

Short bios

Alina Kasprovschi

Alina Kasprovschi one of the founders and the Executive Director of the Bucharest Community Foundation. Previous to setting up the foundation in 2011, she had been working in marketing and communication for ten years. Alina leads her life according to the vision of the foundation – no matter how under-developed or poorly run a city is, if it can be saved, it will be saved by the stubbornness of community leaders getting involved out of belief. On the condition that they have access to resources and are encouraged not to give up.

When she is not at work, Alina is scootering, exploring the urban nature with her son, or reading avidly.

Ciprian Ciocan

After playing around with entrepreneurship and documentary photography I've joined the civil society sector, almost 6 years ago. At the Sibiu Community Foundation we create programs and mechanisms to allow community members to innovate, solve social problems and reach their potential.

Teodora Borghoff

Buzz words: community organiser, project writer, fundraiser, social facilitator, rural dweller, gardener. Founding member in the Community Foundation in Timisoara. Founder and member in several other NGOs ranging from storks protection to a failed ecovillage initiative. Other past or present interests: environmental activism, heritage restoration, European cultural capitals, transition towns, urban resilience, disaster risk reduction.

Ciprian Păiuș

For more that 15 years now, I am actively involved in the nongovernmental sector in Romania. In the early 2000, I was a member of two international student associations which helped me discover my interests for civic engagement and immediately after that I had the opportunity to run the activity of a local human rights association. I am the Executive Director of Iași Community Foundation, for almost seven years now, and actively rally people to its mission, in an effort to make Iași one of the most enjoyable cities in Romania. Since 2015, I am also the President of the Romanian Federation of Community Foundations.

Sandor Gal

Active in the non-profit sector from high school now I am the executive director of Mures Community Foundation. Through the foundation we run a lot of interesting fundraising/funding programs to increase the capacity of local non-profit sector to implement their programs/projects in Mures County. I am very interested in sustainable urban mobility and I improve cycling in my city using few different methods - campaigns, educational programs, lobbying.

Dolores Neagoe

Over 20 years of professional experience and extensive knowledge with respect to the actors, the capacity, and the needs of the non-profit sector in Romania; Dolores took part in a variety of studies and evaluations of the non-profit sector in Central and Eastern Europe. For the past 18 years, she has managed grant schemes for the EC Delegation in Romania, CEE Trust and she is currently Program Director for Philanthropy and Civil Society at the Romanian-American Foundation.

Gabriella Benedek

Gabriella is a social development professional and a researcher. She became familiar with the concept of community development in 2001, restorative justice in 2005, community foundations in 2009, while resilience came into sight in 2016. Besides her involvement with issues of justice, security, and social exclusion, she has been active working with local communities and CSOs, in various capacities. Gabriella is a founding member at the interdisciplinary Foresee Research Group, leading the ALTERNATIVE project between 2011-2017. Works in the core team of KözösALAPON at Roots And Wings Foundation - the national support programme (CFSP) for community foundations in Hungary. She is the supervisory board member of the Hungarian Association for Community Development and board member at Roots and Wings Foundation. She also chaired the board of the Ferencváros Community Foundation (FCF) for six years in her local community, that she resigned due to her becoming a Doctoral Student at University of Brighton in the Education Science, working on her Resilient Generations research, since January, 2018. The research is of international scope, as it maps resilient practices and social development intervention strategies, using life history narratives as core methodology. Her professional approach is characterised by solidarity, reciprocity and participation, as well as respect for change and the acceptance of its unpredictability. She lives and works in Budapest with her family.

Marja Mitrovic

I have been involved in philanthropy and community development in Serbia for over 7 years. I am passionate about people, strategic philanthropy, political satire and pop culture trivia. Within Trag, I am mostly involved in philanthropy promotion, provision of local resource mobilization-related support to CSOs and CFs in Serbia, transparency and accountability of the civil society sector as well as advocacy. I am also involved in philanthropy development on the regional level and participate in the work of SIGN - Southeast European Indigenous Grantmakers Network and WEBCFI - Western Balkans Community Foundations Initiative. I am known for working hard and laughing even harder.

