

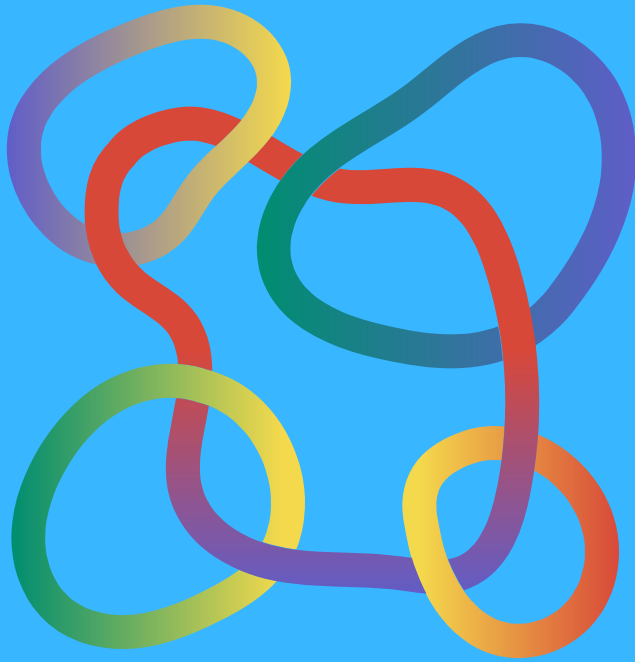
BUILDING STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS



GET INVOLVED

Ultimately, the performance of any city, region, county, union, or federation, boils down to how effective, efficient, innovative, creative, and dynamic its individual members are.

*HUMANITY'S GREATEST
ACHIEVEMENT*



BUILDING STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

This document presents various tools aimed to inspire civic involvement and collaboration among all the local stakeholders at the functional area level, to encourage citizens' engagement and building of healthy, democratic, and sustainable communities. The images in the document were provided by the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition.

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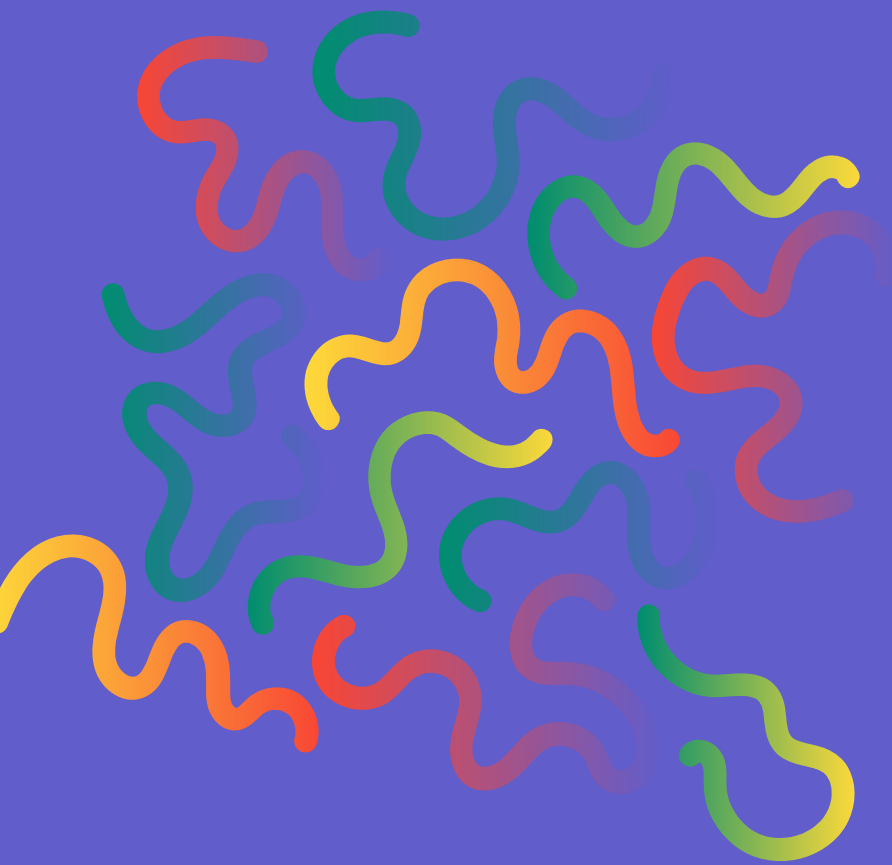
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INTRODUCTION

A healthy society is made up of involved and educated citizens. Sustainable functional areas have in the center their people, which are involved in the development of their communities. Involved citizens transform their areas in functional areas, in collaborative areas that are more attractive for inhabitants, tourists, and investors, contributing in this way to more competitive, developed, and sustainable communities.

