

LEARNING SUSTAINABLE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

A TOOLKIT ON
DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES
AND FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES
FOR GRASSROOTS CITIZEN
ORGANIZATIONS IN EUROPE



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INTRODUCTION

There is an alarming rise of support for far-right parties and movements in Europe. They are generating xenophobic and racist sentiments against Muslims, Roma, Jews, migrants and refugees, and all those who are regarded as „different“. More worrying, is that far-right movements are often very well embedded in societies. Mainstream parties, instead of standing up unanimously to promote human rights, are shifting to the right in order to capture votes. In the current situation, it is becoming crucial all over Europe to strengthen and extend a strong network of citizen organizations which are grassroots, involve local people, address local problems, but at the same time show a willingness to shape national policies in solidarity with minorities and people living in poverty. In this political climate, we need organizations which are politically conscious to promote the value of welcoming and inclusive communities and to build democracy from the bottom up by taking action and holding local — as well as national — decision-makers accountable.

Building membership-based organizations is not easy, but all of us have the roots of organizing in our historic traditions if we dig into our past or keep an eye open toward current trends. To be sure, post-communist countries have in the last two decades faced a backlash of strong individualistic characteristics after the top-down emphasis on forced community work and volunteering of the old regimes. While we are witnessing a revival of the civic ethos after the transition as tens of thousands of civil society organizations (CSOs) have been established, people are still not overly inclined to get involved in community life and to work together with their neighbors to achieve common purposes or to solve common issues. This has many reasons but it is partly because CSOs usually lack the structures that would enable them to work with a large membership in a democratic way. Even if they consist of “ordinary” citizens (non-professionals), CSOs often operate with a small board, or run as a one-man show, and they do not do consistent community outreach. In addition, people retain a mistrust in democratic institutions that affect confidence in their ability to produce change through civic action. Therefore, many civil society organizations end up carrying out tasks which they have taken over from the state (such

as service provision) or organizing cultural or sporting events instead of attempting to change the policies of their public institutions. Thus, they exist in a dependent status, and rarely achieve control of state power or manage to decentralize decision-making into the community. Therefore, it is of high importance to provide and promote organizational structures which allow working with a large membership in a democratic way which also have the capacity to hold authorities accountable to the community.

Over almost the last two years, six organizations in six European countries have carried out concerted activities to increase their knowledge of how citizen organizations can build democratic structures in the framework of the European Commission’s **Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme** (Bona Fides Association, Poland; Center for Community Organizing, Slovakia; Forum Community Organizing, Germany; Minority Rights Group Europe, Hungary; Resource Center for Public Participation, Romania; Social Investment Management Center, Lithuania). The overall goal of the project **“Learning Sustainable Citizen Participation: Democratic Structures and Fundraising Strategies for Grassroots Citizen Organizations”** was to increase the level of sustainability of citizen participation in Europe. All partners involved in this project have been engaged in local citizen participation work for a number of years, have had successes related to building small initiative groups at the local level, and have helped address and solve local issues through collective action. Through formal and informal learning methods, the project sought to address the challenges related to sustainable citizen participation, in particular people’s reluctance to build and become members of civic organizational structures and raise funds in the community for their local civic work.

Throughout the project we promoted the method of community organizing through trainings and practice. In the process of community organizing, people who do not have a say in the decision-making process organize for social change and to rearrange unfair power inequalities by establishing non-hierarchical citizen organizations – organizations in the structural sense not necessarily in the legal sense. Based on community

organizing, the roots of social and economic injustice are sought by focusing on the unequal distribution of power and resources among social groups. Therefore, community members ultimately organize for a more equal redistribution of power and resources by influencing the decision-making processes through democratic means. In the process of community organizing, the organizer listens to the issues of the community and helps build an organization from the members of that community so that they can themselves take action according to their needs. Community organizing focuses on leadership development and encourages members to use a variety of campaigning tactics from petitions to civil disobedience in order to have decision-makers address the demands of the community.

In this publication we share eight examples of community engagement from the six project countries. There are examples of implementing community organizing, community development, or other forms of community intervention, as well as examples of grassroots fundraising. Some of them are encouraging in their victories, some of them are instructive in their challenges, and all of them are examples of community members taking action at a local level to make a change.

The first story is told by **Forum Community Organizing** (FOCO) (Germany), which gives an insightful picture of the organizational structure of the citizen organization **Malstatt-gemeinsam stark**. It describes in details how this organization in Saarbrücken was set up and tells us about the different types of decision-making, roles and field of responsibilities in a group's life.

Then we can read an interview with Barbara, a community leader of the **Kukuczki Housing Estate Initiative** in Katowice, who shares her experience about outreach to new members, leadership development and other organizational practices. The interview was done by **Bona Fides Association** (Poland), which has supported the organizing process there.

The third story is about a firewood campaign carried out in Hungary. It is told by **Minority Rights Group Europe** (MRG) (Hungary) which, together with other **organizations** and the community organization **Citizens United**, launched a campaign in which local citizens asked their mayor to apply for a state-fund-

ed firewood program in order to get free firewood to low-income families. The campaign is a good example of an attempt to bridge the gap between local and national issues. The challenges of organizing for small and winnable issues—a principle of organizing—are presented by the same organization separately in the text box accompanying the story.

The fourth story serves as insight for those who have experienced cultural barriers in community organizing. **Center for Community Organizing** (CKO) (Slovakia) tell us about an event, a tolerance festival for Roma and non-Roma held in the Sasova neighborhood in Banska Bystrica. The tolerance festival unfortunately ended with verbal racial abuse at the festival site and outside on the way home, which could have deepened distrust within the community. The story gives us a great example of how the organizers eased the damage, started advocating to the local authorities to avoid that such thing happens again. They actually turned the conflict into a victory by pressing the city council to issue a resolution in favor of the security of the Roma.

The fifth story, told by the **Resource Center for Public Participation** (CeRe) (Romania) is also about conflict management, however, this time among the members of a citizen organization. The organizer tells us his lessons learned in **Lacul Tei neighborhood** in Bucharest about how the involvement of new members can change the group dynamics and can even weaken the group if there are no organizational policies in place for their integration.

Social Investment Management Center (Lithuania) shares the next story about the Paparčiai village community, which started an initiative to restore an old baroque chapel in the settlement. We learn how this project brought further perspectives for the community organization and helped raise funds.

And this theme leads us to the last two stories, both about grassroots fundraising. **Center for Community Organizing** (CKO) (Slovakia) and **Forum Community Organizing** (FOCO) (Germany) reiterate the importance of financial stability and independence and prove that an organization which enjoys the support of its community can turn its positive reputation into an opportunity to raise funds from local inhabitants.

