



About the Community Resilience Forum

Introduction

Community Resilience Forum (CRF) is one of the EU TACSO 3 Capacity Development Programme package. It addresses one of the most critical issues for civil society as identified through needs assessment, i.e. CSOs relation with constituencies and genuine activism. It has been found that, generally speaking, CSOs have detached from their constituencies which affects their legitimacy, relevance and finally their impact. It was, as well, discovered that community-based organisations, those working at the local level, grassroots, informal groups and citizens' movements are those that have the strongest ties with their constituencies. Commonly, they are able to mobilise citizens, particularly when it comes to issues that are of high interest to citizens and when it comes to small communities. However, new social developments such as political instability and violation of basic freedoms in some of the countries, emergency situation with COVID-19 pandemics etc., change citizens' priorities and put new challenges in front of CSOs. CSOs, therefore, require new approaches to persist in activism in these turbulent circumstances, including also attention to communication trends that digitalization and new technologies bring.

CRF will be organised as large event at the regional level to facilitate learning, exchange and discussion among CSOs so they can think together of resilient modes of activism (particularly in challenging circumstances). The event will also serve to bring back the enthusiasm and strategic orientation in rebuilding trust and strengthening relations with key constituencies. It considers bringing lecturers and models of good practice from EU (particularly Central and East Europe), from the WBT region, but also internationally.

This regional event will be implemented in the form of a two-day regional forum with approx. 60 participants. The Forum will primarily target grassroots, but also other CSOs such as community foundations, CSOs providing grants and capacity building to grassroots, and other interested CSOs including networks, women's CSOs and EU funded CSOs.

The event will consist of **3 main sessions**, **6 parallel sessions** and **2 forum sessions** activities each focusing on a specific issue. By applying this approach, the high level of participation of the large group of participants will be ensured.

Main sessions will be consisting of the presentations provided by key speakers, mainly experienced CSO and community development experts. Their inputs will include overview of inputs from theory and practice, raising questions to stimulate discussion and practical work and response to questions from the participants.

Parallel sessions are envisaged as the smaller events for groups of up to 20 participants. The experienced practitioners will share their thoughts, lessons learned and expertise at those events ensuring exchange of experiences among participants, peer to peer support and transfer of knowledge and skills through short workshops and tasks.

Forum sessions and practical work will be organised for sessions requiring the whole forum is involved around one topic. Those sessions will be mainly organised as the follow-up to main sessions



and from methodological point of view will include standard Q&A sessions, world cafe methodology, small group work etc. The experience experts who will act in the role of moderators of the event will design methodological approach for the forum discussions.

DAY 1 MAIN SESSIONS:

- *Why communities matter?*: The Community Resilience Forum will be organised after a period of over year time marked with number of challenges for CSOs and communities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The global COVID-19 pandemic has brought enormous life changes to citizens all over the world and has affected the way of living in almost all segments. The most vulnerable and deprived have been the most affected and many citizens and communities have overcome the past year with support provided by local activists and CSOs. However, the past period also provided opportunity to all of us to think and re-think about our role in the society and how we communicate and support local communities as key constituencies of CSOs. The first day of the CRF will be dedicated to the introductory session with purpose to inspire and stimulate open discussion, especially by tackling some of the following questions: *How far away are we from our communities? Whether and where have we lost contact with our constituencies? Whether citizens' priorities changed? How CSOs observe needs of the citizens? What can we improve to ensure our accessibility to citizens?*

- *What makes a resilient community?*: This session will be dedicated to the overview of the theory, presentation of example(s) of good practice with purpose of stimulating the solution focused approach of the event and learning based on the successful and inspiring experiences. The session will also include active involvement of CRM participants on engaging them in the group task and discussing the challenges to developing a resilient community. By applying this approach participants will be stimulated to apply some of the principles of resilient communities in their practice.

DAY 1 PARALLEL SESSIONS:

- *Vulnerability in the time of crisis – presentation of cases of CSO support to vulnerable groups*: The time of crises has proved that those that are the most vulnerable in society are becoming the most stressed with the crisis situations. However, it was also observed that community solidarity is strong in the time of crisis even in the most deprived communities. The speakers of this session will share their experience of mobilising community resources and providing support in time of crisis to most vulnerable groups. Also, they will share with the group lessons learned and ideas how communities can be strengthened based on this experience.