The world faces nowadays huge challenges that require everybody's involvement in order to surpass them. The climate change affects all the parts of the Globe, social inequalities continue, wars are still happening, and fake news are widely spread. Addressing these interconnected issues requires unprecedented global cooperation and a commitment to equity and sustainability. And all these can be achieved only through the involvement of the citizens. Because it is all about people.

If people don't act, damaging activities spread easier and quicker. Civic engagement is about the common wellbeing and it must be encouraged so that people realize our common threads and fight together against them and for a more sustainable society. The common wellbeing can only be obtained by joint activities and collaboration among all parts. Local stakeholders in functional areas must collaborate for their community, create coalitions and cooperate with national and international entities in order to reach development and sustainability. Public institutions must always serve the interest of the communities they represent; private sector must develop itself in a green sustainable economic environment; academia and researchers must always thrive to evolve, to innovate and find the best solutions for the humanity; and citizens must always be engaged and signalize any misleading from communities' good.

The development of the humankind was always based on collaboration. Only by collaborating, progress develops and sustainable positive change occurs. To reach an elevated standard of wellbeing for our communities, all the stakeholders in a functional area should put themselves together and collaborate.

Collaboration and civic engagement are crucial so that quality of life improves, and peace and prosperity happen, for a healthy sustainable global community.

Community is much more than belonging to something; it's about doing something together that makes belonging matter.

Brian Solis



BUILDING COMMUNITY

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

A well-developed community thrives on the engagement of its people. The involvement of citizens is crucial for fostering a vibrant community, which is sustainable, innovative, inclusive, with a strong sense of belonging and ownership, and a developed economy rooted in green practices. Citizens' involvement empowers people to build a more responsible community and a society that values sustainability and fights for the collective wellbeing.

Civic involvement refers to the active participation of individuals in the community, being essential for a healthy democracy and the positive development of the society. Through civic involvement, individuals are empowered to influence decision making processes, champion positive transformations, foster social cohesion and promote inclusion. Citizens' involvement builds stronger networks in the community, promotes a positive sense of belonging, and encourages people to work together for more resilient local communities.

Civic involvement also hugely contributes to the economic growth and sustainable development of an area, as it promotes innovation, prosperity, and an improved quality of life for the citizens. These contribute to an increased social capital and a more favorable economic and business climate, stimulating economic activity by attracting investors and encouraging the development of the local private environment. Moreover, civic involvement helps ensuring that the economic development is more inclusive and sustainable, and that it also takes into consideration the grass roots needs. This leads to a more robust economy supported by eco-friendly businesses and healthy practices for people and for the planet.

The development occurs fast due to an increased attention for research and innovation. Researchers and experts are discovering every day immense dangers that could put an end to our humanity, but also innovative solutions to overcome the challenges of the humanity. In order to implement these solutions, everybody must be in the same boat. That is why, researchers, business actors, public sector representatives, nongovernmental activists, and citizens, must closely interact, cooperate, and collaborate.



By actively engaging in the community, individuals play a pivotal role in shaping it and in fostering positive societal progress. This involvement is particularly vital across all sectors to propel prosperity and elevate living standards.

We all are citizens, encompassing a diverse spectrum of roles, among which students, researchers, experts, directors, presidents, sellers, housekeepers, business persons, children. We must adopt an integrated and unified approach, which must be comprehensive and inclusive. All of us, independently of our profession, expertise or experience, should join and contribute to an active civil society for a more developed and more democratic community. We should support the existing civil society organizations that are struggling for community development and should create new ones taking into account our motivations and the field we are more attracting in. By being active in a certain field and creating awareness about it, by attracting more people to support a good initiative, everything we are getting involved in, everything that we are attracting in and active in order to improve it will become more attractive, more developed, with better results for the community.

