

BE ONE

C4. Short description of the project:

The project BE ONE (Bordering Europe: Opportunity for Networking and Enlargement!) aims at establishing a network of towns and cities located at the outmost borders of the European Union. It gathers local authorities based in peripheral areas of EU 28, experiencing different from the inner core of the EU set of problems, being distanced from decision-making process and characterized by their proximity to neighboring regions.

Border regions often act as “guardians” of the EU as they face in a more direct way the challenges of migration, presence of minorities and generally much more exposed to external conflicts and threats. At the same time, their important role often remains underestimated by the “core” focused on its own problems, thus, threatening to further the political distance and foster euro-skepticism.

BE ONE aims to establish a network among LAs situated on the Southern, Western, Northern and Eastern border territories of the EU. The parties are indeed diverse in economic, political, cultural and social terms, but share the common feature of being border territories and related to this problems and opportunities. Furthermore, these territories represent a window to the neighbouring and overseas Countries, a bridge between Europe and other cultures affecting as well as being affected by developments in neighboring countries.

Through the organisation of 4 international meetings, hosted by 4 LAs based along the 4 cardinal points, the selected participants will have an opportunity to exchange on the problems faced, on how they are addressed/unaddressed by the EU, on the channels of participation of border territories to the EU decision making process and the role of the borders regions towards the neighbouring areas. Moreover, they will agree upon future action plan for responding to local problems through exchange and support network as well as identify and develop strategies with regard to strengthening their involvement into decision-making process at the EU level. The creation of specific working and expert groups will allow to promote cooperation among the partners during the project implementation and will lead to the establishment of a long-lasting and solid partnership among the parties of the network.

The project will contribute to bringing closer the EU institutions and the EU outmost territories, fostering understanding on which are the EU policies and actions in regard to problems faced by territories, what are the local needs and initiatives undertaken and what can be improved in particular relation to their inclusion into decision-making creating a platform for joint problem-sharing and problem-solving.

This means, overcome geographical constraints through a better knowledge of the role, the mission and the values of the EU institutions across the entire European territory.

Activity plan:

BE ONE relies on an inclusive method of implementation of the project. All the partners involved have a border with a non-EU territory implying the presence of related to this problems and opportunities.

The project will focus on a number of important issues faces by the EU border countries such as migration, minorities, cross-border cooperation and employment, etc (TBC on the basis of questionnaire). Each of the main themes will include sub-themes allowing to address the issues from a broader perspective and will be discussed within related subgroups led by one of the members. The subgroup work will include comprehensive analysis and research on the situation at local level, EU policies and actions implemented as well as introduce local best practices to address the problem. International events will allow coordinating the work among the subgroup members as well as bringing all the partners together for discussing a broader strategy for inclusion of their territories into EU decision-making process.

The PROJECT FRAMEWORK is based on the metaphor of the window. The 4 planned international events will follow this path: 1. "Looking inside": the challenges of EU border territories ⇒ 2. "Looking outside": the role of EU in shaping territories and of border territories in shaping the EU ⇒ 3. "Looking out of the window and beyond": the role of border territories as bridges of the EU with its neighbors and beyond ⇒ 4. "Looking to the future": capitalization of the outcomes and follow-up (a Memorandum of Understanding and a joint action plan will be developed).

Based on these assumptions, BE ONE will employ participatory methods that aim at involving citizens and the major stakeholders in all the different steps of the project. The employed methodology will be characterized by an active interaction between all the actors involved, in order to encourage and support their active participation. Methods such as the OST (Open Space Technology), consensus workshops, world café, etc. will be used, together with IT-based tools, to encourage and facilitate interaction and participation.

The foreseen activities – as well as the participatory methodologies employed – will encourage the direct involvement of citizens and of the other major stakeholders in all the project's steps, strengthening their commitment towards their local community and to the EU.

The EU DIMENSION is remarked in all the aspects of the project: 1. in the geographical impact of the project, covering all the cardinal points of the EU 2. at the intercultural level, offering participants an unique opportunity to reflect, debate and act with different peoples, cultures, institutions 3. at the policy level, allowing people to have a say in the decision making process.

Dissemination:

BE ONE relies on a pronged and multilevel network involving local and regional authorities, civil society organisations and citizens actively engaged at political and social level. The representatives of the cities and towns chosen to take part to this ambitious project are crucial junctions between citizens and national institutions. In fact, they will have the fundamental task to refer to the superior levels about the outcomes and procedures agreed by the network established during the project, and evaluate the possibility to continue at regional or national level the mission of BE ONE. These cities and towns will also have the very important role of publicizing among their citizens the project, its aims, its results and its values. This will allow common citizens and more active ones to become aware of the huge role they have as essential actors in the EU. The MoU agreed during the project among the different partners foresees a detailed and effective action plan for undertaking future activities and action in the peripheral areas of the EU for further develop and implement – also after the end of the project – the objectives of BE ONE.

The visibility of the project and the dissemination of its results, in order to favour an effective transfer and exchange, is a fundamental pillar of the entire process and will be implemented through the following strategies/tools:

- The project WEBSITE (hosted by ALDA website, 3 million visits per year): it will be an on-line platform for exchange and discussion; it will gather relevant materials concerning the issues at stake; it will showcase of the project's implementation but also the tangible outcomes of BE ONE. It is an essential tool for guaranteeing the continuation of the scope of BE ONE once the project is ended.
- SOCIAL NETWORKS: these tools are very relevant considering that they actively involve the younger generations and that they are grass-root based.
- NEWSLETTERS: a special session of the monthly ALDA newsletter (sent to over 11.000 contacts in 5 languages – EN/FR/RS/RU/IT) will be dedicated to BE ONE.
- E-PUBLICATION: tool enabling local authorities at the EU borders to acquire the relevant knowledge of opportunities and procedures in order to become a proactive actor in the future development of the EU politics.
- Traditional MEDIA as written press, radio and television, will also be involved in the promotion and dissemination of the project, in order to encourage private and public interest. Partners will contribute by involving their press-offices.
- PRINTED MATERIALS will be distributed during workshops and other events, via mail and published online.

- A specific LOGO will be designed to ensure an easy but high visibility of the project.

All the partners will put a variety of MULTIPLYING ACTIONS (i.e. workshops, public presentations, etc.) in action within their action plans, even after the end of the project, to further multiply the results of BE ONE and grant an effective transfer and exchange.