

2016 with CeRe

Briefly about CeRe in 2016

The core activity for CeRe in 2016 remained community organizing and assistance for citizens groups and NGOs on their advocacy efforts and organizational development. We worked directly with more than **100 people** (offering mentorship, coaching, planning the advocacy campaigns, drafting various materials, preparing for meetings with public officials, organizing events, protest, and other direct actions). Out of this 100 people, around 50 also benefited of training on a diversity of topics: public speaking, participatory budgeting, organizational development, advocacy campaigns, mobilizing communities, how to organize a candidates' forum etc. Through the 100 direct beneficiaries, we reached out to around **6000** citizens that got involved in different advocacy campaigns, and **over 700.000** citizens and NGOs members informed of the advocacy campaigns through our Facebook page.

While still working individually with our beneficiaries we helped to increase the capacity of the Bucharest Civic Network – an informal coalition of 13 citizens groups willing to act at city level. For this year's local elections, all 13 groups united around a common goal: making sure that civic groups' voice is heard and their issues are part of the public agenda - in this respect, with CeRe's help, they organized a candidates forum in May 2016 - where 3 of the main candidates for general city hall participated - 200 citizens attended the event and the candidates answered to specific questions.

As strengthening civil society capacity is only one of the ends, we also put considerable effort in promoting the transparency and inclusiveness of state institutions. We organized an exchange of experience among groups and local public administration representatives and the Municipality of Lausanne. In addition to new information and ideas for citizens, the exchange contributed to a better attitude of state institution representatives towards citizens voices.

In our efforts to promote activism and share our own experience, we continued our community organizing exchange programme with the US and offered various training sessions on advocacy, community organizing or coalition building.

Instruments to promote activism and participation were also a very successful 7th edition of the Public Participation Awards Gala, the 3rd edition of the Civic Initiatives Fair and a Map of Civic Victories.



1. Strategic direction: Building social actors' capacity to get involved in the decision-making process

Goal: Improved capacity of the social actors to get involved in the decision-making process

Advocacy assistance and community organizing programme¹

The goal of the program is to strengthen the voice of the citizens and NGOs in their efforts to get engaged in the decision - making process to solve communities' problems and hold state institutions accountable. CeRe supports the groups' advocacy campaigns but also their organizational development and helps them to get engaged with their own communities.

According to the needs of the beneficiaries and the available resources, CeRe's intervention is flexible and covers a large spectrum, from a complex assistance package employing community organizing methods to on the spot advocacy assistance when a group only needs a little advice.

Extensive assistance (advocacy, organizing, organizational development)

In 2016, CeRe offered extensive assistance (ongoing support offered by a community organizer, tailored workshops and learning opportunities, media and financial support) to **8 civic groups and organizations** both in terms of campaigning and organizational development. Moreover, this year



¹ Previously two separate programmes (Community Organizing and Permanent advocacy Service) merged into one.

CeRe continued to assist the development of the Bucharest Civic Network, a coalition of 13 citizen groups that decided to support each other's actions, and share information and know-how.

Advocacy assistance

Until the end of the year, we have offered assistance for advocacy campaigns to **20 civic groups and organisations** willing to engage in advocacy campaigns for their issues. Some of the issues our clients advocates for are: rehabilitation of abandoned cinema halls, saving green spaces, rehabilitation of parks, opening a civic community centre in a very poor area of Bucharest, organising sexual workers to fight for their rights, better infrastructure in the cities, social houses for people evicted from their homes, rehabilitation of one of the biggest parks in Bucharest.

Specific advice

From the beginning of the year until now we have answered to **more than 21 specific requests** on diverse issues: environment, public administration, urbanism, education, social justice, etc. For these requests we offered specific advice meant to answer particular issues, such as: how to organise a protest, how to participate to local council meetings, how to use 544/2001 law on public information, what to do when an illegal building is being built in your community, how to do participatory budgeting, how to respond to councillors and mayors that limit citizens access to public council meeting etc. This type of assistance is provided to citizens, civic group, NGOs and networks from all over Romania.