Citizens act individually, or in civil society organizations, as community groups, nongovernmental organizations, associations, syndicates, labour unions, different advocacy or civic groups. These groups often advocate for policy changes, mobilize public opinion, hold governments and corporations accountable, support social cohesion and sustainable development. In this way, citizens shape their community as they envision it, improving the living standards for all the inhabitants.

We all must thrive for the sustainable development of our communities so that we all have better lives.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

There are multiple ways citizens can engage and actively participate in their communities. Below there are listed several of the most popular forms of civic involvement.



VOTING: One of the most fundamental forms of civic involvement is voting in elections. By casting their votes, citizens have a direct impact on choosing their representatives and shaping public policies.



SUPPORTING Political CAMPAIGNS: Getting involved in political campaigns by volunteering, donating, or supporting candidates is a way to actively participate in the democratic process and help shape the future direction of the government.



VOLUNTEERING: Volunteering in civil society organizations is a valuable form of civic involvement. It allows individuals to invest their time, skills, and resources to address various social issues. Volunteering always comes with lots of benefits as personal and professional development of the individual, and the impact they have in their community. It offers opportunities to collaborate with others, address community needs, and influence decision-making processes.



ADVOCACY: Engaging in advocacy involves speaking out on behalf of a cause, policy, or community concern. This can include writing letters to policymakers, organizing public campaigns, or participating in rallies to promote social change.



COMMUNITY SERVICE: Participating in community service projects, such as cleaning up the gardens in your neighbourhood or the local parks, organizing food drives, fundraising campaigns for a local cause, tutoring students, helping elder neighbours, or taking action for a specific cause, is a hands-on way to make a positive impact on your neighborhood and foster a sense of civic responsibility.



PARTICIPATION in Public Meetings: Attending town hall meetings, city council sessions, or public forums allows individuals to stay informed about local issues, express their opinions, and hold elected officials accountable.



ENGAGING IN CIVIL DISCOURSE: Engaging in respectful dialogue, debates, and discussions on social, political, or cultural issues is a form of civic involvement that promotes understanding, tolerance, and informed decision-making.

*Coming together is a beginning;
keeping together is progress;
working together is success.*

Henry Ford



COLLABORATION

COLLABORATION

Throughout history, the development of the humanity has always been based on collaboration. Collaboration is what puts people together and ensures the progress of the society, being vital for the sustainable development of humankind.

Humanity today grapples with a multitude of significant challenges that span environmental, social, and technological fields. Climate change poses an existential threat, manifesting in extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and biodiversity loss, while the rapid depletion of natural resources underscores the need for sustainable practices. Social inequalities, including economic disparity, racial injustice, and gender inequality, continue to hinder global progress and social cohesion. Technological advancements, while offering tremendous benefits, also bring challenges such as data privacy concerns, cybersecurity threats, and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence. Additionally, geopolitical tensions and the threat of global pandemics further complicate efforts to foster a peaceful and healthy global community. Overcoming these hugely interconnected challenges requires unprecedented global cooperation. Only a multifaceted collaborative approach could overpass them and ensure dignity, peace and prosperity. International agreements could address these challenges by enforcing stringent environmental regulation and fostering sustainable practices, by policies that ensure equal access for everybody and protect human rights and social justice, by ethical guidelines for artificial intelligence and by enhancing cyber security measures. A global commitment to cooperation, innovation, and sustainable development, respecting the principles of justice and equity, is essential to succeed. For that, all the entities, and the citizens, must collaborate.

Collaboration fosters a sense of unity, mutual understanding, and shared responsibility, promoting social cohesion and harmony within communities. Collaboration allows individuals with diverse skills, knowledge, and perspectives to combine their strengths towards a common goal, leading to innovative solutions and progress that would be unattainable through individual efforts. By working together, people can address complex challenges more effectively, share resources efficiently, and create a ripple effect of positive change for the society as a whole.

Collaboration among all stakeholders is essential for the development of a region because it brings together diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources to address complex challenges and capitalize on opportunities. When government agencies, businesses, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and citizens work together towards common goals, they can leverage their respective strengths and experiences to develop comprehensive solutions that benefit everyone involved. Collaboration fosters innovation, promotes efficiency, and reduces duplication of efforts, leading to more effective and sustainable development outcomes. Additionally, by involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process, collaboration ensures that development initiatives are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the community, ultimately fostering greater buy-in and support for long-term growth and prosperity.