Jan Despiegelaere

General coordinator of Streekfonds West-Vlaanderen, Community Foundation West Flanders, managed by the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium). Both Transatlantic Community Foundation Network (TCFN) and Transatlantic Community Foundation fellowship (TCFF) Alumnus. Founding member of Thematic Network of Regional Foundations in Europe of the European Foundation centre (EFC). Big supporter of the global vision, local mission idea and a vibrant living network of human capital of community philanthropy practitioners in Europe (and the rest of the world).

Kai Jahns

I am the Managing Director of the Community Foundation Barnim Uckermark. 92 founders are part of the founders' meeting. Barnim and Uckermark are two large districts in the north of Berlin in the state of Brandenburg. We operate two volunteer agencies. One in the largest city Eberswalde and one in rural areas, Prenzlau. Our focus is on education. It is about community development together with community development. We are project-oriented. We develop school libraries. We help refugees. We have a special fund. And we work with the help of cultural education with our own community theater. The secret of our success is a strong connection to municipal structures and the assumption of tasks (content). The culture of remembrance brought me to Romania. We use a historical site of National Socialist crimes in

Eberswalde. Cooperation with Romania is about the Roma genocide and current discrimination.

Axel Halling

After being involved for several years in international cultural exchange Axel Halling has been working in the CF sector for more than 10 years now. Currently he is coordinating a program for CFs integrating newcomers in Germany, funded by the government. For him resilience is one of the most important things you need to survive - as an activist AND as an organisation. That is why he is also supporting the Hungarian CF movement as a board member of Roots & Wings foundation, who supports KözösALAPON, the Hungarian CF movement. Apart from that Axel is a founding member of the board of the German Comics Association, which organizes comic related events on a regional, national and international level.

Delphine Valette

I have 15 years of experience in the philanthropic sector - on the sponsor side (individuals and companies) and on the beneficiary side (national museum, art foundations, cities) in Paris, New York and Tokyo. In 2011, I launched the community mission of the city of Cannes, and, in 2016, its community found, which was one of the first "community initiative" in France. The last few months I have worked on the establishment of a community foundation for the County of Nice. The declared purpose is to react to the traumatic terrorism attack of the 14th of July 2016. This project is nationally observed and supported by national foundations because it would be the first community foundation in France acting on this scale of population (600 000 inhab). I am actively involved in the professional networks. I participate in the new reflexions and policy making about innovating social entrepreneurship and finance and about new "territorial philanthropic tools". I coordinate the national Group for the development of community philanthropy and the Regional Group Provence-Monaco of the French Fundraisers Association (AFF).

Marie-Luise Stoll-Steffan

Chair of the working group of German Community Foundations, Association of German Foundations, Berlin.

Co-Chair of the Community Foundation of the City of Wiesbaden.

I strongly believe in co-operation with other NGOs on the local level in order to get best results. We need to build strong networks and trust into each other. And never forget the fun in all you do:-)

Boris Strecansky

Boris Strečanský has a degree in philosophy and history from Comenius University in Bratislava and a post-graduate certificate in developmental donor practice from London Metropolitan University. His interests include policy research and analysis for third sector and civil society development and philanthropy for social change. At the Center for Philanthropy in Bratislava he manages peer-learning activities of the European Community Foundation Initiative (ECFI) and oversees Center's on-line giving infrastructure services for non-profits and creative communities.

Inna Starchikova

Inna Starchikova has been working in the Third Sector since 1997. She started her career as a karate coach for children of refugees and needy families. She has also managed a network of programs aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention, development of youth leadership and public

participation for children and youth in the five largest cities in Ukraine. For five years, Inna worked at the Center for Local Government Research (CELOGORE) and managed the evaluations of local governments. Since 2009, Starchikova has been working at Moloda Gromada (“Young Community”) as executive director, whose mission is to support special purpose programs for youth activism, as well civil society development. The events of 2013-2015 (the “Revolution of Dignity”, the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, and the war in East Ukraine) have influenced her work in charity and the philanthropy sector. Eager to find the best solutions for conflict prevention and transformation in divided communities, Starchikova is focused on helping to improve the work of community foundations in Ukraine and civil society development.

Laura Kelly

Laura Kelly has worked in the United States as a newspaper reporter, radio talk show host and magazine editor. She segued into teaching journalism in the early '90s and In 1997 she began living and working in Central and Eastern Europe. She created a journalism program at Academia Istropolitana Nova in Bratislava, Slovakia; mentored journalists in Armenia, Albania and further afield; and was the faculty director of the Prague-based European Journalism Institute for 10 years. She joined the faculty at the American University in Bulgaria in 2016. She teaches storytelling and writes a monthly culture column for an arts magazine based in the Southwest USA.

