



# 10 Highlights from 10 Years

Impulses for Civil Society

**Imprint**

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NGO Academy

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## How to read the results

This brochure is based on multiple data sources, such as aggregated participation numbers, aggregated workshop feedback and a comprehensive member survey, carried out in 2023. Results under #4–#10 are based on the latter source, unless stated otherwise. Find out more at the end of the report.

# A decade of impulses for civil society

We are delighted to present 10 highlights from 10 years of NGO Academy, as we mark a decade of empowering civil society leaders throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Since its inception, NGO Academy has always striven to support the region, providing spaces for exchange and learning for civil society organisations.

We would like to celebrate the many committed individuals who translate the knowledge, skills and connections they acquire at NGO Academy into real-life impacts, tackling inequality, poverty, and environmental and social challenges. As you delve into their stories, which are shared inside this brochure, we hope you will witness the tangible results of our collective efforts.

NGO Academy's tenth anniversary is a perfect occasion to once more show our appreciation to all those who have helped us to reach this milestone. Without the dedication and resilience of our partners, our faculty members, our team, our many sympathetic enablers behind the scenes, and – of course – our member organisations, it simply would not have been possible. They are the driving force and the inspiration that fuels our commitment. As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to empower outstanding civil society organisations, fostering a spirit of empathy, compassion, and innovation.

Thank you for being a part of this story and inspiring us to create a better world.



**Boris Marte**  
ERSTE Foundation



**Michael Meyer**  
WU Vienna

2013

2023

# Many partners

## NGO Academy is teamwork.

NGO Academy is a joint initiative of ERSTE Foundation and the Vienna University of Economics and Business. Founded in 2013, its mission is to strengthen civil society in Central and Eastern Europe by providing management development and training opportunities. NGO Academy offers a range of high-quality capacity-building programmes, tailored specifically to NGOs and social enterprises. By sharing knowledge, imparting skills and helping participants to build up networks, NGO Academy supports the organisations themselves, and, indirectly, their beneficiaries. Programmes target leadership, executives and managers from a pool of outstanding civil society organisations within 14 countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

The development of NGO Academy over the past decade would have been impossible without a broad institutional support system, consisting of individual experts and organisations, such as Porticus, not to mention the countless individuals within ERSTE Foundation and WU Vienna, and a dedicated core team (see below), who have contributed to this partnership.

Over the past 10 years, a diverse team has formed the project, organising, implementing and evaluating NGO Academy's programmes. Additionally, a steering board has overseen NGO Academy's activities, providing strategic guidance for the initiative.

*"NGO Academy began as a start-up – a small team with a profound belief in the idea, with total commitment and high ambition. We have diligently built open structures and collaborative processes through which to offer our programmes. Today, the NGO Academy exists through the interactions of many people and organisations, and has established itself as an important educational institution."*

**Nicole Traxler**  
ERSTE Foundation

**Our mission** is to support civil society organisations by

- building management, leadership and innovation competencies and skills;
- creating international networks between CSOs and various stakeholders;
- supporting them in creating and implementing new projects, in order to increase their impact.

NGO Academy  
Programme Coordinators  
from left to right:  
Klara Lentz,  
Marianne Mann,  
Martin Mehrwald,  
Yvonne Reif



## 4 programmes

**NGO Academy is a meeting point for experts.** Over the past ten years, NGO Academy has devised a wide variety of programmes that aim to support civil society actors, according to their individual needs and wants. NGO Academy offerings consist of short online webinars, multi-week offline programmes and (almost) everything in between.



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### 290 workshops

The **Regional Programme** consists of short interventions, both online and offline, which focus on strengthening competencies across a variety of fields. The tailored workshops, virtual and in-person, address local contexts, languages, and the developmental needs of managers and staff, and can last from 1.5 hours to two full days. Since 2020, the Regional Programme has also included NGO Academy Online Keynotes, which are open to the general public.

### 10 editions

The **Social Innovation and Management Programme** combines practical expertise with strong foundational knowledge, empowering participants to enhance their organisational management skills. Over the course of three modules and five months, 25 participants design a course project to be implemented in their organisations.