Collaboration builds a more interconnected, inclusive, and sustainable world for current and future generations.



BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration refers to the process of two or more people, groups, or organizations working together to achieve a common goal. It involves sharing knowledge, resources, and skills to address challenges and create opportunities. Effective collaboration relies on communication, mutual respect, trust, and a shared vision.

Here are several reasons why we should encourage collaboration at all levels.

Optimization of resources: Collaborative efforts allow communities to pool financial, human, and material resources, ensuring that they are used more efficiently and effectively. It also reduces redundancy as by working together, organizations can avoid duplicating efforts and instead focus on complementary activities, thus maximizing impact.

Enhanced Problem-Solving: Collaboration brings together diverse perspectives and expertise, which can lead to more innovative solutions to complex problems. Moreover, the combined knowledge and experience of a collaborative group can lead to better decision-making and more sustainable solutions.

Building Social Capital: Collaboration fosters relationships and networks within the community, enhancing social cohesion and resilience. Working together on shared goals builds trust among community members and organizations, which is essential for long-term cooperation and stability.

Improving Effectiveness and Efficiency: Collaborative efforts can create synergies where the collective outcome is greater than the sum of individual efforts. With collaboration, accountability is shared, which can improve commitment and the likelihood of achieving sustainable outcomes.

Capacity Building: Through collaboration, community members and organizations can share skills and knowledge, building local capacity and expertise. Collaborative projects often involve community participation, empowering individuals and groups by giving them a voice and a role in the development processes.

Enhanced Advocacy: Collaborative efforts amplify the community's voice when advocating for policy changes or resources, making it more likely to achieve desired outcomes. Working together can provide greater leverage in negotiations with external stakeholders, such as governments or donors.

Sustainable Impact: Collaboration encourages a long-term perspective on development, focusing on sustainability rather than short-term gains. Collaborative efforts tend to address issues in a holistic manner, considering economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability.



WAYS TO COLLABORATE

Overcoming the challenges humanity faces today requires a multifaceted and collaborative approach. Governments, businesses, and civil society must work together to create a regulatory environment that balances innovation with protection. Public authorities should create a positive environment for this thing to happen. Productive interactions among all the stakeholders produce positive change in people behaviour, and societal impact.

Below are several ways collaboration may happen.

ONLINE ways to collaborate

Co-creation of online platforms: Public authorities create online platforms where citizens and civil society organizations can collaborate on decision-making processes, policy development, and community projects. Through these platforms, citizens and the civil society can access information, participate in surveys, submit feedback, signalize issues, propose projects for the community, and engage in discussions on various issues.

Creation of dedicated mobile applications: Public authorities developed mobile apps that allow citizens to report issues, receive updates, access services, and provide feedback conveniently from their smartphones.

Social media platforms: Public authorities utilize social media platforms to share information, gather input from citizens, and engage with the public on a wide range of topics.

Open data: Public authorities make data openly accessible to the public, encouraging transparency, data-driven decision-making, and fostering collaborations between the public administration, citizens, and civil society.

Online opinion polls: Public authorities create opinion polls that enable participatory planning, providing valuable insights into community views on different aspects of the area. They identify strengths, areas for improvement, urgent issues, and the overall impact of projects and plans. This continuous feedback loop ensures alignment with community needs.

OFFLINE ways to collaborate

Community Meetings: Public authorities host town hall meetings, public forums, and community events that enable public officials to interact directly with citizens, listen to their concerns, and gather feedback.

Citizens assemblies: Public authorities host regular citizen assemblies where randomly selected individuals come together to deliberate on important issues, provide feedback, and co-create solutions with government officials.

Citizens Advisory Panels: Selecting citizens to serve on advisory panels or committees provides a structured way for the public to contribute with expertise and insights to government decision-making processes.

Citizens public cafes: Public authorities organize periodic informal meetings to talk with citizens about communities challenges, new proposals for improvement, brainstorming processes on specific aspects that can bring grassroots issues and ideas closer to decision-makers.

