

## Europe For Citizens – Strand 2: Democratic engagement and civic participation, Networks of Towns

Deadline: 1st of September.

**Lead Applicant: Municipality of Arcugnano (Italy).**

### Rational

In the past years, many areas of European towns have been abandoned and have fell in degradation, as a consequence of the gentrifications' processes. Indeed, across European Union some towns are marked by depressed and deprived areas. As a consequence, citizens stay apart from these areas and the sense of belonging decreased sharply. The situation of crisis of the past years (such as the financial crisis of 2009 or the refugee crisis), exacerbates this urban stratification and opposition between areas, producing fragmentation, stigmatization and socio-spatial exclusion. In these conditions, the sense of community, social inclusion and local identity are seriously at risk. This is even more accentuated, in a climate of crisis. Therefore, it is fundamental to promote solidarity, active citizenship, participation and sense of community in order to generate cohesion and responds to societal challenges.

One of the most creative and efficient ways to renew abandoned area, by injecting life, is through street art. Indeed, street art can be a powerful tool to engage communities and regenerate the image of neighbourhoods which can increase local identity and solidarity. When people are emotionally connected to public areas, a sustainable use of these public spaces is also propelled.

Street art can be realised in cooperation with citizens, migrants, schools, hospitals and local organisations.

In addition to the societal potential, the regeneration of some city areas thanks to street art, has a positive impact on tourism. These renew areas can also appeal to new businesses and habitants. The raise of economic performance has, in turn, a favourable effect on the well-being: habitants feel proud of their city again. Moreover, street art is a tool that respects environment as it does not involve new materials, this leads to an increased environmental consciousness.

#### Office in Strasbourg

Council of Europe 1, Avenue de l'Europe,  
F-67075 Strasbourg - France  
Phone: +33 3 90 21 45 93  
Fax: +33 3 90 21 55 17  
[aldastrasbourg@aldaintranet.org](mailto:aldastrasbourg@aldaintranet.org)

#### Office in Brussels

Rue Belliard 20  
1040 Bruxelles  
Belgium  
Phone: +32 2 430 24 08  
[aldabrussels@aldaintranet.org](mailto:aldabrussels@aldaintranet.org)

#### Office in Vicenza

Viale Milano 66  
36100 Vicenza - Italy  
Phone: +39 04 44 54 01 46  
Fax: +39 04 44 23 10 43  
[aldavicenza@aldaintranet.org](mailto:aldavicenza@aldaintranet.org)

#### Office in Subotica

Trg Cara Jovana Nenada 15  
24000 Subotica - Serbia  
Phone: +381 24 554 587  
Fax: +381 24 554 587  
[aldasubotica@aldaintranet.org](mailto:aldasubotica@aldaintranet.org)

#### Office in Skopje

Bld. Partizanski Odredi  
43B/1 - 5  
1000 Skopje, Macedonia  
Phone: +389 2 6091 060  
[aldaskopje@aldaintranet.org](mailto:aldaskopje@aldaintranet.org)

Many European cities have recently started street art activities in order to ensure public areas more liveable and creative. In these towns there is a strong effort to ameliorate the local identity and the solidarity, especially where these areas are lived by migrants and marginalised people. The importance of creating a network of towns, able to formulate answers to social issues and urban degradation, is tangible. Indeed, this can produce a multiplier effect of good practices by connecting and engaging local communities to foster social and urban renewal.

### Objectives of the project

Through a bottom-up approach promoting the local level, the project aims at tackling the regeneration of depressed and abandoned area of European cities, by using the power of community street art in order to generate local identity, social inclusion and active citizenship.

Meanwhile the project is aimed to build a strong network of towns, committed to exchange the positive results of using the street art as a way to involve communities and regenerate public spaces, by creating a multiplier impact.

### Specific objectives

- To foster solidarity between, citizens and marginalised people through street art, in this time of crisis;
- To build a strong network of European towns that use community street art to maximise active citizenship and social inclusion;
- To develop an awareness at the local level on social urban issues;
- To encourage meeting and constructive dialogue solutions-oriented, between citizens and vulnerable group (such as migrants, women and children), thanks to street art;
- To promote common European values and the importance of strengthening the European integration process to share good practises liked to street art, and not only.

### Activities

#### **Phase 1: Cooperation building**

Creation of a network of towns using street art to foster active citizenship and social inclusion with the purpose of exchange best practices.

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## Phase 2: Active community regeneration of towns

Implementation of activities and workshops where citizens, migrants, children etc co-create murals and graffiti in depressed area with the help of street art artists. As people participate actively in giving a new life to these neighbourhood, the sense of connection increases.

## Phase 3: Multiplying the benefit

Organization of local, national and international events, also though festivals, with the purpose of illustrating the results of phase 2. If possible, plan guided tours held by people that were engaged in the creation of the murals in order to strengthen the sense of belonging and emotional connection.

### Partners

We are looking for European **towns** involved in the fields of:

- Street art, murals and graffiti, for active citizenship and social inclusion;
- Enhancing the image of cities in the eyes of their own inhabitants;
- Urban art and architecture;
- Urban regeneration in a sustainable way.

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