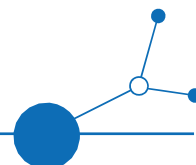


# D 1.4.4. - Citizens' involvement in decision-making processes in the Carpathian Euroregion: the Carpathian Civil Society Platform - Strategy and Action Plan



Version 1  
03 2024



# D 1.4.4. - CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN THE CARPATHIAN EUROREGION: THE CARPATHIAN CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM - STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

## Abbreviations:

CSOs- Civil Society Organizations

NGOs-Non-Governmental Organizations

## Introduction and background

The Carpathian Civil Society Platform aims to strengthen social cohesion and promote citizen participation in the decision-making process through the mobilization of grassroots civil society actors in the territory of the rural-mountainous area of the Carpathian Euroregion, which covers the bordering regions of Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

The Platform is driven by a shared common vision of Carpathian CSOs to strengthen a vibrant, pluralistic, and rights-based civil society in the territory of the Carpathians. The Carpathian Civil Society Platform is an instrument to realize this vision by offering a framework for cooperation between civil society organizations working primarily with grassroots, local communities, and vulnerable groups.

The Platform is an informal organization across borders attached to the geographically, historically, culturally, and sociologically contiguous territory of the Carpathians, which

is the common ground for cooperation and joint actions. Its main objective is to synergize the single and often isolated efforts of CSOs, to increase the impact of their activities at local, sub-regional, and Carpathian levels as well as to generate, disseminate, promote, and mainstream innovative solutions to socio-economic and environmental problems of local and inter-regional relevance, and to free up their innovation capacity to better serve their target groups and articulate the voice of mountain communities.

The rationales for creating the Platform:

- the ecosystem of civil society deteriorated in the last decades in Central and Eastern Europe, and civil societies face serious challenges, such as unfavorable political, legal, and financial environment
- this challenged civil society organizations (CSOs) working in the Carpathians as they are dealing with the most unfavorable social groups in the region far from the centers with limited access to information and funding
- although CSOs are working hard to achieve their missions and goals in an increasingly deteriorating environment, and are initiating innovative solutions to community problems, they operate in isolation from each other due to a lack of supportive and encouraging contexts and institutions, which reduces the social impact of their activities and this is linked to a low level of community-driven development solutions and cross-sectoral cooperation at local, regional, national, and inter-regional levels.

The Platform is a loose, informal network of over 100 CSOs in the Carpathian Euroregion, consisting of local "hublets" (local networks) in each of the sub-regions of the Carpathian Euroregion. Currently, the Platform is run by the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary, in cooperation with local partner NGOs in each country, which act as local focal points for the Platform.

## Key challenges

The Platform has a multi-level character addressing the local, sub-regional, and inter-regional levels and related to the broad framework of national, and EU levels. The

disharmony and sometimes conflicts and gaps between these different levels are not conducive to creating an enabling environment for civil society actors, especially in such remote mountainous areas as the Carpathians. There is a contradiction, for example, EU policy (mostly nice words) regarding the importance of civil society and the practice of national policies, which ignore and, in some cases, intimidate civil society actors and this leads to the shrinking space of civil society. Furthermore, there is a gap between mainstream policy-making institutions and local communities due to a lack of mechanisms and understanding of how to implement policies at the local level on the one hand and a lack of knowledge of the local context on the other.

Governments' attitude toward civil societies leads to the passivity of citizens, apathy for public affairs, and reduces social cohesion, regional solidarity, and deepens the mutual mistrust between state and societies. This negatively influences citizen participation in the decision-making processes at local and inter-regional levels.

In the case of the Carpathian Euroregion, there is a lack of systemic solutions for integrating the development potential of the borderlands, including the lack of integrated strategies and relevant institutions based on unified resources. This is related to the low level of community-led development solutions and cross-sectoral cooperation and can be considered to be one of the basic problems in implementing the socio-economic development of the Carpathians. The other problem is the lack of cooperation and common strategy, considering the specific development needs, among the national governments of the five countries sharing the Carpathians.

As regards civil society organizations expressed their interest in cooperating with other CSOs in the neighboring countries on diverse topics, they also found obstacles to the collaboration, such as lack of funding for transfrontier cooperation - especially for civil society organizations that operate in mountainous areas as they are not prepared to absorb larger EU and national funds, lack of knowledge on how to develop joint cross-border cooperation projects, capacities on how to cooperate across the borders, weak project design and project management skill, and language barriers. Although the war in Ukraine,

which borders four Carpathian countries, makes cross-border cooperation difficult, civil societies in the border region were the first to respond to the situation by supporting Ukrainian refugees and providing humanitarian aid to Ukrainian communities. This indicates that Carpathian solidarity, which is based on common historical experiences of exodus, exists.

## Strategy

The Strategy aligns with the Alps-Carpathian joint strategy to promote community-led development in mountain areas and to assist community-based institutions in upgrading participatory governance processes as it is underlined in related policy documents.

The Strategy of the Carpathian Civil Society and the related Action Plan have been discussed with stakeholders and in addition to the results and lessons learned from the discussions, are based on the following pillars:

➤ *Needs assessment*

In 2023, the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary launched a survey to assess the needs of civil society organizations in the Carpathians towards the Carpathian Civil Society Platform<sup>1</sup>. The survey was a tool to understand how civil society actors see the added value of cross-border cooperation, what organizational and personal challenges they face in cross-border cooperation, and what organizational and personal competencies they need to improve to strengthen the impact of their activities at local and interregional levels. The other aim of the survey was to involve civil society organizations in co-designing the future of the Platform and in defining its activities. (83 organizations participated in the survey.)

The results of the survey and the subsequent local workshops demonstrated that the Platform has its *raison d'être* and is seen by CSOs as an important and niche mezzo-level institution in the Carpathian Euroregion. The survey also showed that there is a general demand from CSOs for the Platform to help them in various ways to build the

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<sup>1</sup> See the attachment for the detailed summary of the survey

organizational and personal capacity of their organizations to achieve their goals, mobilize citizens, and serve their communities more effectively.

*Needs are outlined in the following areas:*

First, many organizations are thinking about the possibilities of cross-border cooperation, but they do not know how to get started and find it difficult to find the right and reliable project partner on the other side of the border. Therefore, there is a common need to share experiences of cross-border cooperation and other projects implemented by civil society organizations to learn from each other.

Second, financial support opportunities for small-scale cross-border cooperation are limited, and those available to CSOs often do not match real needs, are too large and bureaucratic for smaller organizations that are not able to pre-finance cross-border cooperation projects, and do not have sufficient staff capacity to meet bureaucratic requirements.

Third, there is a high demand for exchanging good practices, finding partners for cross-border cooperation, developing joined projects, exchange of information on funding and partnership opportunities, and organizing networking events at local and inter-regional levels.

Fourth, there is a demand for organizational capacity building and personal development. This includes strategic thinking, improving the communication of the organizations (promotion, PR, “marketing”), improving the skill for proposal writing, and service for personal professional development (mentoring, coaching, etc.)

- *The Carpathian Foundation experiences promoting cross-border cooperation and civil society development in the Carpathian Euroregion*

The Carpathian Foundation since its creation in 1995 has extensive experience in providing technical and financial support to local communities and civil society organizations, promoting cross-border cooperation, and developing civil societies in

the Carpathian Euroregion. These field experiences and continuous dialogue with local stakeholders have grounded the initiative in creating the Platform.