Tanja Bjelanovic

Tanja is a long term activist and professional in philanthropy and civil society development. The biggest part of her carrier she spent as Development Director at Trag Foundation, one of the leading in Serbia and the Balkans. One of her biggest successes was the first major donor campaign for the establishment of the first Endowment Fund in the Balkans. Nearly 20 years in the sector moved her to establish Tabula consulting agency in order to share her knowledge, experience and passion for philanthropy and organizational development with those active in social change.

Gergo Pulay

Gergo Pulay is a social anthropologist, currently a Research Fellow at the Center for Policy Studies at the Central European University. His main research interests include urban marginality, poverty, ethnicity, stigmatization, economic anthropology, ethnographic research practice. He defended his PhD dissertation with the title ‘Street life, Value and Exchange in a Poor Neighbourhood of Bucharest’. Currently he is also a Research Fellow at the Institute for Regional Studies at the Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Previously he was an International Fellow at the New Europe College in Bucharest, and a Doctoral Fellow of the Marie Curie SocAnth International PhD Programme Promoting Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe.

Alina Porumb

Alina Porumb, founder of the Association for the Practice of Transformation, senior consultant with the Association of Community Relations. Alina Porumb has started in 2012 and is currently leading the Initiative for Strategic Philanthropy in Central and Eastern Europe (INSPIRE), a community of philanthropy practitioners who take a strategic and reflective approach to their work. Between 2005- 2016, she the was the director of ARC's support program that sparked the creation and development in Romania of 16 community foundations. Alina is a key contributor to national, European and global philanthropy

networks, supporting dialogue around innovation, impact and learning in the social development practice and the evolving role and practice of the philanthropy support organizations.

Cătălin Cotoi

Born in 1974 in Timișoara. Medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine, Cluj-Napoca. BA in sociology and PhD in philosophy. Professor at the University of Bucharest, Department of Sociology. Alumnus of Center for Advanced Studies Sofia, Collegium Budapest, New Europe College, Wissenschaft Kolleg zu Berlin, and Woodrow Wilson Center. He has published in the areas of political anthropology, history of social sciences, and ethnicity studies.

Alexandra Ștef

Alexandra researches, designs and facilitates processes that embed engagement into services. Her interest is in harnessing the collective intelligence of local communities to create better public services for better cities. She is currently working on Urban Education Live, a European applied research project developing a model of collaboration between universities and urban communities. It aims to develop a fieldwork curricula and local hubs where students and young professionals can put their multidisciplinary knowledge at the service of civic initiative groups working to improve their neighbourhoods.

Past work includes drafting a community outreach strategy and delivering experimental neighbourhood projects for Bucharest's bid to European Capital of Culture, facilitating creative public consultations on the cultural potential of neighbourhoods and mapping grassroots initiatives in Bucharest to connect to a global network of social innovators sharing know-how. Alexandra has studies in international affairs (Venezuela), regional politics (UK, Hungary) and social anthropology (Romania)

Ela Bălan

Ela is grant maker at ARC and works with the 16 community foundations in Romania since July 2016. Before that, Ela was Program Coordinator in Guinea Bissau, working with over 150 rural and small city communities in order to improve education and health for over 180,000 kids all over the country. One of the most challenging projects she was involved in, was to fight against FGM (female genital mutilation) in the same African country, where the prevalence of FGM in women aged 15-49 is 44.9%. After 8 years of community development and direct intervention in Africa, Ela's heart was stolen by the Romanian community foundations, where she discovered creative and dedicated people, and new ways to collaborate in order to develop happy, healthy and resilient communities.

Rucsandra Pop

I studied literature in Brașov, journalism in Bratislava, sociology in Warsaw, anthropology and folklore in Bucharest and in Bloomington. I am an urban story hunter and storyteller.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. When I discovered this African proverb, it became one of my mantras. And this mantra parachuted me in the middle of a tribe together with which I feel can get very far. In fact, there are two concentric tribes - ARC and the community foundations. For the last two years, I have been the director of the National Community Foundation Development Program in ARC. In my view, community foundations have as a mission to repair the social fabric by rebuilding trust between the people in the communities they serve.