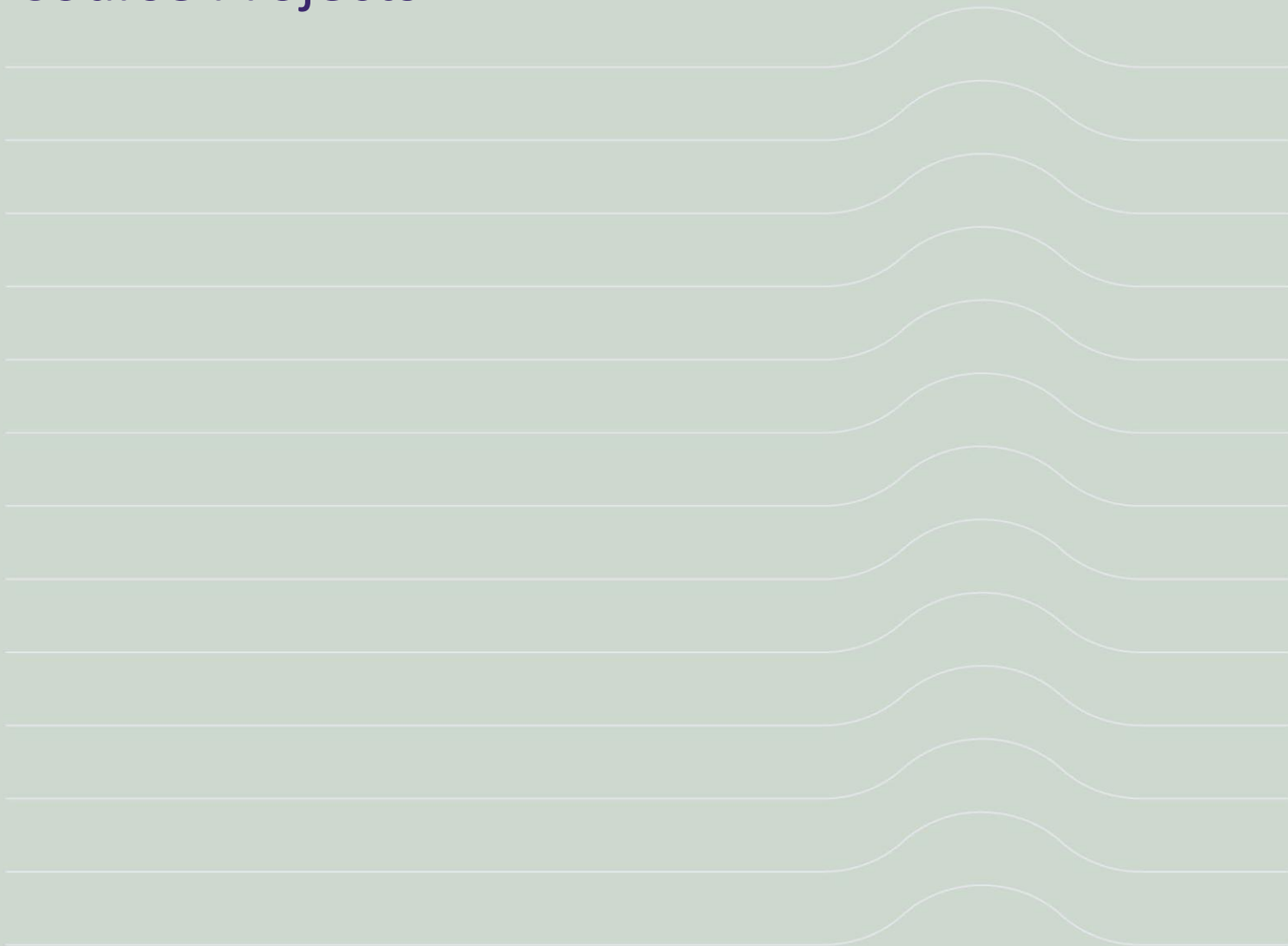


Social Innovation and Management Programme 2026 Course Projects



NGO Academy was founded in 2013 to help strengthen the social sector in Central and Eastern Europe. It offers a range of high-quality capacity building programmes for executive managers and key staff of NGOs and social enterprises. By doing so, it supports the organisations themselves and indirectly also their stakeholders by transferring knowledge, imparting skills and helping them build up networks.

The Social Innovation and Management Programme combines practice-oriented training with a solid base of expert knowledge. The customised, three-week programme, which is held in English, provides participants with the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills required to manage their organisations and to use expert input to work on specific challenges relating to their organisations.

In the course of the Social Innovation and Management Programme 2026, participants developed individual projects. This curricular element is a crucial feature in the programme design. It aims at helping participants to develop skills by directly applying new insights and methods to a real-life project. Hence, it explicitly contributes to the further development of their organisations.

Each participant was asked to develop an individual project. Its basic requirements were a direct connection to the participants' job, their special interest in it, and its relevance for their organisation. The projects were expected to arise out of new or underdeveloped ideas and to tackle existing challenges such as the development of new products or services, the expansion into new markets, new business models or new internal processes.

In the course of Module I, participants were exposed to topics in the field of innovation management and acquisition of resources. Subsequently, they were asked to develop a project idea, create a project draft and discuss it with stakeholders such as colleagues, potential customers, and project partners by Module II. Each project draft received profound feedback by external coaches and peers in the beginning of the second module. In Module II participants worked on the topics of communications as well as impact measurement. In addition to that a range of tools supporting project planning and implementation was introduced. It enabled participants to transform their project drafts into implementable planning documents. These documents were again feedbacked by experts and peers in Module III.

By presenting all executive summaries, this booklet provides an overview of the individual projects. Thereby, it gives insights into the very heterogeneous challenges that non-profit organisations and social enterprises are currently facing in Central and Eastern Europe and potentially innovative approaches to tackle them.

Vienna, June 2026

The Team of NGO Academy

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Abetare Gojani

The Foundation House – DOKUTECH Alumni Speakers Program

The Foundation House (TFH) is a Kosovo-based non-profit organization with over 25 years of experience at the intersection of technology, youth development, and civic life. Since 1999, TFH has empowered young people, particularly women and girls, to become leaders of social and economic change through its three flagship programs: Generation Next, which builds future-relevant skills in youth; Sparking Change, which fosters innovation and entrepreneurship; and Hacking the System, which advocates for inclusive digital policies. Central to TFH's work is **DOKU.TECH**, Kosovo's annual technology festival that has, since 2014, brought over 120 world-class speakers to Prishtina from more than 30 countries – among them a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist, Microsoft researchers, a globally recognized cybersecurity expert, the founder of the world's leading FemTech application, and ten Kosovo diaspora engineers now working at Nokia, Apple, WhatsApp, and Google. Despite this extraordinary, accumulated network, TFH has never built a formal alumni engagement program. Once speakers leave the DOKU.TECH stage, the relationship ends. There is no mechanism to re-engage them, no structured way to channel their expertise into TFH's youth programs, and no institutional partnership with the organizations they represent. The result is that 120 people and the networks behind them represent a transformative asset that has remained completely untapped for over a decade.



