



What will CFSOs be doing differently in the short and medium term?

Challenges and the positive spin-offs

May 19th, 2020

Covid-19 has impacted on the community foundation field in different ways across Europe. Some have become more active and engaged, adjusting existing programmes or implementing new ones. Others, in particular those reliant on volunteers, have been forced into hibernation. CFSOs are seeing different issues and needs emerge, and their own role change.

This on-line call with community foundation support organisations involved discussion prompted by presentations from Carola Carazzone (Assifero, Italy) and Olga Nikolska (Ednannia, Ukraine) who shared their experience of changes in the field that required the support organisation to adapt, and to reflect on operational and strategic changes that may stick.

The meeting concluded with a brief presentation how ECFI proposes to adjust its activities for the rest of the year based on the assumption that international physical meetings are unlikely.

Below is presented a visual harvest of the call, key points from the presentations and discussion, and an outline of ECFI's plans.

Tuzla CF, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Czech Association of CFs

Roots & Wings Foundation, Hungary

Assifero, Italy

Academy for Development of Philanthropy, Poland

Romanian Federation of CFs

Association for Community Relations Romania

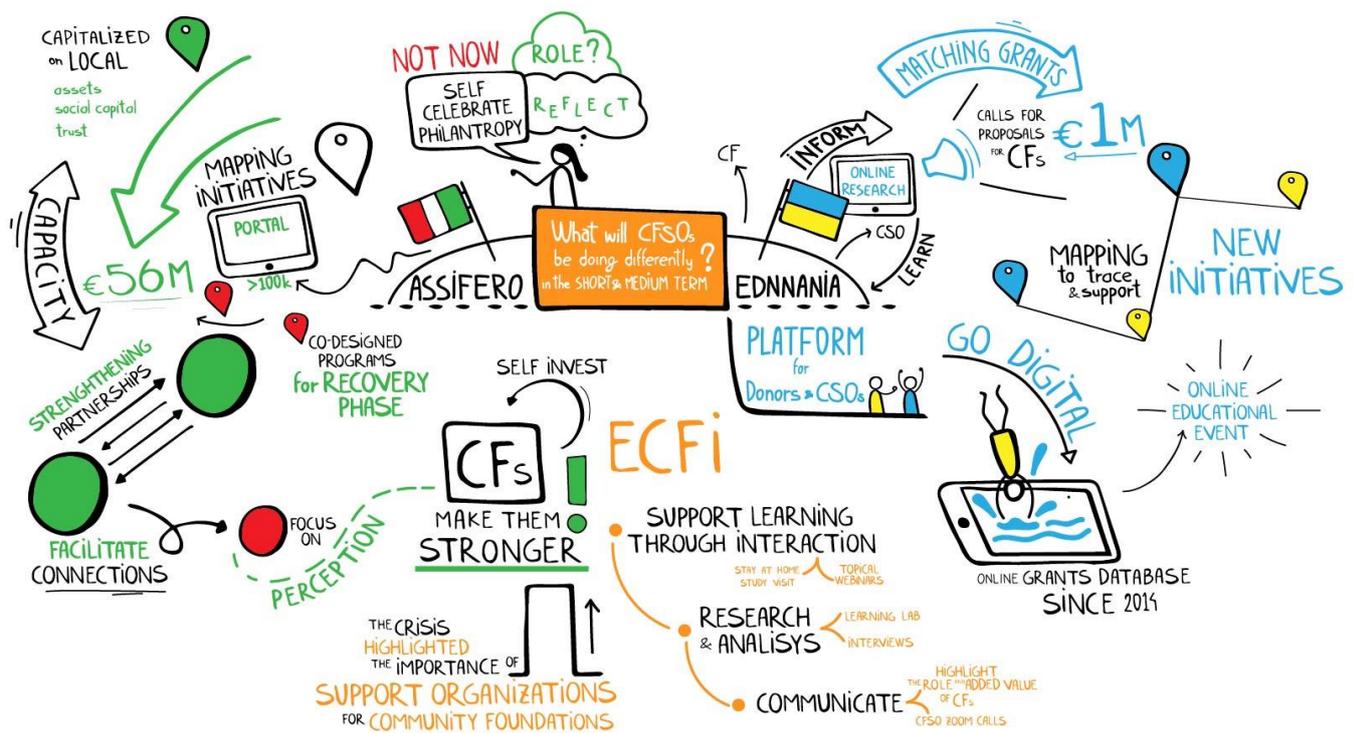
Community Foundation Dobry Gorod St Petersburg

Charities Aid Foundation, Russia

Trag Foundation Serbia

Spanish Association of Foundations

Initiative Centre to Support Social Action Ednannia, Ukraine



Visual Harvest by Adrian Popa

Introduction

While we don't yet know how we will come out of the Covid-19 crisis in the long-term, the brutal reality has forced us as individuals and organisations to adjust quickly to meet the social, economic and health demands brought about by the crisis. In the first two online sessions with CFSOs we considered stories of initial reactions to the pandemic, followed by a more reflective recollection of the challenges of response funds and programming and we end the series with discussions around what CFSOs are doing differently and will continue with in the short and medium term. We appreciate the engaged manner in which the field has come together in sharing both their successes and struggles and we build on this knowledge as a way of moving forward with a desire to support in the long run a resilient, sustainable and locally-rooted movement of community foundations and community foundation support organisations.