➤ *Experiences of the Carpathian Civil Society Platform so far*

The Carpathian Civil Society Platform initiated by the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and its partners from Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine was established in 2018 through an intensive dialogue with CSOs and other stakeholders.

Since its creation:

- Three inter-regional meetings were organized to share experiences, and good practices and identify potential cross-border projects among CSOs
- Local networks (“hublets”) have been established in the sub-regions of the Carpathians
- Initiated the creation of a virtual platform (a knowledge hub) to share news, and information, exchange ideas, and find partners for joint activities and projects
- Capacity-building programs for CSOs were organized on topics identified by the members of the “hublets”
- Micro-grant program has been launched to provide core funding for CSOs to support their small-scale projects and initiatives
- Social Innovation Award to make visible CSOs’ efforts responding to local challenges
- Dissemination of social innovation practices through the announcement of the Carpathian Social Innovation Award

These achievements and experiences gained form a solid basis for the renewal and further development of the Carpathian Civil Society Platform.

## Strategic directions

The Strategy is based on the belief that robust civil societies and the innovative energies they unleash can contribute to the renewing of existing transnational governance structures of cooperation from the bottom, as well as the emergence of new cooperation structures and reinforce citizen participation in decision-making processes at local,

regional, and inter-regional levels. It also aims to position CSOs as change-makers in the long term.

*The main strategic goals are:*

- To make the Carpathian Civil Society Platform a self-propelling organization by designing its organizational structure and strengthening the ownership of the network's members encouraging their self-activity to create cross-border thematic working groups, pop-up hubs, etc.
- To extend the reach of the network by communicating with local governments of small communities and local businesses to broaden the Platform's stakeholder base, provide a space for dialogue among local actors, and strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation.
- To build strategic partnerships with key stakeholders such as the Carpathian Convention and other international organizations covering a specific segment of the Carpathians, to bring mainstream policymakers closer to the local level and vice versa. Close cooperation with the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion is essential, including joint programs such as the exploration of local cultural heritage as a driver of tourism and local economic development, contribution to the creation of the cross-border functional area, and the development of the mechanism of the participation of civil society in cross-border governance.
- To secure financial resources by cultivating existing donor relationships and identifying new ones to support the overall activities of the Platform, including organizing inter-regional (Platform) meetings, supporting capacity-building programs, the Social Innovation Award, and launching a micro-grant scheme to support CSO initiatives.
- To systematically strengthen the capacity of young emerging and committed change-makers and social entrepreneurs by establishing the Carpathian Leadership Academy (CARLA) to provide knowledge transfer and regular peer learning

"The Hungarian partner's participation in the project is co-financed by the Hungarian State." CE0100083



opportunities, serve their personal development and contribute to strengthening the Carpathian identity.

- To empower young people by involving them in participatory decision and policy-making processes based on intergenerational learning methods.

## Actions Plan

The action plan below sets out the steps needed to achieve the short- and long-term strategic objectives described above and takes into consideration the capacity of the organizations, which are behind the Platform and resources available for the next two years.

1. To renew the existing online platform, whose original purpose was to disseminate information on events organized by platform members, funding opportunities, and partner search, and to make it available in the five spoken languages of the Carpathians by using AI technology.

Timeline: April - December, 2024

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary with partners

2. To elaborate a paper on the organizational structure of the Platform and discuss it at the next interregional meeting held in 2025.

Timeline: April - October, 2025

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary

3. To organize systematic thematic capacity-building trainings in each Carpathian sub-region on common issues and, at the same time, allow Platform members to initiate thematic workshops on cross-cutting issues with cross-border relevance.

Timeline: May 2024 - ongoing till the end of 2025 and first half of 2026

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners

4. To establish a grant-making mechanism to provide micro-grants (core funding) for small-scale cross-border cooperation projects and joint actions or events initiated by CSOs.

Timeline: May 2024 - ongoing till the end of 2025 and first half of 2026

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners

5. To explore the possibility of establishing a Carpathian Leadership Academy (CARLA) that would serve the personal development of young emerging CSO leaders, entrepreneurs, and local government officials.

Timelines: December 2024 for the concept note and March 2025 for the detailed feasibility study

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners

6. To organize the interregional summer camp with the participation of CSOs working with young people and discussion of the Platform's strategic directions and the action plan

Timeline: June - August, 2025

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners.

7. To launch the next round of the Carpathian Social Innovation Award

Timeline: January, 2025

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners

8. To collect best practices on citizen involvement in decision-making, and other citizens' mobilization tools like community budgeting, community foundations, youth banks, etc. - dissemination of best practices

Timeline: May 2024 - ongoing till the end of 2025 and first half of 2026

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners

"The Hungarian partner's participation in the project is co-financed by the Hungarian State." CE0100083

9. Partnership-building with stakeholders of other sectors (business and public) - events organized for that purposes

Timeline: May 2024 - ongoing till the end of 2025 and first half of 2026

Responsible: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and partners

## Monitoring and evaluation

The evaluation of the Strategy and Action Plan is based on the regular monitoring of each measurable indicator described in the Action Plan. In addition, we collect and analyze feedback from the main stakeholders of the process, and the participants of the events organized within the framework of the Platform.

The main indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation are the following:

- a renewed Virtual Platform
- a discussion paper on the future organizational structure of the Platform
- number of capacity building trainings conducted
- fund for supporting the collaborating CSOs
- a feasibility study on the Carpathian Leadership Academy
- organization of the summer camp
- the awardees of the next round of the Carpathian Social Innovation Award
- the collected and disseminated best practices on citizen involvement in decision-making

## Risks and contingencies

While implementing the Action Plan the following risks and contingency measures to mitigate its impact have been identified:

- Passivity of the members of the Platform - medium probability and high impact. Measure: strengthening ownership of the Platform through ongoing communication with its members, pro-activity, and being open to their initiatives.
- Workload of the staff of the Carpathian Foundation and its partner organizations implementing the Action Plan - medium probability and high impact. Measures: better planning and coordination.
- Financial resources have the highest impact on the project's implementation. The funding resources are more or less secured to cover the implementation of the Action Plan short-term) until the end of the project period, thus the risk is low but for the implementation of the strategy (long term) the risk to secure funding is high. Measures: donor's cultivation, broaden donor base, make visible the Platform, and build a strategic partnership.

## Review and Adjustment

This Action Plan will be reviewed by the members of the Carpathian Civil Society Platform based on the monitoring and evaluation plan every 6 months from its approval and will be adjusted whenever needed.

## Communication Plan

The Action Plan will be broadly communicated by the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary and its partners

- to CSOs by the following means: emails, Facebook page, webpage

- to other stakeholders by the following means: emails, Facebook page, webpage, regular online ZOOM meetings
- to press, media by the following means: direct mail

**We will publish a brochure as to provide the visibility of civil society organizations and the Platform.**

*This action plan has been prepared with the intensive support and deep engagement of civil society organizations taking part in the Carpathian Civil Society Platform collaboration from Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.*

## **Findings and Conclusions of the Needs Assessment Survey on the Carpathian Civil Society Platform and Hub**

Carpathian Foundation-Hungary/Kárpátok Alapítvány-Magyarország

2023.