The **DOKUTECH Alumni Speakers Program (DASP)** is designed to change this. TFH will begin by personally reaching out to 10 selected alumni, with the goal of building lasting partnerships with at least 3 of them in Year 1. The program operates through three tiers. *DOKUTECH Friends* receive a newsletter, keeping the relationship warm without requiring a commitment. *DOKUTECH Collaborators* contribute online masterclasses for Kosovo youth and mentor participants in a structured six-month cohort. *DOKUTECH Partners* enter into formal institutional arrangements: bilateral staff exchanges, co-designed programmes, and joint applications for European funding. Rather than a mass mailing to the full network, DASP begins with recognition: a public LinkedIn appreciation campaign that celebrates what alumni have already given, before any engagement ask is made. This sequencing, informed by direct stakeholder consultations with a former DOKUTECH speaker, a TFH colleague, and a Kosovo youth beneficiary, addresses the most common failure mode of alumni programmes: asking for too much too soon.

By Year 2, DASP aims to have at least three active institutional partnerships in place, to be serving over 200 Kosovo youth annually through alumni expertise including girls in STEM and ICT, and to have submitted its first application for Erasmus Plus funding for the staff exchange component. The programme directly enables five of TFH's seven strategic objectives for 2025 to 2028 and offers a replicable alumni engagement model that few civil society organisations in the Western Balkans have yet attempted.

Adela Alexandru

FILIA Center – Consolidating women’s autonomy and collective action in Gura Pravăț village

Founded in 2000, FILIA Center is one of Romania's leading feminist organizations, advancing women's rights through research, advocacy, activism, and community organizing. Since 2021, we have worked with women in Gura Pravăț, a marginalized Roma village in Argeș County, supporting them to form the informal group “Women Change Destinies.” Women have developed strong collective agency through four years of feminist organizing. However, persistent functional illiteracy limits their ability to fully exercise this agency independently. As a result, participation remains partially dependent on intermediaries for reading, writing, and institutional navigation. This creates a structural bottleneck between civic engagement and real autonomy.



This project frames literacy as a form of power infrastructure: without it, women are unable to independently access rights, institutions, or collective voice, regardless of their motivation or level of civic engagement. To address this gap, the approach directly supports up to 15 women from the informal group to enroll in the Second Chance program (“A Doua Șansă”), a state-funded remedial education initiative that allows adults to complete compulsory schooling free of charge, through flexible pathways, and with full official recognition.



This initiative responds to a national context marked by the EU’s highest early school leaving rate (16.8%), very low adult learning participation (1% vs. 9.1% EU average), and high levels of functional illiteracy or risk affecting nearly 40% of adults (Ministry of Education, 2023). Its distinctive approach treats literacy not as an end in itself, but as a tool for autonomy, leadership, and feminist organizing. FILIA will complement the program with practical sessions focused on everyday tasks such as completing forms, reading official documents, writing requests, and using basic digital tools (Google Search, Maps, and online appointment systems).

The theory of change is that literacy enables autonomy, and autonomy strengthens collective action. In the short term, participants gain foundational skills and confidence; in the medium term, they engage more independently with institutions and participate in collective organizing; and in the long term, they reduce reliance on external support, become mentors for new participants, and potentially manage small community grants. Impact will be assessed not only through educational attainment, but also through increased agency, civic participation, and collective capacity to act.

Building on four years of existing trust and a need identified by women themselves, the project transforms education into a pathway toward greater autonomy, stronger collective power, and sustainable community-led change.

Aleksandar Žolja

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Human Rights House Banja Luka.
Establishing an Independent Space for Social Dialogue, Civic
Education, and Civil Society Resilience

This project addresses the critical challenge of the shrinking civic space in the Republic of Srpska (BiH), characterized by systemic, legal, and political pressures on civil society organizations (CSOs), independent media, and human rights defenders. The primary objective is to establish, equip, and sustainably manage a new, multi-functional, and physically accessible physical hub (200 - 300 m²) in the wider center of Banja Luka. This independent space will serve as a "safe haven" and a resource center for collaborative work (co-working), social dialogue, and civic empowerment.



The project is structured around four mutually reinforcing pillars:

1. Infrastructural setup and security adaptation of the hub.
2. Joint governance and operational management by a 10-member coalition.
3. Civic and cultural programming, including the Academy of Civic Competences for youth, public debates, and human rights documentary film festivals.
4. Advocacy and financial sustainability.

To eliminate grant dependency, the project introduces an innovative social entrepreneurship model (commercial weekend renting to international bodies) and a pioneering philanthropy strategy targeting the Western Balkan diaspora through crowdfunding and long-term lease agreements for neglected private properties.

Ultimately, this project will transform local CSOs from a state of survival into strategic, resilient actors, providing hundreds of youths with access to critical thinking and human rights education, while securing a permanent institutional barrier against authoritarian tendencies in the region.



Alexandra Țuțuianu

ECOTECA – Developing the Next Generation of Environmental Journalists in Romania



What challenge are we addressing? Romania faces a systemic gap in environmental journalism. Journalists work as generalists under relentless deadlines, with no structured pathway to specialize in climate change, circular economy or biodiversity loss. Students graduate without published portfolios.

Environmental scientists cannot find communicators who understand their work. The result: a public poorly served by shallow, often inaccurate coverage of the crises that most directly affect its future.

What is this project about? Green Media Lab is a 12-month, program by ECOTECA that trains 60 Romanian journalists and students (50 students, 10 professionals), produces at least 30 published expert-reviewed articles through mainstream media partners, and builds a national alumni community with mentorship, micro-grants, and fellowship pathways.

What is new or different?

- Journalism scholarships remove the income barrier that prevents willing journalists from specializing
- A citizen environmental rights module equips journalists to report on legal accountability, not just environmental facts
- The ECOTECA Verified Reporting Standard ensures every published article meets scientific accuracy requirements
- Impact is tracked at three points: before, after, and six months post-program, measuring career trajectories, not just attendance to trainings
- The alumni network (via annual gatherings, peer mentorship, fellowship nominations) creates a lasting professional community

Who benefits and what change do we want? Journalism students gain their first published bylines and a specialist career pathway. Active journalists gain leads, time, resources, and credibility to cover environmental stories in depth. The public gains accurate, actionable coverage of environmental rights, climate impacts, and biodiversity. In the medium term, the program aims to have 70% of graduates still reporting on environmental topics six months after completion, with reader surveys showing measurable improvements in public understanding.



What are the next steps? Conclude media partnership and open participant applications in months 1-2. Deliver four thematic training modules from month 3. Launch the alumni network by month 10 and the first annual gathering in month 11. Commission independent external evaluation and publish results openly. From Year 2, activate a consulting revenue stream, offering waste management and environmental policies communication services to municipalities, to make the program financially self-sustaining.

Alvin Korčák

Impact Hub Czechia – Resiliency Acceleration Program

In today's volatile global market, a compounding "polycrisis"-characterized by severe geopolitical friction, supply chain shocks, resource depletion, and rapid technological shifts, has made traditional long-term corporate forecasting and five-year planning obsolete. Mid-sized manufacturing companies in the Czech Republic are uniquely vulnerable. They lack the massive financial cushions of multinationals and the digital agility of tech startups, leaving them stuck with prolonged product development cycles, fragile linear supply chains, and operational isolation from their immediate regional economies.



