

# CF2CF EXCHANGE

Panacevo (Serbia) and Timisoara (Romania)

LEARNING OUTCOMES REPORT



## 1) Introduction

The exchange between the Pancevo Community Foundation (PCF) from Serbia and the Timisoara Community Foundation (TCF) from Romania took place from **11-14 November 2021 in Timisoara, Romania.**

Pancevo Community Foundation is in its emerging phase, not yet formally registered, being managed by people who gathered 1.5 years ago as an **initiative group**. Timisoara Community Foundation is more experienced, has been operating for five years, currently has five people in an executive team (not full time) and an active Board.

The **Pancevo team** was represented by:

Nikola Curcin, member of the initiative group  
Dragan Sreckovic, member of the initiative group  
Nenad Zivkovic, member of the initiative group  
Marina Balaz, communications and social network coordinator

The **Timisoara team** was represented by:

Teodora Borghoff, Programs Director, ex Board member  
Cristina Potra Muresan, Founder and Board member  
Bianca Baila - Program Manager TCF

**Community initiatives** that were visited were represented by:

Andrea Iager - Founder of Ambasada, building a community and part of [FABER](#)  
Madalina Mahu - Architect, member of the initiative group ['Noi in Traian/We in Traian'](#)  
Sergiu Lazin - Entrepreneur, member of the initiative group 'Noi in Traian/We in Traian'  
Livia Mateias - Artist, member of ['Crosetampovestisi poduri / Knitting stories and bridges'](#)

The visit was facilitated by the consultant Tanja Bjelanovic, who was engaged by PCF.

The meetings were organized in Faber space, a community space - collective of people and organizations, a restored industrial building.

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The program consisted of meeting sessions and in-field visits to two community projects supported by TCF. The objective of the gathering was to exchange information, knowledge, reflect, learn and inspire each other.

### Agenda:

<b>Thursday, 11 November</b>	
19.00h	Arrival of Pancevo team
<b>Friday, 12 November</b>	
10.00 - 16.00h	Sessions on: Background and growth of CFs; Programs; Structure and procedures; Community mapping; Fundraising; Communications
16.00 - 17.00h	Reflections on what has been shared
<b>Saturday, 13 November</b>	
10:00 - 11:00	Visit to community project 'Noi in Traian/We in Traian'
11.30 - 12.30	Visit to community project ' <a href="#">Crosetampovestisi poduri / Knitting stories and bridges</a> '
14:00 - 16:00	Sessions: Board role; Organization of big fundraising events
16:00 - 17:00	Reflection on lessons learned
<b>Sunday, 14 November</b>	
10:00	Departure of Pancevo team

## 2) Key learning

Being more experienced, TCF offered its five-year experience while PCF has brought some fresh ideas, the beginners' enthusiasm and back to basics perspective, which was encouraging for all.

The aspects that took most of participants' attention were fundraising (particularly marathon), programs (particularly approach to grantees) and internal structure with care for people's wellbeing.

It was noted that both CFs have **emerged in spite of challenging political contexts**. In the case of TCF, preparation for Timisoara to become the capital of culture helped gather people and focus on community. For both CFs, the encouragement for the actual start-up came from support organizations: Association for Community Relations (ACT) in Romania, and Trag Foundation in Serbia. It was concluded that **people who made it and good facilitation were key** to foundation of CFs.

Specific lessons that were learned:

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- A **good selection of people** who would make a CF is crucial, with clear criteria. In the case of TCF, it was commitment demonstrated in hard work, particularly when it comes to raising funds for the beginning of the CF operation.
- A key ingredient of a CF is the **quality of relationships and people development**. TCF found it relevant and effective that there is not a *lead face*, but the CF is recognized by its work. This is thanks to development of various relationships so the system functions even with personnel changes. For example, new **Board members** were coming from people that the CF had already worked with, from **various backgrounds**: corporate, communications, strategic visions, urban and community development, but all from the city.
- The **internal structure is developed over time**, step by step. The model of TCF was a start with only one executive position (Executive Director) and a very involved Board. After three years, the TCF has introduced new part time positions (Program Director, Grants Manager, Communications etc.). This is also when working on standards, packages, manuals for program managers, CRM system came. Engaging **executive staff was important for the actual functioning and efficiency of the CF**.
- **Building trust in the community** was a basis of all the work including fundraising. After successful crowdfunding campaigns, including the biggest annual fundraising event, the 'Timotion' marathon, TCF started to build solid corporate partnerships, applying a carefully designed gift acceptance policy. Whenever corporates noted massive response from the public (many people giving small gifts), they gave large amounts. The more people that were made happy and provided a **memorable experience** on one day of the Timotion marathon, the more people came and gave next year.
- TCF shared their insight that **going out of the bubble and a comfort zone were needed for a breakthrough into the community**. One such example is a partnership between TCF and a Runners' Club, which is an uncommon partnership for typical NGOs. Likewise, many people from the TCF started running, even though they could not have previously imagined themselves doing it.
- Several approaches to co-working with the community and grantees have been proved effective. The TCF team makes friendly visits to and consultations with its prospective grantees, however the independent Board decides about grant awards. TCF encourages its grantees to fundraise for themselves. It provides

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a platform which serves as a tool for community groups to raise funds for their causes, so it is a kind of **co-fundraising**.