All the above means we worked directly with more than **100 people** (offering mentorship, coaching, planning the advocacy campaigns, drafting various materials, preparing for meetings with public officials, organizing events, protest, and other direct actions). Out of this 100 people, around **50** also benefited of training on a diversity of topics: public speaking, participatory budgeting, organizational development, advocacy campaigns, mobilizing communities, how to organize a candidates' forum etc.

Through the 100 direct beneficiaries, we reached out to around **6000** citizens that got involved in different advocacy campaigns, and **over 700.000** citizens and NGOs members informed of the advocacy campaigns through our Facebook page.

Here are some examples of the intervention we had in the programme:

- **Human Catalyst Association** is a young organization focusing on better education for children in vulnerable communities. The campaign they fight now, with help from CeRe is to convince the Government to invest state funds for the "school after school programme" in marginalized communities. The campaign is still continuing, having a major intermediary success in 2016: a prioritization of schools getting European money based on vulnerability of the children attending. To get here, Human Catalyst managed to gather many supporters, raised its profile with state institutions and created a lot of awareness around education as a chance to exit the poverty circle. On the organizational development side, we supported HC in developing a strategic plan in order to establish their priorities for the following years and have an efficient intervention.

- **Floreasca Initiative group** purpose is the wellbeing of their neighbourhood. Their main fight in 2016 was to stop illegal buildings on green spaces and parks and real estate projects with negative impact on the neighbourhood in terms of densification, traffic, and pollution. More than 2000 people in the neighbourhood were directly involved in the group's advocacy campaigns, signing petitions, attending meetings, public debates, and protests. The group managed to postpone the building of 4 high rise towers in Floreasca. Moreover, due to the visibility and support gained in the neighbourhood, the investor invited Floreasca initiative group to a meeting to present their new plans (with a reduction of 33% of the project's size), recognizing the group as a dialogue and negotiation partner.

The advocacy actions and the number of people involved show a rapid growth of Floreasca Group in terms of people involved, issues covered, and visibility (in the media, in relationship with their constituency and public authorities). The group is recognised as a resource locally, but also as a worthy dialogue partner among public officials and more recently private investors.



- **Lacul Tei Initiative group** is one of CeRe's old clients. After few successful advocacy campaigns, in 2016 the group focused on opening to the local community and building stronger relationships with their constituency. To do that, they continued to release the neighborhood newspaper "Foaia de Tei", with information about the group's activities, campaigns, projects and members. In collaboration with studioBASAR organization they managed to open the Tei Community Center (14 mp2 container refurbished to meet the community and group needs – see the case study for more details). A big open event was organized to launch the center, attended by 200 people, including local and central authorities. The group also learnt how to plan a project and write a project proposal. In 2016 Lacul Tei applied for 3 grants, receiving funds for 2 of them. Being at this stage of development, the group is discussing about the possibility to register as an Association. Being such an experienced group, Initiativa Lacul Tei agreed to share their experience with newer groups, thus enlarging the number of people getting advocacy assistance with less effort from CeRe.
- **Incotroceni group** is currently focused on having a greener neighbourhood. To make a long story short, after more advocacy activities, the group convinced the local administration to plant 120 linden trees. 60 more are to be plant during 2017. Along with this campaign, the group worked to develop a digital platform that gives the citizens the opportunity to upload information about the green spaces (trees that need to be replaced, spots that need trees or trees that need to be trimmed).

- **Prelungirea Ghencea civic group** continued fighting for the enlargement of the main boulevard crossing their neighbourhood – Prelungirea Ghencea and for the Passage at the ring road of the city. Many petitions, public meetings, participation in city council meetings, and a big protest, with 500 people kept the topic on the state institutions' agendas, with some practical steps, yet no clear results. The group is persisting in their advocacy campaign, while growing and becoming recognized by both authorities and citizens. In terms of organizational development, they are now legally registered as a NGO – The Prelungirea Ghencea Initiative Association with a launching event in September 2016. They have 13 registered members and a strategic plan.
- **FILIA Association** continued documenting the problem regarding sexual harassment in universities in Bucharest. They narrowed down for one major University – SNSPA. They had a meeting with the dean of the university and gained his support and then focused on mobilizing students and gathering them around this issue. In the fall they started working intensely with the students group they mobilized throughout the year, and started supporting this group in order to consolidate it. The group is called AS Initiative and their first major action was a World Café event organized with their colleagues and teachers on the subject in December 2016.