Project Overview: The Resiliency Acceleration Program is an intensive 8-month cohort experience designed to guide established manufacturing enterprises out of crisis-mode triage and into long-term organizational anti-fragility. The program brings together 25 selected production companies for a data-grounded curriculum consisting of 5 advanced workshops, an initial diagnostic digital audit, an intensive onboarding bootcamp, and 70 hours of expert lectures spanning both practical technology integration and ecological strategy.

Who Benefits? The primary beneficiaries are domestically owned, mid-sized production companies (featuring 30+ employees and a verified 2-to-3-year operational track record). Within these organizations, the program directly trains the core decision-making matrix: Founders, Owners, CEOs, and COOs. Secondary benefits extend directly to their regional sub-vendor networks, local employees, and immediate geographic communities by anchoring supply 2 chains locally. Benefits from the program goes to insurance companies through a decreased amount of risk.

Expected Impact & Transformation: We aim to achieve measurable, structural shifts toward automated and sustainable operations, delivering:

- Digital Gain: A 20% reduction in administrative task time through custom AI automation and optimized workflows.
- Revenue Resilience: Sourcing and verifying at least one brand-new, anti-fragile revenue stream for 70% of participants, utilizing circular economy principles.
- Ecosystem Anchoring: The formal execution of 3 strong strategic partnerships per participant to secure localized material and information flows.
- The Resilience Playbook: A comprehensive corporate manual featuring a personalized Resiliency Scorecard to navigate future macroeconomic black swan events.
- Alumni Community: First year lay basics for the alumni community which can offer in upcoming years undisputable benefits in P2P knowledge sharing/open door for mentoring/buddy system.

Ana Ciurac

Impact Hub Moldova – Building an Inclusive and Sustainable Entrepreneurial Ecosystem



The proposed project aims to establish **Impact Hub Moldova** (named Impact Space), a multi-functional platform designed to strengthen inclusive economic development by supporting social entrepreneurs, impact businesses, and underserved communities across the country. Moldova's social economy ecosystem is still fragmented and lacks a coordinated infrastructure that effectively connects entrepreneurship, access to finance, capacity building, and social inclusion. **Impact Space** addresses this gap by creating a national-level ecosystem platform that integrates entrepreneurship support services, investment readiness tools, inclusive employment pathways, and cross-sector collaboration. The project will develop a structured support system combining incubation, acceleration, hackathons, scholarships, internships, and access to impact investment mechanisms.

The Hub will be implemented and operated in partnership with a strong consortium of actors, including EcoVisio-public association, Lezart Foundation, State University of Moldova, and Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University, in close cooperation with local public authorities and IQ Games Public Association, ensuring strong academic, civic, and institutional anchoring. The initiative already builds on an emerging national network, with four regional hubs acting as pillars of the ecosystem in **Tiraspol, Cahul, Edineț, and Bălți**, ensuring territorial outreach and stronger regional inclusion. The direct beneficiaries include social entrepreneurs, impact businesses, and individuals from underserved and vulnerable groups, who will gain access to skills development and employment pathways.



The project aims to transform Moldova's approach to economic development by embedding social inclusion into entrepreneurship and investment systems. It will contribute to a more resilient, inclusive, and investment-ready social economy ecosystem, where vulnerable groups are actively integrated into sustainable economic opportunities. What makes Impact Space distinct is its **systemic and integrated approach**. Rather than operating as a standalone initiative, it functions as an ecosystem platform that connects financing, capacity building, policy alignment, and market access under one coordinated structure. This model enables long-term sustainability and scalability, while fostering collaboration across sectors. A core component of Impact Space will be its open cultural and public exhibition area, designed as an accessible, library-like space open to the general public. It will showcase Moldovan history, artists and local manufacturers, enabling citizens and visitors to engage with national heritage in an inclusive and educational format.

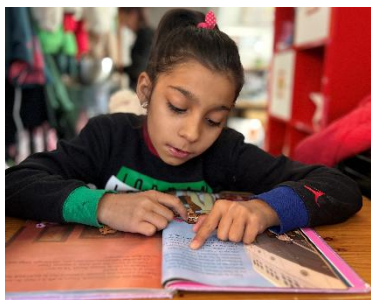
The next phase includes finalizing the project design, securing funding from strategic donors and partners, and establishing operational infrastructure. Overall, the project represents a long-term systemic intervention aligned with key European priorities in inclusive growth and social innovation, contributing to sustainable development in Moldova.

Anca Elena Sandu

Good House Association – In The Other Room. How Housing Shapes Educational Opportunity

Educational inequality often becomes visible in schools, but it frequently begins at home. Every child has the capacity to learn. Yet learning does not happen in isolation. It depends on a set of conditions that many of us rarely think about: safe place to sleep, enough food, supportive relationships, access to resources, stability and confidence that tomorrow will look much like today.

In the Other Room is an immersive public learning project developed by Casa Bună Association that explores how these conditions, and especially housing, shape educational opportunity. Through storytelling, photography, participatory experiences and public dialogue, the project invites visitors to reflect on a simple but important question: how do the spaces in which children grow up shape their opportunities to learn and thrive?



The project emerged from more than 15 years of work with children and families affected by poverty and educational exclusion. During this time, Casa Bună has seen how learning is influenced not only by talent, effort and motivation, but also by the environments. When children live in overcrowded, unstable or inadequate housing conditions, the consequences often become visible long before they appear in school results. The absence of privacy, constant noise, insecurity or the lack of a

place to rest, read or do homework can shape educational trajectories. Over time, these conditions can contribute to disengagement from learning and increase the risk of early school leaving. Using Ferentari, one of Bucharest's most socially and economically marginalised communities, as a starting point, the project explores the relationship between housing and educational opportunity. Rather than presenting poverty as a problem to be observed from a distance, In the Other Room encourages visitors to examine the broader conditions that allow children to learn, develop and participate. Through immersive environments, personal stories and facilitated reflection, visitors are invited to connect experiences with wider social realities.

The project brings together community members, educators, students, artists, researchers, cultural organisations and citizens in a shared conversation about opportunity, inclusion and responsibility. It seeks to move beyond stereotypes and simplistic explanations, creating space for curiosity, understanding and dialogue. Initially launched in Bucharest, the project is designed as a model that can travel to other cities and be adapted to different communities.

„In the Other Room” is not designed as a project about poverty, but about opportunity and about the conditions that allow it to exist. Because before a child enters a classroom, there is always another room. A room where they sleep, eat, dream, worry, play and try to learn. The conditions in that room often shape what becomes possible in the classroom. By making that room visible, the project invites us to rethink not only how children learn, but also what kind of society we want to build. One in which opportunity is determined by circumstance, or one in which every child has a genuine chance to learn, participate and thrive.

Barbora Harmatová

Mareena – Creating Lasting Connections Beyond Volunteering

Every year, people engage in volunteering, community initiatives, and social projects that create meaningful change in the lives of others. Yet when their active involvement ends, the relationships, knowledge, and commitment they have built often disappear as well.