Doing things differently

Assifero

In early March Assifero, in collaboration with Italia non-profit, launched a [portal](#) to map the philanthropic response by foundations, companies and individuals (over €100k). Since then 937 initiatives with over 733 million euro mapped. These data show that community foundation in Italy have been on the frontline and pooled almost €56 million across Italy (90% in the north, mostly in Lombardy region) and capitalised on local trust, local

capacities (to spend immediately and effectively according to the grant purpose) and local “continuum of capital” (i.e intellectual, relational, social capital). Recognising the north-south divide in Italy Assifero supported CFs in Southern Italy in codesigning a program proposal to counteract the economic and social consequences of the Covid-19. It also sees the potential of community foundations as agents of change, not merely grant distributors, and is working to others to position community foundations to play a role in the utilization of EU structural funds to counteract the longer term social and economic consequences of Covid-19.

From the outset Assifero saw the possibility of a more radical and permanent change and it promoted a ‘call to action’ around a shift to unrestricted grants, core funding, trust-based grant making with reduced reporting, and not only for existing ‘beneficiaries’. Throughout the crisis Assifero has been at the forefront making the case for community foundations and building connections with other foundations, including from within its own wider membership.

Carola stressed however that ‘this is not the time for self-celebration, rather the one for social imagination and radical reflection on the world we want to build and which role as CFSOs we want to play. The challenge is to embed some of the changes ignited and enforced by the crisis into continuous processes.’ She questioned ‘whether philanthrolocalism and being hyperlocal is good or bad? Does it sclerotize inequalities in a country deeply unequal like Italy: north vs south, cities vs suburban and rural areas?’

Looking to the longer term it is recognised that it will require continued effort to ensure that:

- the perception of community foundations becomes one of them being agents of change rather than crisis responders and that their professionalism is recognised and adequately resourced;
- connections and productive relationships are maintained;
- and that the enforced pivot to digital does not itself exacerbate inequality

ISAR Ednannia

[Ednannia](#) had robust digital infrastructure and so was able to adapt to remote working in a day. It conducted online research to learn how the situation influenced administrative, program and financial activities of civil society organisations and their needs. A platform was quickly established to connect donors and civil society organisations. As a grant-maker in the wider sector as well as a support organisation, Ednannia offered flexibility in its grant-making and announced several calls for matching grant to community foundations.

An on-line studio school was offered to help organisations access digital technologies and own activities, including educational events were moved on-line. In addition, Ednannia has been monitoring the enabling environment to identify issues relating to shrinking space for civil society.

Ednannia has demonstrated that it had the organizational resilience, in its human resource, technical and financial capacity to act quickly and that actions taken such as the platform and on-line studio school will remain in place in the medium to longer term.

ECFI revised actions 2020

Taking account of the current circumstances and having heard about the changing needs within the field ECFI proposes to adjust its activities for the remainder of 2020 as follows:

SUPPORT LEARNING THROUGH INTERACTION

Shift from face to face meetings to on-line engagement

- Topical webinars e.g. to digital fundraising, digital governance
- ‘Stay at home study visit’
- CF2CF exchanges with flexible approach to use of budget for a joint work rather than exchange
- SDG workshops as a series of national level on-line sessions
- ECFI Learning Lab for Change-makers

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

- Re-imagining local development: scenario thinking together with the PEX community
- Series of interviews with CFs and publication on COVID-19 responses and CF challenges, and collated publication
- Translation of selected resources to national languages and vice versa
- Information gathering through CFSOs

COMMUNICATIONS

Overall goal: Highlight role and value added of CF

- Increase knowledge sharing through blogs, newsletter, social media, website and reports (within and outside the CF field)
- Production of a video about the CF movement in Europe with contribution from local and national experts and practitioners
- Regular Zoom Calls with CFSOs on specific questions to increase the learning, share knowledge and foster collaboration

Next steps



- Contact ECFI if you wish to discuss any of the above
- ECFI to further develop ideas and contact CFSOs directly and raise awareness more widely about proposed activities

Communication Channels



[Twitter @ECFINews](#)

[ECFI Facebook page](#)

[CF Practice Exchange Facebook group](#)

[ECFI Website resource page](#)

General contact:

info@communityfoundations.eu