In our effort to respond to the increased need of assistance coming from groups and NGOs CeRe is exploring new ways to be more effective and efficient. One of them is engaging more experienced groups or citizens in providing support for newer clients. Lacul Tei group, for example, was a very good resource agreeing to share their experience to others. Another instrument was to organize a one-day training for 7 new civic groups and 1 NGO on advocacy and community mobilization.

Coalition building efforts

As voices are stronger when together, CeRe is investing effort in building and facilitating coalitions of NGOs and groups, helping them to better advocate on policy matters.

The Bucharest Civic Network

While still working with individual groups of citizens, CeRe also help the groups to act together like a coalition: the [Bucharest Civic Network](#). The Network has now 13 members: citizens groups all over Bucharest, willing to engage with the Bucharest Municipality for a better development of the city.

In 2016, the Bucharest Civic Network, with CeRe's ongoing assistance, took advantage of the electoral campaign to organize their first big event - a candidates' forum with the top runners for the office of Mayor of Bucharest. Their aim was to promote the Network in front of future decision-makers and to the wider public, but also to put on the candidates' agenda their main themes of concern: transparency, infrastructure, traffic. The Network's decision to organize the candidates' forum was made after attending a workshop organized by CeRe in February 2016 on why and how to organize a Candidates' forum (with US American organizers' contribution).

Representatives of 4 groups (around 10 persons) worked intensely from March to May to organize the forum and involve all civic groups in the main decisions related to the event. The forum helped the Network build a stronger identity and cohesion and to gain visibility.

The Candidates' Forum held on the 28th of May, before local elections, gathered representatives from the Bucharest Civic Network, other non-governmental organizations, Bucharest inhabitants, representatives of public institutions and political parties, students and professors, mass media etc. and 3 of the top runners for Mayor of Bucharest. Around 200 persons attended.

Organizing the forum helped the Network build a stronger identity and cohesion and gain visibility. They have developed promotional materials, a website – www.reteauacivica.ro and officially launched themselves on 11th of April through a press release.

Besides being a successful event, the Forum was a great opportunity for the Network to work together and to take decisions as a team.

Another opportunity for the civic groups to work together and exchange information was their presence at the NGO Fest in May 2016 - 8 out of 13 civic groups promoted the network to the wider public and other NGOs.

In the fall, the Bucharest Civic Network became CeRe's partner in organizing the Citizens' Initiatives Fair (held on the 1st of October 2016). They helped with carrying the message across in their communities - having a total reach for the event of 10 000 people - through online channels of communication. The civic fair was attended by more than 200 people. Some of the participants found initiatives in their own neighborhoods and decided to join them.

While helping the network with its presence in the public sphere, CeRe facilitated internal development processes for the Network: evaluation and planning meetings, strategic planning

process, brief practical training sessions.



In 2016, the Bucharest Civic Network was a space for sharing and learning, where we have encouraged and facilitated a transfer of know how between more experienced leaders and civic groups and new comers. It was also

a space for identifying common issues and solutions to those problems that affect the majority of the groups, like green space preservation and constructions.

The NGO coalition for the fair use of Structural Funds

Coordinating the coalition for structural funds is a well-established effort of CeRe, aiming at keeping the Government accountable about the use of structural funds and at promoting civil society as an important actor in development.

At the end of 2016, the coalition is formed by more than 30 member well known organizations. Even if it has a large membership, the level of involvement varies from an organization to another, from very active organizations to rather silent supporters.