Carpathian Foundation

## Background

The Carpathian Civil Society Platform and Hub, a non-registered informal network of civil society organizations was established in 2018 by the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary, in cooperation with its Polish, Slovakian, and Ukrainian partners operating in the Carpathian Euroregion. Its establishment had multiple reasons. First, the ecosystem of civil society deteriorated in the last decades in Central and Eastern Europe, and civil societies face several challenges, such as unfavorable political, legal, and financial environments, such as peripheral, disadvantaged regions like the Carpathians. Second, this challenged civil society organizations (CSOs) working in the Carpathians as they are dealing with the most unfavorable social groups in the region far from the centers with limited access to information and funding. Third, although CSOs are working hard to achieve their mission and goals in an increasingly deteriorating environment and are initiating innovative solutions to community problems, they operate in isolation from each other and lack a supportive and encouraging backdrop.

Fourth, in the case of the Carpathians, there is a lack of systemic solutions for integrating the development potential of the borderland, including the lack of integrated strategies based on unified resources. This is linked to a low level of community-driven development solutions and a low level of intersectoral cooperation (public/private/non-governmental entities). Strong civil societies and their freed-up innovative energies can contribute to the renewal of existing transnational governance structures of cooperation from the bottom, as well as the emergence of new structures of cooperation. The Carpathian Foundation working since its inspection in 1995 with civil societies in the Carpathian Euroregion in the bordering areas of Hungary, Poland, Romanian, Slovakia, and Ukraine, recognizing these challenges launched the Carpathian Civil Society Platform and Hub to create a Platform for CSOs to exchange and share of experiences, to learn from each other and build partnerships among CSOs.

The creation of the Platform was preceded by an 18-month participatory process that involved more than 100 civil society organizations via workshops, focus group meetings, etc., and the results of the process have been summarized in a comprehensive Feasibility Study, which analyzed the situation of the state of civil societies in the Carpathians, described the goals, and guiding principles, and suggested the structure and possible functions and activities of the Platform. (For more information please see: <https://www.karpatokalapitvany.hu/en/iras/inter-regional-workshop-kosice-2-3-october-2018>).

The main goal of the Platform is to amplify the voice of civil society actors at local, regional, and interregional (Carpathians) levels, strengthen their capacity, and foster cross-border cooperation through networking with civil society actors. Since its creation local networks have been formed in the four sub-regions of the Carpathians; capacity building trainings were organized at the local level; a micro-grant scheme has been launched; annual inter-regional

(Carpathian level) meetings have been held to exchange experiences and build partnerships between civil society organizations, and the Platform launched the Carpathian Social Innovation Award.

Currently, there are around 150 grassroots organizations that are members of the Carpathian Platform, most of them are working in remote rural mountainous areas dealing with mainly disadvantaged groups.

Because of COVID-19 and lack of sufficient funds the activity of the Platform is limited to online workshops and we have skipped important programmatic elements, such as interregional meetings, capacity building training, micro-grant scheme, etc. but the demands from CSOs we raised for the Platform is huge that's why it is important to revitalize it.

The Central Mountain project makes it possible to revitalize the Platform in several ways. First, it allows to fine-tune and deepen its function and activity and lay the foundation of a long-lasting self-propelling organization. Second, make it possible to extend the Platform to the Romanian part of the Carpathian Euroregion. Third, it contributes to strengthening the connections with local, regional, and interregional stakeholders, which will give a new impetus to a more intensive collaboration within the Carpathian Euroregion. Fourth, the Central Mountain project makes it allow us to learn experiences from the organizationally more developed Alp region.

### **Approach and methodology of the survey**

In creating the Platform three important considerations have been considered. First, it is a process and the outcomes should be the results of the process. Second, the participatory principles require the participation of the target group in defining the goal and the activity of the Platform. Third, creating ownership for the Platform, without the participation of involved civil society actors is not possible.

The survey is a tool to understand how civil society actors see the added value of cross-border cooperation, what organizational and personal challenges they face regarding cross-border cooperation, and what organizational and personal competencies need to be improved to strengthen the impact of their activity. The other aim of the survey was to engage civil society organizations (CSOs) in co-creating the future activity of the Platform by defining its activity.

The survey covered selected NGOs in the Carpathians. The method used was CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) - an interview conducted via an online survey, through respondents independently filled out an electronic questionnaire. It contained 23 questions and a metric. There were closed semi-open, and open-ended questions.

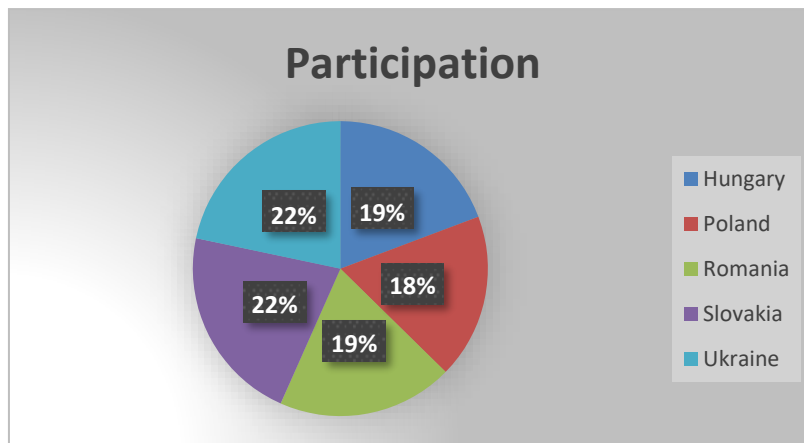


The online survey was launched in the five local languages in the five Carpathian sub-regions in July 2023. Its results were summarized by the local partners and were shared and discussed with the participating organizations. (Attached, please, find the Survey and the reports of the workshops.) Organizations that fill in the survey mostly are members of the Platform (except Romania) but some new organizations joined the group.

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

### I. The organizations

83 organizations filled in the survey, almost equal proportion in the five Carpathian sub-regions (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1: Chart of the participants from each Carpathian subregion*

As regards the general field of activities of respondents, it reflects the wide variety of the activity of civil society organizations (*Figure 2*).

