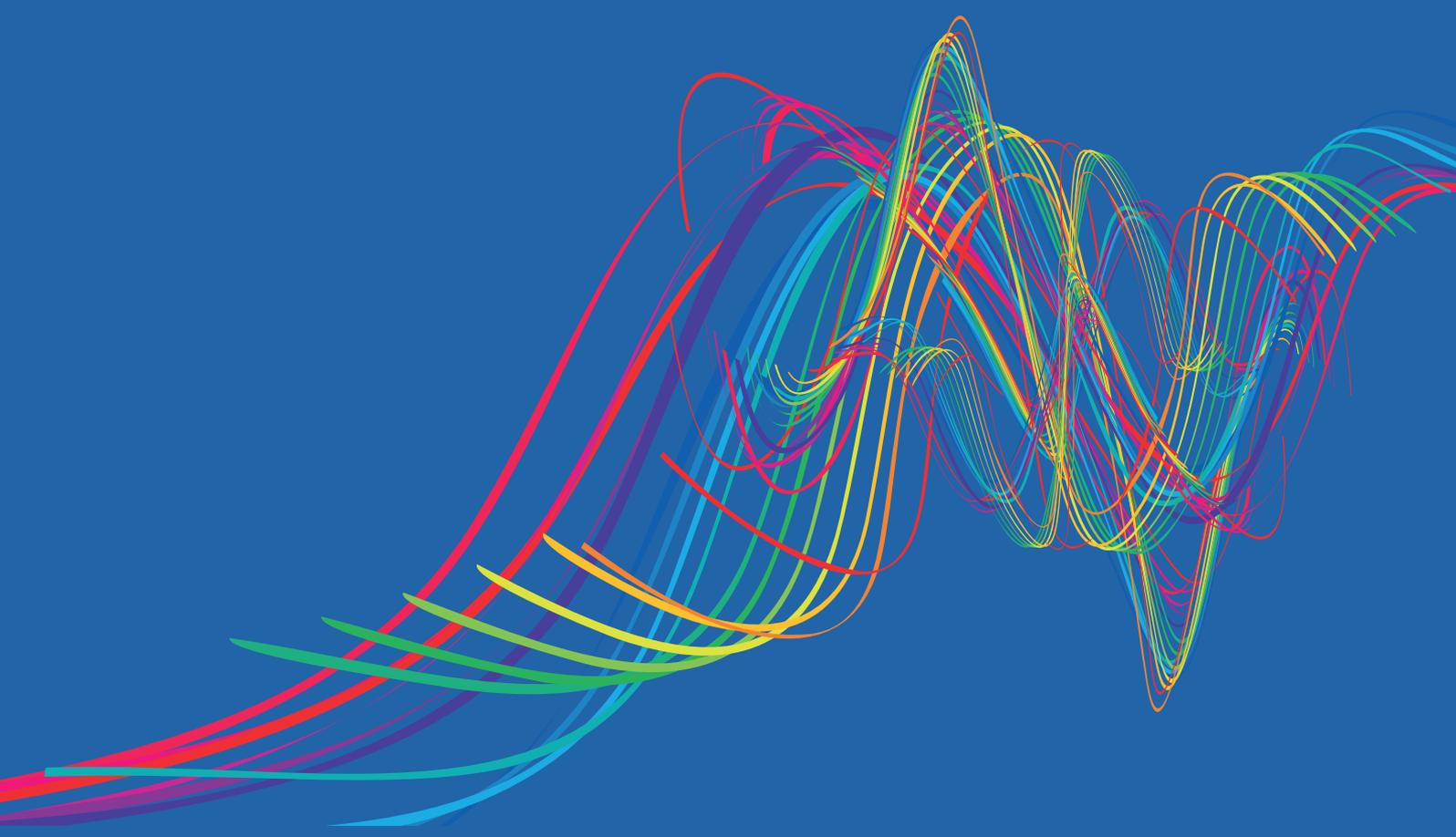




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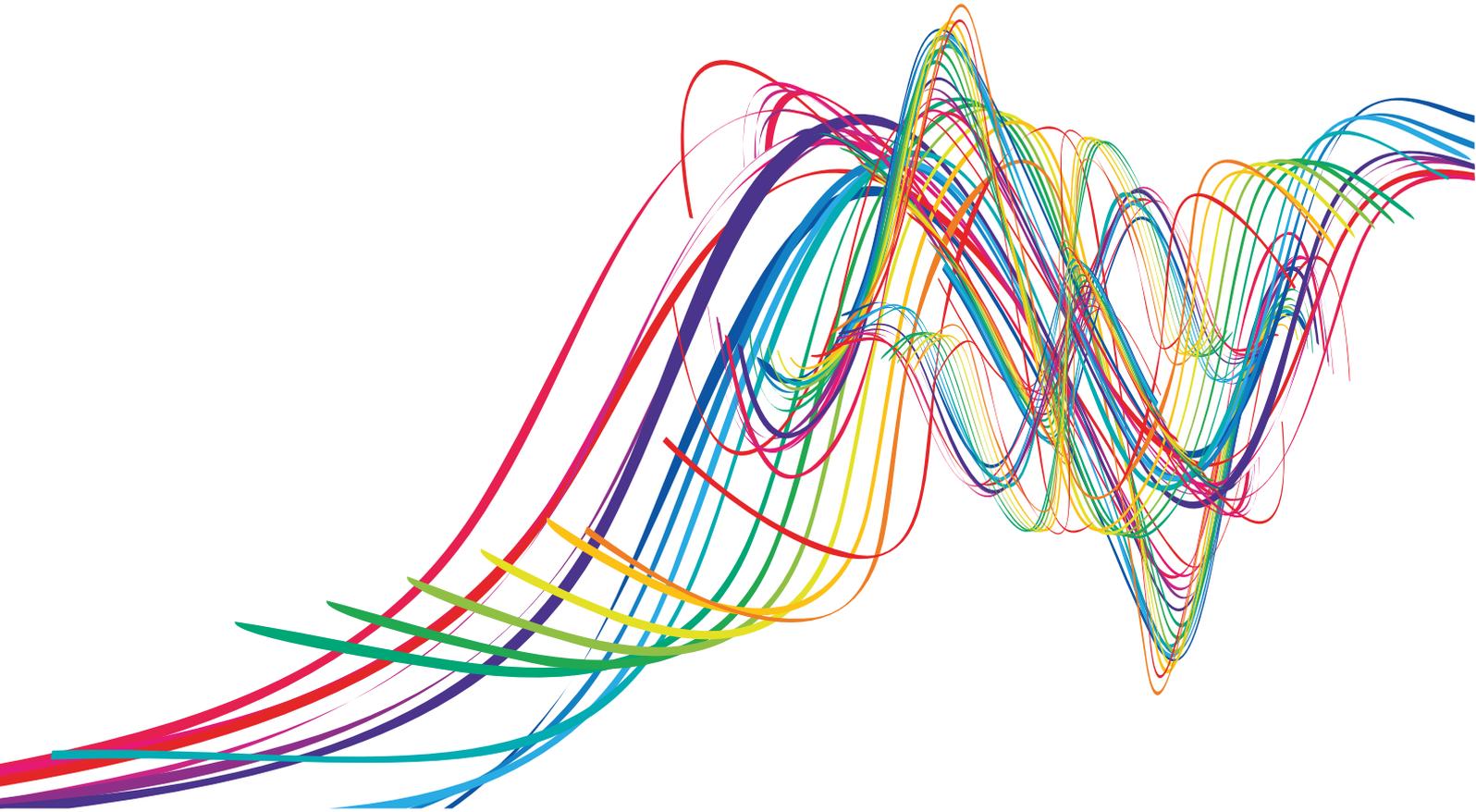


Almanac of the regional TACSO conference

Community Building and CSOs' Communication Guide

March 2016

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*Almanac of the regional TACSO conference:
Community Building and CSOs' Communication*

November 18 – 19, 2015

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

TACSO	Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
WB	Western Balkans
PR	Public Relations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
SIPU	Swedish Institute for Public Administration
CRNVO	Centre for the Development of Non-Governmental Organisations
EU	European Union
IT	Information Technology

Introduction

The publication in front of you represents the compilation of thoughts, experiences, research products, studies and beliefs of the participants and speakers of the regional Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) conference *Community Building and CSOs' Communication* that was organised from November 18 – 19, 2015, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the findings of our team of experts dealing with community building and communication.

