



SUMMARY REPORT

THEMATIC MEETING

5-6 October 2017, Messina (Italy)

Based on notes provided by Boris Strečanský (ECFI) and Wendy Richardson (GFCF)

European Community Philanthropy's Response to Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The meeting was organized by the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) in the partnership with the Association of Italian Foundation and Institutional Philanthropies (Assifero), European Community Foundation Initiative (ECFI) and the Community Foundation of Messina. It gathered a group of community philanthropy organizations, mostly community foundations from various countries of Europe facing the challenge of refugee flows (Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Germany, Italy, the U.K.). There were also representatives of funders (OSI) and support organizations interested in the topic.

The host Foundation, the Community Foundation of Messina, is an example of an organization that has grappled with difficult issues in innovative, entrepreneurial ways. Its DNA has been defined in its establishment through mobilizing a citizen response to the issue of community development in the context of mafia influence over many aspects of social and economic life. The CF has acted as a multi-stakeholder agent investing in assets previously seized from mafia by the government and re-animated these assets with public purpose and common good service. Reclaiming the community assets back to its public purpose function and maximizing their social value while using enterprising strategies to apply economically sustainable models for their maintenance and development were the main messages that the foundation embodied in its presentation and site-visits offered during the meeting. The CF has been also involved in a project with the Messina municipality and the asylum authorities in a project of integrated social housing in the central part of the city for the vulnerable asylum seekers (incomplete families with children).

Aims

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss European community philanthropy's response to refugees and asylum seekers and to reflect on participants' experience with working with this issue. It built on an initial convening on the topic held in Brussels in January 2016.

Specific contribution and role of community philanthropy organizations in:

- Addressing challenges posed by migration to communities
- Building cohesive communities



Challenges to the work

- Building up a knowledge base on the issue and having an understanding of what's going on, when the situation is entirely fluid and always in flux.
- Many small actors (volunteers, NGOs, civil society organizations, etc.) each playing their own role - but these are too often disconnected, and it can appear like no one has the full picture.
- Raising local funds to support the agenda, particularly from a local population that is negative in its sentiment.
- Portrayals of migrants in the media - what is true, and what is political fear-mongering? Understanding and accessing the best entry points for changing public opinion.
- Dismantling the perception of “deserving” vs. “undeserving” migrants - overcoming suspicion and stereotypes..
- Hostile government policies (for example, in Hungary) which are in polar opposition to those of organizations working to build inclusive communities. Finding space to act in such a restrictive environment.
- Securing multi-year funding - particularly which covers core costs - for both community philanthropy organizations as well as the groups we aim to support.
- Maintaining the energy and motivation of volunteers, which is waning.
- Working towards inclusion - beyond the initial welcome and settlement of newcomers, how can individuals be supported and nurtured in the long-term? There are too few actors working with a perspective of long-term integration: it's time to think in terms of eco-systems (all actions are connected and have a consequence) rather than in terms of single interventions.
- Gaining a realistic understanding of what communities actually want - migration is a complex issue with many nuances. This involves finding the right balance between responding to community's fears, hopes and needs, while also taking moral leadership on the issue (because it's the right thing to do).

Distinctive role Community Philanthropy can play

1. *Change perceptions. The long-term positioning and perspective around the challenge of inclusion and identify the resources for inclusion in the community. But that is a challenge in itself - partners in the community are not always inclusive in a similar way or at all. Essential to understand the local context and needs in transit and at destination. Address prejudice in host environment - provide information to go deeper, challenging norms - check your own organization's motive, power, and privilege. Bring together locals and refugees through food, music, relax, sharing stories, to understand where they come from and what they have been through.*
2. *Build community capacity and increase resources. Look for people who want to be involved but do not know how - there are various ways how they can be involved and it is the CF responsibility to reach out to these people and to pro-actively build the support constituency. Money often not the problem. Experiment with different approaches that deal with the crises - to settle in small villages to take up agriculture opposing to stay in big camps - experiment with social issues.*
3. *Build connections. In early stages - “eye-level” collaboration and convening/networking/empowering and building the community capacity creating a platform for engagement - identifying who is best placed to deliver. Understand needs*

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and what is being offered regionally , nationally and internationally.