KEY POINTS

- ✔ Keep pushing even if the decision-makers do not seem to be paying attention. A consistent campaign can open up doors which have been closed for a long time.
- ✔ Put emphasis on leadership development. Community members who can take up coordinating roles and understand democratic group work are key to organizing.
- ✔ Spend enough time building the organization. A stable structure with clear roles and responsibilities as well as transparent conditions of membership keeps organizing sustainable.
- ✔ Victories in the locality are important, but at the same time, keep an eye on the national agenda and help engage the local community in issues with national scope.
- ✔ Be aware of cultural or other differences which can cause misunderstanding and conflict within the group or between groups.
- ✔ An organization which enjoys the support of its community can turn its good reputation into a tool to raise money from the local inhabitants. Financial stability and independence are important.

GERMANY – FORUM COMMUNITY ORGANIZING (FOCO): BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION, MALSTATT-GEMEINSAM STARK

By Siegfried Gress, Anne-Marie Marx and Paul Cromwell

Introduction and background

The greater Malstatt area is a neighborhood of 30,000 residents many of whom are migrants, low-income, and unemployed in the city of Saarbrücken, Germany. The neighborhood office of Diakonie (German Protestant Church social service organization) decided in late 2007 to begin using community organizing strategies in their work. Following a three-step process of listening, research, and solving problems, residents in Malstatt had their first success in July 2008 when the city council committed to replace an old footbridge connecting the two halves of neighborhood with a new 1.1 million EUR structure. Over 2,800 signatures were gathered in support of repairing or replacing the footbridge. Over 40 neighbourhood organizations (churches and clubs) and professionals (shop owners, doctors, etc.) wrote support statements and a public meeting of 125 residents was held with leaders of the four political parties represented in the Saarbrücken City Council. Besides the very tangible result of the new footbridge, residents learned that their ideas and actions can make a difference, that citizen participation has direct benefits.

Following this initial victory, Diakonie continued in the following years to mobilize residents and neighborhood stakeholders (schools, churches, migrants, etc.) to work with city officials. Accomplishments included a major clean-up and infrastructure renovation of Kirchberg neighborhood, a large green space surrounded by a school, kindergarten and two churches. However, there was no citizen organization. Decisions about the neighborhood were often made in an ad hoc way by ever-changing groups of city officials, NGO staff and other stakeholders without consideration given to residents' input. Staffing from the Diakonie office was insufficient to help gather input from and mobilize citizens for their concerns.

From March to September 2013 Diakonie, in partnership with the city, received funding from the German

national government for a “Bottom Up” project, specifically aimed at organizing area residents in a more systematic way. Therefore, parallel to this work of listening to and mobilizing Malstatt residents there existed a process of developing a democratic and sustainable citizen organization.



Photo 1: New playground equipment in the neighborhood green space of Kirchberg, 2014
Credit: FOCO

Steps in building a democratic neighborhood organization and results

The process of building a formal citizens organization began in September 2012 with input from a consultant experienced in community organizing. Elements of organizational structure—such as written rules, leadership roles and responsibilities, legal status, board and committee structures, election processes, membership requirements, guiding values, etc.—were reviewed by the active core group of 25 citizens.

Discussions about an organizational structure took longer than originally expected. A committee charged with providing suggestions for a written set of rules met and reported to the larger group over the course of an entire year. The group struggled to find a potential model structure from elsewhere to copy because most German associations are formed as a “Verein”

which often has a large membership but small core group that does everything for the group. Concerns were expressed about not becoming overly bureaucratic, the need to remain flexible and efficient, the need to be non-partisan, whether forming a structure would be too time-consuming and costly, and whether to become a legally registered organization. However, the group also saw the advantages of having a clear and transparent structure for fundraising and decision-making purposes.

On October 15, 2013, over twenty residents gathered to debate and vote on the final draft of the organization's constitution and elect the first steering group (board of directors). At the conclusion of the meeting, over a dozen people paid dues, becoming the initial organizational members.

Malstatt-gemeinsam stark (MaGS – Malstatt-Strong Together) consists of a Board of Directors with 5 people who are elected by the membership for a two-year term. This group meets regularly to make ongoing decisions for the organization. The dues-paying membership currently consists of 47 individuals, a number of whom speak on behalf of other organizations in which they are active (churches, NGOs, etc.). Once a month an open meeting is held for members and non-members to gain input about MaGS activities. The organization has established a bank account and has conducted a number of fundraisers. However, MaGS decided to wait before becoming a legal organization, feeling that it would be good to “test” the new organizational structure before formally registering. MaGS is an active participant in, and receives



Photo 2: MaGS Board of Directors, July, 2014
Credit: Werner Lorscheider



Photo 3: MaGS President Siegfried Gress leads a planning workshop for the Social City Program, March, 2014
Credit: Sadija Kavgic-van-Weert

consulting and training assistance from, the **Forum Community Organizing** (FOCO). MaGS leaders and staff also participate in meetings and trainings of the **European Community Organizing Network** (ECON).

A long-term staff person from the the Diakonie neighborhood office remarked, “Since the establishment of a formal citizen organization in the Malstatt neighborhood, the city politicians and administration take the concerns of residents more seriously.” A major recent accomplishment of MaGS is that the city of Saarbrücken, along with the regional and national government, have designated Malstatt as a “Social City” project, giving the neighborhood the opportunity to receive significant and long-term financial and personnel support for infrastructure and other improvements. The President of MaGS states, “We still need to develop our organizational structure. For example, at the moment our Board does too much of the work without an effective committee structure. But we just opened an office, we are organizing around a number of themes, and we are very excited about the improvements which will come with the Social City program.” Another MaGS leader commented, “Now the residents, not staff, lead neighborhood efforts. It was not easy establishing an organization, but we are already seeing benefits.”

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POLAND – BONA FIDES ASSOCIATION: KUKUCZKI HOUSING ESTATE INITIATIVE

By Iwona Nowak

Since January 2013, [Bona Fides Association](#) has been supporting one of the local initiatives in Katowice – [Kukuczki Housing Estate Initiative](#) (Inicjatywa-Osiedle Kukuczki). The initiative was established in March 2013 and it currently has 15 active members.

In January 2013, Bona Fides Association's community organizer conducted more than 120 interviews with inhabitants of the estate and learned what makes people angry and what they want to see changed in their neighborhood. Subsequently, we organized meetings with the inhabitants, and we set up a civic group with the help of active citizens expressing a desire to work for the local community. The group "Kukuczki Housing Estate Initiative" decided to focus on two of the largest issues in the neighborhood: the low number of parking places and the inadequate management of green areas.

Results we are proud of:

- mobilizing and raising awareness about the poor number of parking places, for example, by organizing a Neighbor Day and by gathering evidence that confirmed that it is possible to allocate more parking spaces in the neighborhood;
- taking action such as collecting 167 signatures in support of creating a new parking lot and submitting a list of recommendations, as well as a proposal for cooperation with the Administration and the Settlement Council;
- monitoring the cleanliness of the neighborhood and holding the relevant authorities accountable;
- organizing an "accountability session" with the mayor of Katowice in the neighbourhood;
- raising funds through Polish grants and resources such as "Green bench" financed by the Bank for Environmental Protection; through "Let's do it together!"; a local initiative of the City Hall in Katowice; and within the city's participatory budgeting process around the establishment of Family Activity Point in Kocurek Square.

