

30 March 2022



Community Foundations and Refugees Workshop 2022. Illustrated by Marina Roa from SenseTribe



As ever, challenges are common but context matters, both local and national, relating to the social, economic and political environment, and in particular the potential for community foundations to build relationships with others, in order to play whatever role is appropriate and for which they have the capacity and capability, in their own situation. This report presents challenges, describes actions being taken and highlights the added value that community foundations offer.

Introduction

The purpose of this meeting was to gather community foundation and support organisation practitioners to enable them to demonstrate their solidarity in addressing needs associated with the current refugee crisis, to develop a structured understanding of what can be done and to consider the challenges presented, to make connections, and to identify next steps for ECFI and the community foundation field. 33 participants from 13 countries took part in the call. Some had previous experience of working with refugees, but most not. Below are notes from the discussions which were prompted by presentations from:

Romania:

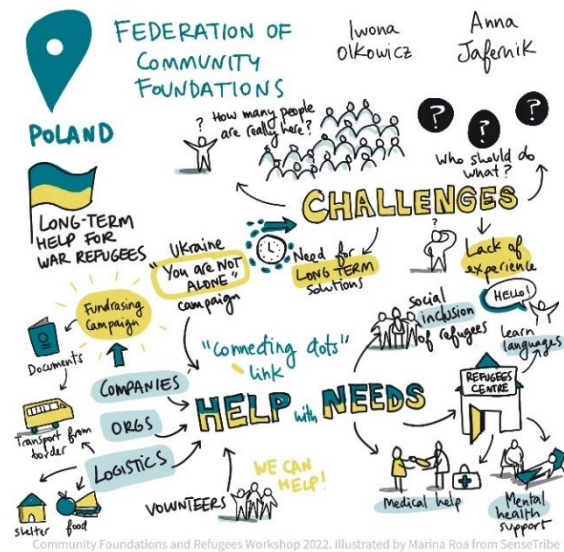
Alina Kasprovski, Bucharest Community Foundation,
 Claudia Abrudan, Oradea Community Foundation



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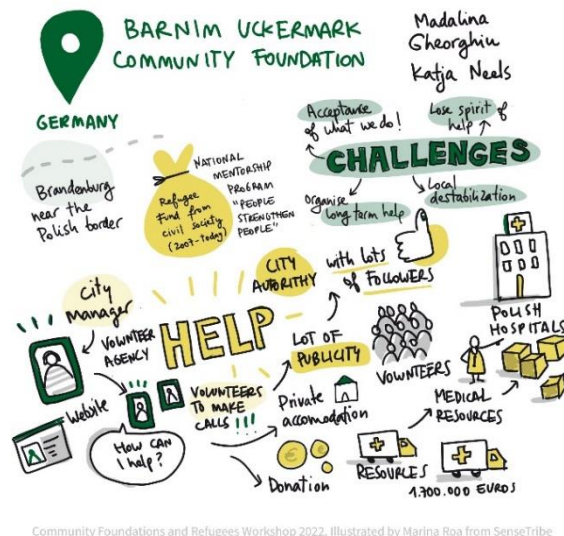
Poland:

Anna Jafernik, Zywiec Development Foundation,
Iwona Olkowicz, Federation of Community Foundations in Poland



Germany:

Katja Neels, Mădălina Gheorghiu, and Kai Jahns,
Barnim Uckermark Community Foundation



Challenges faced by community foundations

Challenges faced by these organisations related to the need to divert human and financial resources away from other activities (at a time when organisations, staff and volunteers, and the local community had not recovered from the additional burdens imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic). Nevertheless, there was much evidence of the activation of volunteers and a sense of a moral obligation to respond. As one contributor put it “We just say ‘Yes’”.

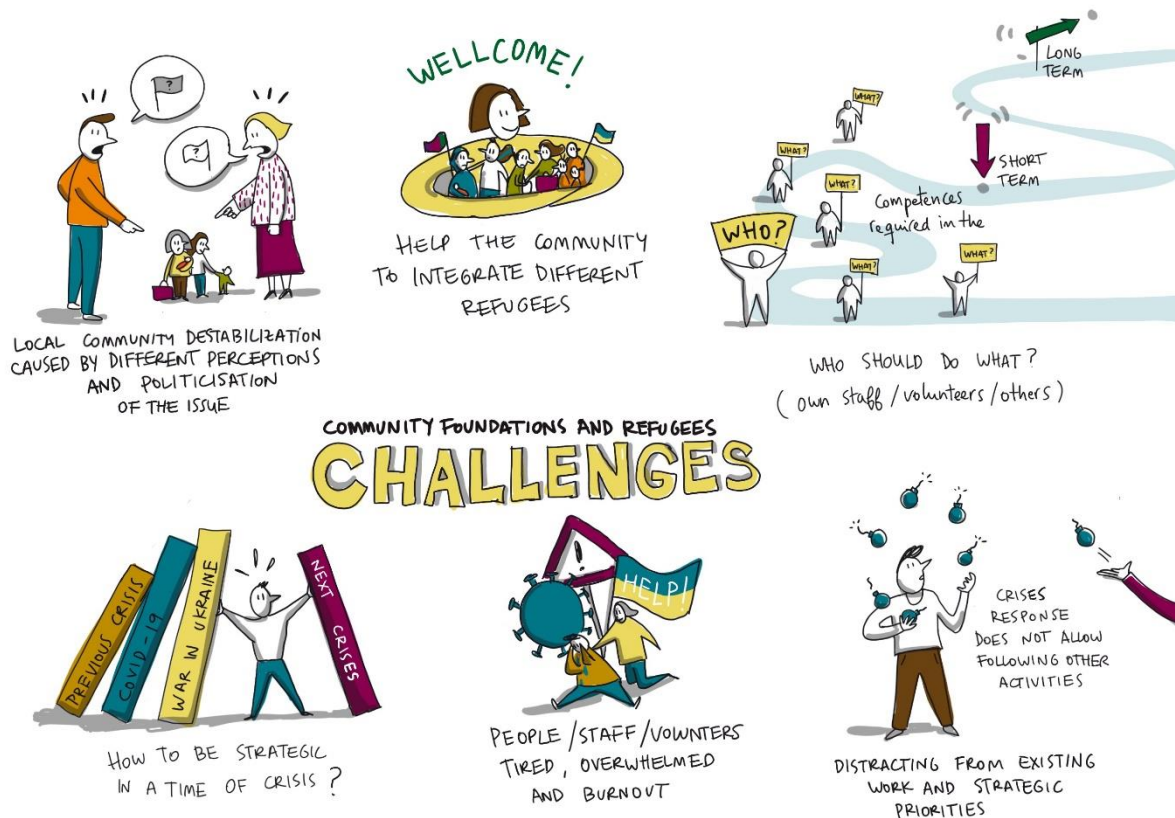
There is also the challenge of how to be strategic in a crisis, even with some preparation e.g. with emergency plans and funding mechanisms in place. It was

