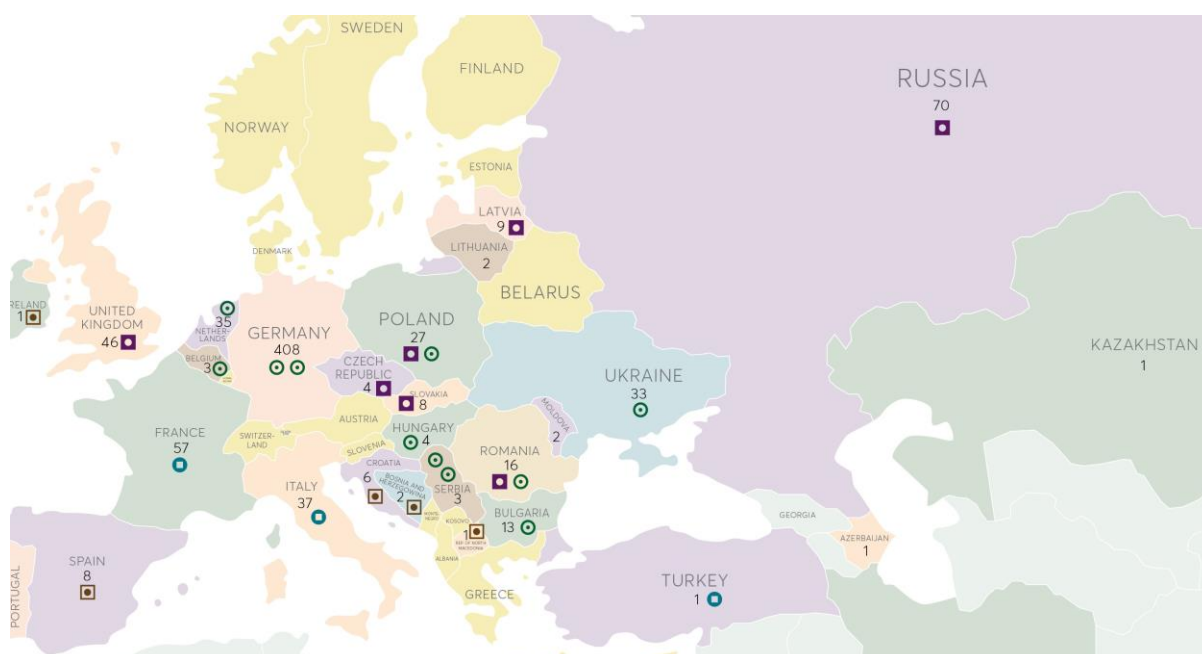


Report on

DAFNE / ECFI Webinar



Community Foundations and their Support Ecosystem in Europe



In February DAFNE (Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe) hosted a webinar in cooperation with ECFI (European Community Foundation Initiative) to help develop a better understanding of the community foundation field and its potential, and to describe the critical role of a range of types of support being deployed to develop the movement. This blog highlights key issues raised in the presentations and subsequent discussion. Presentations used in the webinar are available [here](#).

The community foundation movement is evolving rapidly in Europe. Community foundations play an important role in ‘place-based’ philanthropy and act not only as vehicles for philanthropy in all its forms, but also as leaders, convenors and connectors in their locality - harnessing local energy and creativity to identify and address complex inter-related socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues. Community foundations thus act as agents for change, bridging between public, private and other philanthropic actors and actively engaging local citizens in their governance; as volunteers, in forms of participatory democracy, and in raising and channelling financial resources.

According to ECFI [research](#), presented by James Magowan, there are approximately 800 community foundation movement in Europe. The movement is characterised by diversity,

in the age, scale, form, and operation of community foundations. Their existence and role are determined by their regulatory and operating environment, where the prevailing legal and fiscal system; role of civil society organisations; and attitudes to, and potential of philanthropy (in all its forms from the giving of time to money), combine to create a unique set of conditions in the locality.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution to building the community foundation movement. It requires a diverse and flexible support system that is appropriate to national and local contexts and the stage of development, which in Europe ranges from start-up through to mature community foundations. ECFI has identified 22 active community foundation support organisations and initiatives across Europe. These include membership organisations dedicated to community foundations, wider membership organisations with an interest in community foundations, and support initiatives for community foundations.

Rucsandra Pop, ARC, described the evolution of the community foundation movement in Romania since 2008, which was built in a context where 'the word "community" was devoid of meaning'. She described a process implemented by ARC, which required a commitment over time, a power-balanced relationship, and a tailored approach, in order to help community foundations build trust, relationships, assets, and resilience. Romania now has 16 active community foundations covering almost half of the population, with more in the process of establishment.

In Germany the community foundation movement has grown very rapidly over the last 20 years. There are now over 400, with enormous range in scale from village to city level, and most being run by volunteers. Axel Halling, Bürgerstiftungen Deutschlands (Community Foundations in Germany), described the criteria they use to characterise a community foundation - independence, transparency, diversity of purposes, networking, civic & local commitment, PR, endowment, support of own and other's projects, strengthening of the community. He highlighted that despite the rapid growth, support challenges remain - including working in areas where there are no or few community foundations, and helping community foundations to build assets and endowment; to address a wide and growing range community needs with hugely diverse scales of operation; and to invest in governance and succession management.

Responding to questions from participants James referred to the added value of facilitating connections between community foundations and within the support ecosystem in order to share learning. The importance of allowing time to build relationships, assets, and credibility, was highlighted, in order to ensure that community foundations can grow as institutions which add value to the local community infrastructure.

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About DAFNE:

DAFNE (Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe) is Europe's largest network of donors and foundations associations. With 27 member associations with a collective membership of more than 10,000 foundations and grant-makers, DAFNE is a leading voice of European foundations. It underpins individual activities of its members by encouraging dialogue and collaboration between the national associations.

About ECFI:

ECFI (European Community Foundation Initiative) is a collaborative initiative committed to strengthening and promoting the community foundation movement in Europe. ECFI works with community foundations and community foundation support organisations primarily through facilitating and stimulating interactions to enable learning, knowledge-building and empowerment. ECFI is also engaged in mapping and analysis and in disseminating information that will facilitate development of the field.