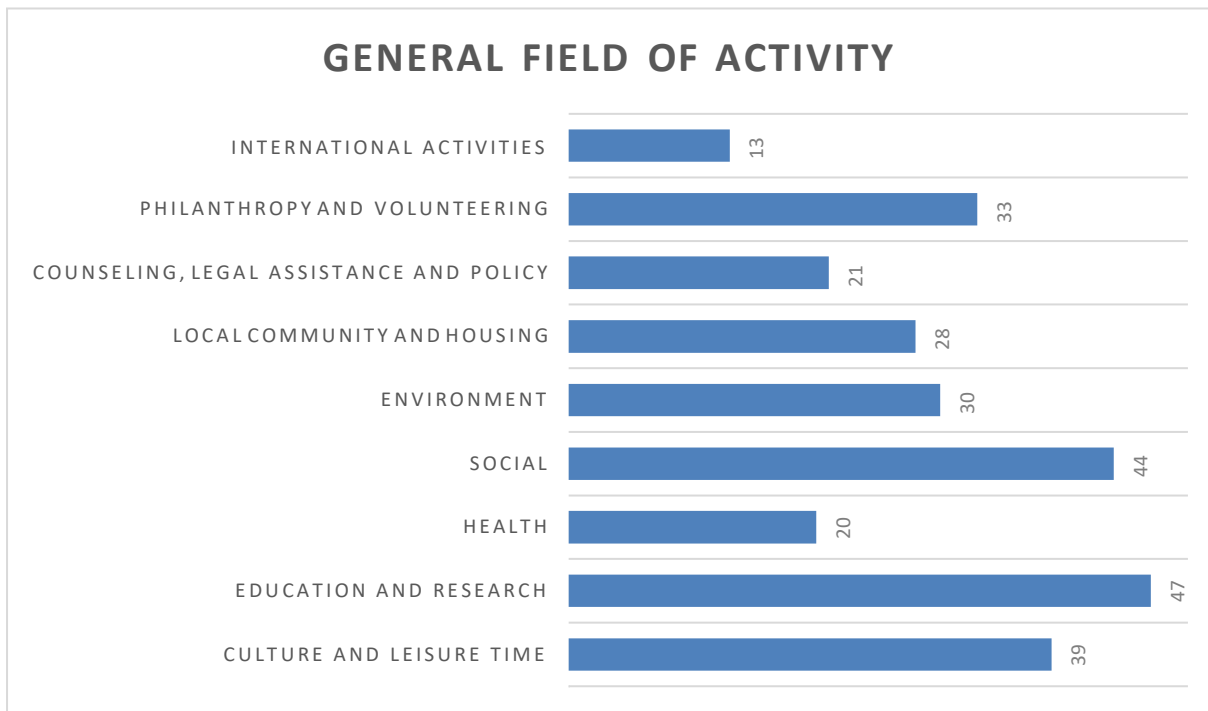


Figure 2: General field of activity of participating organizations of the survey

The result shows that CSOs are “multitasking” organizations and combine their activities. Regarding the countries, there are some differences. For example, in Ukraine 15 CSOs out of 18 organizations) identified its activity as “social” because of the war they are working with IDPs, while Polish CSOs are more active in the field of environment (10 out of 15 organizations.)

## II. Cross-border cooperation

We asked the organizations if they have contacts in other countries of the Carpathian Euroregion the generated answers were the following (Figure 3.):

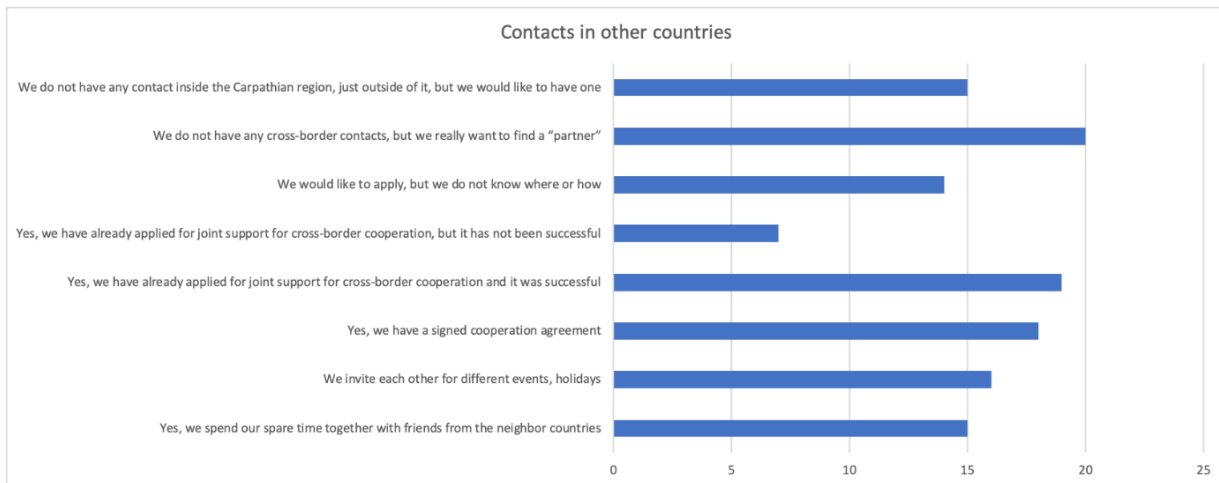


Figure 3: Foreign contacts of the organizations

It indicates that most of the connections are informal (“spend spare time with friends” on the other side of the border or “invite each other to different events, holidays”), which is an important, mostly underestimated characteristic of "cross-border cooperation" via people-to-people, personal connections. Out of 83, 18 organizations have signed cooperation agreements with partners on the other side of the borders, and 19 applied successfully to support joint projects. Altogether, 35 organizations out of 83 responded that they do not have cross-border contacts or partners, but they would like to have one, and 14 responded that they would like to apply, but don’t know where, and how to apply.

For the question if they submitted grant applications for cross-border projects, 26 replied with “yes”, and 55 replied “no.” The less active were the Romanian organizations: 15 out of 16 respondents said that they had not submitted grant applications. Regarding the results of the grant applications, 24 replied that they received the requested amount, and 2 received only a part of the requested amount.

The next question was about the challenges the organizations face in cross-border cooperation. The results are summarized in the following chart (Figure 4):

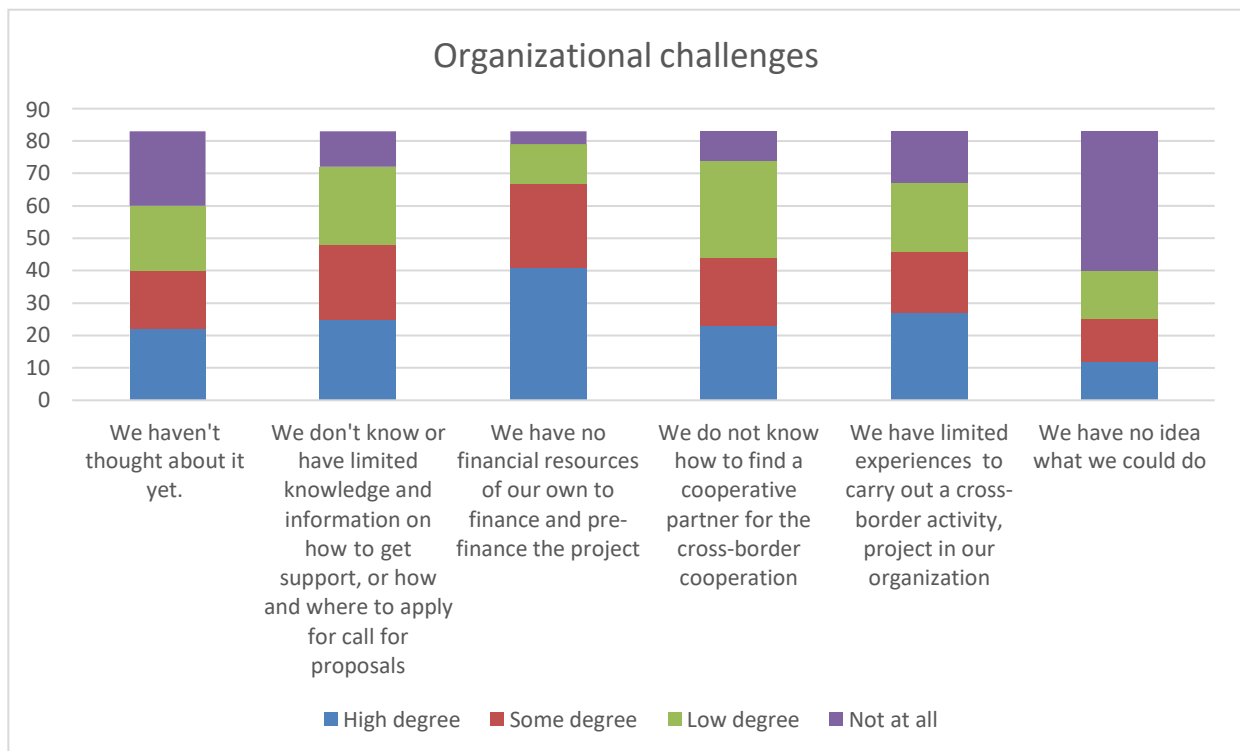


Figure 4: Challenges the organizations face in cross-border cooperation

This shows that the biggest challenge is the lack of financial resources (49%), and only 4,5% of the respondents (4 organizations) mentioned that it is no problem for them. The other challenge is that they have no, or limited knowledge and information on how to get support for cross-border cooperation (CBC) -30%, and they have limited experience in carrying out CBC projects (32,5%.) Despite these challenges, 51 % of organizations (43) have ideas of what they could do regarding cross-border cooperation.

