluble problem can lead to successful management of migration flow and stabilization of current situation. Also other important aspects such a prevention of related crime issues such as human trafficking or corruption, and elimination of various forms of discrimination of incoming people and their social exclusion, which often leads to other negative aspects, should not be neglected and has to be addressed.

During the workshop, various aspects of migration in Europe, starting from recent developments and current trends, through particular challenges in migration management to other related issues such as potential migration-related risk mitigation will be targeted during the session. The workshop will offer space for debate about the role of the citizens and the actors of the civil society towards the challenge of migration.

Since the topic of migration is very diverse, and has many different aspects and related issues, it opens a space for a lively and participative debate of the participants.