### 2 cohorts

The **MSc Programme in Social Innovation & Management** is a fully accredited academic executive programme. Thinking without boundaries, imagining the future, transferring thinking in acting, supporting, and advancing public interest for societal problem areas are the guiding principles of cooperative learning fostered within this 15-month programme.

### 5 CLEs

**Community-Led Events** are events designed and led by our members. They promote collaboration and networking among NGO Academy member organisations and professionals in Central and Eastern Europe. NGO Academy provides support for such events adding value to the NGO Academy community and beyond.

# 258 dedicated faculty members

## NGO Academy is about sharing.

Over the past decade, our faculty of over 250 experts has played a vital role in the success of NGO Academy. We are grateful that we can build on the theoretical and practical expertise offered by faculty members affiliated to renowned institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond. Their commitment to sharing their knowledge, expertise and experience has been instrumental in shaping the growth and development of our participants.

individual coaching sessions. Their dedication to empowering NGOs has equipped our network with the necessary skills and tools to make a lasting impact on the sector.

NGO Academy participants highly value the work of the faculty: over the years, 97.3 %<sup>1</sup> of Regional Programme participants have agreed that their trainer or instructor demonstrated expertise in their subject matter. Similarly, 96.4 % praised their lecturers for interpreting their subjects in a way that was easy to understand, and 95.2 % described their delivery as lively and inspiring.

Across a diverse range of topics, they have captivated audiences and imparted invaluable insights through workshops, webinars, keynotes, and

*“After six months of strategic mentorship on institutional fundraising, an organisation that participated in one of my NGO Academy workshops for the first time accessed public funds for one of their high-impact projects.”*

*“We regularly receive feedback from former NGO Academy participants about the eye-opening insights they’ve been offered (e.g., how to fundraise from international foundations; writing grant proposals that reflect the passion for the work we all do).”*

<sup>1</sup>Source: Aggregated Regional Programme Feedback, see also page 28

# 258

faculty members



**Sonia Oprean**  
Faculty

We are grateful to our faculty for their on-going support. They are a vital part of the NGO Academy network and we look forward to continuing our journey together.



**Lisa Ringhofer**  
Faculty

Meet the faculty here

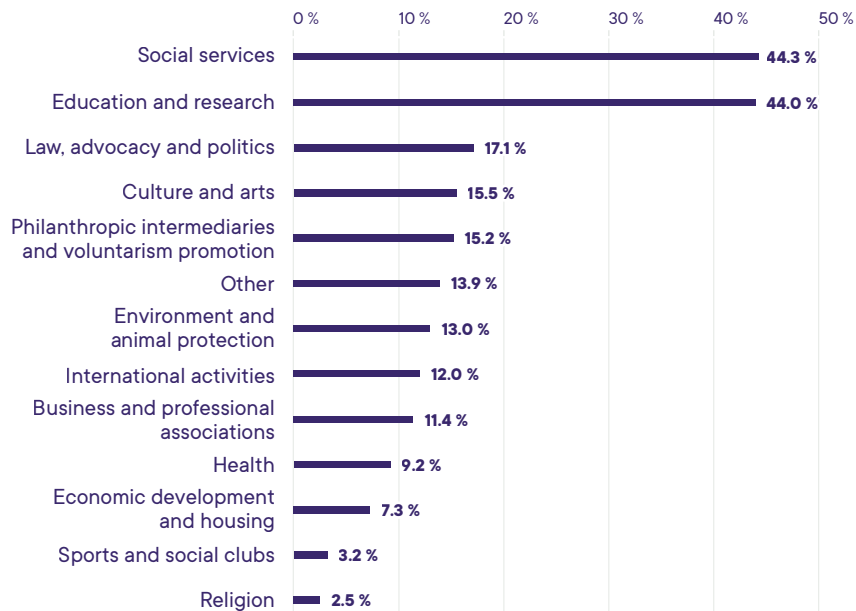


# 6,063 times we've heard "Hello, my name is..."

**NGO Academy is diverse.** As of August 2023, we have welcomed 6,063 participants to our programmes. 4,910 participants took part in the Regional Programme and 240 participants completed the Social Innovation and Management Programme. In addition, 76 participants took part in a Community-Led Event and more than 800 people attended our NGO Academy keynotes.