Comments from the respondents on the challenges in cross-border cooperation:

*We are all tired and fed up with project and campaign funding, there is no long-term support with the possibility to focus directly on your work without unnecessary bureaucracy and begging.*

*However, we consider the functioning of programs whose task is to support cross-border cooperation (Interreg) to be a problem, as they are among the most criticized for a long time - huge bureaucracy even for small soft projects, refund grant schemes... We made the decision that we want to apply anymore for Interreg SK-HU support again - it burdens us too much and the effect is not proportionate to the amount of support and what we can achieve under these conditions. Cooperation with Ukraine in the current wartime brought us new challenges, but also new funding. We do not intend to stop there and we are doing everything to be able to continue.*

*We are often faced with the fact that in the process of implementing projects, grant administrators take longer to approve interim reports and thus we do not have interim payments allocated, which effectively hinders the implementation of project activities.*

*Among additional organizational challenges, the following were named: language barriers, lack of knowledge of English, cultural differences, mobility, and lack of funding. It was also mentioned that they would need the exchange of knowledge and experience, but it is very hard to find the time for it among daily challenges.*

*Lack of co-financing possibilities from the local authorities; the state of war in Ukraine; and difficulties in finding reliable partners on the other side of the border.*

We asked respondents about the personal challenges they face in cross-border cooperation and received the following results (Figure 5.).

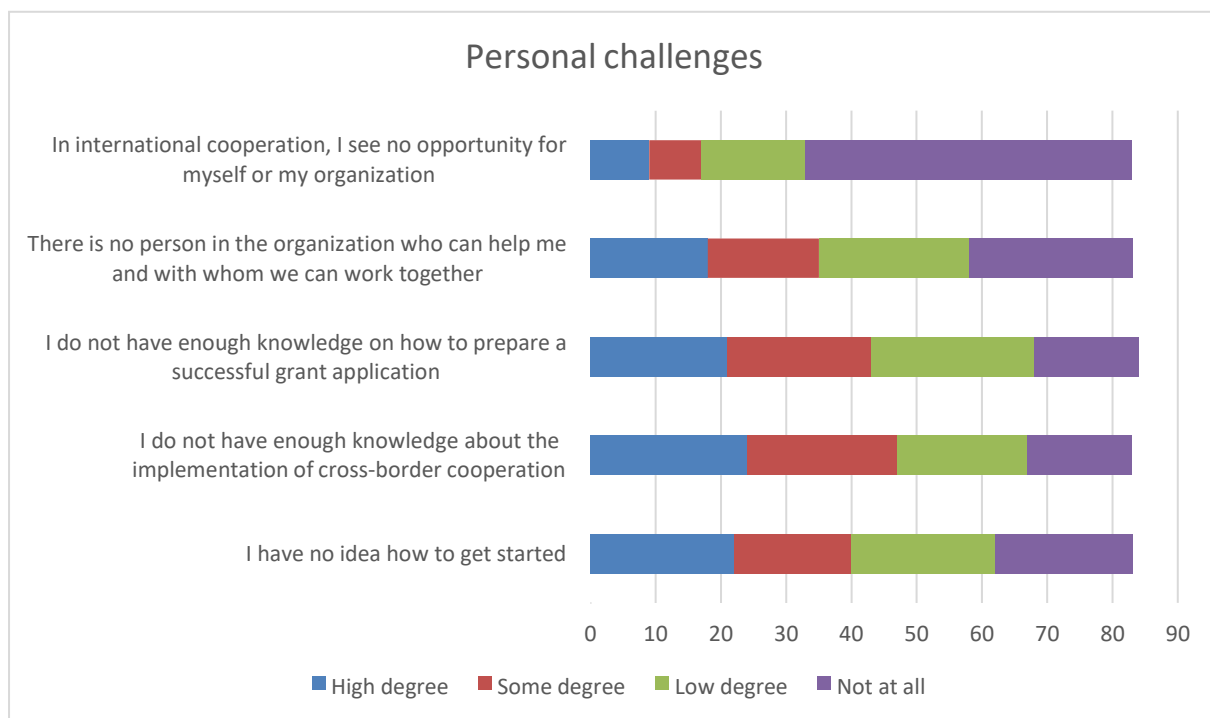


Figure 5: Personal challenges of respondents

This more or less corresponds with the answers to the organizational challenges, but the personal perceptions are slightly more positive regarding the challenges than the organizational ones. This indicates that the development of human resources and supporting them with training opportunities is crucial.

*“The mentioned personal challenges include lack of organizational capacities, lack of expertise for writing and managing an application; lack of knowledge of international law;*

*fundraising, involving volunteers; lack of funding; no energy and capacity for cross-border programs due to the many daily challenges; bad experiences: lack of real professional content; lack of foreign language. Despite good cooperation, due to the war in Ukraine, it is not safe to work cross-border. It is hard to harmonize volunteer work with personal family duties. “*

### III. Carpathian Civil Society Platform

We asked the organization whether they would like to participate in the Carpathian Civil Society Platform and for what reasons we have the following result (Figure 6.).