We have decided to accept this approach because we feel that civil society organisations in the Western Balkans (WB) and Turkey should always remind themselves and their communities of why they started their work. Remembering that communication and communities are two faces of the same coin that help civil society organisations be bearers of change. That is why we decided to create the Community Building and CSOs' Communication Guide.

Stripped from expert terminology and bureaucratic lines, this publication represents the views of a large group of civil society communication practitioners who gathered in Sarajevo, not with the intention to solve the problems that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Western Balkans and Turkey face in the field of community building and communication (being aware that these issues cannot be solved through one conference), but to start the information sharing process, in which these pages are only a beginning.

You will find in the second part of the publication short summaries of the presentations of the speakers at the conference whose efforts contributed not only to the discussion and information sharing but also added practical experiences, which were eye opening for the majority of the participants. Links to the PowerPoint presentations are also included in the Annex.

We, as Europeans and citizens of the world, have never needed civil society organisations to be facilitators of change¹⁹ and "bridges" among us more than today. Therefore, civil society organisations have to enhance their capacities in order to continue to bring much needed change, starting from today.

Radoš Mušović, Communication Expert

Sanela Tunović, TACSO Communication Expert

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CSOs as facilitators of changes in the community

Civil society organisations are often seen as facilitators of change in the community. This has to do mainly with their direct contact with citizens and their ability to understand the needs of regular citizens much more than state systems or political parties. So it would not be a surprise to conclude that CSOs are often seen as “bridges” in our communities or channels of communication that also have another purpose. That purpose is to create a forum for problem solving so we can also see CSOs as “moving bridges”.

Why are communities so important?

A rhetorical question such as this can be replaced with a more specific one: “Can civil society organisations function or exist without ties to their communities?” This question is legitimately raised, having in mind that the majority of activists believe that civil society organisations rely on their communities to give their work legitimacy and purpose.

So we asked the participants of our conference to answer the question concerning the **legitimacy** of CSOs and its connection to various communities that CSOs communicate with and work with on a daily basis. Specifically, the question was: “If you agree that CSOs gain their legitimacy from their communities can you name why and how?”

There were a large number of similar answers, and they all reflected on civil society organisations as organisations that gain their legitimacy through concrete support of their communities in a practical manner, through social activism, volunteering or membership, donating or simply supporting as opposed to the political parties, which gain their legitimacy through the electoral process. Also, the majority of the participants noted that this ensures the political parties that their goals and plans would be implemented through the political system and that direct inclusion of the communities is not often necessary.

In this way CSOs differ because their work is always dependent and connected to all of their communities for their sense of legitimacy. Also, having in mind that political parties often tend to please general audiences, they have a tendency to “sacrifice” the “tricky” topics in order to gain more political points. CSOs, having more direct and stronger connections and communication with various communities and knowing their worries and problems, rarely compromise in this manner.

Another point that was raised in trying to answer the question and it is a term that is connected to civil society since the dawn of time: **change**. Participants saw that change is not possible without the involvement of communities, noting that the purpose of CSOs is to bring positive changes to our everyday lives. It is logical to conclude that change is not possible without the involvement of the citizens that we work for. But often this question is in our minds connected to the support of the general audience.

Concretely, we often do not believe that change is possible without the support of the general audience, which should be considered as a wrong approach. CSOs often do great things with the support of small communities that are more active or more influential. Therefore, if they want their missions to be successful, CSOs have to have a specific approach and be able to communicate to different communities.

Success of CSOs' Missions

The question of CSOs' mission success is directly connected to their role as facilitators of change in our communities. But how often do CSOs, their members and activists raise this topic in the donor driven environment that we work in?

Dr Miklos Marschall, one of the founding executive directors of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, a global network of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and foundations to promote civil society, stated in one of his speeches: "...A great deal of freedom derives from the fact that the majority of NGOs are, by their very nature, single-issue organisations, which enables them to concentrate their resources on that single issue..."¹ This quote, describes the majority of civil society organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey, meaning that their missions are often connected to that single issue.

So we asked our participants the following question:

- What is the main problem that CSOs in the WB and Turkey face concerning this topic?

At first, there were different views and opinions not only on the situation in the Western Balkans and in Turkey, but also on the term itself. Having in mind that a "CSOs' mission" is a very broad term; a lot of participants gave general observations and conclusions without going into the details of the topic or even problematising it.

Some had negative opinions stating that CSOs often disregard their original mission, due to the so called "donor race". However, all of them indicated, that this question is not often asked among the CSO community, and that somehow it gets pushed aside as a non-priority or marked as too general.

The truth is that CSOs' in the WB and Turkey lack the habit of doing self-assessments concerning their mission success. Therefore, they do not have enough quality information to evaluate their mission success and see what can or should be changed in their work.

Participants agreed that self-assessment is very important for the future work of civil society organisations in WB and Turkey, especially having in mind the ever changing environment that affect all citizens and thus influences the work of civil society organisations.

Overview of actions or advice that could help improve CSOs' mission success and build better relations with their communities

Staying true to your mission
Know your community
Do not forget why you started – always remind yourself and others of that
You are not here only for fulfilling donors wishes or plans
Keeping the focus on your mission
Think about what you want to say – self regulation and self-assessment
Create mechanism to check whether you are still on the same mission
Monitor and evaluate (goals, mission, actions, etc.)

¹ Source : <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/176/31396.html>

Recognition and reception of the CSOs

As stated above, CSOs' get their legitimacy and support from their communities, so the topic of their recognition and the reception of their work is of the utmost importance.

This question is often connected to the way that CSOs' communicate with their communities and how they present their work and the products of that work to their communities. We should always keep in mind that other stakeholders, like governments and political parties and sometimes-even CSO donors, also want to present their work in the most successful way.

Therefore, CSOs are often perceived as the “attention grabber” that could steal their spotlight. These stakeholders have more systematic approaches and funds than CSOs, which presents a problem to civil society organisations and puts them on a “slippery slope”.

Having this in mind, we asked our participants the following questions:

- To what extent is the recognition and reception of CSOs important?
- Which are the main communities that we should communicate with in order to improve reception of CSOs?
- What are the main mistakes that CSOs make in the communication area that effect their recognition and reception?

Participants agreed that recognition and reception is directly connected to legitimacy. Having this in mind, CSOs do not participate in mechanisms such as elections. They have to work on creating a favourable and supportive environment for their work through public relations (PR) and communication activities and through the inclusion of a larger number of people in their activities.

For the second question, a greater number of participants agreed that media, as one of the important communities, is very important in order to communicate CSOs information, which could improve the image of civil society organisations among the general public. Also, participants emphasised the importance of combining traditional and new Internet based media, which could ensure that the message is well received and sent to a larger number of people as well as to different audiences.

Concerning the main mistakes that civil society organisations make in the communication area that affect their recognition and reception, the conclusion of the group, but also of the conference, was that there should be a unique approach with each specific community. Communicating with all communities in the same way is the main communication fault of CSOs in the WB and Turkey.

Participants stressed that CSOs, probably under the influence of the government and donors, have formalised the way they communicate. This is hurting their relations with regular citizens. We could go as far to say that this approach is alienating civil society organisations from regular citizens. This is seen as a major problem that CSOs will face in the future.

Core principles of community building

Transparency of CSOs in relation to their communities

Community building is not a new topic in the CSO world, but it is a broad term that can often include various sub-topics, mechanisms and behaviours. Although quality communication is essential for community building, in order to create strong, functional and long term ties with your communities, there are several core principles that should be followed and included in the everyday work of civil society organisations.

Transparency as a core principle of community building

Among the participants who discussed this topic, there were several self-critics who stated that CSOs often insist that governments should be transparent, while they themselves are not so transparent. This is envisaged in the proverb *practice what you preach*. But in order to come to a conclusion and create clear recommendations, it is important to define transparency. To whom, in what manner, and to what extent do we owe transparency?

When the topic of transparency comes up, a majority of CSO representatives turn to financial transparency, connecting transparency to the obligations that CSOs in some countries have to publish their financial report online or to submit their financial information to their national tax offices and respected governments. But transparency, in the sense of community building, is much more than that.