Aside from the NGO Academy Keynotes and Community-Led Events, our offerings target a defined pool of organisations. As of August 2023, our member network consists of 595 outstanding civil society organisations in 14 countries, covering a variety of different fields of activity.

**Figure 1**  
Field of activity of member organisations



**Figure 2**  
Member organisations per country

## 9 out of 10 benefit from new knowledge

**NGO Academy creates knowledge and skills.** Our members actively use the skills, the knowledge and the contacts they acquire at NGO Academy offerings within their organisations. In general, 90.0 % of our members agree that attending NGO Academy offerings increased their overall knowledge about nonprofit management.

That agreement only increases with the number of NGO Academy offerings attended: for instance, 87.5 % of one-time-attendees of the Regional Programme report improved overall knowledge, but that rises to 93.0 % for members who participate in 6 to 10 offerings, and to 96.2 % for members who participate in more than 11 offerings.

And the knowledge participants acquire is not just academic, but practical, too. 85.1 % of respondents say that they sometimes refer to materials or concepts they learned about at NGO Academy. The application of knowledge can take a variety of forms: read about two examples on the next page!



Read an article written by attendees of an NGO Academy workshop on media and PR, published in Austria's daily newspaper, Der Standard:  
[short.wu.ac.at/MS5](https://short.wu.ac.at/MS5)

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Read how the organisation Genesis Project successfully designed and implemented a workshop on financial literacy, attended by 35 participants, based on an approach acquired at an NGO Academy offering:  
[short.wu.ac.at/MS4](https://short.wu.ac.at/MS4)

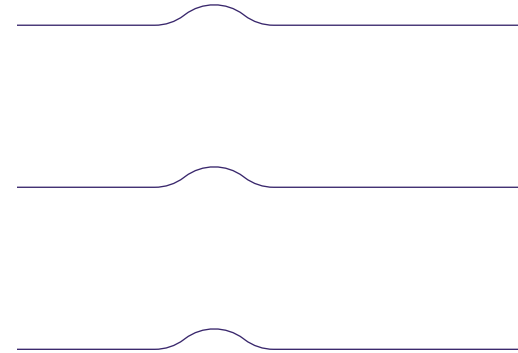
# 84.6 % improved their organisational capacity

**NGO Academy offers knowledge that can be applied.** Overall, more than four out of five members agree that their NGO Academy membership supports the development of their respective organisations (see Figure 3, and the combined percentage of “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree”).

Apart from sharing what they have learned from NGO Academy offerings with colleagues, a significant 67.8 % of our members disseminate the knowledge acquired from NGO Academy by applying what they have learned within their organisations. This leads to new and innovative approaches towards organisational challenges, with almost two out of three organisations (62.3 %)

developing new or improved processes as a result of participation. These include new fundraising approaches, team building tools, and a more strategic approach to innovation management, amongst other improvements.

In a similar manner, 57.3 % of our members engaged in new activities or embarked on new projects, prompted by their participation in NGO Academy, ranging from a social bakery, to innovative training approaches for young people, to new models of emergency services for victims of trafficking.

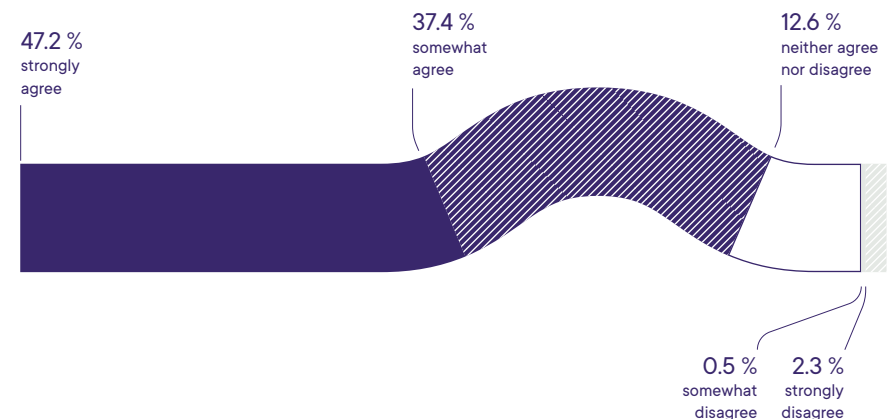


62.3 % improved their processes with learnings from NGO Academy

57.3 % engaged in new projects or activities as a result of NGO Academy participation