4. *Inform - spreading the information in our community about what is happening - in a more systematic way*
5. *Go deep and give long-term support, involving migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the work, giving the opportunity for flexibility and space to respond creatively and dynamically.*
6. *Go beyond the community level - only if it is combined by local campaign that appreciates the volunteering work*

Four dimensions to consider

- A. *Advocacy to address anxieties and fears*
- B. *Deserving and undeserving (human rights and citizenship)*
- C. *Professional and Volunteer responses - how can they work together?*
- D. *New governance models - roundtables, with key partners and authorities*

3 Levels of response

Local level

Focus on security, participation, and wealth:

- *Security:* especially in the case of those who have recently arrived, consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - what are the fundamental safety and physiological needs of all human beings (security, food, water, warmth, rest)? What else would be welcomed? Rent subsidies, emergency loan funds, urgent mental health care, start-up kits of household goods, etc. Reduce stress and improve quality of life. Treat people with dignity.
- *Participation:* it shouldn't be about us doing it for people, but about people doing it for themselves. Involve newcomers in the work of your organization in practical and useful ways. Help them seek out other local opportunities that will allow them to have their voices heard. Prioritize access to language courses and trainings so that isolation is less palpable. Organize events (cultural, cooking, music, etc.) that bring together different parts of the communities and which celebrate the origins of where newcomers have come from. Engage with naysayers in sensitive ways.
- *Wealth:* seek out new partners with chambers of commerce, proactively seek out employment opportunities. Assist in the translation of qualifications, diplomas, etc.

Regional level

Focus on values, inspiration, and communication:

- *Values:* Work with like-minded organizations at the regional level, particularly in pursuit of changing public opinions. Demonstrate the power of a network that can

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lead to community conversations, building community knowledge and connecting resources with needs. Move from being a musician (acting alone, but well) to being an orchestra (acting together, in concert, for an even better result).

- *Inspiration*: Encourage a willingness to change - this is the right thing to do, so we should therefore do it. Use social capital to influence constituencies.
- *Communication*: Communicate successes and good stories from other parts of the region. Understand what will appeal to constituents - is it emotional arguments? Financial arguments? Capitalize on energy that is already there.

National level

Build a movement of impassioned organizations, much like Community Foundations of Canada achieved to do with its [Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees](#):

- Advance community belonging and inclusion as part of a country-wide effort.
- A network is a living thing, not dots on a map: activate everyone involved.
- Connect disparate actors who want to contribute with funds, ideas, supplies, etc.
- Acknowledge that wider scale efforts must include government and corporates.
- Build the appeal of rural areas for newcomers, who often have the instinct to head directly to cities, and to stick with their own existing cultural groups and networks.
- Create a celebratory atmosphere - look at what can be achieved if we work together.
- Balance responsiveness and leadership.

Shifting public opinion

- How can we find common viewpoints with those who don't agree with our approach at all? Or, even more challenging, with those who are marginalized themselves?
- Messaging opportunity: communities can flourish when everyone is encouraged to be open about, and celebrate, their differences (ie. the opening of a Syrian bakery). Make everyone think they are gaining something by welcoming newcomers.
- Understand that not everyone will be receptive, find a balance in messaging: taking care of newcomers while not neglecting those already in the community (and who may have needs of their own).
- Even when public opinion may be positive (ie. when Syrians started to arrive in Canada), don't assume it will just stay like this on its own. Continually monitor the pulse of a community or group, as it may take just one incident to swing opinion in an entirely different direction (ie. 2015 / 2016 New Year's celebrations in Germany, where in a number of cities - though primarily in Cologne - refugees were accused of mass sexual assaults, rape, theft, etc.).
- However, facts usually don't change opinions. This is why it is important for community philanthropy to have a positive framing around the issue.
- The messenger is as important as the message: is it elites speaking about the plight of refugees, or is it refugees speaking about themselves? This can entirely change how a message is received.
- The opportunity is that community philanthropy organizations are already in people's social circles - they can read what the general sentiment is, and tailor

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messages accordingly. Larger actors, or external actors, do not have this luxury of insight.

- Audiences can be more or less divided into:
 - *Allies*: don't lose them.
 - *Mushy middle*: who may have legitimate fears, develop arguments for them.
 - *Those against*: maybe best to leave them alone, you won't sway them.

Mushy middle

- Start with yourself: are any of your board and staff part of this mushy middle, not entirely convinced about the work? Have an internal conversation: shouldn't we be standing up and doing something, providing moral leadership? What are our organizational values? And are we living the values that we say we stand for?
- Feed local news partners stories, and be on their case to publish them. Don't wait for them to be proactive and to do this on their own.
- Make stories about individuals - and not just their obstacles and hardships, which leaves viewers/readers feeling guilty (and guilt is never a good, or long-term motivator) for doing anything. Engage audiences on an emotional level, emphasizing that we are not talking about a faceless mass, but individuals with their own stories, histories, culture, etc.
- Make sure you are choosing key audiences and then tailoring messages (parents will be more in tune to stories about children, teachers might be more interested in the education aspect, etc.).
- Be patient, clear and honest in responding to all queries, as accountability is key.
- Be present on the ground so you actually know what is going on, and can speak with authority.
- Facts (pick a few but don't overdo it) + emotions = appealing to all sensibilities.
- Emphasize commonalities, not differences between newcomers and residents: through cultural festivals, music (mixed choirs and orchestras), food (look who is coming to dinner, cooking workshops, etc.).