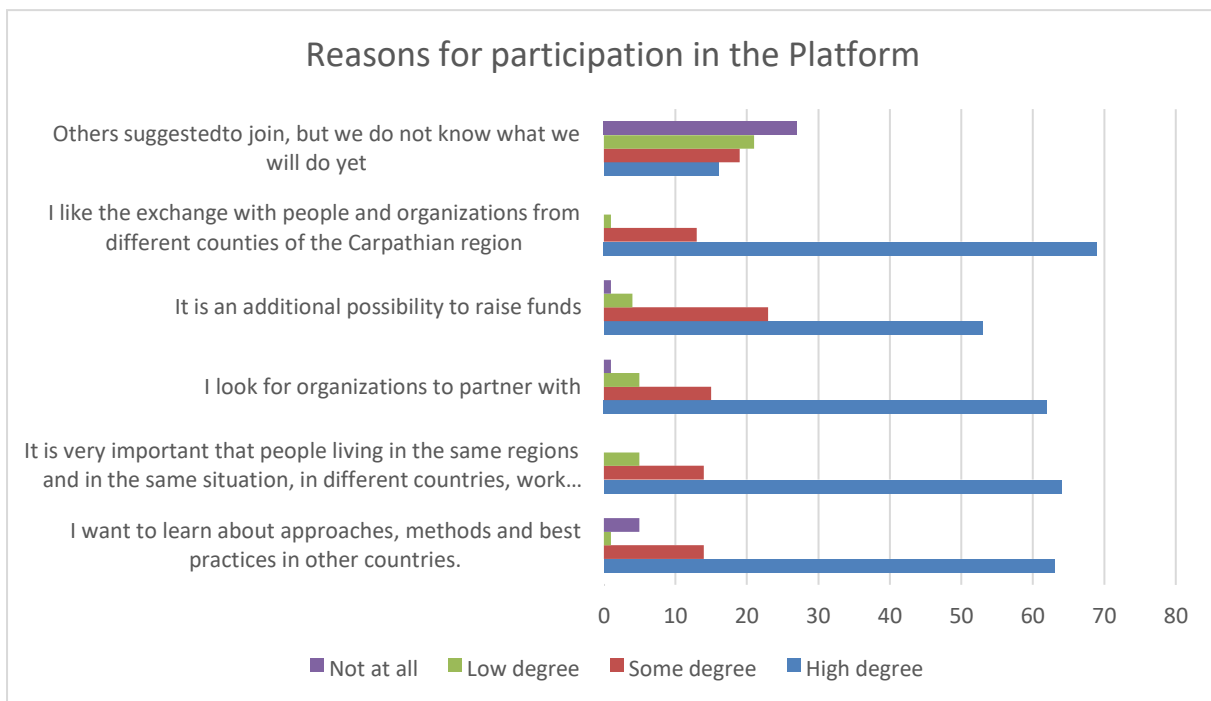


Figure 6: Reasons for Participation in the Platform

This chart indicates the needs and expectations of the Platform, which is about learning from each other, looking for partners, and cooperation. Only 8,4 % of the respondents are not interested at all in any goals of the Platform. Remarkable that 42 % of respondents indicated and scored as a “high and some degree” that “others suggested to join but we do not know what we do yet.”

To further specify their motivations, the respondents stated and made suggestions, just to quote some of them:

*“Many problems are similar to common, so the solutions can also be similar to common.”*

*“Cooperation (also cross-border) is important for us for several reasons: 1. we can share our own experience with less experienced countries (Ukraine) and support them in the development and building of their own country, 2. we can learn from others who have a similar focus and are dedicated with things that are of interest to us as well, 3. The Carpathian region has historically developed together for a long time, so it faces similar challenges and has similar prerequisites - it is, therefore, natural to cooperate even across borders and not limit itself to one's own country, 4. organizations operating in capital cities, more developed parts of countries, they usually deal with different topics - geographic proximity is often also thematic and content proximity. ”*

*“We would like to inspire the functioning of other centers in the Carpathian region. Since we are part of the infrastructure of volunteering in Slovakia and we want to strengthen it with additional information points about volunteering in the Prešov region, In the case of finding intersections in areas of cooperation, we would be able to offer our experience in providing long-term free legal assistance to foreigners.”*

*“Plans of regional environmental protection programs are needed.”*

We asked the organizations what kind of support they would like to receive from the Carpathian Platform. The questionnaire contained 8 choices and the respondents could give multiple answers. A 9th open question regarding training allowed them to specify their training needs.

The list of choices and the answers of the respondents are in the following chart (*Figure 7*):

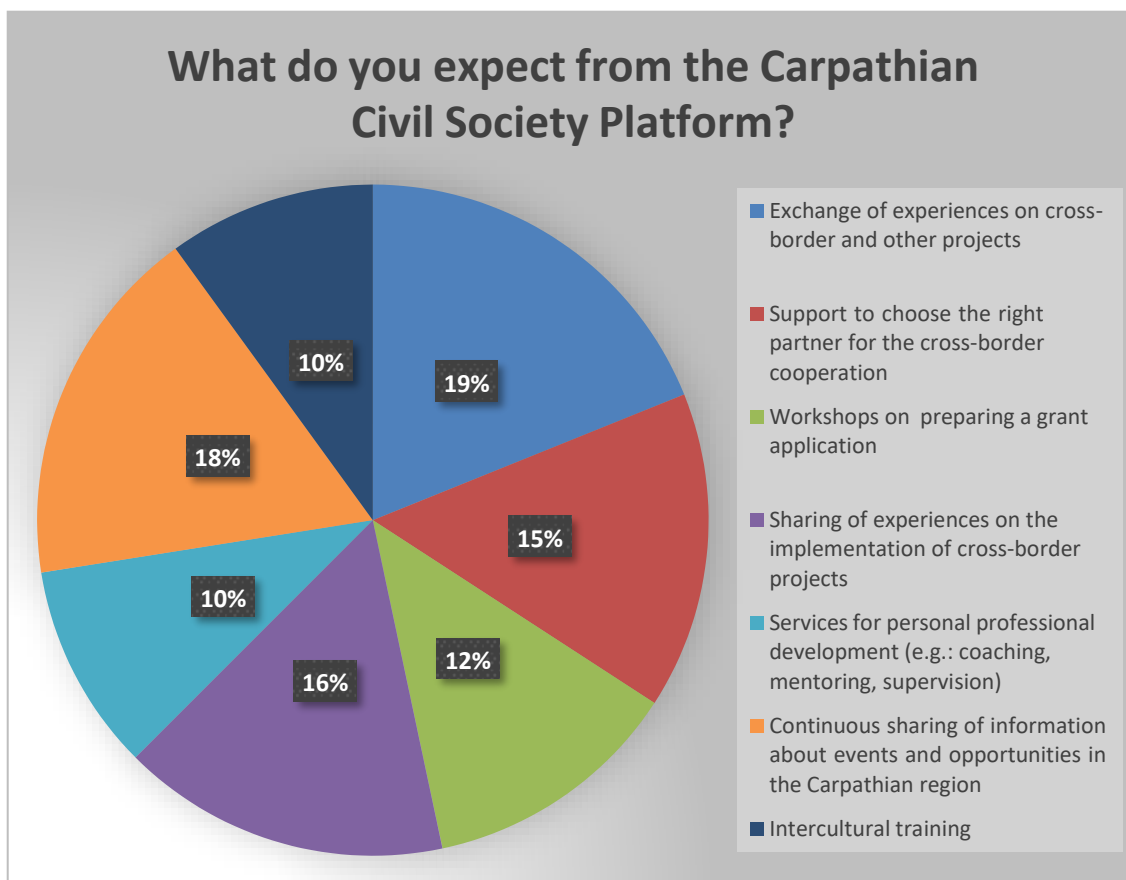


Figure 7: Expectations from the CCSP

**Other trainings:**

Respondents find the most important exchange of experiences particularly on cross-border cooperation and implantation of CBC projects (68+57 mentions, i.e.125 altogether), and sharing of experiences information about events and opportunities in the Carpathian region (63 mentions), and help to find the right partners for cross-border cooperation (55 mentions.) As for the need for training, they found it important to organize workshops on preparing grant applications (45 mentions), services for personal development like mentoring, coaching, etc. (36), and intercultural training (36 mentions.)

