

## Romania's Leadership Journey: fostering the power of shared learning for a new generation of leaders



*Leadership journey participants*

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*The community foundation movement in Romania has been an exemplar to others across Europe, demonstrating how a sustained strategic commitment over time can build a community foundation field from scratch. The Romanian Federation seeing a new generation and new blood is coming into the field identified the need for support to ensure individual and collective development, thus turning transition into transformation at personal, organisational and movement levels. Below Monica Jac describes the Leadership Journey programme.*

In January 2024, Romania's community foundation movement stepped into its 17th year with a new generation of leaders, as nine new executive directors had taken the reins across the network over the last 3 years - many of them coming from within the network. While undoubtedly a key moment for the sustainability of both individual organisations and the movement as a whole, this change was also an opportunity to celebrate this new generation and nurture its creativity and energy.

Taking on the leadership of a community foundation is a transformative journey on both personal and organisational levels, and indeed, for the entire movement. Inspired by the potential of this transformation, and by the courage of the nine new directors who joined the Romanian community foundation network, the **Leadership Journey programme** came into existence - a learning experience for new leaders, implemented by the Romanian Federation of Community Foundations, the support organization for community foundations in Romania, and funded by the Romanian-American Foundation, our network's strategic partner.

Drawing inspiration from Joseph Campbell's archetype of the cyclical hero's journey, wherein individuals venture into the unknown only to return transformed, empowered to contribute positively to their communities, the

Leadership Journey programme aims to echo this narrative. Compared to the Hero's Journey, the Leadership Journey aims to highlight both the individual process of becoming leaders and the collective experience at the national movement level: together and each in their personal mission for the community.

The programme is centered around the group itself as a resource for the participants' own personal and collective development. The learning process is co-designed, leveraging the diverse experiences and needs of the group, with guidance from seasoned mentors within and beyond the network. We aim to focus on knowledge, skills, belonging and self-awareness, while also fostering stronger bonds and a sense of community.

We launched the programme in January with an inspiring meeting at Cincșor, in Romania, providing an opportunity for the group to connect, draw inspiration, and collaboratively design the upcoming programme sessions, which will continue online for at least 8 months. As the Leadership Journey unfolds for the new Executive Directors, our hope is that they emerge not only with a better understanding of their roles and enhanced skills, but also with a profound sense of belonging and support to help them succeed in their mission.

We truly believe that stronger leaders mean stronger community foundations, fostering a more robust network and communities better prepared for the future. So, here's to the leaders, the dreamers, and the Leadership Journey ahead!

Monica Jac, Project Manager

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