Interview with Barbara Kaczyńska – leader of the Kukuczki Housing Estate Initiative on building the organization

❑ How do you reach out to new members? What recruitment methods have you used?

Based on our experience, one of the most effective ways to reach out to new inhabitants is word-of-mouth marketing. We talk to our close neighbors, friends, relatives and encourage them to join. We have a [Facebook page](#) which we use to promote our current activities. Additionally, we organize activities in our Housing Estate such as events where we promote our campaigns; for example, the Neighbour Day, which we organized in September 2014, or we hang posters and distribute leaflets in the flats and in any public places such as the local library, the Cultural House, etc.

We have been actively working in our neighborhood for almost 2 years and throughout this period our group has become more visible. More and more inhabitants come to our monthly meetings or talk to us on the street and share their concerns.

❑ Have you ever tried door-knocking to recruit new members?

In the beginning of 2014, we celebrated the first anniversary of our Initiative. In December, our Promotion Working Group prepared special „Christmas” newspaper for inhabitants of the Kukuczki Housing Estate. Therein, we informed people about our current campaigns and plans for 2014. We distributed it by knocking on people's doors and trying to engage with them. Subsequently, we invited all those to whom we talked to the monthly meeting in January 2014. The meeting was attended by around 30 people and it was a great success.

❑ Is there an initiation process for new members?

Every new person coming to our monthly meeting is invited by one of the Initiative Members who is chairing the gathering. We provide a brief story of our Initiative and current campaigns and we ask every member to introduce themselves. Then, we request the new person to say a few words about themselves, what their self-interest is, how she/he found out about the group, etc.

❑ How do you enable new members to take up new roles? In other words, how do you build leadership?

If a new person is interested in joining any of our actions, we assign them with a small task (for example, writing an official letter to the local authorities). In our opinion, the more people are accountable to do something, the more they will identify with our group. Besides that, we have a system of membership dues. If a new person attends 3 monthly meetings in a row, she/he has to pay dues.

❑ How do you make decisions in your organization?

We have established a rule of majority voting. Prior to voting, we discuss the issue in-depth so that the voice of each member can be heard.

❑ How do you plan actions?

For instance, most recently we applied for a public grant „Green Bench” that was financed by the Bank for Environmental Protection. First, we chose a team of members who were willing to work on the application. Secondly, we divided work between ourselves, prepared an outline and then elaborated the project proposal. Thanks to that, the application was written smoothly and we succeeded. In July 2014, we started implementing the project „Bench of 5 senses” that envisaged an animation of the surroundings near Kurpiowska Street in Katowice.

❑ How do you choose/appoint people for different roles?

Our Initiative has its own structure that was established years ago. We have a leader that supervises the activities of the Initiative, I would say she is the „driving force” for all actions we do. There are also three working groups that take care of different matters:

- Promotion Working Group that deals with the promotion of the Initiative (writing press releases, running [our profile on Facebook](#), etc.);
- Green Management Working Group that deals with the campaign to improve green areas in the neighborhood;
- Infrastructure Working Group that focuses in particular on the campaign to establish new parking places in the Housing Estate.



Photo 4: The Kukuczki Housing Estate Initiative
Credit: Bona Fides

Moreover, there is a Treasurer, a minutes taker and a two-person team responsible for fundraising.

Every 6 months we organize elections for the above-mentioned positions, which are held during one of our monthly meetings. Amongst the members of the group that are present in the meeting, we ask the person who is in charge of the given function, for example the Treasurer, whether she/he is willing to hold this position for the term of the following 6 months. If so, we confirm her/his nomination by undertaking decisions by rule of majority voting. If a person in charge does not want to run again, we ask each member present at the meeting whether she or he wants to be appointed and hold a new position. In such a case, we also confirm such a nomination by majority voting.

❑ How do you develop leaders in the organization?

We try to provide every member with a possibility to grow and improve his/her skills through, for example, participation in workshops, opportunities to chair a monthly meeting, etc. The best way to develop leadership skills is to assign a member with a task or a specific role like, for example, the coordinator of one of the working groups.

Moreover, Bona Fides Association supports our group and occasionally conducts trainings and workshops for members on topics such as: writing press releases, leadership skills, fundraising, access to public information, etc. As a result, our members have increased their knowledge and skills necessary for effective work in the public sphere and over time have become more professional community leaders.

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SMALL AND WINNABLE ISSUE: SHOULD ORGANIZERS START ORGANIZING APATHETIC AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS FIRST AROUND “IMMEDIATE AND WINNABLE” ISSUES?

By Bernadett Sebály

The tactic of organizing around “immediate and winnable” issues holds out the promise that a quick victory on **a small issue** (a parking space, a stop sign, garbage delivery or bus service change) can give impetus for the organization and the members to grow, which is essential for a bigger campaign. This approach builds on the tradition of **Saul Alinsky**, a community organizer who elaborated the process of organizing and contributed a great deal to make it a profession. Without dismissing the merits of this tactic, however, community organizers often forget to consider its pitfalls, which may arise in particular because they set the standards too low by choosing a “small” issue at the very start.

Is it really an effective strategy when a new organization sticks to “small and winnable issues”, fighting for a parking space, stop signs or garbage delivery? In the last decade of community organizing, has the gap between small and winnable issues and big and significant social issues in fact shown itself to be bridgeable? Does this really lead us to long-term social change, asks Gary Delgado (American researcher, lecturer, activist, one of the founding members and organizers of ACORN) in his article from 1998 **The Last Stop Sign**.

Right-wing grassroots efforts, which would close abortion clinics, would put gays and lesbians back into the closet, he says, have never organized for stop signs. These groups, he adds, know that “good organizing issues are deeply felt, controversial.” Delgado does not want to deny traditional methods of community organizing: empowering grassroots community leaders, organizing a wide democratic base, or community learning through which marginalized people can prove that they can articulate their issues and that they do not need anointed experts. He does not intend to dismiss real victories either: the improvement of public housing, school reform, tax reform. But he also says that commu-

nity organizing often has “misconceived notions of wins” and “is almost completely separate from the parallel world of progressive activism” which, he thinks, achieved significant results (women’s movement, gay and lesbian movement, immigrant movement, etc.).

The essence and merit of community organizing is the building of a community infrastructure, which can lay the foundations of a new movement, or can enhance an existing one. Naturally, the progressive activist movements, which Delgado hailed, could not have evolved to their full potential without an existing community infrastructure, through which participants could mobilize one another. And therefore, it is essential that neighborhood groups fight for less spectacular, smaller issues so that group identity can shape and citizen participation can become a familiar phenomenon. Accepting all this, it is important what Delgado in 1998 said, “if traditional CO [community organizing] is to become a force for change in the millennium and beyond, it must proactively address issues of race, class, gender, corporate concentration, and the complexities of a transnational economy.”