As regards other training respondents mentioned

*Organizational development, team building, project management, project development, prevention of burn-out, planning and budgeting, and different types of psychological support. Non-profit management: organizational, legislative requirements, etc. How to prepare the budget for a project / Financial management of international projects.*

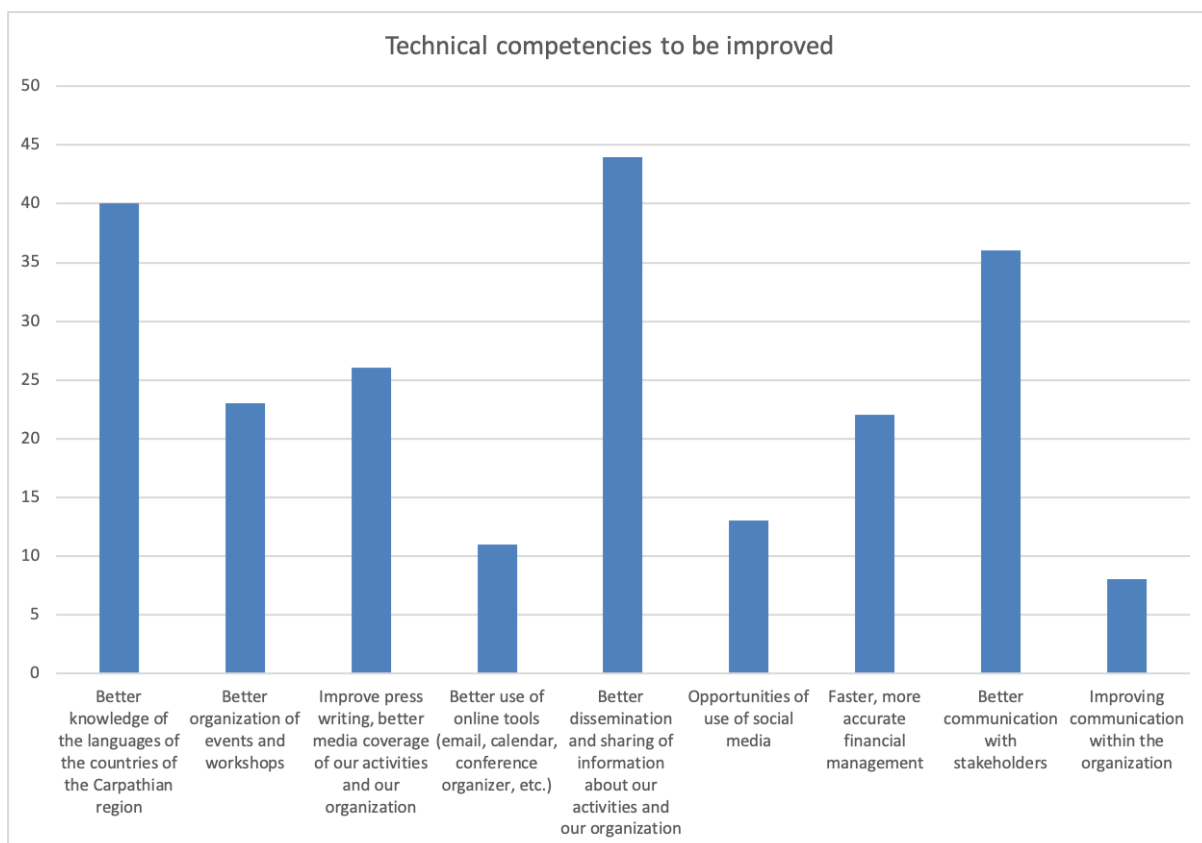
*Coaching for young people, mentoring.*

*“We are interested in education in the field of children's inclusion and exchange of already positively implemented experiences.”*



## Competences

We asked which technical (1) and organizational and strategic (2) competencies they need to improve to overcome the mentioned organizational and personal challenges. We asked respondents to tick 3 competencies they especially wish to improve (*Figure 8*).



*Figure 8: Technical competencies to be improved for the organizations*

The results indicate that the most important 3 technical competencies are better dissemination of information about the activities of their organizations (44 mentions), but if we add the “improve press writing and media coverage” category (26 mentions) the value is higher (70 mentions), which shows the strong demand to improve the communication of the organizations. The second most important technical competence is, somewhat surprisingly, the knowledge of the languages of the Carpathian region, which reflects the language barrier of cross-border cooperation. The third most important competence is communication with stakeholders including donors, and the public and private sectors.

Other technical competencies they consider important to improve and which were not included in the table above.

*“Legislative questions - what is and is not subject of the core activity, forms of contracts with donors.”*

*“We don't lack technical competencies so much...what we lack most is time, capacities, and people. “*

*“A major problem in cross-border projects is the language barrier, which in some cases is difficult to overcome. It would be nice to be in a situation where everyone speaks English, but we still have to wait for that.”*

*“Trained experts are needed with knowledge of languages in the field of inclusion and children's education.”*

As regards the organizational and strategic competencies, the results are summarized in the following chart. (Here we also asked respondents to tick 3 competencies they especially wish to improve.) (Figure 9.)



*Figure 9: Organizational and strategic competencies be improved for the organizations*

The results indicate that the most important 3 organizational and strategic competencies they wish to improve are building partnerships with other local organizations/networking PR and marketing. The second one is knowledge of funding opportunities and programs. The third one is the strategic planning.

### Conclusions and recommendations for the Platform focus on the future

The results of the survey and the subsequent workshops demonstrated that the platform has a raison d'être and is seen by CSOs as an important and niche "institution" in

the Carpathians. The survey also demonstrated that there is a general demand from CSOs for the Platform to help them in various ways to build the organizational and personal capacity of their organizations to achieve their goals and serve their communities more effectively.

Needs are outlined in the following areas:

First, many organizations are thinking about the possibilities of cross-border cooperation but do not know how to get started, and they find it difficult to find the right and reliable project partner on the other side of the border. So, there is a common need to exchange experiences of cross-border cooperation and other projects implemented by civil society organizations, to learn from each other.

Second, financial support opportunities for small-scale cross-border cooperation are limited, and those available to CSOs often do not match real needs, are too large and bureaucratic for smaller organizations that are not able to pre-finance cross-border cooperation projects, and do not have sufficient staff capacity to meet bureaucratic requirements.

Third, there is a high demand for continuous exchange of information on a. opportunities for funding, b. possible partners for cross-border cooperation and. c. events in the Carpathian Euroregion.

Fourth, there is a demand for organizational capacity building and personal development. This includes strategic thinking, improving the communication of the organizations (promotion, PR, “marketing”), improving the skill for proposal writing, and service for personal professional development (mentoring, coaching, etc.)

As one of the workshop participants formulated the final conclusion of the workshop: “The need exists, the desire to be involved exists, what is missing is the knowledge, information, and training of CSOs regarding benefits, how to write, and find a partner and implement cross-border projects, regardless of the problem addressed or its specifics.”

Recommendations:

1. To renew the existing online Platform, whose original goal was to disseminate information on events organized by Platform members, funding opportunities, and partner search, and make it available in the five spoken languages of the Carpathians by using technologies such as chatbot.
2. To organize systematic thematic capacity building trainings on the above topics in each Carpathian sub-region on common issues and, at the same time, to allow Platform members to initiate thematic workshops on cross-cutting issues with cross-border relevance.
3. To create an intermediary grantmaking mechanism to support a micro-grant (“core money”) for small-scale cross-border cooperation with grassroots organization.
4. To explore the possibility of launching a Carpathian leadership program that would serve the personal development of the leaders of CSOs, which, at the same time, would strengthen the regional identity, inter-cultural exchange, and inter-regional cooperation.

## Annexes

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## Needs Assessment - Carpathian Civil Society Platform

*Participation of the Hungarian partner in the project is co-funded by the Hungarian State.*

Carpathian Foundation-Hungary with its partners is working to follow up on the activities of the Carpathian Civil Society Platform and Hub. The purpose of this survey is to get to know your current needs, and expectations for cross-border cooperation, as well as to involve you in the co-creation of the future activities of the Platform. Filling in the survey takes around 20 minutes, and its results will be shared and discussed with you.

The Carpathian Platform and Hub, established in 2018, is a network of civil society organizations in the Carpathian region, comprising the bordering areas of Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Its main goal is to amplify the voice of civil society actors at local, regional, and interregional levels, strengthen their capacity, and foster cross-border cooperation. Since its creation local networks have been formed; capacity building trainings were organized at the local level; annual inter-regional (Carpathian level) meetings have been held to exchange experiences and build partnerships between civil society organizations, and the Platform launched the Carpathian Social Innovation Award.