noted however that some community foundations, for example in Romania, were feeling overwhelmed and that there was also fatigue in local communities and it was in some places proving difficult to raise funds and to continue to engage volunteers. Others were being approached by donors (particularly existing corporate partners) offering financial support.

Some, for example in Poland, are operating in an environment where there was no national policy or infrastructure to deal with refugees. Here in particular, there was the need to work out who can / should do what and establish working relationships with relevant public bodies and NGOs. The need for international support was highlighted.

It was also noted that community foundations were having to deal with local community destabilisation caused by different perceptions of the conflict and local politicisation of the issue, and the different attitudes towards different refugees - something that could bring reputational damage but also could provide an opportunity to open discussions around equality and integration.

Despite having responded quickly everyone recognised that this would be a long-term issue and that community foundations will continue to have a role to play.



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Actions being taken

Three areas of action were cited:

1. Direct intervention - mobilising staff and volunteers to provide support e.g. provision of supplies, transport, advice and guidance accommodation etc
2. Grant assistance - providing financial support to NGOs for both funding activities and general operating costs
3. Connecting within and outside the community foundation and philanthropy field - building relationships with municipalities, businesses and NGOs, and being involved in the longer-term strategic response

Added value offered by community foundations

- Established and trusted local institutions (to raise and distribute funds and mobilise volunteers)
- Knowledge of the locality (people, needs, institutions etc)
- A variety of practical skills and competencies (from grantmaking through to logistics)
- Ability to act quickly (mobilising human and financial resources)
- Direct people-to-people connections in local communities, but also nationally and internationally
- Complementarity between community foundation work on the ground with technical and financial support from national networks / associations (and their connections internationally) and potential leverage of knowledge and resources

Next steps

ECFI will continue to share knowledge and experience from community foundations and support organisations on this topic and raise awareness of the role of community foundations among the wider philanthropy field to encourage their support for this work.

Presenters

Katja Neels	Community Foundation Barnim Uckermark	Germany
Kai Jahns	Community Foundation Barnim Uckermark	Germany
Madalina Gheorghiu	Community Foundation Barnim Uckermark	Germany
Iwona Olkowicz	Federation of Community Foundations	Poland
Anna Jafernik	Zywiec Development Foundation	Poland
Alina Kasprovschi	Bucharest Community Foundation	Romania
Claudia Abrudan	Oradea Community Foundation	Romania

Participants

Jonida Alite	Partners Albania for Change and Development	Albania
Wendy Richardson	Global Fund for Community Foundations	Belgium
Katya Dyankova	Stara Zagora Community Foundation	Bulgaria
Helen Lenda	Via Foundation	Czechia
Václav Kovář	Via Foundation	Czechia
Teona Chkadua	“Dopomoga Ukraini” platform	Georgia
Bernadette Hellmann	Foundation Active Citizenship	Germany
Mia Weselmann	BürgerStiftung Hamburg	Germany
Dorothea Jäger	Bürgerstiftung Hannover	Germany
Felix Dresewski	Kurt und Maria Dohle Stiftung	Germany
John Sansome	The Community Foundation for Ireland	Ireland
Shreya Chaturvedi	The Community Foundation for Ireland	Ireland
Ilaria De Cave	Assifero	Italy
Francesca Mereta	Assifero	Italy
Laura Panni	Fondazione per L’Infanzia Ronald McDonald Italia	Italy
Milena Lazza	Milano Community Foundation	Italy
Zanna Heidemane	Alūksnes and Apes County Funds	Latvia
Paulina Kamyk	Academy for the Development of Philanthropy	Poland
Irina Nichifiriuc	Fundația Comunitară Iași	Romania
Liliana Cristea	Galati Community Foundation	Romania
Vjekoslav Vuković	Trag Foundation	Serbia
Alexandar Weisner	Trag Foundation	Serbia
Sarah Giles	Oxfordshire Community Foundation	United Kingdom
Gerry Lejeune	Berkshire Community Foundation	United Kingdom
Andrea Powell	Community Foundation Wales	United Kingdom
Sabita Ravi	Quartet Community Foundation	United Kingdom

Graphic facilitation

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