During 2016, the coalition benefited by the openness of the technocratic government and managed to pursue its issues more effectively. Some of the issues the coalition fought for are:

- more investment in impact and less in bureaucracy;
- better evaluation of the projects funded;
- more flexible funding schemes.

Coalition members are part of all relevant monitoring committees and of different working groups, gave their input on documents such as applicants' guidelines, and participated in various consultations.

Two reports public reports were issued during 2016 by the Coalition. One analyzes the level of bureaucracy and proposes measures for reducing the administrative burden and another one analyzes how the government observed the partnership principle.

2016 brought about some improvements (better calls for projects, funding schemes that are better addressing community problems). Yet, the system remained equally inflexible in terms of administrative burden, even if this matter is recognized by all stakeholders as being one of the major problems of the 2007 – 2013 programming period.

For the future, the Coalition planned for a new project aiming at increase the efficiency and impact of the European funded interventions in disadvantaged communities.

Politics without Borders Platform

Politics without Borders is a small group of activists and NGOs' members taht started to work together during 2013 to advocate for improvements of the legislation making easier for new actors to enter the political scene. CeRe shares the role of facilitator and advisor for the platform.

After having notable achievements with their advocacy efforts during 2015, in 2016 the platform focused on:

- monitoring the impact of the new legislation;
- educating the public about the new previsions of the legislation (formation of a political party or distance voting for Romanians aborad).

As far as CeRe is concerned, the most important is that PwB members remained together and active even after their most relevant objectives were achieved. In the next period, CeRe will stay close to platform and help its members to set up new goals.

In addition to these endeavours, CeRe has been invited by other NGOs to assist them building advocacy coalitions. The most relevant one is Romania against Food Waste, a group aiming to diminish food waste and to better redistribution of the food surplus. Without having a prominent role, CeRe also continues to be active in the informal group for housing.

2. Strategic direction: Watch-dog and advocacy for better public participation to the decision-making

Goal: Improving the legislation and practices in the area of public participation and its implementation

Open up the City Hall

Open up the City Hall is a long term endeavour to convince the Bucharest City and Districts' Halls to create more space for participation and include citizens in the decision making process.



Abuzurile şedinţei CGMB din 21.09.2016

-  Din 44 acte normative votate
-  0 acte normative au fost supuse consultării publice
-  Cetăţenii nu au fost lăsaţi să intre la şedinţa publică
-  Reprezentanţii CeRe şi ActiveWatch nu au putut lua cuvântul, deşi au depus cerere scrisă
-  Sustinătorii doamnei Primar au fost singurii cărora li s-a permis să ia cuvântul în şedinţă

Pentru mine consultarea publică este un mod de viaţă, un mod de a fi.
(Primar Gabriela Firea - depunerea jurământului, iunie 2016)

At Bucharest level, before the local elections Bucharest had two interim Mayors (as the General Mayor was prosecuted and was suspended).

With the two new Mayors, we had some small wins, such as creating an email address for the public to send recommendations on draft local decisions (to send such recommendations, one needed to go in person and register

hard copies!) and some chairs for citizens in the Local Council meeting room.

The biggest event was organized a couple of months before the elections: *Adopt a councillor* campaign – the second edition – encouraging citizens to contact their local councillors, ask for more transparency and discuss about their achievements at the end of their mandate. The purpose was also to understand their future plans, in case they run and won another mandate. 25 councillors were adopted and received questions from citizens, either in writing or face to face, related to transparency and local community problems.

The results of the June local elections brought new obstacles related to openness and transparency, especially at the Bucharest City Hall level: the citizens were not allowed to attend the general city councils meetings and speak before the general councillors, the video room in the City Hall building where citizens could watch the discussions was closed, the new city councillors' contact data was not published on the website and the projects adopted were not under public debate, as the law requested. Moreover, the Mayor organized many extraordinary city council meetings, without an obvious emergency, avoiding the regular process of public debate. It is to be mentioned that the members of the opposition (especially those coming from the newly established party, USR) were denied information, full participation and were even persecuted (one of the USR councillors was forced to leave the Council Meeting when she argued against one of the projects proposed by the Mayor's party).