Partnership programs: Public authorities can establish partnership programs with civil society organizations to co-design and co-implement community projects. By working together, they can leverage each other's strengths, resources, and expertise to address local challenges effectively.

Participatory budgeting: Public authorities engage citizens in the budget allocation process, allowing them to decide how a portion of public funds is spent in their community.

Capacity building workshops: Public authorities organize capacity building workshops and training sessions for civil society organizations to enhance their skills in areas such as project management, fundraising, advocacy, and community engagement. This collaboration can help NGOs become more effective in their initiatives.



OFFLINE ways to collaborate

Policy dialogues: Public authorities facilitate regular policy dialogues with civil society organizations and citizens to discuss key issues, share insights, and co-create policies that reflect the needs and priorities of the community. This collaborative approach ensures that policies are more inclusive and responsive to local realities.

Joint advocacy campaigns: Public authorities and civil society organizations collaborate on advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about important social issues, mobilize community support, and influence policy decisions. Public authorities and civil society organizations can amplify their impact by working together to advocate for positive change.

Joint applications for funding: Public authorities collaboratively prepare applications for funding with civil society organizations. This is an effective method to properly respond to community needs and priorities, while working together to implement change. Multiple European funding programmes support projects developed through collaborative partnerships among several stakeholders, showing dedication to addressing complex challenges through systemic change. Recently, European funding programmes have been increasingly proactive in supporting the participation of functional areas in calls for funding.

Research partnerships: Public authorities engage civil society organizations and citizens in research partnerships to gather data, conduct studies, and assess the impact of community initiatives. By partnering on such research projects, they can develop evidence-based solutions and measure the effectiveness of their collaborative efforts.

Regular communication channels: Public authorities maintain open and transparent communication channels with the civil society organizations and citizens, ensuring that information flows freely, feedback is welcomed, and collaboration opportunities are easily identified. This ongoing dialogue fosters trust, cooperation, and mutual understanding.

Community-based monitoring: Public authorities empower communities to oversee urban management and outcomes through citizen-led initiatives. This includes training community members to monitor issues such as waste management, sanitation, and public services. The collected data can hold local authorities accountable and stimulate urban management improvements.





*Individually, we are one drop.
Together, we are an ocean.*

Ryunosuke Satoro

TYPES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) are non-profit entities that operate independently from the government and the business sectors. The civil society organizations encompass a broad range of organizations and groups that operate within civil society and are formed by individuals to advance shared interests, values, or goals, usually focusing on social, cultural, environmental, political, or economic issues. CSOs play a crucial role in fostering civic engagement, promoting democracy and human rights, providing services, and addressing various societal needs and challenges. They often advocate for policy changes, mobilize public opinion, and hold governments and corporations accountable.

The civil society organizations represent the entire spectrum of organized civil society, both formally or informally, beyond government and business. Examples of CSOs include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, advocacy groups, professional associations, labor unions, charitable organizations, etc.



some of the most popular civil society organizations

CIVIC GROUPS

Civic groups are non-profit, voluntary groups that are formed by citizens to address and advocate for community interests and public affairs. These groups are essential components of civil society and play a significant role in promoting democratic engagement, social cohesion, and community development. Civic groups are fundamental to a healthy and functioning democracy. They empower citizens to take collective action, address community needs, and contribute to societal progress. By fostering civic engagement, these groups play a crucial role in building strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

Nongovernmental organizations are independent, voluntary groups, non-profit and not part of a government, that operate on a local, national, regional, or international level to address various social, environmental, cultural, and humanitarian issues. NGOs play a vital role in society by addressing gaps left by governments and the private sector, advocating for the marginalized, providing essential services, and promoting sustainable development. Their contributions are crucial for fostering social justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights worldwide.

FOUNDATIONS

Foundations are a type of nonprofit organizations established to support charitable, educational, religious, or other philanthropic purposes. The mission of a foundation is the core purpose or goal for which it was established. This mission statement defines the foundation's focus areas, target beneficiaries, and intended impact on society. Foundations can have a wide range of missions, such as promoting education, supporting healthcare initiatives, or advancing environmental conservation efforts.