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**\* Kötelező kérdés**

1. I consent to process the data for the purpose of the project and the Platform. \*

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

Yes

2. 1/1. The country of your organization \*

*Soronként csak egy oválist jelöljön be.*

Hungary

Ukraine

Slovakia

Poland

Romania

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3. 1/2. The location of your organization (city, town, village) \*

\_\_\_\_\_

4. 1/3. Name of your organization \*

\_\_\_\_\_

5. 1/4. Please choose the general field(s) of activity of your organization. (Multiple answers possible) \*

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- Culture and leisure
- Education and research
- Health
- Social
- Environment
- Local community and housing
- Counseling, legal assistance and politics
- Philanthropy and voluntaring
- International activities
- Egyéb: \_\_\_\_\_

6. 1/5. What is your role in the organization (Multiple answers possible) \*

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- Member
- Employee
- Volunteer
- Managing director/chairperson/president
- Member of the board or supervisory board
- I'm responsible for international cooperation at our organization
- Egyéb: \_\_\_\_\_

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9. II/1. If you submitted an application on cross-border cooperation, what was the result of applying for support? \*

*Soronként csak egy oválist jelöljön be.*

- We have received the requested support
- Our application was rejected
- It was supported but did not receive the requested amount
- Do not know

10. II/2. If you have received the requested support, what was the topic of your application?

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11. II/3. Who was the donor?

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12. II/4. What was the reason for unsuccessful application(s)? (Multiple answer possible)

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- The evaluation score was not high enough.
- The positively assessed application was put on the substitutes list and at the end the budget was too small to fund it
- The organization that applied resigned from the project realization.
- Do not know.
- Egyéb: \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Carpathian Civil Society Platform

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7. 1/6. Does your organization have any contacts with organizations in other countries in the Carpathian region? \*

Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.

- Yes, we spend our spare time together with friends from the neighbor countries
- We invite each other for different events, holidays
- Yes, we have a signed cooperation agreement
- Yes, we have already applied for joint support for cross-border cooperation and it was successful
- Yes, we have already applied for joint support for cross-border cooperation, but it has not been successful
- We would like to apply, but we do not know where or how
- We do not have any cross-border contacts, but we really want to find a "partner"
- We do not have any contact inside the Carpathian region, just outside of it, but we would like to have one
- Egyéb: \_\_\_\_\_

8. 1/7. Have you submitted any grant applications together with the other organization in the Carpathian region to fund the common cross-border cooperation? \*

Soronként csak egy oválist jelöljön be.

- Yes *Ugrás a(z) 9. kérdésre*
- No *Ugrás a(z) 13. kérdésre*
- Do not know *Ugrás a(z) 13. kérdésre*

*Ugrás a(z) 9. kérdésre*

## 2. Cross-border cooperations



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13. III/1. Would you like to participate in the Carpathian Civil Society Platform /HUB/ and why? \*

Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.

	High degree	Some degree	Low degree	Not at all
I want to learn about approaches, methods and best practices in other countries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is very important that people living in the same regions and in the same situation, in different countries, work together to set common goals and therefore work together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I look for organizations to partner with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is an additional possibility to raise funds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like the exchange with people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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and  
organizations  
from  
different  
countries of  
the  
Carpathian  
region

Others  
suggested to  
join, but we  
do not know  
what we will  
do yet

14. III/2. Please describe why you would like to participate in this cooperation addition to those listed above:

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15. III/3. What challenges does your organization face in cross-border cooperation? \*

Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.

	High degree	Some degree	Low degree	Not at all
<b>We haven't thought about it yet.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>We don't know or have limited knowledge and information on how to get support, or how and where to apply for call for proposals</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>We have no financial resources of our own to finance and pre-finance the project</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>We do not know how to find a cooperative partner for the cross-border cooperation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>We have limited experiences to carry out</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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a cross-  
border  
activity,  
project in  
our  
organization

We have no  
idea what  
we could do

16. III/4. Please describe what additional challenges your organization faces in implementing cross-border cooperation projects, or activities:

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17. III/5. What challenges do you personally face in cross-border cooperation? \*

Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.

	High degree	Some degree	Low degree	Not at all
I have no idea how to get started	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not have enough knowledge about the implementation of cross-border cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not have enough knowledge on how to prepare a successful grant application	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is no person in the organization who can help me and with whom we can work together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In international cooperation, I see no opportunity for myself or my organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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18. III/6. Please describe any additional challenges you face:

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19. III/7. What kind of support would you like to receive from the Carpathian Civil Society Platform? (Multiple answer possible) \*

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- Exchange of experiences on cross-border and other projects
- Support to choose the right partner for the cross-border cooperation
- Workshops on preparing a grant application
- Sharing of experiences on the implementation of cross-border projects
- Services for personal professional development (e.g.: coaching, mentoring, supervision)
- Continuous sharing of information about events and opportunities in the Carpathian region
- Intercultural training
- Trainings
- Egyéb: \_\_\_\_\_

20. III/8. If you ticked trainings, namely what kind of trainings?

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IV. In which competencies do you need to improve to overcome the mentioned (personal or organizational) challenges?

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21. Iv/1. Technical skills - Please choose the 3 technical competences you need to improve the most to participate more successfully in cross-border cooperation *(Technical skills include those required for the everyday operation of NGOs)* \*

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- Better knowledge of the languages of the countries of the Carpathian region
- Better organization of events and workshops
- Improve press writing, better media coverage of our activities and our organization
- Better use of online tools (email, calendar, conference organizer, etc.)
- Better dissemination and sharing of information about our activities and our organization
- Opportunities of use of social media
- Faster, more accurate financial management
- Better communication with stakeholders
- Improving communication within the organization

22. Iv/2. You can mention one other technical competence you consider important to improve, which is not included in the table above.

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23. IV/3. Organizational and strategic competences \*

Please select 3 organizational and strategic competences, that you think you need to develop in order to contribute to the better functioning of your organization (Strategic and organizational competencies include skills that help the organization to design and use the most appropriate organizational and other tools to achieve its objectives in the most effective manner.)

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- Strategic planning
- Develop system thinking
- Building and improvement partnerships with other local organizations / Networking PR & marketing
- Knowledge of funding opportunities programs
- Development of application writing techniques
- Management of legal matters related to the organization
- Identify and manage the risks related to the operation of the organization
- Human resource management
- More efficient day-to-day office management
- Developing better budget and financial management

## 24. Iv/4. You can mention one more organizational and strategic competency you consider important, which is not included in the table above.

## V. Personal information

## 25. V/1. Your gender

*Soronként csak egy oválist jelöljön be.*

- Male
- Female



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26. V/2. Your age \*

*Soronként csak egy oválist jelöljön be.*

- under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70 or above

27. V/3. What is your field of professional education? (Multiple answers possible)

*Válassza ki az összeset, amely érvényes.*

- Law/administration
- Economy
- Management/marketing
- Media/communication
- Social sciences (psychology, sociology, etc.)
- Pedagogy /education
- Art/culture
- Engineering
- Other (what area do you work in, which was not listed above):
- Egyéb: \_\_\_\_\_

28. V/4. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

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Thank you very much for your participation in our survey!

We are eager to know your opinion!

Keep in touch with us!

Address

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Ezt a tartalmat nem a Google hozta létre, és nem is hagyta azt jóvá.

Google Űrlapok

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