- *Strengthening and mobilising – how to support communities to recover when everything falls apart*: For many communities, recent period has not been only the time of crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic but were also strongly affected with natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and fires. How to mobilise community after everything falls apart is the key question of this session at which community activists from affected communities will share their experiences including how they organised their work, volunteers, from where they have started, which methods were used to mobilise resources and how their actions were prioritised. They will also share their thoughts with participants on how they see that experienced crisis and recovery process will affect the future of the affected communities.

- *Observing the needs of communities – knowing your constituency*: Monitoring is the key aspect of any operation, also including community actions and services to citizens. However, often this aspect of CSO work is neglected due to the lack of time, human and financial resources in relation to the number of activities and services CSOs are conducting. This session will be implemented in the form of the short workshop presenting several simple tools that can help community based CSOs to

effectively monitor their actions, and in the same time assess the changing needs of the constituencies.

DAY 2 MAIN SESSION:

- EU financial support to third parties – Enhanced Outreach to Civil Society Organisations: Financial support provided by EU is mainly dedicated to organisations with strongest capacities to implement large scale of actions and manage larger budgets. However, by introducing the Financial Support to Third Parties concept, the EU has succeeded to provide financial support via sub-granting mechanism to community-based organisations. In this way, the EU has succeeded to enter the number of local communities and support extensive number of locally based CSOs and their actions. This session will provide comprehensive overview of this learning experience by involving all parties involved in this process emphasising the lessons learned, ideas for further exploring of this approach and value of EU support for community initiatives.

DAY 2 PARALLEL SESSIONS:

- The Strength of Community Support – Community Philanthropy and Funding for Resilience: The session will provide an overview of the current status of the community philanthropy and fundraising activities. Key experts working on development of the community philanthropy will share their observations and views on the community resources successfully used in the past period and opportunities that are still not explored or widely used.

- Resilient Models of Activism – New Approaches in Digital Era: Whom citizens trust? What are the new approaches to activism (digital activism and communication)? How to support those that are not having digital skills neither access to digital tools? These are just key questions that will be explored during the session by CSO and community activities which will share their experience conducting advocacy actions, supporting public participation in decision-making process, and providing community service to citizens during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Importance of adopting Human Rights Based Approach in Building Resilient Communities - How to Persist in Activism in Turbulent Circumstances: To apply Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in practice CSOs are required to improve not only the design and approach to implementation of their actions but also to dedicate time and resources to develop and adopt their internal organisational policies. What is needed to adopt HRBA and how the experience of this process is perceived by CSOs will be the key features of this session in which several CSOs activists and experts will present their findings on this process.

DAY 2 FORUM SESSION:

- Message to Persistent Community Mobilisers: This forum session will be the last session prior official closing of the CRM event. It will include design of messages to inspire, recover, and lead community development processes. Also, this session will summarise the key lessons learned, discuss what was good and what can be even better when talking about community resilience in practice. The final note of this session will be dedicated to envisioning the future of resilient communities in the WBT region. The session will be designed to ensure active involvement of the large group of participants of the CRM event and will be moderated by experience experts.

After the event, detailed conclusions and recommendations will be prepared by engaged experts including the feedback provided by participants of the event. The summary report prepared by EU TACSO 3 will be published in the electronic version in English language. To increase the visibility and outreach, informative material containing press releases will be produced, and post on social media will be published and disseminated.



Specific objectives:

- ✓ To introduce CSOs from WBT with new approaches and good practice models to activism and community mobilisation;
- ✓ To support exchange of CSOs practices and skills in citizens' activism, participation in decision making and community mobilisation;
- ✓ To raise the issue of constituency building and discuss strategies to promote and support activism and community mobilisation in the WBT;
- ✓ To increase ability of CSOs to respond to basic freedom violation.

Relations to the Project's Result Areas

RA1: Further development of CSOs' institutional and organizational capacity, this activity is a part of the Capacity Development Programme.

Timing

20 - 21 October 2021

Location

The event will be organised in physical/hybrid form in Belgrade, Serbia and on-line via the Zoom platform. Final decision will be made timely, according to the COVID-19 situation in the region. Recommendations and the on-line report will be published in November 2021. The event will be implemented in English language.

Participants

Up to 100 representatives of grassroots, but also other CSOs such as community foundations, CSOs providing grants and capacity building to grassroots, and other interested CSOs including networks, women's CSOs and EU funded CSOs.