LABOUR UNIONS

Labor unions are organizations that represent and advocate for the rights and interests of workers in specific industries. They negotiate with employers on behalf of workers to secure better wages, working conditions, and benefits.



some of the most popular civil society organizations

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

Community Development Corporations are nonprofit organizations that focus on improving and developing specific communities or neighborhoods. They engage in activities such as affordable housing development, economic development, and community revitalization initiatives.

THINK TANKS

Think tanks are research organizations that conduct studies, provide analysis, and make policy recommendations on various social, economic, and political issues.

ASSOCIATIONS

An association is a group of people who come together for a common purpose or to pursue a shared interest. These can be professional, social, cultural, educational, charitable, or any other type of non-profit organization. Associations operate on a non-profit basis, meaning any profits generated are reinvested into the organization to support its objectives rather than distributed to members.

The process of forming of all these civil society organizations differ depending on their specificities. Some of them are informally formed and rely on the level of engagement of their volunteer members. Others respect more complex procedures of legal registration and reporting, having a minimum number of founding members and a minimum required initial budget.

Steps in founding an association and recommendations for its proper functioning are presented next.



STEPS IN FOUNDING AN ASSOCIATION

Define the purpose: the mission, the vision, the scope, and the goals

Gather the founding members

A minimum number of founding members is required (3 or more); the founding members establish the association and form the initial leadership

Develop the governing documents: structure, rules, procedures

Select the board members

Register the association

Choose the name: select a unique and appropriate name that complies with the local regulations and is not already used

File legal documents: details as the association's name, the purpose, the registered address, and the names of founding members.

Obtain a fiscal identification number for tax purposes and for opening a bank account

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PROPER FUNCTIONING

Membership management

Define membership criteria, rights, obligations, and regulations

Develop a system for recruiting, engaging, maintaining, and motivating members

Governance

Hold regular meetings to discuss the activities and make decisions

Create an operating regulation document and respect it

Financial management

Maintain accurate financial records (income, expenses, and assets)

Develop a budget and manage funds responsibly

Ensure compliance with financial reporting requirements

Activities and projects

Plan and implement projects, events, and initiatives that align with the association's objectives.

Engage members and the community in these activities

Fundraising

Develop strategies for raising funds, such as donations, grants, fundraising events

Ensure that fundraising activities are ethical and comply with legal requirements.

Reporting and Compliance

Submit annual reports and financial statements

Adhere to regulations regarding transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct.



*If you want to go fast, go alone. If
you want to go far, go together.*

African Proverb



CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

Citizens act individually, or they put themselves together in civic groups or organizations. These civil society organizations become stronger, when they collaborate, cooperate, and put themselves together into civil society coalitions.

A civil society coalition is a collaborative effort among various organizations, groups, or individuals from civil society who come together around a common cause or goal.

OBJECTIVES

Advocacy: Civil society coalitions engage in advocacy efforts to influence policy decisions, raise awareness, and promote their cause. They develop strategies for collective advocacy and action, such as campaigns, lobbying efforts, or public awareness initiatives.

Networking: Civil society coalitions provide a platform for members to network, collaborate, and share best practices.

Capacity Building: Civil society coalitions provide resources, training, and support to strengthen the capacity of their member organizations.

Public Engagement: Civil society coalitions mobilize public support, organize events, and campaigns to engage the broader community in their cause.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Civil society coalitions monitor progress towards their goals, evaluate the impact of their activities, and adapt strategies as needed.

CHARACTERISTICS

Diverse Membership: Civil society coalitions usually consist of a diverse range of members, including civil society organizations, community, activists, experts, and involved citizens.

Common Goal: Members share a common goal or purpose, such as advocating for a specific policy change, addressing a social issue, or promoting a particular cause.

Democratic Decision-Making: Decisions are typically made through a democratic process that involves input from all the members.

Resource-Sharing: Members pool their resources, expertise, and networks to achieve their shared objectives.

Non-Hierarchical Structure: Civil society coalitions often have a flat or decentralized structure, allowing for equal participation and representation.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Civil society coalitions are often flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances, priorities, and challenges, while maintaining focus on their long-term objectives.



STEPS IN BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY COALITIONS

Civil society coalitions play a crucial role in amplifying voices, mobilizing resources, and fostering collective action to address complex social issues and advocate for positive change.