Mareena is a Slovak non-profit organization promoting social cohesion and the inclusion of migrants. Over the years, several hundred volunteers have engaged in its community and integration programmes and they have contributed to creating more welcoming communities across Slovakia. Many leave their volunteering experience with new friendships, valuable skills, and a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion. However, once their active engagement ends, there is currently no structured way for them to remain connected to the organization and its mission. This project aims to change that.

The Alumni Engagement System will create opportunities for former volunteers to stay connected to Mareena long after their volunteering experience has ended. Through community gatherings, storytelling, recognition activities, alumni ambassadors, and regular communication, the project seeks to transform volunteering from a one-time experience into a long-term relationship. The initiative is built on a simple belief: **people who share common values and experiences should have opportunities to remain connected, learn from one another, and continue contributing to causes they care about.** The pilot phase will focus on former volunteers and create the foundation for a broader alumni community that may eventually include former beneficiaries and other members of the Mareena community. The long-term vision is to build a strong and connected network of people who continue supporting Mareena's mission and contribute to a more inclusive and cohesive Slovakia beyond their formal engagement with the organization.



The project seeks to strengthen belonging, encourage long-term civic participation, and create new pathways for community leadership. By maintaining relationships with people who already believe in Mareena's mission, the organization can build a stronger and more resilient community that extends far beyond its current programmes. The Alumni Engagement System is rooted in relationship-building. It recognizes that long-term

social change depends not only on projects and services, but also on people who continue carrying shared values into their communities, workplaces, and personal networks.

In the long term, the project envisions a vibrant alumni community that continues to support a more inclusive and cohesive Slovakia while helping amplify Mareena's mission, impact, and values for years to come.

Bardhyl Jashari

Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society – DEMO-NEXUS: Civic Literacy and Democratic Resilience in the Digital Age

We are teaching democracy with the wrong tools. Young people do not experience public life through textbooks, formal speeches, or institutional brochures. They experience it through screens, platforms, influencers, algorithms, and constant information pressure. That is where they form opinions, build loyalties, and decide what to trust.



Democracy is being shaped in new environments, but civic education has not adapted. We believe democracy cannot remain resilient if young people learn public life mainly through digital environments shaped by manipulation, emotional pressure, and weak trust in institutions. In North Macedonia and across the Western Balkans, democratic institutions remain fragile, public trust is weak, and democracy is increasingly taken for granted. When political judgment is shaped by disinformation, hate speech, and algorithmic amplification, the damage is not only informational. It affects decisions, public trust, democratic participation, and quality of life.



This is the problem DEMO-NEXUS addresses. DEMO-NEXUS exists because we want young people to care about democracy, understand why it matters, and recognize what is at stake when democratic judgment is shaped by manipulation. The project is designed to help people understand democracy before they lose faith in it, and to understand the effects of manipulated decisions before those effects become real.

DEMO-NEXUS works by turning fragmented civic education, media literacy, and digital citizenship resources into one interactive, practical, and deployable learning programme. It bridges the disconnect between old-school civics and new-age digital realities, transforming passive information into an active, practical, and unforgettable experiential journey. The programme builds on what already exists, selects and adapts quality resources, and creates only what is missing. What makes it different is that it does not only teach democratic principles; it helps participants experience how manipulation, harmful narratives, and algorithmic pressure shape judgment before those effects become real in civic and political life. The programme combines three elements: a gamified Democracy Explainer, simulation-based Skills Labs, and a training strand for educators, civil society actors, and institutions. Together, they connect democratic history, media literacy, and practical civic judgment in one coherent package, designed for both online and offline learning and for future institutional uptake.

If democracy is increasingly shaped online, civic education has to go there too. The future of our democracy depends entirely on how well we train young people to think critically right now. That is what DEMO-NEXUS is designed to build.

Eglantina Avdiu

BONEVET Mitrovicë Foundation – TAKING ROOTS

BONEVET Mitrovica was established to provide children and young people with access to hands-on, future-oriented education through technology, creativity, and making. While the center offers high-quality STEAM programmes and a well-equipped makerspace, its reach within the community remains limited compared to the educational needs and opportunities that exist across the Municipality of Mitrovica.



TAKING ROOT is an organizational development initiative designed to strengthen BONEVET Mitrovica's role within the local educational ecosystem. The project addresses three interconnected challenges: limited awareness among families, weak institutional integration with schools, and the need for stronger participant retention.

The initiative combines three complementary components. First, BONEVET will establish structured partnerships with primary schools and deliver curriculum-linked STEAM activities that transform theoretical concepts into practical learning experiences. Second, community Maker Pop-Up events will bring educational activities directly into neighborhoods, increasing visibility and building trust with families. Third, the Maker Passport programme will provide children with a clear learning pathway that encourages long-term participation and celebrates achievement.



The project will benefit children, parents, teachers, and schools throughout Mitrovica by expanding access to innovative learning opportunities and strengthening cooperation between formal and non-formal education. At the organizational level, it aims to increase enrollment, improve retention, strengthen institutional partnerships, and build a foundation for long-term sustainability.

What makes TAKING ROOT different is its focus on creating lasting connections between schools, families, communities, and learners rather than delivering isolated educational activities. By combining outreach, partnership building, and participant engagement into one integrated model, the project seeks to position BONEVET Mitrovica as a trusted educational partner and a recognized part of community life.

The next steps include strengthening cooperation with schools and the Directorate of Education, adapting STEAM activities to curriculum topics, expanding the project team, launching the Maker Passport programme, and implementing the first cycle of school and community-based activities.

Iuliana Rada

Margareta of Romania Royal Foundation – Building an innovative culture within the Margareta of Romania Royal Foundation

Margareta of Romania Royal Foundation (MRRF) is a 36-year-old NGO with a track record of impact in education, community development and intergenerational solidarity. And yet, despite this solid foundation, the organisation finds itself at a turning point. Its 7 programmes run smoothly, but largely unchanged. There are few internal mechanisms to generate, capture or develop new ideas. Innovation, when it happens, is mostly driven by external pressure rather than internal drive. In a world that is changing fast, standing still is no longer a safe option.



The project proposes to build a culture of innovation within MRRF. Not through a one-off training or a new programme, but through a deliberate, two-year process of cultural and structural transformation, from autumn 2026 to summer 2028, that changes how the foundation thinks, works and positions itself. The activities are organised into three categories. Structural activities work at the level of the organisation as a whole – re-clustering the seven programmes into four coherent areas, creating an advisory board on innovation, formalising new working policies and repositioning the foundation publicly by the end of the process. Individual activities work at the level of the people in the organisation – through Innovation Fridays, Innovation breakfasts, a team retreat, an annual Innovation event and regular trainings and study visits – gradually making innovation feel natural, accessible and even enjoyable, rather than threatening. Personal and background activities are what I will do in parallel – researching how innovation works in other fields and organisations, reflecting on what the foundation has already innovated, and building the intellectual groundwork that will inform the whole process.

The primary beneficiaries of this project are the foundation's own staff and leadership – 20 people whose mindsets, habits and daily choices shape the organisation's culture. The ultimate beneficiaries are the children, young people and elderly people MRRF serves, whose evolving needs deserve an organisation that evolves alongside them.