What does it mean to be transparent in building community relations?

The majority of the participants concluded that being transparent means that you should make your work visible enough that your communities are informed about every step that you are making, thus creating the atmosphere of trust between CSOs and their communities. However, this is easier said than done. The image of civil society organisations as a financial burden is often used to tarnish the work of CSOs and it is often mixed with varying information about the number of registered civil society organisations.

One of the ways that CSOs work on their transparency in order to build community relations is through creating networks or coalitions of CSOs that publish information about their activities, finances, numbers of employees, volunteers and donors as well as the taxes they paid. This approach proved to be successful, especially because of its efficiency. A greater number of organisations means a better dissemination of information, and having a type of ‘one-stop-shop’ focal point for or this kind of information, especially on paid taxes, gives the media and other interested parties better insight and also creates an image of unity in the civil sector that is very much needed.

There are various examples of CSO networks publishing similar material and disseminating it to various audiences. In Montenegro, *The Coalition of NGOs – By Cooperation towards the Goal*, included transparency in their statute. It stated that 90+ members must submit information about their contacts, employees, volunteers, donations and paid taxes.

If an organisation does not submit such information it is excluded from the coalition. In this manner this coalition of CSOs calculated that their members in 2013 paid more taxes to the state than the state financed their programmes and activities. This was not only very well received among citizens of Montenegro but also by the media outlets.

For more information about other examples visit [CIVICUS](#) and their [Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability \(LTA\) Programme](#).

Overview of mechanisms and advice that can influence the level of transparency of civil society organisations

TRANSPARENCY
Trust and honesty (balance between values and community)
Credibility – insist on it, never risk it
Showing that you care about your community through every action
Participate in crisis management
Insist on the transparency of others. Deliver transparency from your side
Financial reports – make them available to everyone
Showing transparency through the results of actions
Present your donors
Tackle the problem (do something for the community)

- Insist on honesty in all of your actions.
- Transparency is directly connected to credibility; one without the other cannot exist. Insisting on transparency shows your credibility.
- Your care for community and the reasons you implement certain activities should always be repeated in order to create a unique message that will help you create an image of your organisation that corresponds to the real situation in your organisation.
- Crisis management is very important and can be very helpful in situations where your organisation is in danger. But also be honest when you make a mistake, do not create space for false information.
- The practice what you preach approach is very important. Insisting on the transparency of others when you are not sure that you are fully transparent can create a problem and further conflicts with other stakeholders.
- Publish online financial reports and work on their dissemination.
- Insist on the results of your actions, which will not only make your CSO transparent but also help you in community building.
- Talk about your donors openly. Destroy taboos of “foreign agents” and similar spins.
- Show that you are always there for the everyday citizen.

Participation as a principle of community building

Participation is an important principle of community building, but participation has various forms and if implemented in an incorrect way it can bring more harm than good. Therefore, CSOs have to plan and create ways of participation, which are adjusted to their various communities. Also, CSOs should include not only their communities in their activities but also in the planning processes.

This could not only improve their relations with their communities but also make their activities more efficient. We often talk about community building without truly including the communities in this discussion. When this discussion is opened it raises the level of participation and will improve the chances of CSOs meeting the needs of their targeted audiences.

For example, some CSOs dealing with climate change stated that on some level they are informing their community about their actions but they are not involving them at all, which is a huge problem. It was said that they are working just with authorities, not with communities.

How can this be changed? Many CSOs that have built good relations with their communities use direct channels of communication and mechanisms such as town hall meetings, organising meetings with local communities, asking the community what they think are the most important problems and solutions in this area. They asked citizens to devote time and energy and volunteer. Sometimes, asking simple questions can bring you a long way.

Also the conclusion of the participants is that CSOs should use simple everyday language so the general community that does not use donor, CSO or government language or legal terms can understand it. CSOs should always keep their community in mind.

There is a general image in public that CSOs are donor oriented. This is a consequence of a lack of time; human resources; communication funds and of implementing the agendas of donors rather than focusing on their missions. Through their work in groups, participants concluded that communities should know that CSOs are focused on meeting the needs of their communities, that all the activities and actions are implemented in order to improve the living conditions, standards and level of democracy in their respective countries and communities.

Participants came up with three layers in working with community:

- FOR community
- WITH community
- EMPOWERING your community to activate itself

These layers involve different communication strategies. **Working for your communities** asks of you to include community through visibility and communication campaigns. **Working with your community** in order to solve a certain problem asks of you to find a way to include them directly, while **empowering your community** to activate itself asks of you to trigger social activism in your community so that members of your community can act on their own and try to solve certain problems or come up with certain activities.

Also CSOs have to pay attention to the work of other CSOs to try to create partnerships and use each other as resources to create better relations in with their communities. This is especially important in small local communities where there are fewer resources or funding.

Overview of advice that could help to raise the level of participation

Encouraging participation
Be on the same level as members of your community
Actually include your community (are you meeting the needs of your community?)
Bigger impact – broaden your community
Leader of participation (your community can also help you)
Adjusting to your community
Give ownership to the community

Overview of advice that could help to build partnerships with other CSOs in order to improve further community building

Partnerships
Build partnerships with other CSOs in order to implement joint activities, campaigns, etc.
Cross-cutting issues are important for community and partnership building
Respect the differences among partners. Remember that you are working towards a common goals
Join networks

Communication as a principle of community building



“Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.” - Rollo May

CSOs acquired the status of facilitators of change thanks to their ability to communicate directly to their community and also their ability to simplify problems and solve them using the bottom up approach. Translating this from the language of bureaucracy, CSOs know how to talk with the everyday people and include them in their work, therefore, building their community. But what happens when you have to communicate with a large number of people, with whole nations, companies, media houses or government representatives and you want to include them in the community building process. Well, then CSOs have to go to the starting point and do something that we as humans have done since the dawn of time. They have to adapt.

In the beginning civil society organisations and the civil sector did not have problems communicating with the general community because they were an extended arm of that community. However, in the process of the development of civil society organisations it became clear that, in order for CSOs to gain more influence, communication with their new donor and government communities should be more formalised.

Because CSOs have to act quickly in order to ensure funds and support from these two communities, the language CSOs started using became more and more bureaucratic. This led to communication problems between CSOs and their other communities, the citizens and the media. CSOs are a product of real life needs so they should know how to tell a real life story without using legal or professional terms.

Today civil society organisations have the advantage of having social media as a great outlet that is accessible to almost everyone and that helps the process of dissemination of information and connecting with your community much easier. However, CSOs often start using social media, without a strategic approach, which could, like in any other field, have consequences for their relations with their community.

For more information on how CSOs should use social media please check the presentation in Annex I - Developing community relations through social media.

The discussion on this topic led to eight recommendations to improve the communication of civil society organisations in the community building process

Communication
Know what you want to say! Form a crystal clear, simple message
Be humble in communicating with your communities
Choose the right communicator (not everyone is a good speaker)
Show enthusiasm for what you are doing
Show empathy
Be sure to reply to every message, request, dilemma on any communication channels
Think about local media and web portals and devote energy and time to them
Adjust your tone and terminology depending on your target audience

How to gain and keep the trust of the community

In order to gain and keep the much-needed trust of their communities, civil society organisations have to use a strategic approach in order to identify crucial problems, models of communication and steps that they should take. In the modern world there are many channels of information and communication as well as information fatigue and a lack of social activism. Civil society organisations have to double their efforts in order to gain the trust and support of their communities.

The first step is, as in the case of communication or transparency, to identify your communities. Not all civil society organisations have the same communities, so the approach cannot be the same for every CSO. Some single issue CSOs that deal with culture or art or specific human rights issues have specific target groups and the trust building process differs from other CSOs that are created with journalists or government officials.

If your CSO is already active in a certain area of work and has a track record, the first step should be calculating the level of trust between you and your community.

Answer the following questions:

1. How many people have returned to your CSO and participated in your activities in the past year? (Volunteers, activists, former employees, citizens who have participated in the past.)
2. How many activities were the result of consultations with your community? How many activities were the direct result of suggestions from your community?
3. When was the last meeting, discussion or event that you organised that gave your community the opportunity to suggest discussion topics?