In the U.S., where community organizing is embedded into a strong movement tradition and is closely connected with organizing to put pressure on the decision-makers, it should of course be self-evident for many that small issues are only a tool to organize for long-term goals while building community infrastructure. Therefore, when we talk about the Alinsky-tradition in a new context, e.g., in Europe, (a place outside its progressive, historic context) in an unavoidably distilled manner, it is important that these tactics gain ground in a way that they have **resonance to the current progressive social events of the actual country**. In short, we must avoid simply interpreting it as a methodology, deprived of its original context and set of values.

HUNGARY – MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP EUROPE (MRG): FIREWOOD CAMPAIGN IN HUNGARY – CONNECTING THE LOCAL WITH THE NATIONAL THROUGH A SMALL AND WINNABLE ISSUE

By Bernadett Sebály

A few years ago in a small village in Hungary on a winter day, B. went to the nearby forest to get firewood to heat the house. After 2 long hours had passed, B's wife started to become more and more nervous. "He must have been caught by the police, and he will be put in jail," she said worryingly. The afternoon was terrible. Finally, the man came home with a big branch from a tree – he had saved his skin this time.

In Hungary, since 2013 cutting even a little branch of wood illegally is considered to be a crime, and it can even entail a two-year jail sentence. According to the [2014 collection of data](#) by the Hungarian Roma Press Agency, it is common that people cutting wood illegally end up in jail, even those who take just a small amount of wood, even if it is picked up from the ground, or is decayed. These harsh legal conditions are tools in the hands of the state to keep poor, in particular Roma people, on the edge. The situation is even more disappointing if we take a closer look at the housing situation. According to a [research](#) in 2012, hundreds of thousands of people in Hungary cannot afford to heat their homes to an appropriate temperature. The heat is easily lost from dilapidated, badly insulated houses. [The largest proportion](#) of these worst equipped houses (those not equipped with indoor plumbing or flushable toilets, sewage systems, or warm running water) are found in Northern Hungary and in the north of the Great Plains, specifically in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.

This is the housing and legal context in which a state-funded firewood program was launched 4 years ago in Hungary. The government benefit program, which gained extensive media attention, was designed to allow local municipalities to apply for state-funded firewood. In the case of a successful application, the municipality receives a specific amount of wood that can be distributed in their settlement among the needy. This government-initiated benefit program is obviously an inadequate answer to the energy poverty of those Hungarians who live under poor housing conditions, in badly insulated houses and cannot afford to heat their rooms to an appropriate temperature. The programme allows only 10 days for local municipalities to apply for the firewood, and only a small amount of firewood (1-5 m³, enough for 1-4 weeks) can be distributed per house-

hold and only in settlements under the population of 5,000 can apply.

Yet, a large proportion of local municipalities did not apply for the firewood programme despite the huge demand in their villages for any contribution in firewood (mayors said it causes more conflict than help due to the small amount; they referred to the costs of transport to the local municipality, etc.). Even though this state programme has obvious shortcomings, we thought that it is a waste of resources to leave this pool of money in the state budget. In addition, we made the assumption that this issue is small and winnable to the extent that local leaders could mobilize around it.

Those who organize in small settlements or in marginalized communities know how risky it is to engage in the struggle for a social cause. Organizing with the aim that the mayor who did not apply for the grant in the previous years will do so now as a result of community pressure involves confrontation. Still, the level of risk was bearable even in a small settlement; community members were motivated by the need for their local municipality to apply for a firewood grant from the state – a state-funded firewood programme which is already available. We found that the firewood campaign therefore could be an appropriate issue to encourage community involvement, mobilize the community, and increase the power of the community.

This issue was important also because it frames three nationwide problems: the energy poverty of the Hungarian population, in particular the Roma; the injustice around the intense criminalization of stealing wood which provides opportunity for ethnic discrimination; and the dissatisfactory measures of social politics. So in 2014 we launched a campaign as a pilot project to test whether other organizations or local communities are receptive to the idea of organizing for state-funded firewood. The campaign was carried out together with the [Civil College Foundation](#) and it had three levels: 1. Community actions in two settlements. 2. Information campaign and website. 3. Energy Poverty Roundtable with the [Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network](#) on International Anti-Poverty Day. For more information on the campaign, and the lessons learned from the community organizing process, please read this study [here](#) in Hungarian.

In this short case study, you can read the summary of the events told by a community leader and programme partner, Sándor Csóka on behalf of **Citizens United** based in one of the participating settlements, Borsodbóta.

For many families in Borsodbóta, it is very difficult to sort out heating in winter. Those who heat with firewood need to go to the forest and get it illegally, with varying degrees of success. Many of the people trying to collect wood this way have gotten caught and have been fined or put in jail.

Therefore, we have tried to assess the needs of the population and to find solutions relevant in 2014. We tried to visit the nearby forestry and the owners of the private forests so that they can help by contributing firewood for the local inhabitants. Unfortunately, this was not successful. Then we heard that in a nearby settlement in the previous year people were given state-funded firewood. This captured our imagination and we got in touch with the head of the minority self-government (state-guaranteed representation attained in national elections which provides minorities in Hungary with cultural autonomy) in Farkaslyuk.

We started to plan how we could get “free” firewood to this settlement. And then the big opportunity came when American community organizers were invited to Borsodbóta on June 4, 2014. We tried to invite as many local organizations to the meeting as possible. We also invited the local mayor with whom we had not been able to arrange an appointment for a long time because he had always dismissed our requests by referring to his other duties. So we invited him in his position as the head of the local Firemen’s Association and not as the mayor. He accepted the invitation and we started to plan accordingly.

I got in touch with Bernadett Sebály, who joined as the interpreter for the two American trainers. We knew each other from earlier; she worked here in Borsodbóta and taught us many useful things. I shared our plan with her and asked her to talk to the trainers to tell them about our plans and ask them to try to get a verbal promise from our mayor that he commits himself to apply for the state-funded firewood.

The big day had come and everything went as we planned and organized. The mayor promised that he will get in touch within two weeks with settlements which have experience in applying for the state-funded firewood, then he will report back to us and we will continue the talks.

After the meeting a couple of us sat together and we wrote a reminder to the mayor and we designed the next steps. Unfortunately, no answer has come so we handed over the reminder to the mayor personally—still no follow-up from the mayor. So we tried to mobilize other contacts to help us in the further planning. On behalf of the Civil College Foundation, Péter Peták came to help us, and tried to arrange an appointment with the mayor. After two months of nagging on the phone and in person, he gave us an appointment for further talks. We were not late because there was still time until the application would be advertised. In the meantime, we started to collect signatures and spread the word among the people about our firewood campaign plans and many people supported us with their signatures.

The day of the meeting had come and Péter came earlier so we could talk a little and plan the meeting with the mayor. We met a totally different mayor when we came to the meeting. He took notes and it seemed that he was taking seriously the idea of helping us. We assessed the meeting as successful.