Those against

- Deliberately engage with those who have different views and confront prejudices of a very deep kind.
- Create safe spaces for locals and newcomers to interact that is relaxed and safe.
- Use many different avenues for communicating - don't forget social media.
- Develop partnerships with local news and press organizations. Define - in your context - what are the stories that combat hate and, in some cases, state sponsored xenophobia?

What do we all need in order to do our work better?

- Connections: opportunities to continue meeting and exchanging with other community philanthropy organizations working on this issue - this is important in terms of learning, but also solidarity.
- Continued exchange of information about what is working well at the local level - particularly on aspects of the work we all face, regardless of context (for example,

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mechanisms ensuring transparency and accountability, and strategies for building trust with communities).

- Reminders of why this work is important: take time to volunteer yourself, meet with newcomers, and reignite your own motivation.
- To be realistic about our own capabilities and limitations.
- To take the time to celebrate successes when they happen.
- Core funding - to be nimble, flexible, and reactive - but also to allow for more time to actually get the real work done (rather than writing proposals and reports).
- Robust infrastructure organizations that can provide leadership and which can advise on strategy around complex issues such as migration.
- Real collaboration amongst ourselves: stop competing for funding, and start working together.



Annex 1

The Global Fund for Community Philanthropy (GFCF) spoke to some of its partners who attended the convening - from Germany, Hungary, Italy and the UK - to hear about the highlights from their time in Messina, and to understand what they will be taking back to their own work and communities across Europe.

GFCF: Do you think that there is a distinct / specific contribution (or role) that European community philanthropy can play to address the challenges posed by migration in our communities?

Vittoria Burton, Fondazione di Comunità del Canavese: Community foundations can rise above the public and private economic interests of the “immigration business” and concentrate on what comes after the more basic, immediate reception needs. We have the freedom to look further ahead into the future, in order to start building a more cohesive, inclusive and open society. The work we do towards that objective will benefit not only immigrants but all of the more vulnerable citizens in our communities. I believe we also have a role to play in initiating a credible, reliable, authoritative conversation about immigration with the public sector (local councils, social services, schools), other non-profit organizations, businesses and individual citizens. And we are the only ones in that position, as far as I can see.

Helen Wray, Foundation Scotland: Community philanthropy does have a distinct role in helping address the challenges posed by migration in our communities. Those supporting community philanthropy are in a relatively unique position to have the ability to shape responses and apply their resources in ways to test and challenge the issues of integration without the bureaucracy and politics that restrict local and national government responses. Community philanthropy is about more than money and brings local knowledge, people and expertise to the table. It should be courageous in its responses as it is at the frontline of building communities.

Orsolya Polyacsko & Erika Barna, Ferencváros Community Foundation: Community foundations are deeply embedded in their communities and have direct contact with their constituencies, therefore they are in a unique position to: flexibly respond to what is happening in their immediate environment by reading the social climate; thoroughly understand the lived realities of citizens; and, help locally emerging ideas take shape. From this vantage point, community foundations can then create opportunities for people of different backgrounds to meet, and work together around points of common interest. This is the role that the Ferencváros Community Foundation plays in the ninth district of Budapest. We are currently exploring the district’s migration landscape, hoping to make friends with “our new neighbours” in order to help implement the ideas and projects that they value. Ultimately, we’d also like to see these newcomers as our board members, volunteers, and funders.

GFCF: From discussions with other participants in Messina, did you learn any new or interesting approaches around building inclusive communities?

Tobias Stein, Bürgerstiftung Duisburg: What struck me was that those organizations that had built the best collaborative networks were those who seemed to be the most

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successful in realizing their goals. It takes completely new approaches to make change in our societies - and a change is needed if we want to build more inclusive communities. Shifting mind-sets, especially, requires a combination of different organizations working together on, and believing in, the same idea.

Thomas Flynn, London Community Foundation: For me, I'm coming away with a new appreciation for transparency and communication - both of which are absolutely vital when trying to build inclusivity and trust.

Orsolya & Erika: We were very impressed by how the Fondazione di Comunità di Messina has managed to re-invent public spaces throughout the city, transforming them into true community spaces after the region's complicated history related to the mafia. For us, it is, a symbol of the creative capacity of community foundations, as well as their ability to respond to the most critical social problems.