45.8 % of our members have been supported in acquiring funding

**Figure 3**  
Agreement to the statement  
“NGO Academy contributed positively to my organisation’s development.”



*“Based on my project in the Social Innovation and Management Programme, we developed and submitted a project proposal for digital fundraising. The project was awarded funding, and proved to be a valuable opportunity.”*

**Anonymous respondent**

# 3.92 new connections for each member

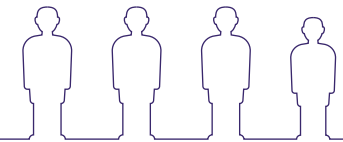
**NGO Academy fosters connection.** At NGO Academy, our mission is not only to provide offerings that help to build capacity, in the form of programmes, workshops and webinars. We also strive to connect civil society actors in Central and Eastern Europe. Survey results show that our members actively use NGO Academy as a source of professional connections. On average, each NGO Academy member is regularly in contact with almost four other members. 52.1% of these contacts cross national borders, and 45.0% cross fields of activity. These diverse connections also lead to strong peer-support within

the community: 78.5% of our members have had valuable information shared with them by another member in the past year, and 12.3% every other week.

This not only leads to fruitful discussions and exchange, but to collaborations among member organisations, and personal friendships. 51.7% of our respondents have already worked jointly on a project or activity, while 36.6% stated that they had embarked upon a new project or organisation together with another member.

*“At one workshop, we were forming groups of two, turning our backs to each other to discuss the most difficult problems we were facing. My fellow peer and I supported each other with recommendations. I still remember the excellent advice which I wouldn’t have heard from friends or colleagues.”*

**Anonymous respondent**



3.92  
new connections  
for each member

83.2 %  
reconnected to ...

78.5 %  
received advice  
from ...

78.5 %  
gained valuable  
information from ...



Read how Vera Pfaff (Kozličić) and Martina Mladenović (Zeleno Zlato) have successfully collaborated since 2017, after meeting at an NGO Academy workshop: @ [short.wu.ac.at/MS8](https://short.wu.ac.at/MS8)

... another member in the past



## 77.3 % of member organisations feel empowered

**NGO Academy creates real-world impact.** Supporting member organisations is our mission. We are proud that our 595 current members do extraordinary work: amongst much else, they run schools in war-torn regions, drive ecological innovation, and work with society's most marginalized groups. Through our work, we aim to increase the effectiveness of these organisations. Our members acknowledge these efforts: 68.2 % of our survey respondents stated that their NGO Academy membership helped to increase the impact of their organisation.

NGO Academy may be only one source of support available to members and their organisations when fulfilling their

mission. Nevertheless, members report that NGO Academy has a considerable impact, not only on their organisation's success, but also on their own professional journey. 77.3 % of members attribute more than 10.0 % of their organisation's professional success to their NGO Academy membership, and this number only increases to 84.0 % for personal success. On average, members attribute ...

→ 41.8 % of their personal success  
→ 36.6 % of their organisation's success

... to being a NGO Academy member.

Respondents to our survey described a variety of effects on their operations. These include greater involvement of beneficiaries in the development of new programmes, and a core understanding of what potential impact to focus on and measure:

*"We implemented new monitoring tools and are now better prepared to integrate feedback we receive in our future activities. This helps us to provide more meaningful activities for our beneficiaries, that more closely meet their needs."*

**Anonymous respondent**

Survey respondents also reported introducing new concepts they have learned about at NGO Academy, so as to better serve their target groups. Examples include the launch of new communication methods for engagement with beneficiaries, and the duplication of previously successful projects developed by other NGO Academy members in new locations:

*"After visiting some inclusive farms through one of the NGO Academy courses, we wrote a project that led to the building of a similar facility in our area, which had a huge impact on all of the NGOs who work with people with disabilities, having this additional, brilliant resource in their work, therapy and free time."*

**Anonymous respondent**





## 69.7 % agree that NGO Academy strengthens civil society

**NGO Academy is one part of the puzzle.** Considerable effort is needed to create a strong civil society sector, including external support and robust funding possibilities, as well as leadership skills and management know-how. Focusing on these latter, NGO Academy aims to equip civil society actors with the competencies and tools necessary to bring the sector forward.