In the beginning of October 2014, the application came out and we did not have much time so we got in touch with the mayor and our allies again. Together we achieved that in our settlement 108 families received 1 m³ of firewood. Our group undertook an effort to distribute the wood so that everybody got an equal portion. The local Roma minority self-government undertook to pay for part of the fuel and gave assistance in the delivery.

By Sándor Csóka, Citizens United

The article is based on the study **Közösségsszervezéssel a szociális tűzifaért** [Organizing for state-funded firewood] written by Bernadett Sebály – Máté Varga – Péter Peták – Tímea Éva Kovács.

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SLOVAKIA – CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING (CKO): CULTURAL BARRIERS IN BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION – WORKING IN ROMA COMMUNITIES

By Chuck Hirt

Background information

Banska Bystrica is one of the five largest cities in Slovakia. With its nearly 80,000 inhabitants, it is the administrative and cultural center of Central Slovakia. Banska Bystrica has about 5,000 Roma. The largest part of the population of Banska Bystrica lives in the typical post-socialist settlement, the Sasova neighborhood. There are around 25,000 people living there. Roma represent only a small amount of the residents of Sasova.

In 2013, the Banská Bystrica region also experienced the election of a neo-Fascist leader. The **Center for Community Organizing** (CKO) suggested an idea of creating a local platform based on a U.S. non-profit organization's example which is called "**Not In Our Town**" (NIOT). The platform was formed in early 2014.

CKO has been working in Sasova which included work with the majority community as well as assisting a group of Roma who live mainly in a small settlement on the edge of Sásová. Both communities complained about frequent entry of cars through their settlement, so one of the first campaigns that the group agreed to work on related to the issue of traffic. For this reason, they started communicating with the city of Banska Bystrica with proposed solutions. The group was promised that their suggestions would be implemented.

Further cooperation with Roma communities has occurred with another small community living in the villages of Senic and Skalica. The work was made possible with the support and involvement of the citizens' initiative Hope for Children. In this partnership, as well as in conjunction with NIOT, we organized a "festival of tolerance and understanding" in Sasova. The festival allowed Roma and non-Roma interaction including a presentation of Roma culture and work in Roma communities. Our goal was to create a space for meetings and presentation of different minorities and subcultures that are part of the Sasova community. We wanted to highlight the diversity and uniqueness of the community of those that live close to the housing estate. We managed to involve Roma as well as a Russian community who enriched the

artistic program and offered traditional food. In addition, we tried to inform people about the various activities of NIOT.

The tolerance festival unfortunately ended with verbal racial abuse at the festival site itself and a separate incident on a bus as Roma children who performed returned to their village and were verbally abused by another passenger on the bus. Both incidents left an awful taste for those who attended and word spread throughout the Roma communities in particular, especially in Senica. The information about the attacks made it to all of the Roma communities.

We decided that we could not let these incidents alone. We met with several people involved with the incidents as well as planners of the event. We came to the conclusion that we needed to address the problem of safety for Roma. We started work on a campaign for safety, especially with Roma parents (in particular, mothers) from Senica. Several meetings were held in which we gradually defined the strategy, clarified the basic problem and the goal of our efforts. The first action under this campaign was to attend the next meeting of the City Council in September where members of the group spoke. Participants held posters when the presentations were made to City Council. The local Parliament approved two resolutions in support of the group's demands. The first was a motion that the City Chief of Police would meet with the group's representatives and cooperate on methods to improve security for Roma in Banska Bystrica. The second was similar in directing the Head of Schools to meet with representatives of the group to develop and implement a program related to tolerance and racism.

The meeting with the Chief of Police was held about a month after the resolution and began an important conversation. While the Chief offered many excuses for why he could not implement a new training program for police, he did agree to several other measures to improve security. The group intends to continue working on ways to improve police interaction with Roma. Progress has been made with setting up a program in schools with a plan to implement this in target schools in September.

WHAT WE LEARNED AND WHAT OBSTACLES WE FACED

The new group won a significant victory with the two city council resolutions. We were able to turn an initial disaster into something positive. There was a serious problem following Tolerance Day that the event would never happen again and organizers were blamed for not giving enough attention to prevent that these kind of things should happen. It was important that something positive should result and the success at City Council helped to change this perspective. Normally, these kinds of incidents are simply met with anger and resentment and a further erosion of hope.

However, there were four important related cultural issues that we faced. The first and most important was related to trust. The near disaster that resulted at the end of Tolerance Day severely affected trust. There had been a certain amount of positive trust that had been built in the preparations for the event. These were completely dashed and broadly spread when the two racist incidents occurred. There was considerable skepticism that anything good could come from any of this. The focus on making sure that something positive was achieved was important and helped to restore trust.

The second issue is distance. Unlike the work in other urban highrise neighborhoods, the Roma community is a series of small settlement-like locations. While small local issues that are specific to that locality can be worked on, larger issues like the safety of Roma require working to bring in citizens from many different Roma communities. It is more complicated to bring people together when they are scattered around the city.

A third cultural issue was the difference between civil society leaders and ordinary citizens. Civil society leaders made things more difficult following the two racist incidents when they accused the organizers of not adequately preparing and were pessimistic of anything being able to be done to solve things. Their support would have been helpful but instead we had to overcome their resistance. Citizens were more open to working together.

The final issue was the importance of having a Roma organizer. It made considerable difference that the organizer was Roma and could establish credibility with the community.

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ROMANIA - RESOURCE CENTER FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (CeRe): BUILDING THE GROUP AND DEALING WITH GROUP DYNAMICS – CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

By Vlad Cătuță

“..no group can be entirely harmonious, for it would then be devoid of process and structure” (Lewis A. Coser, *The functions of Social Conflict*)

In May 2014, I started to work as a community organizer for the **Resource Center for Public Participation** (CeRe). I was assigned to the **Lacul Tei Initiative Group**, a neighbourhood organization that was built with the help of CeRe in late 2009. My mission was unclear due to my lack of experience, but also because of the uncertain dynamics of community organizing. The project meant to create new opportunities for the informal initiative groups we were working with such as increasing their leadership skills, bringing new members and supporters for planned advocacy activities, publishing a neighborhood newspaper, etc.

By that time, Lacul Tei Initiative Group had won several campaigns: they had achieved that local authorities allowed car owners to park their cars on the boulevard; they managed to convince the public administration to pave an alley in the neighborhood; they achieved that the A.L.P.A.B. institution rehabilitated Circului Park, etc. Due to the success of Circului Park, Lacul Tei Group was awarded with the first prize at the Civil Society Gala in June 2014. After this event, the group was heavily exposed in the media (radio interviews, TV coverage, social media). They were strong, powerful — they were successful.