In this context, together with 2 ally NGOs, we decided to go to court and ask for the cancelation of the decisions adopted in September. Besides the court action, we decided to continue the watchdog activity and to release a 6 months report on transparency of the General City Hall (December 2016). A few conclusions of the report:

- Less than 5% of the projects adopted by the City Hall were under public debate, as the law required, and only 10 out of 751 official decisions made by the Mayor were published
- Citizens cannot attend and take the floor during the city councils meetings
- The budget is not published in open data and 7 out of 8 budget changes have been proposed and adopted without public debate
- The contact details of the city councillors and the meetings of the city council commissions are not published on the website

3. **Strategic direction: Promoting public participation and activism**
Goal: Public participation at the decision-making and activism are recognized as valid approaches to achieve change. Public participation is also seen as a means to alter the balance of power in favor of those having less power.

Abusive and unlawful actions taken by the City Hall at the September 21st City Council meeting – 0 projects under public debate out of 44 projects adopted, citizens were not allowed in the City Council meeting, CeRe and ActiveWatch representatives were not allowed to take the floor and speak in front of the City Councilors

Even if activism has increased in the last few years, the need to promote good examples and stir up the enthusiasm is still high. CeRe is using few instruments to promote activism to a larger public and others to offer more in-depth information and knowledge to existing and potential practitioners.

Among the instruments to promote activism are the Public Participation Awards Gala, the Civic Initiative Fair or the Map of Civic Victories.

Among those offering in-depth resources, information and knowledge are training and workshops, exchange of experience, internship opportunities or written manuals and resources.

a. Promoting participation and activism

Public Participation Awards Gala

Delia Mihalache (citizen, member of the jury): *I support CeRe's Gala because it is the best opportunity to find out about civic initiatives and applaud the courageous and dedicated people that do not give up, that fight every day and bring about the positive change we all want. I support the Gala because it has a snow ball effect for the civic engagement of the regular people. I support the Gala because it makes public participation cool and trendy, something that you really need to try!*

Valentin Simionov (Romanian Harm Reduction Network) *The Award I received was one of the very few confirmations that what I was doing was good. I am not used to receive positive and strong feedback. The lack of reaction from the larger public, from the decision-makers and even from colleagues, can weaken the trust in what you do. CeRe's award came in a very difficult moment for me and gave me back my enthusiasm: I was down and I got up.*

The Public Participation Awards Gala is an event that stirs the enthusiasm around public participation and active citizenship. Each year, CeRe scouts for new initiatives and brings forward, into the public attention, some of the most inspiring stories of citizens and organizations who fought for fairer public decisions. From access to health care services in poor communities to preserving parks in small towns or subsidising public transportation for pupils, each campaign is a motivation in itself for anyone who, at some point, was upset by public decisions affecting them.

The concept of the VII edition of the Gala, held in March 2016 – “Do you want magic? Refuse the impossible!” once again fuelled the idea that without people’s involvement in civic actions there are



no magical results. In the same time, Gala was a reminder that the winning stories should not be seen as exceptions, but as starting points for those who are less trustful in their power, to make a positive change in the community through public participation.

All the 12 winners, citizens and organisations, enchanted the audience with emotional stories about the challenges they confronted along their advocacy campaigns. Once again, the uniqueness of the event came from the successful civic interventions with positive impact in various fields: health system, education, environment, urbanism etc.

Around 300 participants (citizens, NGOs, public officials, business people, media) and 400 on-line viewers applauded the 12 winners of the 2016 Gala. The effect was magnified by media, which was very open to reflect the awarded stories and the event.

A little bit of event’s energy is reflected by these [video](#) and [pictures](#).

The Civic Initiatives Fair

During the fall of 2016, CeRe organized the third edition of the Civic Initiatives Fair. It became one of our annual events organized to celebrate citizens’ power to advocate for their communities. It is a half day event offering citizens groups the opportunity to gather together to know each other and to promote their activities and achievements. It is open to the larger public, on one hand to inspire other people that do not yet have the energy or the courage to act and to match the groups with possible new supporters or members.