If you feel that you are not satisfied with your own answers then the level of trust between you and your community is in danger because the trust building process is directly affected by the level of participation.

Trust is often connected to the image that your organisation presents to the general public and to the clarity of your messages. So civil society organisations have to make clear what their missions are and to overcome project terminology while talking to their audiences.

Another problem for CSOs in the WB and Turkey is that CSO leaders and directors are often so visible that citizens are very familiar with their activities and public statements. They do not connect them to the work of CSOs. This is a result of a lack of strategic approach to communication. CSOs should enable all their employees to communicate with their communities and be visible. This will create an image of equality in the organisation itself and will send a message of equality to others who would like to join or participate in their activities.

Here is some advice that could help civil society organisations to gain and keep the trust of their communities. The bullets are a product of the participants' discussions.

Be Reliable

- Do what you say.
- Honour your promises.
- Be consistent.
- Know what you are talking about.

Be Honest

- Tell the truth.
- Admit your mistakes in a timely manner and apologise if needed and explain how you will rectify the situation.
- Express your feelings – show that you are passionate.
- Admit that you have limits and ask for help.

Be Open

- Work on proactive communication.
- Be flexible; adapt to change in your society.
- Be open to feedback.
- Insist on cooperation; avoid one-man-shows.
- Be accessible to new people.
- Be and transparent and insist on transparency, especially concerning your finances.
- Be ready to accept criticism as a way to evaluate and improve your actions and message.

Community building activities and tools

There are many activities and tools that can be used for the purpose of building stronger relations with your community. It is important to emphasise that tools and activities differ from community to community. These activities are important for ensuring continuity in communication with your community and ensuring further participation by your community.

These activities can be a part of your everyday work programme or project activities or they can be dedicated for community building purposes.

Media and journalists as your community

Because of the circumstances of their jobs, media workers do not have a lot of time and energy to devote to activities that will not bring them a story. CSOs rarely devote time and energy to communicating with media editors who are very important actors in the media community. The truth is that journalists and editors do not have time to devote to research on the work of CSOs or to going through complicated press releases.

Therefore, there are two things that CSOs should do in regards to building better relations with media as their community:

1. Get to know journalists who are following your events and topics. Know them by first name and always go an extra mile for them ensuring that they have a statement from all relevant actors and materials. Continue to communicate with them after the events. Send them e-mails and invitations and offer them stories. It will make them feel appreciated and it will make you look more open to the press.
2. Develop a relationship with media editors. Include them in study visits, projects and other relevant activities. Ask them to speak at your events and ask for their expertise. Some CSOs tend to present campaigns to media editors before they start campaigning in order to ensure enough media presence.

National and local government officials as your community

Government officials and other public servants represent an important community for civil society organisations because they represent the decision making part of our communities. Communication with them and strong relations are of the utmost importance. However, sometimes we forget that officials are also only people. They care about the community and want to be included, participate and also be acknowledged.

When we are talking about officials we often think about high-ranking government officials and big political names. The laws and other regulations that are important for CSOs are written by public servants who work on the managerial level. This target group is very important for civil society organisations.

Besides the regular project and programme activities that CSOs include public servants in, CSOs should take advantage of their knowledge and information sharing capabilities to create stronger ties with the community. Public servants, often lack new knowledge or information

because state systems are often rigid and do not provide opportunities for further specialisation that is necessary for promotions and more diverse career opportunities.

- CSOs should focus on building capacities of public servants who are their target group in order to create stronger relationship with them.
- Officials like to be informed and acknowledged. Inform them through e-mail lists, newsletters, etc.
- Praise government bodies and officials that you have good cooperation with. This will help you maintain strong relationship with current officials and help to attract others.
- Use study visits to educate, get to know and connect this community with other important stakeholders.

Other CSOs as your community

Often CSOs tend to forget that other organisations also represent a specific community. We often perceive that umbrella organisations or resource centres have CSOs as their community and that this does not apply to other CSOs that deal with matters such as culture, human rights, environment, etc. However, relations with other civil society organisations are very important because, in cooperation with others, we gain more channels for dissemination, build a base for support for current and future campaigns and also ensure that we will be informed about what other organisations are doing and vice versa. By cooperating with other organisations you build your credibility and earn the respect of your peers and communities.

The three most common ways to strengthen your ties with other civil society organisations:

- **Information sharing.** It is important to create special communication channels with civil society organisations in order to ensure that other organisations are informed about your work and vice versa. It would be good to use e-mail lists and groups instead of newsletters because they provide possibilities for much needed two-way communication.
- **Forming networks or coalitions.** It is up to you and your peers to decide what kind of coalition you think is the best for you. But if the goal is to broaden your sphere of influence, general and bigger networks are much better. They can be used for advocating for your topics, finding support and ensuring a direct forum for information and knowledge sharing. Coalitions are helpful in advocacy campaigns and other activities where it is important to send a strong message to others. Sending a message through your coalition raises the chances that your voice will be heard and acknowledged because it is a voice of several organisations united in one cause.
- **Partnerships.** CSOs should develop a habit of forming partnerships with other CSOs, which could be beneficial to all involved parties. A lot of donors ask CSOs to have partners in implementing certain projects. We have little or no information on what happens with relation to partners after the project ends. CSOs should strategically pick their partners keeping in mind that their partner could be a contact point between them and other communities that they have not reached before. Or that their partner could continue to support them even after the project has ended.

Donors as your community

This is a challenging topic. Donors are rarely seen as a community or a part of one, but we all have to agree that their role is crucial. Donors, like CSOs, feel that their work, although often limited merely to funding, is important and that it helps the society to improve itself and progress. CSOs often communicate with donor only in the fundraising process and during open calls. This is a mistake, especially if your donor is the European Union and European Commission.

Donors need guidance. They cannot be expected to know the problems of local communities better than the local organisations. Building stronger ties with donors is important. It will make funding more efficient. Additionally, the CSOs that do good job and deal with real issues will get better chances for funding.

There are three ways to build better relations with donors as one of your communities.

- **Information sharing.** Be sure to include your donors in your mailing and newsletter lists. Try to offer bilingual information. Share information about your donor through all your communication channels regardless of a current project or funding scheme.
- Insist on **consultations.** Try to make your donors organise consultations before opening calls for funding. Through this process they will get to know you better and see your competencies.
- **Include** your donors in events and projects that they did not fund. In this way they will feel appreciated. If you are able, try to organise briefing meetings especially for the donor communities where you can talk about your current activities and future plans. This will help you to create a small but private forum for communication with the representatives of this community.

General community and citizens

This publication is a guide on how to communicate with communities in order to have stronger ties with them. Community building is a process that never stops especially with the largest community - largest in numbers but also in activities that could be used for the community building process.

All polls show that there is a decline of trust in civil society organisations in Western Balkan countries and in Turkey. Oddly, there is an increase of trust of CSOs among other communities such as public servants, donors and the media. This indicates that CSOs are at risk of alienating themselves from their primary audience and community, the citizens.

The discussion of blame could last forever and the blame could be transferred to various sides. But that would not change the current situation that we have in the region.

These are three pieces of advice that CSOs could use to improve relationships with citizens.

- Use **social media**, but use it strategically and wisely. CSOs should use social media in order to involve others not merely to inform them. Ask questions on Twitter and Facebook. Share stories on YouTube or Vimeo, etc.

- Use **language** that everyone understands. This point was repeated through the communication and transparency section of the publication, thus emphasising how this advice is important.
- Insist on **direct communication**. Go to the streets. Visit local cultural centres, volunteer clubs, other CSOs. Share your mission and the reasons why you are doing what you are doing.

Annex I: Presentations of the speakers of the conference

Role of CSO communication in community relations development

Radoš Mušović, Capacity Building Programme Coordinator, Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CRNVO), Montenegro

It is a fact that civil society organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as well as in the rest of the world, have become a communication “bridge“ between various conflicted sides and that their role in our communities is important. They acquired this status because of their ability to communicate directly and to simplify problems and solve them using a bottom up approach. Translating from the language of bureaucracy, CSOs know how to talk with everyday people and include them in their work. What happens when you have to communicate with a large number of people, with whole nations, companies, media houses or government representatives and you want to include them in the community building process? You must go back to the starting point and do something that we, as humans, have done since the dawn of time. You have to adapt.

