



Seeing is Believing



A study visit delegation of 12 delegates from North Macedonia had a recent excellent learning experience in Romania. Led by Konekt, the support organisation for the community foundation movement in North Macedonia, representatives from 5 local action hubs (LAHs) and their leadership groups had the chance to be inspired by the Romanian experience in development of community foundations and to transfer the knowledge acquired in their own communities. Irina Hadji Mitova, Project Manager, Konekt, summarises what participants took away from their time in Romania.

Irina Hadji Mitova, Nikica Kusinikova and Viktor Mirchevski, Konekt, visiting Timisoara Community Foundation

The study visit was co-organised with the hosting organisation Association for the Practice of Transformation (APT) and its Initiative for Strategic Philanthropy and Intelligent Resources in Central and Eastern Europe (INSPIRE). It was designed to include municipalities and community foundations that reflected diversity of size and socio-economic contexts comparable to the context of North Macedonia. The programme was structured in a way to provide insight not only into the activities for mobilising local resources but also into the governance issues, financial systems, management of donor funds, staffing issues, sustainability etc.

The delegates had the opportunity to engage with 17 representatives and beneficiaries from four Romanian community foundations - Timisoara, Fagaras, Brasov and Ramnicu Valcea. A particular highlight was the chance for delegates to see and experience first-hand the value and impact of 'Brasov Heroes', one of the major awareness and fundraising events run by Brasov Community Foundation, now in its 11th year.

Some of the key takeaways and inspirations from the intense week, cited by participants included:

- “With the right people, female persistence, and a good strategy, it is possible to gain the trust of the citizens. Our communities deserve to have their own foundations to which they can entrust their donations and be sure that they will contribute towards projects that are essential to the community.”

- “These fundraising professionals encouraged us and made us aspire to where we see ourselves in the next 10 years.
- “The potential of their community foundations and the use of available resources and creativity in finding solutions is truly admirable.”
- “Not much human capital needs to be invested for a foundation to work successfully.”
- “There is almost nothing impossible if we know what we want, there is no ignorance if we are willing to learn, there is no failure if we know how to succeed... desire, vision, persistence.”

This participant testimonial encapsulates the relevance and value of seeing to believe.

“My study visit to community foundations in Romania not only provided valuable insights into their work, but also inspired me to adapt their experiences to our social context. The passion and commitment of these organisations towards making a positive and philanthropic impact on their communities strengthened my belief in the power of collective action. Consequently, I am motivated to explore ways to apply the lessons learned in my work and contribute to building stronger, more empathetic and sustainable communities.”

If you want to take a look how Konekt’s study visit went, check the [video](#) (with subtitles in English) made by Viktor Krstanovski, coordinator of the Local Action Hub in Ohrid. The Study visit was part of the USAID Project ‘Get Together for the Community’ implemented by Konekt in partnership with Apollonia Foundation, Indigo and EVN.

Irina Hadji Mitova

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