- Both foundations have the same niche when it comes to types of grantees they support. Those are start-ups / initiative groups in the community. TCF emphasized that it may be a challenge to **balance the selection of the right projects and be accountable to donors**, i.e. keep the genuine enthusiasm and avoid too much bureaucracy.
- In **developing programs**, it was helpful to partner with **non-usual suspects** (ROBiKE Valley), with **corporates** (Lidle), and also to participate in **joint national programs** through the Romanian Federation of Community Foundations (Stiintescu).
- **Networking with other community foundations** through the Romanian Federation of Community Foundations was useful in several aspects. This is where the support comes for the development of documentation and procedures. Also, **learning from others was helpful**: Sibiu Community Foundation and its Executive Director provided great consultancy exchange and pro bono support at the beginning of TCF's work.
- It was concluded by all participants that being aware of the need to take **care of people is important**. The type of people that found CFs tend to be very committed, enthusiastic, ambitious, hardworking, hence subject to potential burn out. The development of a CF should be considered as "a marathon, not a sprint".

Some of the messages that TCF directed to the team of PCF were:

- Do not suggest complicated things at the beginning
- Pointing out problems in the community takes some risks, people might be politicizing issues and not be interested in more problems
- Be careful not to substitute for public authorities
- Do not map problems, but create communities, gather people, build relationships (*Talk the Walk* - walk with people in the city and just see the community, not the problems). Start from the initiatives you supported and their story telling.

PCF has taken the following lessons from the study visit:

- It is not likely that we will reach the level of the TCF development in five years, which is ok. **Growth takes time** and the circumstances are different in our community. It is good to be aware that we need time, patience and

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commitment. At the same time, we need to be dedicated to ongoing learning, articulate our needs and use support opportunities.

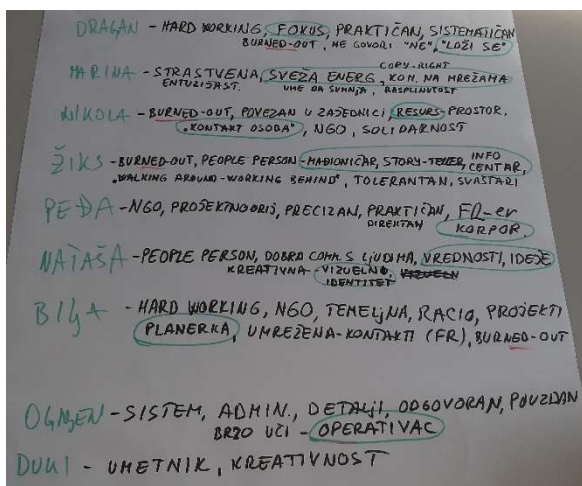
- We realized the importance of **right people**- credible, with genuine motivation, committed for a long time, active.
- We learned that **community mobilization is a deal breaker** to success of the work of a CF. In order to achieve it, we need to go out of our bubble, think out of the box, make non-typical partnerships, step out of the comfort zone, and be creative.
- We realized the **power of collaboration and solidarity**, so we should think of making partnerships with various stakeholders in the community. An interesting insight was the importance of involving the scope of different generations and how this might be very helpful to breakthrough to the community and increase reach.

PCF will **apply the following ideas** in its work:

- We will go **step by step**, one thing at a time rather than to multi-task. We will set the minimum annual targets and our basic principle will be to do well what we do. We will take care of the team, practicing self-care, in order to prevent burn-out.
- We will consider implementing **co-creation model in our work**, and apply accompaniment to our grantees. We will support genuine initiatives, even at the neighborhood level, with no pressure for them to register and professionalize.
- We will **use the learning, networking and support opportunities**, shared experiences of peer CFs in Serbia and elsewhere, as well as the support of the Trag Foundation. This particularly stands for the development of system and procedures. We will use the informal network of CFs in Serbia to consider a joint national program sometime in the future.
- We will aim to **make partnerships with a variety of stakeholders**. We will consider including elderly, sports clubs etc.
- We will **consider organizing *Talk the Walk* events** in our community in order to reconnect people with the community, build relationships, inspire, motivate and engage them.

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- We will apply a hybrid model of internal structure, governance and management, with an active Board at the beginning and gradual engagement of executive staff.



Inspired by the team of TCF, the team of PCF has defined the profiles of its current members. Every member committed to do at least one thing differently after this visit. The list of profiles and decisions are noted in Serbian.

### 3) On-going relationship

The teams of TCF and PCF clicked very well. There was a strong connection established as they found many commonalities in external contexts and internal motivation to act in the community. The community foundations are coming from the same geo-political region Banat (part of it in Romania and part of it in Serbia). Having this in mind, ideas for further exchange have been shared. PCF team is willing to come when *Timotion* is organized, to help and learn. TCF is interested to visit Pancevo and present its work.

### 4) The exchange process

There were no obstacles in the organization of the visit. Everything was smooth. COVID-19 circumstances and private issues prevented two members of PCF team from participating in the visit, so there were four instead of six. Also, due to the unexpected family situation, the Executive Director of TCF couldn't attend.