This presentation is to be used as an information-sharing tool. Its main purpose is to raise questions about everyday CSO communication in the process of community relations development. The goal is to identify common mistakes that CSOs make in this process and to offer some communication tools that could help to overcome obstacles. It is important to emphasise that, in this presentation, we are talking about communication and not PR.

Practical example - how did we work on community relations without tools and social media?

The Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations is a Montenegro NGO that was registered in 1990 while a part of the Former Yugoslavia. Because of the situation in the country, which was mostly isolated, under sanctions and in fear of internal conflicts, the NGO sector was the only thriving connection with the outside world. Two young men, fresh out of university, who were former student activists who had succeeded in gathering great numbers of students into networks and helping them to bring their initiatives to the Supreme Court, decided to register an NGO that would do exactly the same thing in the civil sector: connect people and organisations to help them build their capacities so their voices to be heard. They had an office in an attic with one desk, two chairs, one computer that one of them brought from home and an old couch that their friends donated. It was clear that their resources were limited. The main question they raised was: “How do we build our base?” Translated into terms of our conference – “How do we engage ourselves in community building?” They had little to no funding, but to implement the goals of their organisation they had to start offering help to other NGOs. How did they start communicating with their community?

In 1999, the Official Gazette of Montenegro published information about every NGO that was registered at the Ministry of the Interior with the names of the founders, the name of the organisation and their postal address. They, decided to send a letter to every new NGO as it was founded, introducing themselves and their organisation and offering help to each newly founded NGO. They introduced financial and legal consultations and created the first help desk service for CSOs in Montenegro. Sixteen years later CRNVO is a place where people

who want to register an NGO; NGOs that are already founded; donors and diplomatic missions; government and local self-government officials; and European Union (EU) representatives visit when they have a question or a dilemma concerning civil society in Montenegro and the region. It all started from a simple two-page letter in 1999.

This was a good example of people choosing the best communication channel and identifying their communities and their approach resulting in attracting others and becoming their community.

What are common mistakes that CSOs make in this field today?

1. The first mistake would be not identifying your communities correctly.

A lot of CSOs do not take into consideration that general people are not their only and primary audience. Identifying other audiences helps to create several communication models and approaches. Specific audiences ask for specific approach. For example, media houses and journalists require different methods and channels of communication than other CSOs, donors or general audiences. Communicating with all audiences in the same manner can be energy consuming and not effective.

2. The second mistake would be not adjusting communication channels, methods or tools to your audiences and using only one communication model.

In the digital era this is a common mistake that new CSOs make. Social media managers and content managers would probably not agree, but the kinds of communication that we are talking about will never be fully digital. New CSOs often use social media as their only communication tool in order to work on community relations, sometimes avoiding direct communication or traditional ways of communication with their audiences. This approach is incorrect for several reasons. The first reason is that CSOs work happens in real life and users of social media are useful when it comes to information sharing but their level of engagement in real life situations is often low. The second reason is that, using only social media, you exclude a large number of people who are not active on social media. The third reason is that social media posts lack soul and a direct human touch. Not all audiences react to social media posts.

But these are not the reasons why we should not use social media and new communication tools. These are the reasons why we should combine traditional tools and new e-tools.

The Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations is a service oriented CSO that also deals with research and advocacy and, by its specific nature; its communication tools were always those that today we would call traditional mostly because service provisions in the recent past meant direct communication. These had to change, considering that service provisions today can be online, but CRNVO has decided to offer its services online and through direct communication. CRNVO's clients can communicate by phone, e-mail and social media platforms with CRNVO's employees. The employees are instructed that at one point, they ask the client to visit the organisation or the organisation visits the client. For CRNVO this was shown to be a very productive approach because this creates enough time and space to gather all the information about the client, analyse how the client

can be included in other CRNVO activities and ensure further involvement of the client with the organisation. This method is also used with journalists, donors and other stakeholders.

3. The third mistake would be communication becomes promotion.

CSOs often make the mistake of promoting their activities through various communication channels without adding to the information a way of engaging and involving their audiences. The main goal of any CSO should be to involve various audiences in their activities. They are often confronted by the demands of a donor to ensure better visibility and promote the donor rather than to work on involving a greater number of people. CSOs should see the difference between PR activities and communication activities. The first goal is to promote and to give basic information. The goal of the second is to engage and involve.

How to use project activities in order to build better community relations

CSOs are mostly project oriented, which is a consequence of the lack of programme funding. Their communication methods and tools and their content have real effect only through project activities. This can be a major problem especially for smaller organisations that do not have general communication plans and a strategic approach to communication. Sometimes it is impossible or very difficult to create a general communication plan and to plan activities in this field if you do not know what kind of activities will be funded or which target groups you will cover.

The solution is to interconnect various projects and activities and use this link to build stronger ties with all of your audiences. It is very important to take notes and gather information about all the people that are included in the project activities so you can include them and invite them to all of your other activities. People like to be wanted and acknowledged. It is in our nature.

For example, CRNVO organises trainings for representatives of government bodies on the topic of civic participation. All attendees of the trainings are invited to every big CRNVO conference even though the topic of the conference is not linked to their main work obligation. This way CRNVO ensures continuity of communication and cooperation with these public servants.

How do you include all members of the organisation in community building activities and how do you include it in your everyday work?

It is very important for all employees and activists to recognise that community relations are important. It is important for every employee to understand that everyone has to deal with communication and community relations. There is an incorrect perception that these processes should be left to PR managers, social media people or people at higher positions such as directors or board members. In fact, the biggest percentage of communication occurs by assistants and project managers. Sometimes they do not even realise it.

Some successful tools that CSOs in Montenegro use in order to engage with their audiences include:

1. Specialised audiences (other CSOs, government representatives, journalists, business).
2. Briefing meetings (donors, representatives of local self-governments, high official representatives of the government).
3. Performances and public campaigns (general audience). It is important to stress that these activities do not necessary involve their audiences but they attract and send messages.

[Developing community relations, case study presentation - Checks and Balance Platform](#)

Sevna Somuncuoglu, General Coordinator, T. Women Union, Turkey

Who are we?

We are a movement, which works to strengthen democracy and the system of checks and balances in Turkey. We have different approaches and different political preferences. However, we are all always on the side of democracy. The many NGOs working in different fields, on different approaches with many political agendas believe in one common thing. Checks and balances are a must.

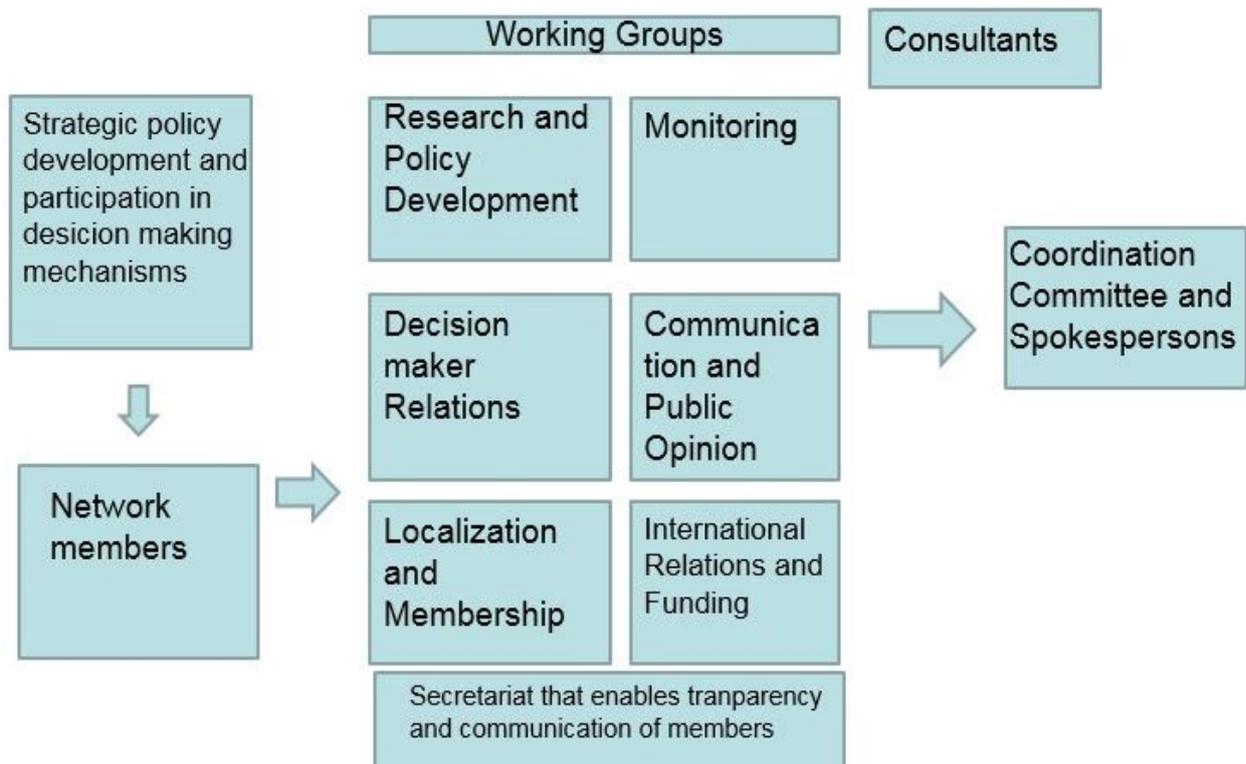
What are our goals?