The group I inherited as a community organizer had a core group of about 5 active members with 2 leaders plus an email list with 35 contacts from the neighborhood. The first step for me was to build relations with these people. My goal was to get to know their self-interest better and find out what they wanted to see changed in the future. Our first two months together were very productive. We had a lot of group discussions, they organized a world café to see what were the latest issues locals had in their neighborhood, they had an event in the park to celebrate International Children's Day, had meetings with local authorities,

participated in other events organized by CeRe. I had the good impression we were becoming “friends”.

It was summer and members of the group felt they needed a holiday. At the end of the summer, the group had a strategic planning meeting where they decided how they would continue to work. Two working groups were constituted, one focused on solving new issues related to Circului Park, and the other committed itself to opposing a local council decision.

During the next 3 months, I experienced the group losing interest in their plans. One of the leaders became really busy with work, the other one became a father, plus there were no hot issues in the neighborhood, which would have triggered immediate action. Some letters to request public information from local authorities were sent. However, the active core was becoming inactive.

I felt the real pressure of my work when I started to talk about two new grants with the core group. The two projects elaborated by CeRe offered a lot of opportunities for the group such as workshops, a neighborhood day, advocacy campaigns, a neighborhood newspaper, theater, etc., which they were supposed to implement. However, it did not happen this way. The core group wasn't showing any real interest in doing all these activities. They did not see them as opportunities. (Of course, I was responsible for not knowing how to present all these activities as opportunities. Later on, I found out that the activities were regarded more as assignments. There was a lot of talking and planning going on, but no action. Feeling the pressure of achieving the objectives from the two projects, and knowing the old Chinese saying “Talking will not cook the rice,” I started to recruit new members from the neighborhood.

This became the hot spot for conflict. The next month, during the weekly meetings, I introduced some newly recruited, young member (“This is Dorin. He found

about the Lacul Tei Initiative Group and he wants to be part of the group”). They were willing to get involved and they started “to cook the rice” (preparing an advocacy campaign, planning a neighborhood day, working on the newspaper, being active in the group discussion and the online platform). I started to shift my attention from the old members to the new members, in a way “abandoning” the old structures. I was building relations with the new members, but totally ignored some basic facts: Lacul Tei at that time had neither a set of statutes nor a mission or a vision defined; old members had a strong ownership of the group; there was neither a mechanism for including new members nor a strategy for building relations between old and new members. I was holding the relations “on the leash.” From one mistake to another, step by step, conflict was approaching. It was simmering and one spark was enough to trigger it.

It all started with a proposal: a petition to stop local authorities for implementing a one-way street campaign in the neighborhood. A new member drafted the document and sent it for feedback to the group’s email list. Pandora’s box was opening. Old members of the group started to aggressively criticize the document without proposing solutions. An argument arose between new and old members. It was spreading like cancer to all the activities that were planned by the group. Emotions, tensions, frustrations were everywhere in the air, during weekly meetings and daily emails. In this process, I showed more sympathy with the new members. I felt very frustrated that my work of bringing new members in the group was not appreciated. And this was making things worse.

At the end, CeRe, the group leaders, and the new members together decided to undergo a mediation



Photo 5: The Lacul Tei Initiative Group
Credit: CeRe

process. The meeting was facilitated by an external facilitator and the results were positive.

Lessons learned:

- Conflict is a form of socialization. Both positive and negative factors build group relations.
- It is a must for a group to have its mission, vision and values defined. Each time a new member is recruited, he/she should see these crystal clear.
- Mechanisms for integrating new members are necessary. It is important to find mechanism to build relations between new and old members.
- The community organizer must be focused on the organizing process and has to remain objective at all times.

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LITHUANIA – SOCIAL INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT CENTER: PAPARČIAI COMMUNITY – AN ARTISTIC PROJECT

By Milda Lukoševičiūtė

A small village in Lithuania, Paparčiai, has a vivid cultural life. The local community organization, **Kaimų bendruomenė Viltija** has implemented several historic conservation projects of cultural heritage, the village has an active artistic scene, and each year a baroque cultural festival is organized there. Paparčiai is a small village, so community members are familiar with one another.

A good example of cooperation and community activity in Paparčiai was the restoration of a Dominican chapel. In 2002, an artist from Vilnius, Audronė Neniškienė moved to the village. She immediately fell in love with the ruins of the baroque chapel sitting on the edge of the village. The chapel was built by the Dominicans in 1782 but during the Soviet era it was converted into a warehouse. The chapel, in particular the stucco, was in bad shape because the fertilizers kept there had destroyed them. It further aggravated the situation that just recently local youth had come there to party and left lots of trash, empty bottles and cigarettes behind.

Audronė decided to organize the renovation and raised 900 EUR for plastering and painting from the regional cultural heritage department. The preliminary investigations revealed that, as part of the renovation, it was necessary to trim the trees, ensure ventilation in the chapel and change old rainwater pipes.

In the beginning, it was quite hard to start work because the project did not have enough money to pay the workers and almost all the community members were very busy with their harvest, so they were reluctant to help voluntarily. Finally, local scouts happily agreed to help and the project could start in 2005. During August, in the two first days, scouts cleaned the area and the interior of the chapel and took out all the garbage. Seeing the kids helping made other inhabitants feel engaged and the restoration had become a community effort. At the same time, specialists arrived to do the artistic work inside the chapel.

The chapel conservation project was a success for the community: it did not only gather community members together and ease unemployment issues, but also community members were able to increase their work experience.

This made the community so enthusiastic that the following year they applied for funds to carry out the rest of the renovation. Finally, as a reward, they held the opening programs of the baroque cultural festival. This was a great fundraising initiative for the community as 30 percent of the income gained from selling the entrance tickets was given to the community in return for the conservation work. This allowed them to buy a roadway gate to protect the chapel.

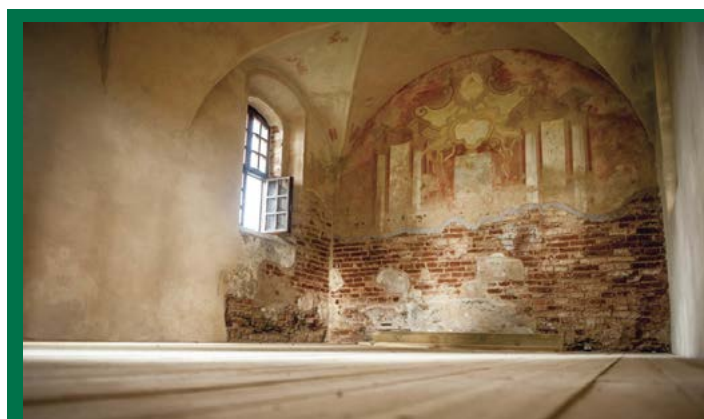


Photo 6: The Dominican chapel in Paparčiai
Credit: Social Investment Management Center

Community members started to regularly arrange baroque music concerts and festivals in the chapel, invited famous opera singers, orchestras from Lithuania and abroad. The voluntarily maintained chapel became a regional center, attracting lots of tourists. In 2014, the community made a decision that all the future activities of the community will be related to the conservation of cultural and historical heritage in the region.