What is new about this approach is not the idea of innovation itself – it is the deliberate focus on building the internal conditions that make innovation possible and sustainable, within a traditional, established institution that has both the heritage and the credibility to lead by example in the Romanian non-profit sector. This matters even more in an Eastern Europe, where innovation in civil society is still more aspiration than reflex – constrained by scarce resources, competing priorities and organisational culture that tends toward caution.

The next steps are to present the finalised project to the executive director and management team, share responsibilities, secure board backing, and launch the first activities in autumn 2026. By summer 2028, MRRF will have done something significant for its own development and future – looked honestly at itself, chosen to change, and had the courage to follow through.

Leila Sorbala

"Dorcas Moldova" Foundation – Walking in Their Shoes

In an ageing society, one of the most important questions is not only how people grow older, but how generations continue to live together. In Moldova, many older people remain on the margins of community life, too often seen through the lens of dependence rather than dignity, resilience, and contribution. At the same time, younger generations have few opportunities to understand what later life truly feels like. This distance weakens empathy, reinforces stereotypes, and erodes the social ties that hold communities together. Walking in Their Shoes was created to address this issue by making ageing more visible, relatable, and human – and by fostering intergenerational understanding to create stronger, more connected communities.



Developed by Dorcas Moldova, the project is a structured intergenerational experience program that will be piloted through two existing Community Safety Nets – one in a rural setting and one in an urban environment. The program brings together people of older age, children, youth, volunteers, and local stakeholders through experiential learning, direct contact, practical solidarity, and storytelling. Participants will not only hear about ageing; they will experience aspects of it, reflect on what they have learned, build meaningful relationships, and act in support of older people in their own communities. The project benefits older adults who gain greater visibility, inclusion, and social connection; younger generations who develop empathy and respect; and communities, which become more responsive, participatory, and caring.



What makes Walking in Their Shoes distinctive is that it moves beyond traditional awareness-raising. Rather than relying solely on information, it combines guided Ageing Experience Labs, intergenerational dialogue and storytelling, youth-led solidarity actions, and public narrative activities such as community events. The program also invests in capacity building by training older people as co-facilitators and by developing a toolkit for future use. Older people are therefore not positioned only as beneficiaries, but as co-creators of change. The project aims to shift attitudes, strengthen local support systems, and contribute to a broader cultural change: shifting the perception of older age from stage of need to recognizing older persons as people with voice, dignity, and continuing value.

Dorcas Moldova has a strong foundation for this work. since 2003, the organisation has been active in Moldova, working in 70 communities across the country, and reaching an average of 15,791 people per year through community-led, evidence-based programming. The next step is to implement and evaluate the 12-month pilot, document lessons learned, refine the methodology, and prepare it wider integration into Dorcas Moldova's Community Safety Nets approach. If successful, the project could become a replicable model for strengthening intergenerational solidarity and improving the inclusion and well-being of older persons.

Ljiljana Siničković

Pro Peace Western Balkans – Building the Foundation for Change

Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst – now rebranded as a Pro Peace is a peacebuilding organisation that has been working in the Western Balkans since 1999, supporting post-conflict societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia to move beyond the divisions left by the wars of the 1990s. Through partnerships with civil society organisations across the region, the organisation works on Dealing with the Past and Peace Building through peace education, conflict-sensitive journalism, and the use of arts and culture as tools for dialogue and social change.



As the current programme cycle draws to a close in 2027, Pro Peace is entering a period of significant organisational transition. A new regional strategy for 2027–2030 is being developed, a structural reorganisation is underway, and the anticipated changes in the funding landscape will require difficult decisions about the scope and focus of future work. These changes are happening simultaneously, in a region where civil society space is shrinking and where the sudden USAID funding withdrawal in 2025 has already destabilised many partner organisations. The risks of navigating this transition are not only internal, they affect the partners, communities, and broader peacebuilding ecosystem that Pro Peace supports.

This project addresses that challenge directly. It is an internally driven organisational development initiative, led by the Regional Management Team, focused on building the internal structures and tools the organisation needs to navigate the transition with clarity and confidence. The work is organised around six interconnected areas: strengthening the governance and decision-making capacity of the Regional Management Team, developing a practical prioritisation framework to guide strategic choices, designing a structured and relationship-sensitive process for partner transitions, conducting an honest review of the cost structure in light of expected changes in the funding environment and strengthening monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning practices so that evidence genuinely informs future decisions and developing a concrete third party fundraising plan that maps alternative funding opportunities for parts of the programme that cannot be fully covered by the primary donor.

By the end of 2026, the goal is a Regional Management Team that functions as a genuine strategic governance body, a partner portfolio that is focused and sustainable, a cost structure aligned with future realities, and an organisation that knows what it stands for in its next strategic period.

Mario Bajkuša

Forum for Freedom in Education – “Law in Everyday Life”
Programme



Law governs every aspect of daily life, yet most young people leave school without the knowledge to understand a work contract, assert their rights, or navigate the institutions that shape their lives. In Croatia, research confirms what teachers and students already sense: legal literacy is structurally absent from the school curriculum, teachers are unprepared to teach it, and dedicated materials do not exist. Students from vulnerable backgrounds are disproportionately affected, lacking the family networks and resources that might otherwise compensate for what the system fails to provide. “Law in Everyday Life” is a comprehensive programme designed to change this. Developed by Forum for Freedom in Education and grounded in three years of original research conducted under an international Erasmus+ project, the programme makes fundamental legal literacy accessible and teachable within the existing Croatian school system.



The programme's core logic is straightforward: we invest in teachers. A single well-trained teacher reaches hundreds of students. Forum therefore works directly with teachers – through an introductory seminar, an advanced training programme, and an ongoing Professional Learning Community – equipping them with the legal knowledge, pedagogical tools, and peer support needed to integrate legal concepts into their everyday teaching. This teacher-centred approach is supported by a full ecosystem of resources developed and available from the outset. A student textbook and a teacher's manual provide the core content foundation, giving both learners and educators a structured, research-grounded entry point into fundamental legal concepts. A free online course (MOOC) extends access beyond the classroom, allowing students to engage with legal literacy content independently and at their own pace. Together, these materials ensure that teachers entering the programme are never starting from scratch – the knowledge, the structure, and the tools are already in place.

What makes this approach distinctive is its depth, its evidence base, and its proven reach. Approximately 1,200 Croatian teachers engaged with an earlier version of the programme in the 2000s. The renewed programme has been piloted in European partner schools and, in 2025, was awarded the European Innovative Teaching Award by the European Commission – recognition that validates both its pedagogical quality and its relevance across EU member states. The programme has also been cited as a promising practice by the Croatian Ombudsperson for Children in official documents submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The immediate beneficiaries are teachers across Croatian primary and secondary schools. The ultimate beneficiaries are the students they teach – a generation better equipped to understand their rights, fulfil their obligations, and participate actively in democratic life.

Next steps: securing initial funding from foundations and legal sector organisations, launching first cohort of teacher seminars and student workshops, establishing the Professional Learning Community as the backbone of a growing national network of legally literate educators.