- A new constitution, which defines that sovereignty belongs to citizens; rights are protected by the rule of law; and separation of power is clearly defined.
- Legal and institutional changes, which pave the way to strengthening the parliament's legislative and supervisory capacity; providing and protecting the independence of the judiciary and the media; supporting democratic political parties and the electoral system; and helping to build a strong civil society.
- Civil and political culture throughout Turkey, both national and local, based on the principles of participation, transparency, mutual respect and pluralism.

What are our work fields?

- Research - We try collect data with due diligence related to checks and balances and identify the existing problems within the system.
- Policy development - We try to keep Checks and Balance on the agenda by developing policy proposals with a participatory approach.
- Raising awareness and getting support from the community - We try to create awareness and gain support from the community for checks and balances with our publications, social media campaign, local and national level campaign events, roundtable discussions, public forums and other events.
- Convincing politics by creating media and civil society support - We try to convince politician to follow the principle of checks and balances by mobilising communities, reaching decision makers and media representatives throughout Turkey and keeping checks and balances in the agenda.
- Follow-up - We are trying to monitor that politicians and decision makers to ensure they are accountable, transparent, and participatory in their actions and create policies according to public demands.

This is our working structure



Our organisation has a communication and public opinion working group consisting of:

- Twenty representatives from 20 different CSOs
- Two chairpersons
- Secretariat
- Graphic Designer
- Copywriter
- Technical and professional support for information technology (IT)

These are strategic steps that we take in communicating with the media

National media

- Preparation of contact lists
- Priority to journalist with whom members have relations
- Balance of political differences
- Priority to parliament reporters
- Visits to chief editors and Ankara agents

Local media

- Lists prepared with the help of local members
- Priority to journalist with whom members have relations
- Balance of political differences
- Press conferences on the local level
- Invitations to local meetings

During this process the organisation contacted 2,900 national and 1,100 local media persons.

Social media

- In June 2014 a Web site was created.
- Then Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Medium, Flickr, Slideshare, Prezi, Line.do and Onedio.com.
- The organisation had zero followers on Facebook in June 2014. Now it has 20,000 followers.
- The organisation when Googled had 0 results in Google in 2012. Now it has more than 1,000,000.

The organisation has a different approach depending on the target.

Target 1: To make “checks and balances” known as a term and concept

- Tools
- Videos
- Samples from daily life
- Table of democracy

Target 2: To create a space for the people who think differently

- Tools
- Target people from every walk of life.
- Prepare videos of academicians, public officials, CSO representatives, etc., on how they understand checks and balances.
- The meetings effected diversity positively.

Target 3: To include social media users in order to create solutions together

- Tools
- Tests and surveys
- Discussion sessions
- Stories and experiences shared

In the organisation we had a long discussion on the language that should be used in various channels.

Here are some points that we identified:

- Mainstream media demands “attractive topics”.
- CSO members demand the use of regular language.
- Social media demands the use of dynamic and trendy language.

Understanding the importance of communication, we created a creative team comprised of:

- Secretariat
- Strategic Digital Consultant
- Graphic Designer
- Copywriter
- Technical professional support for IT

The organisation does an evaluation of its presence in traditional media and of social media and it evaluates Web site traffic.

Although the organisation has improved its communication habits there is some room for improvement.

- More involvement of the member CSOs in campaigns is needed.
- Attracting the attention of mainstream media is still hard.
- Involving the younger generation is a challenge.
- Gaining the trust of bureaucrats is still an obstacle.

[Developing Community Relations \(organisational communication, creativity and innovation\)](#)

Anna Kuliberda, the Project Coordinator and Community Builder for TranparenCEE project, Foundation Techsoup, Poland

TechSoup is a global network of 62 partner NGOs that provide the best technology resources to over a half-million organisations in 127 countries. We connect organisations and people with the resources, support, and the technology they need to change the world.

TechSoup is in the Balkans and Turkey.



www.techsoupbalkans.org



www.techsoupturkiye.org.tr

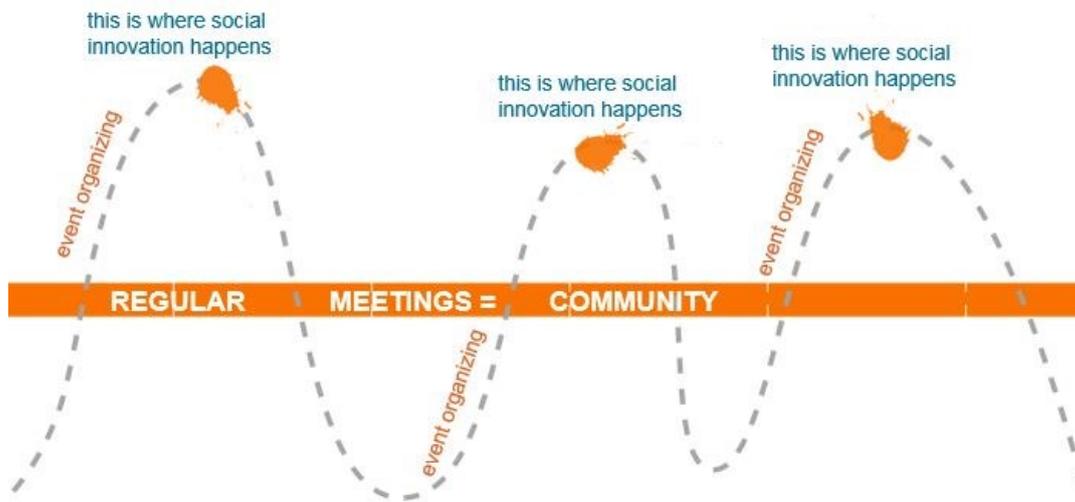
What do we do?

- Things in Turkey.
- Community Boost_r in the Balkans.
- Data Academy.
- TransparenCEE.
- Apps4Warsaw.
- NetSquared.

How do we work?

Through learning by meeting and learning by doing – offline and online

- Challenges – app contests.
- Web sites and social media.
- Incubating projects.
- Camps – (un)conferences.
- Hackathons.
- Trainings.
- Replicating projects.
- Meet-ups.



What makes a good event for community building? Values and how to implement them

TechSoup organises a community boost_r camp. Camp is part of a bigger programme and serves as inspiration and community building. Camp creates favourable conditions for people to learn from each other, treating them as human beings who like to have fun, feel safe and be relaxed.

TechSoup uses Open Space Technology always having in mind that the best learning and networking happens at coffee breaks.

Links available at: goo.gl/znSD9N.

Who is your community?

Jelena Hrnjak, Programme Manager, NGO Atina, Serbia

The NGO, Atina, deals with human trafficking victims.

To what should I pay attention?

- Psychological status of victims immediately after exiting the situation of human trafficking.
- Generalised distrust toward people.
- Fear (of retaliation from persons in the criminal organisation, as well as rejection from their family).
- Fulfilling the expectations of the immediate social environment.
- Sudden and frequent mood changes.
- Low level of frustration tolerance.
- Delayed manifestation of trauma symptoms.
- Internalisation of the blame for the experienced violence.