In fact, 69.7 % of our members believe that NGO Academy has been successful in strengthening the local civil society sector. Through skills, information and access to networks, 65.4 % of our members have been able to position new operational practices within their respective country. Similarly, the initiative supported 51.2 % of respondents in advancing new topics and 39.8 % in advancing policy changes in their country of operations.

NGO Academy is already recognized as the largest management capacity-building initiative for civil society organisations in Central and Eastern Europe. However, NGO Academy's development is not yet complete. All those involved with NGO Academy, and its partners, are dedicated to further improving our offerings, aiming to contribute to ever-stronger civil society sectors in Central and Eastern Europe.



Photo: ERSTE Foundation / Markus Schwarze

*“NGOs must act on a par with politics and business to improve modern societies. In this vein, WU Vienna and ERSTE Foundation’s NGO Academy has contributed substantially to capacity building in Central and Eastern Europe.”*

**Ivan Krastev**  
Faculty

*“I have been working in the civil sector for 30 years. I have to say that in all that time I have never felt the support and recognition that NGO leaders have received in the last couple of months during the Social Innovation and Management Programme of the NGO Academy in Vienna.”*

**Katalin Vég**  
Member

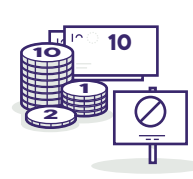


## 83.3 % would have trouble finding similar offerings

**NGO Academy meets a need, and that need remains.** On the one hand, 66.7 % of our members reported positive development of civil society in their country over the past ten years. Similarly, 69.2 % of our members expect the civil society sector to positively develop over the next 10 to 15 years. However, these outlooks on civil society differ strongly throughout the region. Romanian members, in particular, expect positive development in the sector, with 95.8 % having such an outlook; Moldovan (93.7 %) and Albanian (87.5 %) members also have optimistic perspectives. Members from Hungary (29.4 %), Slovakia (40.0 %), Montenegro (40.0 %) and Bosnia (45.9 %), though, are more pessimistic.

At NGO Academy, we aim to support positive developments by providing organisational capacity building within Central and Eastern Europe, and by

keeping barriers to participation as few as possible. In fact, 79.9 % of our survey respondents would find it financially difficult to take part in other capacity-building offerings. Similarly, 83.3 % would have trouble finding comparable offers of a similar quality in their region. Overall, a vast majority of 81.3 % of members would be disappointed if NGO Academy did not exist.



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### ↗ Positive development

*“Civil society organisations are playing an increasingly important role in some fields, for example in social services. They are recognized as a responsible part of society in general.”*

### Anonymous respondent

### ↘ Negative development

*“Society needs more services, community activities, etc., but worsening economic circumstances will mean a lack of resources (money, human, infrastructure).”*

### Anonymous respondent

## A word or two of thanks

**NGO Academy is grateful.** We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to NGO Academy over the past ten years, as a participant, lecturer, facilitator, coach, project partner, keynote speaker, input-provider, multiplier, critic, tour guide, member of the project team, member of the steering board ...

... and last – but most certainly not least – survey responder. The results in this report are based on an online survey carried out in late Spring 2023. The survey was designed to capture feedback and personal views about NGO Academy's activities and their perceived impact. It was sent to all participants in past offerings, as well as to NGO Academy's contacts within member organisations. The survey was also distributed (in an adapted

form) amongst NGO Academy's faculty members. Overall, 315 members and 42 faculty members embarked on the survey, with 209 members and 30 faculty members providing answers to all questions. The data was analysed using descriptive statistical methods (e.g., frequencies, mean, median, etc.). This brochure aims to highlight ten key takeaways from the survey, and complementary NGO Academy impact measurement tools, like aggregated results from post-workshop surveys for Regional Programme offerings from 2015 to 2023, and Social Innovation and Management Programme modules from 2014 to 2023.

Thank you! We look forward to continuing our work, providing future impulses for civil society!





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