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SLOVAKIA – CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: “WITHOUT MONEY, OUR ORGANIZATION CAN’T BE INDEPENDENT OR FREE”

By Sanja Nikolov

We make a huge mistake when we „spoil” members of our organizations from the very beginning by giving them all the money for their activities they want. We give it to them whenever they ask without pushing them to find their own resources. The result is that after years, it is almost impossible to force them to change their attitude and thinking which can easily lead to the end of the organization once they are obliged to face the financial deficiency.

This was the case for the **Citizen Initiative Zvolen – Zapad. Center for Community Organizing** (CKO) was financially supporting the Initiative for many years. CKO was paying the organizer, activities, material and rent. And the Initiative was growing, building the member base and structure through many successful projects, organizing many excellent events and becoming a more and more well-known group in the city. But with more activities and events there was less and less funding, and then suddenly the group faced a situation where there were many activities planned in the agenda but very limited funding sources.

So more than four years ago the Initiative made the decision that they will start to raise their own financial resources and they will turn its positive reputation into an opportunity to raise funds. The group needed to survive and this was the only possible way. The Initiative did have a Finance Committee from the beginning within its structure, but its role was only to plan the budget and to prepare a report how the money had been spent. Nothing more. So the Initiative decided to expand the structure and to add the Committee for Fundraising with the purpose of raising money but also to organize non-financial, i.e. in-kind support. Another role of the Committee was to train members how to become a successful fundraiser.

The first fundraiser was Sanja Nikolov, a community organizer. She had a long list of experience as a sponsor/donor based on her previous work. As a restaur-

ant owner, she had supported many similar activities and organizations. She knew that the worse that can happen is to be refused. But she also knew that every single businessman likes to have something in exchange and get something back. She realized that it always has to be a win-win situation for both sides. Our fundraising started to work.

The turning point came at an event in 2013 called „Neighborhood Day”, which was previously one hundred percent financially supported by CKO. However, in that year, the Initiative decided to raise its own money. A team of members went through trainings. After that they started their first fundraising campaign by writing letters, emails, making phone calls and organizing meetings with potential sponsors.

The result was more than € 10,000 fundraised in two months.

And the feeling that we can do that was priceless.

Some lessons learned:

- There is no need to be ashamed of asking for money – engaging the support of sponsors can not only help raise funds, but also increase solidarity and engagement with local community members;
- Everybody can be a fundraiser: recognize the person with potential, invest time and energy into training him/her and the effort will always bear fruit;
- Prepare a fundraising strategy in the beginning of the year and put it into your calendar;
- Prepare a detailed budget for the whole year and keep an eye on the nuances;
- Fundraising is a skill: it is important to regularly organize trainings for members;

- The money should be asked in face-to-face contact, but also at public events. It is important to be ready to ask for money whenever it is a good time and opportunity. For instance, don't miss a party which the director of your bank attends;
- Be „recognizable and identifiable“ when you go and ask for money. Don't forget to present yourself, wear a t-shirt with the logo of your organization, etc.;
- Do not forget to say thank you to your sponsors whenever you have a chance to do it. They will feel good and important. Also do it publicly so that they can get more customers. You can say that without their help, your organization would not be as successful as it is. Share with them the feeling of success;
- Never spend all your money - keep the „golden reserve“. You can use it for another fundraising training connected with a team building event;
- Always be transparent so that people can trust you! Always be clear on how much have you spent and for what purpose;
- Always be the first one who donates to your organization. In our case, the adult members pay annually 10€, youths 5€. The meaning is that we all care and want to support our own work;
- Fundraisers must be aware how a businessman or a manager of a bank thinks. Do your homework and prepare in advance about the person or company from whom you want to raise money. You should be familiar with his/her hobbies, family, etc.

Raiffeisen bank has a motto „We support local communities“. When we asked the question, „How do you do it?“, the director did not know how to answer. Our proposal was, „You support us and we support you. We need your money and you need new clients.“

They gave us 1000 EUR and we were promoting them for a specific period of time. And since we were a well-known organization and people trusted us, the bank gained a lot of new clients. And that is when the real cooperation started and lasts until this day because, as a matter of principle, they will not allow any other bank to be the main sponsor of community organizations in the city.

Fundraising is an integral part of community organizing and it is very important to insist on the implementation of fundraising from the very beginning. You will then not only build up your self-confidence but your members will learn about financial discipline and the organization will become strong and financially independent.

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GERMANY – FORUM COMMUNITY ORGANIZING (FOCO): FUNDRAISING FOR CHANGE – “LET’S ORGANIZE” FUNDRAISER OF FOCO

By Paul Cromwell and Hester Butterfield

Introduction and background

In 2013 the **Forum Community Organizing (FOCO)** celebrated its twenty year anniversary of sharing and supporting community organizing strategies in Germany. FOCO provides community organizing groups centralized and local trainings and consulting, translates and writes publications, hosts a 30-50 person annual membership meeting, has a website, and twice-a-year newsletter that reaches its 60 members and 300 person data base. FOCO is a founding member of the European Community Organizing Network (ECON).

During recent years, FOCO’s activities have grown with its increased focus on the work of local groups doing community organizing. With an increase of activities, including a growing demand from local projects for community organizing training and consulting, FOCO began giving serious consideration to raising more money to support its work. FOCO wanted to raise money for an additional trainer and consultant, part-time administrative assistance, and common meeting expenses. A two-day fundraising training held in October 2013 in Saarbrücken, Germany, and sponsored by ECON and a Grundtvig Learning Partnership, provided extremely helpful skills to FOCO members to initiate a grassroots fundraising campaign.

Kick-off and subsequent fundraising campaigns

At the October 2013 training Joan Flanagan, a fundraising expert and trainer, began by asking the thirty participants what dislikes and likes they have with fundraising. Participants responded with comments such as,

- “I do not feel comfortable asking for money. It feels like begging.”
- “We are competing with others who are doing fundraising.”
- “I feel disappointed when people do not give.”



Photo 7: Members of FOCO and local organizing projects at the October, 2013 Fundraising Training
Credit: FOCO



Photo 8: Joan Flanagan at the October, 2013 Fundraising Training explaining how to establish an effective fundraising committee
Credit: FOCO

- “Fundraising takes a lot of time.”
- “I do not feel comfortable asking for money from persons that I know have less money than I do.”
- But participants also stated,
- “Fundraising gives our organization freedom and independence.”
- “It feels great when we are successful.”
- “When we raise money, we also can gain new ideas and directions for the organization.”