Obstacles in communication with survivors

- Perfunctory reports of the survived during the trafficking situation.
- Denying the suffered violence.
- Denying the stressfulness of the experience they survived.
- Giving contradictory statements about the trafficking experience.

Suggestions and recommendations for the establishment and maintenance of communication

- Tactful choice of words.
- Respecting the psychological boundaries of a person.
- Respecting the rhythm of conversation.
- Acceptance of a person's feelings.

Our community

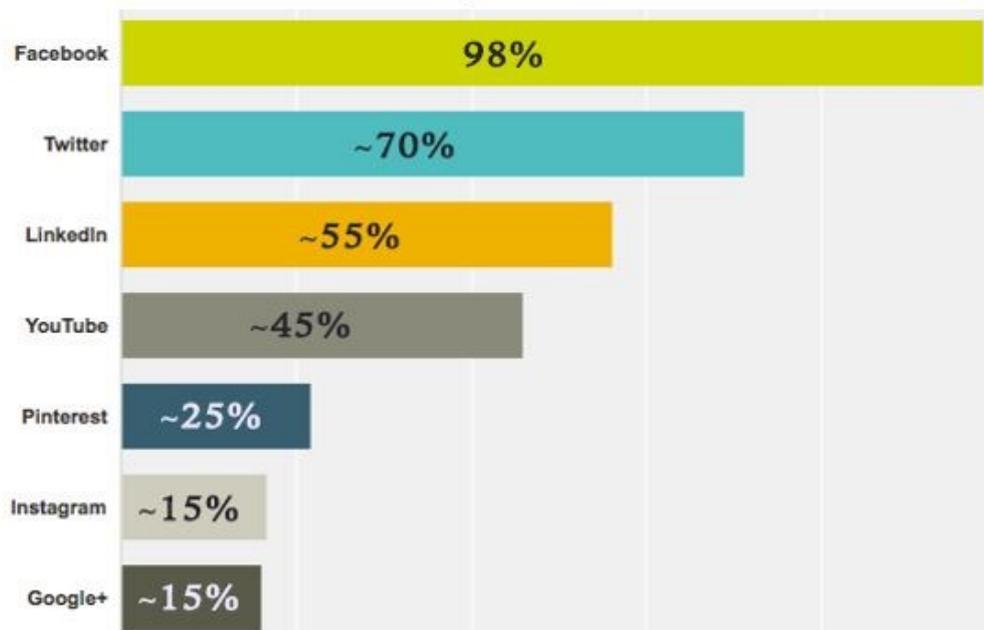


[Developing community relations through social media](#)

Antoaneta Ivanova, Co-founder of Mladiinfo.eu, Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Different case studies indicate that non-profits only allocate $\frac{1}{4}$ of one full-time person to social media marketing (2012), and one full-time or part-time person (2014). The reality is that, for non-profits, social media usage is growing three times faster than email.

Most preferred social media for non-profits:



Reality:

- Most non-profits do not have a documented social media strategy or plan for posting.
- Responsibility typically falls to one person or one employee.

The survey found that more than half of non-profits spend two hours or less per week on social media marketing, whereas half of for-profit businesses spend at least six hours per week.

Who are our online communities?

- Our employees and their families.
- Our partners and supporters.
- Our donors.
- Our followers and fans.
- General public.

Methodology of posting

- Five days a week post to Twitter.
- Four days a week post to Facebook and/or Google+.
- Three days a week post to Pinterest and Instagram.
- Two days a week post on your blog or feature new article.
- One day a week post on Vine, Instagram (video), YouTube or SoundCloud.

Tricks & Tips with Twitter

- If you do not tweet, you do not exist.
- You need to do Twitter every day.
- The # (hashtag) is essential – this is how you connect.
- Tweet Wall – LIVE Tweeting from your events.
- Follow trending tweets (What’s viral at the moment?).
- Tweets + pictures = double the impressions.

The Twitter Methodology: 4 E’s

- ENTERTAIN – have sensational headlines.
- EDUCATE – when we stop learning we die, so never exclude the educational component.
- ENHANCE THEIR LIVES – through entertainment and education tweets you enhance the lives of your community members.
- ENGAGE – share tweets, re-tweet others.

LinkedIn is a “dating space” for professionals

- Space for professional networking.
- Connections are interested in WHAT you do.
- Review of your company profile or interactive group of your company.
- Transparency of who views your profile.
- Endorsing skills and providing recommendations to employees.
- Page ranking.

Recommendations for Engagement

- Start a hashtag campaign on Twitter. Use popular hashtag (ex. #TBT – Throw Back Thursday "throwback to" to indicate an old photo, thought, idea, etc. Or Truth Be Told. It's another way of saying TBT (to be honest).
- Highlight the stories of your friends and followers. Invite guest posts to your blog or article section, re-tweet, share Facebook status updates, and ask for original social media content submissions.
- Host a video or any other type of contest.
- Do something seasonal that is tied to your cause.
- Encourage visual storytelling – either through strategic engagement of people to post selfies at your local event, or via Instagram.
- Always stay open to your community through as many as channels as possible. Respond on Facebook comments and inbox messages, Tweeter chat, Skype hours, etc.

Developing community relations through media product management or “The Missing Link between the CSOs and Communities”

Brikenda Rexhepi, Editor, KOHA Ditore, Prishtina, Kosovo

I live in Sunny Hill. It is one of five biggest neighbourhoods of Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. Two years ago some of its inhabitants took the initiative to organise a protest in front of the branch office of the Regional Water Company. This neighbourhood had been subject to water supply restrictions in the last two decades. The initiative came as a result of a decision to double the restrictions in some parts. Citizens would have water supply for three hours in the morning and three hours in the early evening. A leaflet was produced by the initiators of the protest calling the inhabitants to join. It was distributed around the neighbourhood and on social networks. It was even published in some news portals, and of course in KOHA Ditore, the newspaper I work in. What followed is:

1. Around ten people attended the protest.
2. No civil society organisation was involved.
3. The protest was covered by all major media outlets.

The reason why I brought up this situation, which at first glance might seem trivial, or some might think even completely irrelevant, is twofold. It will help illustrate the complexity behind the issue of an active society and at the same time illustrate the simplicity behind communication.

The complexity will be elaborated through the analysis of the above three points. The simplicity of communication is the approach of this piece of writing itself. They will both provide ground for a practical discussion of the relations between civil society and the media.

1. **SOCIETY: Approximately ten people attended the protest. It is 0.0005 percent of the 20,000 inhabitants that Sunny Hill has.**

The initiators had notified the police of the protest, as required by the Law on Public Gatherings. Three or four policemen were present. As they were communicating with the people gathered, one of the initiators asked them: “Since you have the chance to follow these kinds of events and are familiar with the spirit, can you tell what it takes for a gathering to actually gather more people?” One of the policemen said, “You should organise a political rally.”

It is the political developments in this region that through decades have brought the society to this point. In Kosovo, society had a revival during the nineties when it reached the peak of activism and solidarity because peoples’ lives and survival were at stake. The social mobilisation, however, started to decline after the war reaching the point where the masses started feeling comfortable with the minimum as opposed to most of the politicians who are not comfortable enough with the maximum. This came as a combination of the after-war approach, “now we can at least live without fear” and the efforts of the governments to drown the spirit of a demanding, active society. The latter was done discretely and openly through efforts to manipulate trade-unions, civil society organisations and the media, or to make their lives harder. They created political and ideological strongholds based on tight interests that kept people fanatically linked to certain political parties.

However, these constellations are not a justification to society for not being more vibrant. And I want to stress here that the protest for water is not the only one that was organised in Kosovo. We have had a handful of events that have gathered more than ten people. We have also had many engagements where CSOs address many phenomena. But again, they all are far too little compared to the problems that the society faces.

In this reality and also because of the poor economic situation, being an independent and effective social entity, be it CSO, union, media, etc., is challenging. It takes extra efforts to succeed. Therefore, it cannot be expected for all of them to make it. Some close down; some change sides.