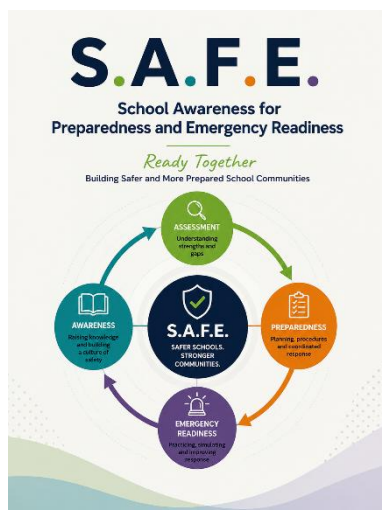
Martina Vidović

Archdiocesan Centre for Youth Pastoral “John Paul II – ”S.A.F.E. – School Awareness for Preparedness and Emergency Readiness Organisation



Schools play a fundamental role in ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and development of children and young people. However, recent incidents in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region have highlighted the growing need to strengthen school preparedness, crisis response capacities, and institutional resilience in educational settings. While schools are expected to provide safe environments for learning and development, many educational institutions continue to face challenges related to emergency preparedness, practical implementation of safety procedures, crisis communication, and coordinated response mechanisms.

In response to this growing issue, S.A.F.E. – School Awareness for Preparedness and Emergency Readiness – was developed as a pilot project aimed at strengthening school safety and crisis preparedness. The project seeks to develop and test a comprehensive model that combines research, school safety assessment, capacity-building, simulation-based learning, preparedness planning, and policy dialogue. Through a baseline assessment and School Safety Audit, the project will identify existing strengths, vulnerabilities, and preparedness gaps within participating schools. Based on the findings, a practical School Safety Framework will be developed to support schools in improving their preparedness systems and crisis response capacities.



The pilot project will directly engage approximately 100 school professionals, including teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, and school management staff from 10 elementary and secondary schools. In addition, between 500 and 1,000 students will participate in awareness-raising activities, preparedness workshops, and simulation exercises designed to strengthen their understanding of safety procedures and appropriate responses during emergency situations. Through expert-led training modules, practical simulations, and the development of School Safety Improvement Plans, participating schools will strengthen their preparedness systems, improve crisis response competencies, and enhance institutional resilience. At the same time, consultations with educational authorities and relevant stakeholders will contribute to policy dialogue and the development of recommendations for strengthening school safety within the education sector.

By combining crisis preparedness, institutional learning, and cross-sector cooperation, S.A.F.E. aims to contribute to the creation of safer, more resilient, and better-prepared school communities for children and young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Miljenka Buljevic

Association for promotion of cultures Kulturtreger – Help connect communities through literature and critically reflect on society

The project answers the organizational sustainability challenge arising from increasingly insecure public funding that is the main funding the organization relies on. It also answers the predicament of modern city dwellers and artists arising from digital congestion and precarious work.



The project aims to create a commercial cultural center/retreat where target groups (artists, writers, city dwellers with particular emphasis on children and youth) can retreat for a while to work and regain their energy through engagement with arts and rural communities. In the process, the cultural center/retreat would create stable funds for organizational sustainability.

This combination of commercial activity that meaningfully answers the needs of target groups while securing stable funds for the organization is a rather new approach within civil society sector in Croatia. The project is also a novelty in rural tourism and cultural tourism that we hope will be appreciated by the wider market.

The first step is to develop a pitch for the organizational team, experts and Club Booksa members that should be involved in the project implementation. This is precondition to develop a sound business plan based on the feasibility study that will serve as the basis for the purchase, renovation and launch of the cultural center/retreat.



Monica Jac

Romanian Federation of Community Foundations – Resilience in Practice: Conversations and Tools for Stronger Organizations

Civil society organisations in Romania and across the region are facing increasing levels of stress, fatigue, and burnout. Practitioners work under constant pressure, often without the structures, tools, or support needed to sustain their wellbeing. This affects not only individuals, but also organisational stability, talent retention, and the long-term resilience of the sector.



This project responds by helping organisations strengthen resilience and embed simple, practical wellbeing practices into everyday work. It combines facilitated reflective spaces, easy-to-use tools, and leadership development to support both individuals and organisational culture, while addressing the structural and cultural conditions that shape how people work, collaborate, and recover. Rather than focusing solely on personal wellbeing, the programme engages with broader questions about the future of work in the NGO sector and how to build organisations where people can thrive. Its aim is to create meaningful change by helping practitioners feel supported and connected, while enabling organisations to build cultures where sustainable work is possible. Grounded in local realities and centred on prevention, the programme ensures that wellbeing becomes a shared responsibility and a strategic component of organisational development.

The programme is designed first for practitioners and staff within the Community Foundation network, supporting the people who support communities and contributing to healthier local ecosystems. The next steps focus on piloting the approach within the



Romanian network, refining it through real experiences, and building partnerships with wellbeing professionals and funders. As it matures, the initiative will gradually extend to the wider NGO sector in Romania, Moldova, and other parts of the world facing similar challenges, and, in the long term, evolve into a regional model for organisational resilience that can be adapted across different countries and contexts.

Nina Horvat

Teatar Tirena – "IT MATTERS TO ME"

What happens when young people stop talking about the issues that shape their lives? At first glance, it may seem that many teenagers are simply uninterested in politics, social issues or public life. However, during the development of *It Matters to Me*, a different picture began to emerge.



The project started with a question about political disengagement among young people. Through workshops, discussions and a participatory theatre process involving teenagers from Teatar Tirena's drama studio, it became clear that the issue was more complex. Many young people do care deeply about what is happening around them. They ask questions about war, democracy, inequality, discrimination, climate change and the future. Yet many hesitate to express their opinions publicly because they fear conflict, judgement or misunderstanding. *It Matters to Me* is a participatory theatre project developed by Teatar Tirena, an independent theatre organisation for children and young people based in Zagreb, Croatia.

The project combines research, youth participation, artistic creation and educational outreach in order to create spaces where questions can be explored openly and dialogue becomes possible. The project includes an original youth production, *The Sound of Silence*, created by teenagers through discussions, improvisations and collective authorship. Their experiences, reflections and questions form the foundation of a professional theatre production that will premiere in autumn 2026. Rather than offering ready-made answers, the project focuses on the value of questioning. It explores how young people navigate an increasingly complex world and how theatre can become a space for critical thinking, reflection and conversation. Alongside the performance, the project includes post-show discussions, educational materials and the establishment of a Youth Advisory Board, ensuring that young people remain active contributors throughout the creative process.



At its core, *It Matters to Me* is not a project about politics. It is a project about dialogue. It asks how we can create environments where young people feel safe to ask difficult questions, listen to different perspectives and recognise themselves as active participants in society. Its ultimate goal is simple: to remind young people that their questions matter, their voices matter and that participation often begins with the courage to speak.

Simona Ciuraru

Federation of Social NGOs in Transylvania (FONT) – Support Hub

This initiative addresses a growing but often invisible challenge within the NGO sector: the lack of structured support systems and safe spaces for peer support, reflection, emotional resilience and collaborative learning for NGO workers. Over the last two years, through direct collaboration with 16 organisations and community events involving more than 300 participants, we observed a recurring pattern among NGO leaders and professionals: exhaustion, loneliness, fear of the future and a constant state of survival mode.



