



ANTONELLA VALMORBIDA

Candidate for the position of the
Secretary General of the Congress of the
Council of Europe (October 2022)

« *For a stronger Congress,
more relevant and
strategic* »

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25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BACK-TO-BACK WITH THE CONGRESS

I am honored to introduce myself to the Congress' members with more than 25 years of experience supporting local democracy in Europe and beyond. I know the Congress well, as I have built my career back-to-back with it. Democracy, development, and fair societies find fertile ground both at local and regional levels. The latter thus represent the basis on which all the rest of governance relies, and I strongly believe in this our cause. I have dedicated my life to it, seen great results and met unbelievable leaders. For this reason, starting from the goals achieved by the outgoing Secretary General, I am willing to put my experience and skills at your disposal **to make the Congress stronger, more relevant and strategic.**

I intend to do this with the members of Congress, with its political leadership and with the staff.

The Congress is a **UNIQUE** place of knowledge, dialogue and political orientation that is essential within the Council of Europe, in our member States and for our citizens. Not only it is **the guardian of local democracy**, but also it is a **strong promoter of changes** thus, ensuring democratic societies, human rights and rule of law as well as peace and sustainability for our planet.

I can interact directly (with great pleasure) with many of you.

I am **bilingual French and Italian**. I speak fluently at high **proficiency level, English and Russian**.

I have working capacities in **German, Spanish and Serbian**. I started **Arabic classes**. ([VIDEO](#))

WE CAN DO IT TOGETHER (MANIFESTO)

- **Stronger**

A stronger Congress would empower its **functioning methods and liaise with other institutions** at the CoE and national level and with other European organizations. The well-known difficulties in budget and funding (with limited resources for staff and actions), affecting the possibilities of the Congress, should be addressed with **innovative proposals by matching strategic partnerships and by making essential the role of the Congress and its deliverables**. A dedicated plan looking at internal CoE resources and external funding, as well as strategic partnerships, would be reassessed and followed up.



Figure 1 Opening LDA Mariupol, Dec 2017, Former Mayor of Gdansk, Pavel Adamovicz and Vadim Boichenko, Mayor of Mariupol Ukraine

The Congress should embark on a process of **further modernization**, while respecting the rules and procedures. It should be able **to react and act immediately**.

The question of the languages is a difficult one. I have dealt with this problem all my life. **We should investigate further means offered by technology**. We learned during the pandemic how to use Internet. Let's take the best out of it!

A stronger Congress is **a well-positioned institution within the Council of Europe, at the European Union level and within the international community**. We should work with networks and substantially empower our presence and role. A stronger Congress is **a well-attended and qualified Assembly**. The meetings should be **impactful with innovative methods of gathering and working, more interactive, with clear follow up identified**. A dialogue with **the national associations and other thematic networks** should be further improved. The strength of the Congress would be increased through a more assertive and efficient **communication**. This is a terribly difficult task these days, but a special focus will be dedicated to it, to further strengthen the path already started on digital innovation with a more **agile communication in more languages with key partnerships and cooperation**.

- **More relevant**

Local Democracy is the basis of democracy and not a second level political process! The Congress is not the smaller "chamber" of the political institutions of the Council of Europe: on the contrary it is its building block! We need **to identify and valorize the strong added value as a unique local democracy assembly, representing a large Europe**. My commitment is to find ways to help you to reach better standards for peace, democracy, and social and economic development. **We should speed up to have 100% monitoring of the Charter in 100% of the member States**, completing this basic document as for today's times. The **monitoring of the Charter and the elections' observations** must be core activities of the Congress. I propose to **improve the quality of this component by further embracing the**

spectrum of both our analyses, as well as on good practices, that could be shared. It is important that *all the countries could be equally involved in the rapporteurs' missions to have a shared approach to this crucial work of the Congress.*

The post monitoring and post elections should be accompanied by strong follow up activities, with possible synergies with other stakeholders and strategic partners. *Any declaration and steps at the political level should be followed up carefully.* Difficult questions deserve answers and should not be forgotten.

The selections of our topics of discussion and policy making – proposed by political bodies – should be *ambitious while addressing the reality and changing dynamics in local and regional governance.*

The Strategy of the Congress till 2026 mentions the need of overcoming the COVID 19 crisis. It goes now much further, *including the war in Ukraine and our responses to changes with the global scenario. Migration and environmental challenges bring us into a permanent crisis dimension* where local and regional authorities are



Figure 2 ALDA Team Council of Europe March 2022

the forefront. *Our strategies need to be evaluated yearly and adapted accordingly.* In changing times, *flexibility and reaction are essential.*

The first moment will be the midterm mandate of our Congress in 2023. In this perspective, in current times, a specific attention must be brought in our agenda to the *difficulties of representative democracy and citizens participation, extreme polarization of the political spectrum, reduction of inequalities in Europe, economic difficulties, environmental issues and development, solutions and challenges of digitalization.*



- **More strategic**

We need to create *forward-looking opportunities of partnership and alliances* within the Council of Europe, but also at the European Union and global level, while focusing on cooperation with associations of local authorities and other types of stakeholders. *Acting alone is not an option.* We need *ambition, vision, and leadership.* The allies working in the same directions are institutions, civil societies, international organizations, and even the private sector. It means that *we cannot afford to work on "business as usual"* and we need to identify new forms of working among us and with other partners.

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME: CHECK MY KEY ACHIEVEMENTS!

([KEY ACHIEVEMENTS](#) AND [FOTO GALLERY](#))

A SHORT GLANCE ON WHO I AM

I contributed to the creation of **ALDA European Association for Local Democracy** – a project established by the **Council of Europe and the Congress**, in 1999. Since then, I am its **Secretary General**. Before this, I worked 4 years in Croatia with the Congress for the **Local Democracy Agency in Sisak**. I have an extensive experience in promoting local democracy, strengthening and involving civil society at local level, and good local governance throughout Europe and globally. I am a **senior European consultant on local governance** issues and more particularly on the implementation of **participatory processes and decentralization** in support of local and regional authorities.



Figure 3 Congress session 2017, supporting civil society in Belarus

I lead **ALDA, an Association of 300 members – local authorities and associations of local elected officials** – in partnership with the European Union institutions and the Council of Europe. **ALDA has 5 offices, 50 staff members and a stable budget of 4,5 mil Euro, with a strong support from the European Commission**. I coordinate a network of **15 Local Democracy Agencies**, opened with the support of the Congress, associating hundreds of local authorities from all over Europe.

I have a long-life experience in working with the **Congress** but also with the **Directorate General Democracy** and the **Conference of the INGO**.

I have a senior experience in **management** of European projects on local governance and local authorities' empowerment, dealing with European Commission networks and funding. I am involved and familiar with the activities of worldwide stakeholders such as **UNDP and UN Habitat**.

I am the Chair of the **European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)** and member of the Steering Committee of the **Civil Society Convention on the Future from Europe**. I was the coordinator of the **Subgroup on Local Government and Public Administration Reform of the Civil Society Forum for the Eastern Partnership**. In 2012-13, I served as a board member of **CIVICUS** – the Global Alliance for Citizen Participation.

In 2022, I have been appointed **Chair of the Jury for the European Capital of Democracy**. I have an **academic career at the University of Padua**, Italy, and I published **three books** on decentralized cooperation and citizens' engagement at the local level to promote democracy as well as various articles and papers on the same matter.

I am Italian, born in Switzerland in 1968, I am married with Fabio since 1993 and we have three (now adults 😊) children. We live in Vicenza, Italy