This explains the outcome of previous studies on the relations between CSOs and the media indicating insufficient, or a lack of mutual trust. It is actually a conclusion, I do not agree with. Simplifying and generalising, while regarding it as one of the starting points in the efforts to bring the sectors closer, I think is counterproductive.

If a study were conducted on the trust of CSOs or media within each of the sectors themselves, the same doubts would have again been raised again.

Not all CSOs and not all media are the same and the idea here is not to identify which are good and which are bad. It is, rather, to separate general prejudices from real opportunities for better communication among those that have similar objectives.

There are many of them; they know of each other; they already communicate and they have plenty of room to advance and widen communication.

While a society that tends to be politicised and inactive for so many years remains an aggravating circumstance and, that should pose an alert to CSOs and donors to review their approach in order to get closer to the people. As close as they get to the people, that close they will get to the media. The modalities of cooperation would then be much easier to fix.

2. CSOs: No Civil Society Organisation was involved.

Having only ten people protest for water in one of the largest neighbourhoods of Prishtina and not having one CSO that has dealt with this problem is indicative of a lack of citizen activism.

Kosovo has more than 8,000 registered civil society organisations of which, it is believed, that only ten percent are active. Although the majority of registered CSOs are membership associations, only two percent of the population is part of one or more organisations. In order to address this discrepancy, there is an initiative to amend the Law on Freedom of Association in NGOs, which limits the registration into either associations (membership organisations), or foundations that manage a fund and have no membership. This would legally solve the problem of the low membership figures and enable CSOs to register according to the way they function in practice. But, this also recognises the fact that citizens do not feel that they are a part of civil society organisations, or vice versa. The percentage of citizens that have benefited from services provided by the CSOs and the percentage of those that have participated in activities organised by the civil society are very low (3.1 % and 6.2% respectively).

So the question here is, to what extent and on what level do CSOs reflect and respond to the needs of the citizens? And, how does this impact the relationship between CSOs and the media?

Kosovo has a considerable number of CSOs that are not only active but are a very important factor in several sectors. They are mainly located in Prishtina and have very well developed internal structures. They are close to their donors, but far from their constituencies. Most of them function as think tanks and thus play an important role in policy dialogue, monitoring central institutions and ensuring civic participation in policymaking and drafting legislation. CSOs that function in municipalities are a different story. They might participate in such activities, however, their mission is more directly linked with social and community based issues, day-to-day problems that should serve as stimulation for activism. The vast majority of organisations outside Prishtina are less developed, facing serious staff and expertise shortages.

This is important because the relationship between CSOs and the media should be approached accordingly. The presence of think tanks in media is huge, which is not the case with other types of CSOs. This is a reflection of the above-mentioned situation. Therefore, it is the civil society and donors that should internally treat the issue of low outreach and then approach media with an eventual strategy.

As far as media are concerned, they are organised in different sectors, inevitably with the political being most relevant. However, this does not mean that they are not interested in having that social segment and flavour in their content. On the contrary, they just need good illustrative stories because social media is not technical.

Last but not least, as far as CSOs are concerned, is the importance of making communication integral part not only of a specific project but also of the overall strategy of an organisation.

3. MEDIA: The protest was covered by all major media.

Stories were broadcasted on primetime newscasts, on national television, and published in the main newspapers and several news portals. If you counted the number of stories in all the media it surpassed the number of protestors. This is indicative of two elements. First is what attracts media and second is how the media should be approached.

3.1. The media are interested in what is visible and illustrative of situations that are unusual and that attract and affect people. In this case of the Sunny Hill, protest it was the reduction of the water supply in the capital for up to 18 hours a day. A technical press release about it would end up in a corner of a page of a newspaper, or just as a short piece of text on a portal, or nothing.

There are actually many other realities in society that need better treatment by the media and there are many other forms of illustration of such realities apart from organising a protest. On the other hand, there are realities that CSOs deal with and there are press releases that they issue.

CSOs need to keep in mind that the media is attracted by what attracts their audiences: news, interesting stories, uncommon situations, thorough analyses, etc.

CSOs need to keep in mind that the media is not a service for the reproduction of press releases and reports. Even if they would, that would not be communication.

CSOs need to keep in mind the challenges that the media themselves face. The lack of staff is not an unknown issue to CSOs. They actually lobby a lot for more funds to fill staff gaps (one example being that of PR officials). The media does not lobby, as they do not have donors (with few exceptions of NGO media). The media reduces staff. When you have limited staff you delegate them to cover the most striking and interesting news and events. It basically becomes a race. The most attractive win.

3.2. The second has to do with how to approach the media. The reason why all the major media covered the water protest is not only the absurdity of the situation. The initiators made sure to go beyond the written announcement that was sent to the media and distributed around the neighbourhood. They managed to make an issue out of it among journalists and editors of different media. It is a form of lobbying. If you want to actualise something that you are engaged in, you have to convince others, in this case journalists, of its importance. In order to do this you have to be close to them and invest in building connections. Socialising with journalists, in my opinion, should be part of the job description for all the staff of CSOs, not just PR persons. The best example of the trick is some of the lawyers in Kosovo that became famous using this kind of friendship. They figured out that providing journalists with interesting stories would also open their door to the public. When your name is all over, you become well known and get more clients. If CSOs do not have interesting information to share, then they must have another problem. If CSOs have interesting information, but they do not know how to turn that into “gold”, then there are ways to learn how to do that.

In the media I am part of there is not a single day that at least one CSO representative is not present, be it in KOHA Ditore newspaper, KTV national television or the KOHA.net portal. But often we cannot find a civil society voice to talk about or to analyse concrete issues in sectors that affect peoples’ lives more directly, such as health, education, pensions, etc. This is a reflection of another issue that has an impact on the civil society’s work: Donor interest.

Civil Society is still to a large extent, donor driven, and this inevitably is reflected in communication with the media. CSOs are dependent on donor funds and they engage accordingly. The media are dependent on the attention of people and they work accordingly. The ideal thing would be to have situations where sectors’ interests would meet, but unfortunately this is not always the case.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Illustration – The reason why this piece of writing does not have the form of a usual report is to provide an example that issues that CSOs want to raise in public can also be illustrative. They should be linked to a concrete representative case that brings the complexity of an issue closer to the ordinary people. It makes people understand how certain technical issues affect their lives concretely. Simple situations provide the best grounds for further elaboration.

Generalisation – Generalising the impressions that CSOs and the media have for each other into a lack of trust risks setting these two sectors further apart. Therefore, it is important to avoid bringing in general prejudices and to focusing only on concrete opportunities for connecting those that have similar principles and objectives. It would be a waste to spend energy in solving general trust issues as a precondition for building better relations.

Constituencies – CSOs and donors should review their approaches toward the power and the needs of people. Well-established and centrally located CSOs are successful in implementing projects, managing funds and reporting. However, they remain far from the people, from the masses. Finding modalities for better outreach works in favour of social change. The closer CSOs are to the people, the closer they will get to the media. The modalities of cooperation would then be much easier to fix.

Connections – Spokesperson is not the magic word. Communication should become an integral part of the overall strategy of an organisation. This means that they should see it as a process in which all the employees of a CSO are involved. A spokesperson can coordinate and handle the technicalities, but it is the employees themselves that should make efforts to push the issues they deal with into the agenda and interest of the public and especially among journalists' community. They should invest in making and maintaining continuous connections with journalists. An advantage is that journalists are always interesting to socialise with.

Cooperation – How to facilitate better relations? The above issue of the approach of CSOs toward communication is a precondition for any other following steps. The media is usually on standby when communication and information are concerned. The idea is how to create a common ground of mutual interest in which both are willing to contribute. And here we are not talking about the democracy building ideas, but practical day-to-day work. Possible means of facilitation could be: Initiatives that would bring together directors of CSOs and editors of media in casual events where, apart from inevitable political developments, they would also discuss possible ways of cooperation; discussions of these possibilities in more formal forms (conferences, seminars, etc.); joint events for journalists and CSO staff; trainings for CSOs on how media function; programmes in which CSOs and media would exchange staff for few days; databases of journalists and especially correspondents in municipalities; databases of activities in the field of CSOs; etc. The ideas can go on and on. They can all be easily translated into projects, but if the mind-set does not change they will remain efforts. The mind-set can be changed if the very essential issues elaborated above are taken into consideration.

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*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



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