Helen: What struck me was that there were common approaches across all of the countries present, around the use of music, the arts and food to bring communities together and bring down barriers. I was particularly inspired by the Fondazione di Comunità di Messina, in the way that they make connections between local challenges to identify new solutions (for example, the exodus of local rural populations has resulted in empty housing, which the foundation is now using to integrate refugees into rural communities, helping to make them vibrant and self-sustaining again).

GFCF: What differences has the Messina convening made to the way you think about your organization's work around refugees and migrants? Will you change anything as a result of your participation?

Tobias: Our team used to consist only of people exclusively from our own region. Now we have agreed to widen this, and to begin working with refugees who have already been living here for a few years. It's vital to work with people who already have experienced specific situations, and who can better understand the actual circumstances in which people live.

Thomas: More can be done. It has given me more confidence to be able to talk about the challenges faced in London, and in turn to influence others about the need to support such a cause.

Orsolya & Erika: An important point that was discussed in Messina was around collaboration with different stakeholders, specifically local government. Independence is a key policy of our foundation, which is manifested through our fundraising practices: we raise funds from the community and do not accept funding from government or municipal sources. This is an approach we will stick with, but Messina discussions underlined how vital it can be to collaborate with local government. So we are exploring how we can harmonize our policy of independence, with the recognition that collaboration between stakeholders is very important.

Helen: I realized that overall we are reactive in our response and need to be bolder and more informed to allow us to be more proactive. We need to play more of a role in telling



the history and the story of refugees and asylum seekers and - more importantly - allowing them the space to do this themselves.

Vittoria: It was encouraging to hear that we are all working on more or less the same issues and in more or less the same way: we can't all be wrong! We will certainly be more outspoken and less apologetic about our work moving forward, and will also increase the efforts we are putting into creating a network of grassroots organizations that take creative action on the topic. I also think it's important to focus on the small numbers and consider them a victory too: if we are able to turn five, ten people who were previously hostile or unconcerned, we should consider that a positive change and take into account the domino effect!

GFCF: Are convenings such as this useful / relevant, given the contextual differences that exist between different regions and countries?

Thomas: Convenings like this are hugely important, as a joined up approach is key. Unified organizations supporting each other can enable innovation, empowerment and learning to take place; all of which can strengthen individual approaches to dealing with migration. And understanding differences between our operating contexts allows for new avenues of thought, perhaps overlooked previously.

Vittoria: Very useful. Sometimes you feel inadequate in your own response to the situation, compared to other organizations, sometimes you feel guilty for having it so easy compared to other countries. In the end, though, it's reassuring to have the common ground of working with a community philanthropy model: to #ShiftThePower.

Orsolya & Erika: The sense of being part of a wider network and an international community, as well as the solidarity expressed at the meeting, provides us with great reassurance and "emotional ammunition" as we continue this work in Hungary, where the issue of migration is particularly controversial and critical.



ANNEX 2

Participants

Carola Carazzone	Assifero
Ilaria De Cave	Assifero
Anna Omodei	Assifero
Nadejda Dermendjieva	Bulgarian Women's Fund
Sara Lyons	Community Foundations of Canada
Marie-Luise Stoll-Steffan	Die Wiesbaden Community Foundation
Andrea Hausy	Die Wiesbaden Community Foundation
Boris Strecansky	ECFI
Orsolya Polyacsko	Ferencvaros Community Foundation
Erika Barna	Ferencvaros Community Foundation
Vittoria Burton	Fondazione Comunita Canavese
Andrea Pastore	Fondazione della Comunitana Salernitana
Massimo Barilla	Fondazione di Comunita di Messina
Gaetano Giunta	Fondazione di Comunita di Messina
Iva Tankova	Varna Community Foundation
Natasha Salehi-Shanian	Berlin Community Foundation
Andrew McCracken	Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
Tobias Stein	Duisburg Community Foundation
Giorgio Abate	Fondazione Della Comunità Della Val di Noto
Melania Cimmino	Fondazione Della Comunità di San Gennaro
Stefania Mancini	Fondazione Italiana Charlemagne / Assifero
Nicolò Della Chiesa	Fondation Assistance Internationale FAI - Lugano
Helen Wray	Foundation Scotland
Carlos Chavez Hernandez	Leeds Community Foundation
Thomas Flynn	London Community Foundation
Andreas Hieronymus	Open Society Foundations
Katya Dyankova	Stara Zagora Community Foundation
Caren Moirongo	Stuttgart Community Foundation
Marija Mitrovic	Trag Foundation
Andrea Powell	Wales Community Foundation
Joanne Brady	Wiltshire Community Foundation