The context in which NGOs operate has become increasingly unstable due to overlapping financial, political, social and technological pressures, intensified by the pandemic and the war at Romania's border. Social service providers are particularly affected, as they combine high emotional labour with continuous legislative changes and administrative burden. At the same time, many NGO employees perform multiple roles simultaneously often in under-resourced organisations with project-based funding structures. Although NGO professionals are motivated by purpose and community impact, this does not protect them from burnout. On the contrary, the lack of support systems, limited opportunities for meaningful connection and reflection and a culture that often encourages competition more than collaboration contribute to emotional fatigue, isolation and overwhelm. The project proposes the creation of a support hub for both expertise and empathy, designed specifically for NGO workers and leaders from Braşov County (and beyond). The initiative aims to build a community around improving happiness skills — understood as the ability to strengthen emotional resilience, communication, collaboration, self-awareness, openness and supportive relationships.



The project is built around three core principles:

- **Community** – creating safe spaces to grow together;
- **Contribution** – encouraging resource-sharing and mutual support;
- **Co-creation** – designing solutions together with participants, not only for them.

The pilot phase will include: community mapping & outreach; participatory workshops for identifying needs & aspirations; matchmaking between participants' needs & available expertise/resources; buddy systems & mini-support groups; workshops, mentoring & facilitated conversations; concise & actionable wellbeing content; collaborative learning & peer-support.

The project aims to create a replicable methodology and guidebook that can later be adapted for other professional communities, such as teachers, caregivers or community workers. The expected impact is the development of stronger, more connected and emotionally resilient NGO communities. Participants will gain access to practical support systems, improve their communication and relationship skills, reduce feelings of isolation and increase their capacity to navigate uncertainty together. In the long term, the initiative aims to contribute to healthier organisational cultures and more collaborative, supportive and resilient local communities.

Stefan Aleksandar Jovanovski

KomshiLOOK – KomshiLOOK agency

KomshiLOOK is entering its next phase: the development of a social creative agency that uses art facilitation, experience design, public interventions, community-based formats, site-specific artistic concepts, and social imagination through art to respond to real social challenges in public, shared, and everyday spaces. After several years of testing KomshiLOOK as a cultural model, the organization has developed a clear method: instead of bringing culture into a community from the outside, it works with the relationships, spaces, tensions, stories, and gestures that already exist inside that community.



The result is a temporary reorganization of how people see and use the spaces they share. Through small and accessible gestures, such as hosting a performance, opening a yard, sharing electricity, or becoming part of a collective action, people are invited to participate without needing to become artists themselves. KomshiLOOK's method creates formats where participation is simple, direct, and meaningful. The agency will build on this method and translate it into a professional service model. Its role will be to design artistic situations, public experiences, participatory processes, and site-specific concepts for partners who are working with social topics but need stronger, more direct ways to engage people. These partners may include municipalities, cultural institutions, NGOs, international organizations, foundations, festivals, and companies with social responsibility programs. Many of these actors already work on important issues, but their communication often remains limited to campaigns, visuals, events, or messaging. KomshiLOOK can offer a real-life experience where people encounter the issue physically, emotionally, and socially. The direction of development should be focused on positioning KomshiLOOK as a creative studio for public imagination and social engagement. Its work should be built around art facilitation, experience design, public interventions, community-based formats, site-specific artistic concepts, and the use of artistic thinking as a tool for making social issues visible, felt, and shared. The agency should become the professional arm of KomshiLOOK, while KomshiLOOK itself remains the artistic and community-based platform. This separation allows the organization to protect the integrity of its cultural work while creating a sustainable income model through commissioned projects, partnerships, and consulting.

The next phase should be developed through three parallel tracks. The first is internal structuring. KomshiLOOK needs to clearly define its services, roles, production capacity, pricing logic, and collaboration process. The second is portfolio development. Existing projects and concepts should be rewritten as strong case studies that show the social challenge, the context or client, the creative response, the format, and the possible impact. The third track is market testing. The agency should identify potential partners and approach them with selected concepts, offering pilot collaborations. The long-term goal is to create a sustainable structure where KomshiLOOK can continue producing experimental community-based art, while also offering its method to others. In this way, the agency becomes more than a business extension. It becomes a way to make artistic thinking useful in society: helping institutions to move beyond messages and create experiences that people can enter, remember, and take part in.

Tamás Komáromi

Egyesek Youth Association – Corporate Recognised International Volunteering Service

International volunteering workcamps provide young people with unique opportunities to develop intercultural competences, teamwork skills, resilience, initiative, and social responsibility through real-life community projects. Every year, more than 70,000 volunteers participate in over 7,000 international volunteering projects worldwide, yet these experiences remain largely disconnected from labour market recognition and employer engagement.



In Hungary, approximately 60–80 young people participate annually in international workcamps through Egyesek Youth Association. Despite the proven educational value of these programmes, participation is often limited by financial barriers and a lack of recognition from employers. Many young people do not perceive volunteering as an investment in their future careers, while companies struggle to engage motivated young talent in authentic and meaningful ways.

This project aims to develop and pilot a Corporate Recognised International Volunteering Service model. The project will explore how companies can partially sponsor participation in international workcamps and recognise the competencies developed through these experiences. Rather than creating new volunteering programmes, the initiative builds on existing international workcamp structures and introduces a bridge between youth work and the labour market.

The primary beneficiaries are young people who gain increased access to international volunteering opportunities and improved recognition of their skills. Corporate partners benefit from authentic employer branding opportunities and access to proactive, internationally minded young people. Youth organisations benefit from stronger visibility, new partnerships, and increased sustainability.



The innovation of the project lies in connecting three sectors that rarely cooperate systematically: international volunteering, talent development, and employer branding. While scholarship-based volunteering support models already exist in countries such as Mexico, no structured model currently connects workcamp participation with employer recognition and talent engagement in Hungary.

The next phase of the project is to develop a pilot model, identify interested corporate partners, define a competency recognition framework, and test the concept with a small group of sponsored participants. The long-term vision is to create a scalable model that increases participation in international volunteering while strengthening its value for young people, employers, and society.

Teodora Rebeja

Terre des hommes Moldova – Transforming School Culture, Wellbeing, and Safety in Moldova



School violence and bullying continue to undermine students' safety and learning in Moldova, affecting their academic performance, mental health, and sense of belonging. Existing responses often remain fragmented and focused on disciplinary measures rather than prevention, relationship-building, and the root causes of harmful behaviours. The project addresses this challenge through a comprehensive whole-school approach grounded in restorative principles, which promotes accountability, empathy, and positive relationships. By strengthening school culture, building the capacities of teachers, and empowering students as active contributors to change, the intervention aims to create safer, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

The project directly benefits students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and wider school communities. All students in the participating schools will benefit from safer and more supportive learning environments, improved school climate, and greater opportunities to participate in shaping school life. Teachers will gain practical skills and structured support to manage conflict, apply restorative practices, and strengthen classroom relationships. School leaders will be supported to improve institutional policies and practices. Parents and community stakeholders will be engaged in promoting consistent approaches to child wellbeing and violence prevention. The expected change is a measurable reduction in violence and bullying in schools, alongside improved student wellbeing, sense of belonging, and trust within the school community. Teachers are expected to become more confident and effective in preventing and addressing conflict, while schools will strengthen their capacity to respond in a consistent and constructive manner. In the longer term, the project aims to contribute to improved educational outcomes and stronger social cohesion by fostering positive, respectful, and inclusive school cultures.