Ms. Flanagan then shared principles and strategies for successful fundraising, many of which FOCO utilized in their subsequent two “Let’s Organize” Grassroots Fundraisers in the winters of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

FOCO began by forming a fundraising committee which prepared a brochure, appeal letter, pledge sheet and thank you letter. The committee also identified members who would follow-up the initial mailing with “personal asks” – either with phone calls, e-mails, letters, or hosting a “house meeting”. Members who asked others for contributions were also encouraged to make a contribution before they began asking others. Two weeks prior to mailing the fundraising appeal, FOCO sent its twice-a-year e-mail newsletter to insure that potential donors were well informed of FOCO’s valuable work. Fundraising materials and follow-up personal contact gave potential donors various options regarding how much (amounts of 24, 120, or 1,200 EUR) and in what ways they could give (monthly amounts of 2, 10, or 100 EUR or in a lump sum with a bank transfer to FOCO’s account).

Immediately following a donation, FOCO mailed a thank you letter to each contributor. Included in the following FOCO e-mail newsletter was a report on the fundraising efforts, how funds were being used, and an expression of gratitude to all donors. From the start of preparing materials until the final thank you letters were sent, the fundraising campaign took approximately three months from November to January.

In addition to asking persons for a donation with a written and personal appeal, four “house meetings” were organized, gatherings of ten to twenty-five persons in which a presentation about FOCO’s work was made followed by a request to give. These gatherings, which were often connected to someone’s birthday or retirement (i.e. “Please do not give me a gift, but rather I ask that you make a donation to FOCO.”), raised approximately 2,000 EUR.

Fundraising Results

The 2013-2014 “Let’s Organize” Fundraiser gathered 5,715 EUR and the 2014-2015 fundraiser gathered 8,825 EUR from 46 donors. Prior to these two fundraisers, FOCO also initiated a new membership called the “FOCO 100” – i.e. persons who give 100 EUR instead

of 24 EUR a year to be a member of FOCO. Currently, FOCO has 17 “FOCO 100” members.

Prior to initiating the “Let’s Organize” fundraisers and FOCO 100 memberships, FOCO’s annual income from donations and memberships was approximately 1,100 to 1,300 EUR per year. With these new fundraising efforts, FOCO’s annual income from donations and memberships jumped to 11,800 EUR in 2014.

A major result of these fundraising efforts is that in March, 2014 FOCO was able to hire an additional part-time community organizer, trainer and consultant along with a part-time administrative assistant, expanding the number of local organizations FOCO is able to assist and the number of FOCO activities. A second major result has been the increased level of participation and degree of ownership felt by FOCO members. Also, the local organizations with which FOCO works and who participated in the October 2013 fundraising training have successfully carried out local fundraisers. At FOCO’s October, 2014 Annual Meeting it was reported that FOCO and the local organizations had raised with grants and grassroots fundraising approximately 100,000 EUR in the past year for community organizing work in Germany.

The following comments by FOCO members reflect the sense of pride and accomplishment FOCO feels about its new fundraising efforts.

- “It was great fun and a real sense of accomplishment when we were successful in raising more money for our work!”
- “These fundraising efforts helped to significantly expand FOCO’s work.”
- “It was very rewarding to see that many persons who gave the first year also gave the second year as well.”
- “I was deeply moved by persons who financially could not give much, but still gave. For example, one person gives 2 EUR per month.”
- “Fundraising is organizing – it helped FOCO engage new people in our work.”

For more information, please contact Forum Community Organizing e.V. at <http://www.forum-community-organizing.de/kontakt/kontaktformular.html>.

PROJECT ORGANIZATIONS



The “**Learning Sustainable Citizen Participation: Democratic Structures and Fundraising Strategies for Grassroots Citizen Organizations**” project was financed by the European Commission’s Grundtvig – Lifelong Learning Programme and lasted between September 1, 2013 and July 31, 2015. Organizations from six European Union countries partnered in the project and organized numerous travel exchange programmes for their partners and staff.



Bona Fides Association is an independent, non-profit and apolitical non-governmental organisation that was established in 2003. Bona Fides is dedicated to the development of civil society and improvement of quality of public life in Poland.



Center for Community Organizing (CKO) supports the active participation of citizens in the public decision making processes. It creates the space for the effective co-operation between citizens, government and business sector in the complete development of the communities. CKO is a non-governmental organization that has carried on its programs in Slovakia since 1999.



Forum Community Organizing (FOCO) has been working since 1995 to promote community organizing through trainings, consulting, exchange visits, common meetings, and the writing and translating of texts on community organizing. It is a founding member of the European Community Organizing Network (ECON).



Malstatt-gemeinsam stark n.e.V. neighborhood association seeks to bring together citizens of the Saarbrücken neighborhood Malstatt, engage in public decision-making, and create a future vision for the community. We seek informative, cultural, and social events; cooperation between and support for all associations and initiatives in the district; and cooperation with the city government, the state institutions and political parties to strengthen direct citizen participation in Malstatt.



Minority Rights Group Europe (MRG) is a non-governmental organization working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities.



Resource Center for Public Participation (CeRe) is an organization that actively supports citizens and NGOs to have a stronger voice when dealing with public authorities, to take stance and get involved in public decisions with direct impact on them or the community they represent. CeRe’s mission is to act so that public decisions meet the needs and desires of social actors.



Social Investment Management Center is an organization focusing on several areas of society: active civil society, encouraging cooperation of government and people, ecological awareness and social responsibility of business.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Training and curriculum materials

The [European Community Organizing Network](#) (ECON) is an informal network of organizations from nine European countries that use the community organizing methodology. ECON provides trainings, consulting and other resources to member organizations and to other groups and NGOs that want to implement community organizing. ECON has also organized exchanges between organizers and volunteers within Europe and with the United States as well as it hosts annual meetings for training and the exchange of experiences and best practices. Training and curriculum materials on community organizing are available [here](#).

Books

“Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists”, Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall and Steve Max. The Forum Press, 2010;

“Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals”, Saul Alinsky. Vintage Books Edition, 1971;

“Creative Community Organizing: A Guide for Rabble-Rousers, Activists and Quiet Lovers of Justice”, Si Kahn. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010;

“Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy”, Rinku Sen. Jossey-Bass, 2003;

“Dynamics of Organizing: Building Power by Developing the Human Spirit”, Shel Trapp. Self published, 2003;

“We Make Change: Community Organizers Talk About What They Do – and Why”, Joe Szakos and Kristin Layng Szakos. Vanderbilt University Press, 2007;

“Lessons from the Field: Organizing in Rural Communities”, Joe Szakos and Kristin Layng Szakos. Social Policy Magazine, 2008.

Online Resources

[Comm-Org: The online Conference on Community Organizing](#) - contains hundreds of articles and resources about community organizing

[The New Organizing Institute](#) - contains training materials, projects, blogs, and numerous other resources concerning community organizing;

[comm-org.wisc.edu/training.htm/](#) - a list of online training manuals;

[neworganizing.com/organizerstoolbox/](#) - an Organizer’s Toolbox including numerous training videos and outlines;

[Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community.](#) Fragments from Joan Minieri’s and Paul Getsos’ book. Jossey-Bass / Kim Klein’s Chardon Press, 2007.