18 groups and communities were the main actors at this year edition of the Fair. They are active in different areas, such as stopping illegal buildings, saving green spaces, access to services for the LGBT community, better regulation for the Cyclists Community of Bucharest, infrastructure to the neighbourhoods placed at the outskirts of Bucharest, increasing public participation among youth, social housing, etc. For the first time, the Fair brought together not only groups of citizens gathered around neighbourhood problems, but grass root activists gather around other type of issues.

In 2016, the fair was attended by over 200 people. Some of the participants found initiatives in their own neighborhoods and decided to join them. Also, the Fair was a great opportunity to bring together public institutions and grass-root groups: we had 7 public institutions represented at the fair by 24 representatives (a Mayor and a Minister among them) who engaged in direct conversations with the citizens. During the event not only did the groups and communities had a chance to present



their work to the public, but also they had the opportunity to create relationships with the other participants, and so, to collaborate in the future. The main message was to increase the civic power for advocacy actions targeting the issues of Bucharest, and also to create dialog with the public authorities.

It is also to be said that the Bucharest Civic Network became CeRe's partner in organizing the Citizens' Initiatives Fair. They helped with carrying the message across in their communities - having a total reach for the event of 10 000 people - through their Facebook pages.

A little bit of the energy of the event is depicted by this short [movie](#).

The map of civic victories

[The map](#) of civic victories is an on-line platform showing that regular citizens can make their voices heard by the decision-makers. 41 civic victories of 15 groups of citizens are documented and marked on the map. For each story there is a "data-card" containing information about: initiator, contact data, relevant links, how long it took to win, targeted institutions, pictures etc. Each datacard is tagged so that searches on different items are possible. One can also generate graphs on different tags. Thus, the map can constitute a resource for research and for those interested in public participation.

Through the concrete examples offered, the Map has a strong motivational role, clearly indicating that civic engagement can bring about real changes. It also shows that the actors behind are not superheroes, but citizens as me and you.

The variety of points on the map and their distribution all over Bucharest, show that a critical mass is starting to grow and soon “connecting the dots” will be possible.

b. Offering resources, information and knowledge

As CeRe became well known for its expertise in the area is often requested to facilitate advocacy planning workshops or trainings on topics such as community organizing, advocacy or coalition building. In 2016 organizing such gatherings became both a means to promote these methodologies and an income generating activity. This direction of our strategy is complementary to offering direct assistance to groups and NGOs.

Exchange of experience with Lausanne Municipality (Switzerland)

During 2016, CeRe organized an exchange of experience program for citizens – members of citizens groups and local public administration representatives (elected and appointed) with the Municipality of Lausanne. During three exchange visits (organized in Bucharest and in Lausanne) Romanians met their Swiss counterparts and discussed about good practices such as the neighbourhood contract, the neighbourhood associations or the community center. Many discussions also focused on how Lausanne Municipality consults the citizens during the decision-making process.

Today, we felt defied by Anghel Ilie, the private investor who continue to build the block of flats near the gas station, although his permit is not valid. And the authorities defied us, as they should enforce the law and stop the work. Yet, today we got an unexpected gift: 2 people representing neighborhood associations in Lausanne and a representative of the Municipality of Lausanne, along with our friends from CeRe visited us. What we've learned from them gives us strength to go on until our Mayor understands that they need to listen to and work with the citizens they represent. So we know what we have to do!

Facebook post on Prelungirea Ghencea Initiative Group

The neighbourhood contract, community center and neighbourhood association were the three models that caught the attention of the Romanian Citizens Groups at most. The Swiss experience inspired three of the Romania groups to explore more thoroughly the idea of registering as an Association. One of the Groups (Prelungirea Ghencea) already registered. Community centers is also on the agenda of many groups and Lacul Tei Group already found the resources to open such a center in their neighbourhood.