What makes this approach new and different is its integrated whole-school model based on restorative practices. Rather than addressing violence through isolated trainings or disciplinary measures, the project combines school policy development, teacher capacity building, and student empowerment in a single systemic framework. Restorative circles and peer mediation are central tools of the intervention, enabling schools to prevent conflict, repair harm, and strengthen relationships. Students are not only beneficiaries but active agents of change, trained as peer mediators and facilitators of restorative processes. This participatory and relationship-based approach ensures that change is embedded in daily school life and sustained over time.

Over the course of 36 months, the project will pilot, evaluate, and refine a whole-school restorative model in 10 schools, generating evidence, good practices, and a scalable framework that can support broader adoption within Moldova's education system in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research.

Veres Nagy Timea

“Sepsi” Local Action Group – College of Community Builders

Romania is a country where the lack of trust is the basis of society. Our educational system has a grading scheme from 1 to 10 scale, out of which 4 grades are for failure. Technically, you need to learn something to fail. Institutions don't trust citizens and NGOs, citizens don't trust public institutions and companies // NGOs don't trust anyone but their small clusters // and companies are told and they believe that they keep all the other sectors alive. Meanwhile 34% of the Romanian children go to bed hungry every evening. Poverty has been severely ethnicized and criminalized since 2010, the major victim being the Roma community.



The Sepsi Local Action Group has been working since 2018 in order to tackle poverty and social exclusion among Romani people in the city of Saint George. We work with a local network of service providers, including social services, local authority, labour market experts, educational and health care experts, NGOs, urban planners, consultants and supervisors. Most of them live in their institutional bubbles, not trusting each other and not trusting their target groups, the most vulnerable communities of our city.

So how to fight mistrust and poverty at the same time? By the College of Community Builders. CCB is a 4-month long incubator programme where 15 participants, representing different types of stakeholders, work together in the framework of 4 training sessions in order to experience a co-creation process. The training culminates in 3 community projects implemented in their cities, based upon wide public consultations which integrate different perspectives, knowledge and experience and which will serve as a good example of an inclusion-driven intervention. The CCB becomes the educational platform of the Sepsi LAG, creating the framework for a learning process where participants gain theoretical and practical knowledge about community development, trauma-sensitive interventions, community and institutional facilitation, public consultation, field visits, databases. They improve their empathy and communicational skills and experience a co-creation process with different types of stakeholders.



The added value of this proposal relies on the fact that not one sector is targeted but many which secures the integrated approach of community development and also supports the understanding of perspectives different from ours. Participants will reflect during the process upon their best self in work, as we will seek the answer to the question “who are we on our best days?” There is a repeating pattern of interinstitutional cooperation and breaking this pattern is part of the process. The result is not only gaining theoretical and practical knowledge, but also creating a network. The most important result, though, is that this programme may be the starting point of a transformational process that will lead to **real commitments in laws, budgets and institutional practice, based on participation and commonly shared values.**

Veronika Grand Bruncková

Rozmanita – Evidencing impact of the organisation Rozmanita

What challenge are we addressing? Rozmanita implements highly impactful educational programs, continuously gathering vast amounts of longitudinal data on children's holistic development. However, we currently face a data challenge. Our gathered data is fragmented, overly complex. This lack of an accessible structure prevents us from clearly communicating our long-term impact to critical external audiences and creates a heavy administrative burden without consistently delivering actionable, time-saving insights for our teachers.



What is the project about? This project is a comprehensive data synthesis and measurement optimization initiative. We aim to audit our existing measurement frameworks, identify and eliminate obsolete metrics, and consolidate years of historical data into a secure, structured database. The ultimate deliverable of this initiative is the publication of a comprehensive, professionally designed and visually engaging Impact Report, alongside accessible data dashboards.

Who benefits? Internally, the primary beneficiaries are our pedagogical staff, who will be empowered with streamlined, data-informed dashboards that save time during lesson preparation. Our management will benefit from clear metrics to guide strategic decisions. Externally, current and prospective donors will gain transparent, easily digestible evidence of the return on their social investment. Finally, parents and partner public schools will benefit from clear insights into children's academic growth and school well-being.



What change do we want to achieve? Beyond external reporting, our primary goal is to foster a true culture of organizational learning - using data not just to prove our worth, but to continuously improve our internal processes. By providing transparent, synthesized evidence of our holistic impact, we want to secure our organization's long-term sustainability. Ultimately, solid, clear data will make our core strategic goal - scaling the proven LAB School model to public state schools - more credible and achievable.

What is new or different about our approach? Our approach breaks away from traditional top-down data collection. First, we are utilizing a bottom-up implementation process: we start by directly asking our staff, *"What data or insights do you need to know to do your job better?"* ensuring our measurements serve our team first. Second, we are optimizing our tools by replacing redundant questionnaires with innovative proxy indicators - for instance, measuring voluntary contributions as a direct indicator of satisfaction. Lastly, we are actively integrating a Social Return on Investment (SROI) model, connecting financial inputs directly to developmental outcomes to speak the precise language of our partners.

Vlad Levente Viski

MozaiQ LGBT Association – Building a Social Enterprise to Sustain LGBTI Community Work in Romania



The challenge. MozaiQ LGBT Association is one of Romania's leading LGBTI community organisations, serving thousands of people through psycho-social care, student empowerment, cultural activism, employment inclusion and community organising. Yet almost all of this work rests on project-based grants from international donors, a foundation that has become acutely fragile as governments and foundations in the United States, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom reduce or redirect their human-rights and development budgets.

The project. Rainbow Social activates a dormant strategic asset: a private company owned by MozaiQ, currently generating income from community events and online sales with no strategy, no dedicated management and no investment. This project develops Rainbow Social into a structured social enterprise whose profits are channelled into MozaiQ's social mission, specifically the Rainbow Care programme, which provides free psycho-social support, emergency shelter and health services to the most vulnerable LGBTI people in Romania.

Who benefits. The primary beneficiaries are LGBTI people in crisis who depend on Rainbow Care, including Roma LGBTI people, trans individuals, people living with HIV, sex workers, and those experiencing poverty or homelessness, who gain a service that is less exposed to the gaps and restrictions of grant cycles. MozaiQ as an organisation gains unrestricted, flexible income and greater independence.

The change we want. A meaningful and growing share of Rainbow Care's budget covered by self-generated, unrestricted income, reducing MozaiQ's dependence on any single donor and protecting essential services from interruption.

What is new. Rather than launching a new venture, the project re-frames an existing, underused company as a mission-aligned social enterprise, overcoming the “functional fixedness” of seeing Rainbow Social as merely an event organiser. It professionalises what already works (community events), tests new streams (merchandise, corporate diversity-and-inclusion services), and builds the governance and financial discipline to grow them responsibly.

Next steps. A baseline financial audit of Rainbow Social, a review of grant agreements for commercial-income clauses, the design of a legally sound profit-transfer mechanism, and the commissioning of a full business plan, followed by a conservative, phased growth path within three years.

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