

Why community development is more necessary than ever before

A strong community development voice at the heart of Europe can make a key input into addressing some of the major and urgent challenges that face the European Union, its Member States and other European countries. If we are to build a more social, a more inclusive and a more sustainable Europe then it is essential that the experience of people working at local level is heard at the policy making level. If Europe is to develop effective policies to tackle the major challenges it faces then the process of developing them must take account of the reality and the experience of people who are affected directly by the issues.

In the next decade there are five key interrelated challenges that Europe must address energetically and about which community development workers have something really important to say. These are:

- ✓ first, the persistence of poverty, social exclusion and growing inequality and the need to build more inclusive societies;
- ✓ second, the migration crisis and the need to ensure effective policies and programmes for integration and empowerment for migrants and refugees;
- ✓ third, the growth of racism and xenophobia and the need to more effectively ensure equality for all people and diverse groups in our societies and to recognise and celebrate difference and diversity;
- ✓ fourth, the democratic deficit at the heart of Europe where by those affected by issues feel they have no say in the policies and programmes that affect them; and
- ✓ fifth, the environmental crisis and the need to connect environmental and social justice in building a sustainable and fair future.

As well as continuing to promote exchange and learning between community development practitioners and ensuring that a community development voice is heard on these key issues, the European Community Development Network can do more. It can play a key role into the future in helping to build a progressive movement for change that is built from the struggles for a better future at local level into national, European and international movements.

**The challenges
we face across Europe**

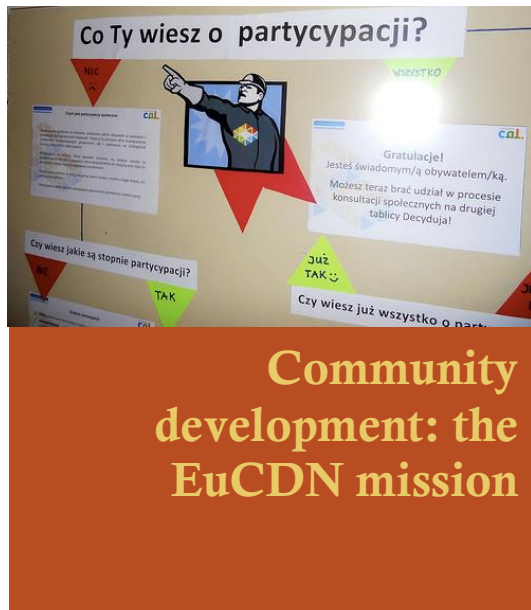
The challenge we face is to build solidarity with all those who are working to create a sustainable, inclusive and peaceful world free from poverty, conflict and inequality. Networks like EuCDN can bring real support and leadership to such efforts. Community development work across the network:

- ✓ provides professional and independent support to groups of people;
- ✓ identifies, together with local people, community problems;
- ✓ increases the empowerment of local people so that they can organise themselves in order to solve problems;
- ✓ turns its attention primarily to people struggling with social deprivation and exclusion;
- ✓ contributes to a sustainable community based on mutual respect and social justice;
- ✓ challenges power structures which hinder people's participation;
- ✓ contributes to the socio-cultural development of the neighbourhood by local people themselves.

Community Development practice develops under different political and cultural contexts, but future progress depends on a combination of factors:

- ✓ the recognition of autonomous Community Development organisations and/or of a separate Community Development discipline;
- ✓ substantial financial support by the government;
- ✓ an openness towards interactive or participative decision-making processes;
- ✓ a greater awareness among policy-makers of the added value of Community Development;
- ✓ a core Community Development curriculum in (non-)university education;
- ✓ a qualitative training and solid research for Community Development practitioners;
- ✓ horizontal learning by bringing groups together;
- ✓ exchanging and disseminating good practice;
- ✓ interregional and international links between Community Development organisations within a European framework.

EuCDN works on this agenda by working to strengthen bonds, exchange learning, widen awareness and influence policy.





Benefits to our members:

- ✓ Opportunity to participate in funded cross-national projects
- ✓ Opportunity to participate and contribute to in all EuCDN events
- ✓ Opportunity to showcase and publicise work and analysis to a wide European audience
- ✓ Opportunity to exert greater influence over policies in favour of community development and its concerns
- ✓ Opportunity to networking and exchange learning with others
- ✓ Opportunity to access potential partners in joint projects
- ✓ Opportunity to organise and/or participate in study tours and study visits
- ✓ Greater solidarity and friendship with others on common issues and concerns
- ✓ Full access to the EuCDN photo library of community development images, and to papers, reports and opher information
- ✓ Access to discussion days, creative conversations, study visits and mini-conferences to develop understanding, practice and theory.



Join our network!

We aim to build a strong, active community development network across Europe. With such a network we will promote best practice, share information and ideas, and continue to advocate community development as the most effective route towards sustainability, social justice and human rights.

Membership is open to community development and other organisations that adopt its values and approaches in their work. Individuals working in the CD field as trainers, consultants, researchers or commentators are also encouraged. All members sign up to the EuCDN Declaration of values and purpose.

We want to encourage an active, supportive and influential network to evolve – this is the best way to keep community development on the policy agenda, to inform and improve practice, and to publicise the advantages. For these reasons we expect each member organisation to play a part, for the benefit of all. It is for these reasons that we ask all members to:

- ✓ Sign up to the EuCDN declaration and to work within the EuCDN framework
- ✓ Profile their membership of EuCDN in websites, social media and other communications
- ✓ Contribute news, insights and ideas to others through EuCDN channels
- ✓ Participate in actions to promote and publicise and advocate community development.



Our members' Declaration

I/we practice, recognize or support community development and/or wish to develop it.

- As such, we work primarily with people and communities that are oppressed, marginalised, excluded or poor.
- Our work is underpinned by our values of participation, empowerment, social justice and equality.
- We work with people and communities to promote learning and understanding, to advance inclusion and involvement of all, to encourage organisation and network building, and to bring about positive and sustainable change in social, economic and democratic circumstances

European Community Development Network

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