Beyond knowledge, better attitudes were inspired. Some of the public administration representatives that participated to the exchange are now more supportive of groups and more open

to their initiatives. For example, the Chief Architect of District 2 being very helpful with the formalities related to opening the community center or a former municipal councilor proposing a neighborhood contract.

One of the visits of the Swiss delegation to Romania was organized soon after the local election so that a big number of newly elected participated. Both citizens and newly elected representatives were astonished by the level of transparency and thoroughness of consultations practiced by the municipality of Lausanne. The biggest surprise is that the city of Lausanne has renounced certain town planning projects following strong opposition from the inhabitants.

Some of the citizens are now more assertive in their demands, based on what they've seen and heard. This [facebook post](#) gives an idea about the group's reaction after meeting our Swiss guests. As does [this](#) one.

US community organizing internship program

Within a partnership with Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and Development, CeRe is recruiting and coaching potential community organizers and facilitate six week internship stages to US community based NGOs. US community organizers are also travelling to Romania for short term visits to do trainings and consultancy with local groups, and NGO representatives.

In 2016 CeRe recruited and coached approximately 40 young professionals working in the field of community organizing, advocacy, civic education, citizens participation. 10 of them, took part in a 6 week internship in the United States where they gained knowledge of U.S. practices in citizen participation and advocacy, engaging minorities and marginalized populations in civil society and politics, collaborating with community leaders to inform changes in legislation that make a difference in minority communities (including roma, disabled, homeless, immigrants, LGBT) and build up grassroots democracy.

Their 6 weeks stay in the United States combined trainings, meetings, peer to peer learning, networking and field work, giving them both the theoretical understanding about community organizing and minority communities, but also hands-on experience and the opportunity to participate in direct actions. They have increased their communication and training skills, improved negotiating techniques and critical thinking and overall self confidence in the ability to move forward, to make changes in their communities in small steps and on a long term. They are aware of the importance of building leadership, empower citizens and create networks of support.

This experience gave the fellows the energy to step up and find how they can be part of changing things for the better. The majority of interns came back with courage, enthusiasm and determined to strengthen the civic muscle for a healthy democratic society in Romania.

Besides the 10 fellows that benefited from first -hand experience on community organizing in the US, many others were exposed to the method through the presentations and workshops held by both the American mentors and the alumni of the program.

13 American mentors travelled to Romania in 4 different delegations to mentor and train the alumni

in their field work in the cities they work in, but also to hold workshops and trainings for other people interested – NGO leaders, journalists, youth, community leaders, local councillors and others. Through these activities, we managed to spread the word about the methodology of community organizing, but also to go in depth and offer support to the alumni in the projects already started. Alumni were trained on strategic door knocking, power analysis, coalition building, about strategies and tactics, how the public actions needs to be able to grow the organization, breaking down the problem into issues.

The alumni brought their contribution using community organizing tools in breaking the “culture of silence” of the dispossessed (roma people, lgbtq community, young people, people living in extreme poverty), helped them have stronger voices. They are becoming the model and inspire others to fight for social justice.

While working with the 2016 alumni, the internship program keeps involved the last years' generations of alumni. Many of them developed successful projects such as:

Alumni Mihnea Florea developed a new organization - Mozaiq - fighting for LGBTQ community that applies the principle of community organizing. This year the organization turned 1 year of activity. The organization managed to attract many new members to different formal and informal events. Together with other local organizations, started an advocacy campaign for creating the first LGBT Community Center, co-organized the first LGBT History Month 2016 and also Bucharest Pride 2016. The also lead a diversity march during the electoral campaign. Activating the LGBT community was one of the main principles of MozaiQ and they managed to do this mainly with the help of US mentors Alan Reiff (Queens Pride, New York, SUA), Mo George (Community Voices Heard New York, USA).

Alumni Florin Nasture and Cristina Ionescu did a tremendous work in Roma communities. In Jilava community Florin Nasture along with the Community Action members organized themselves for different Civic Actions such as obtaining birth certificates for children that were not registered. In other community from Liesti, Florin is in the process of mobilizing the community for renovating a building where they want to start of program for combating the illiteracy in the community.