IDENTIFY COMMON GOALS AND SHARED VALUES

Find common ground among stakeholders by identifying shared values, objectives, concerns, or priorities. This could involve conducting stakeholders analyses, reviewing existing campaigns or initiatives, and discussing on potential areas of collaboration.

BUILD THE NETWORK

Map the relevant stakeholders who could contribute to or benefit from the coalition by reaching out to a wide range of organizations, civic groups, grassroots initiatives, involved citizens.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Establish strong relationships and build trust among potential coalition members. This involves reaching out, networking, and engaging in dialogue to understand each other's perspectives, capacities, and areas of expertise.

ESTABLISH THE STRUCTURE AND THE GOVERNANCE

Determine the structure and governance of the coalition, including decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities, communication channels, and any necessary legal agreements or memoranda of understanding.

DEVELOP THE ACTION PLAN

Collaboratively develop a strategic plan that outlines the coalition's mission, objectives, activities, and desired outcomes. This plan should also identify key stakeholders, resources needed, timelines, and indicators for measuring progress.



ESTABLISH CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Create effective communication channels to ensure regular and transparent information-sharing among coalition members. This could include regular meetings, email updates, shared online platforms, or social media channels. Establish transparent communication channels to facilitate collaboration and decision-making among coalition members.

MOBILIZE RESOURCES

Identify and mobilize resources, including financial support, in-kind contributions, expertise, and networks that can support the coalition's activities. This could involve fundraising, grant applications, or partnerships with donors.

LAUNCH JOINT ACTIVITIES

Begin implementing joint activities, campaigns, projects, or advocacy initiatives that align with the coalition's goals. These activities can help demonstrate the coalition's impact, build momentum, and attract more support.

MONITOR AND EVALUATE

Establish mechanisms for monitoring progress, evaluating the impact of activities, and reflecting on lessons learned. Regularly assess the coalition's effectiveness, reflect on lessons learned to improve future efforts, adapt strategies as needed, and celebrate achievements.



*Unity is strength... when there is
teamwork and collaboration,
wonderful things can be achieved.*

Mattie Stepanek



THE ENGAGED JIU VALLEY

THE ENGAGED JIU VALLEY NGO COALITION

The Engaged Jiu Valley is a civil society coalition formed by 28 local NGOs active in the former coal mining area of the Jiu Valley, in Romania. The region began the transition from the hard coal mining activity in the 1990s, a painful transition that concluded in huge demographic and economic decline and huge levels of pessimism among the citizens. The few NGOs active in the area used to be mainly international NGOs working on social issues, and NGOs founded by the mountains' lovers.

Since 2016, the civil society in the Jiu Valley started to get more involved in the community's development, and in 2019, 4 local NGOs started the work to a local NGOs' coalition in the region. The coalition developed itself from 10 NGOs at the end of 2019, to 19 NGOs during the pandemic time, and 28 NGOs at the end of 2023. Moreover, part of the NGOs members are the cofounders of the Association of Integrated Territorial Development Jiu Valley (the entity responsible with the implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investments in the Jiu Valley), together with the 6 town halls in the Jiu Valley, the Hunedoara County Council, and the University of Petrosani.

The scope of the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition is to offer a framework of collaboration for the social, economic, and cultural development of the Jiu Valley, and for contributing to the just transition to climate neutrality of the region.

The collaboration at the civil society level increased the community building in the Jiu Valley, brought enthusiasm and optimism among the citizens, and implemented several impactful projects for the region. The activities implemented by the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition brought the Transformative Action Award 2022 in the Jiu Valley, prize obtained for the impactful transformative actions undertaken in the region.

The Engaged Jiu Valley coalition develops itself, establishes new partnerships in the region and beyond, and continues to support the local community in its transition from the polluted industry.





HOW THE ENGAGED JIU VALLEY NGO COALITION GOT FORMED

Several young people that left the region for studying or working in the largest cities in Romania or abroad started to get involved in the development of the Jiu Valley, supporting the young initiatives aimed to preserve the cultural industrial heritage, protect the nature and the environment, strengthen the positive sense of belonging, and promote the development of the area.

The collaborative initiative started informally and the following steps were followed in the process.

IDENTIFYING COMMON GOALS AND SHARED VALUES

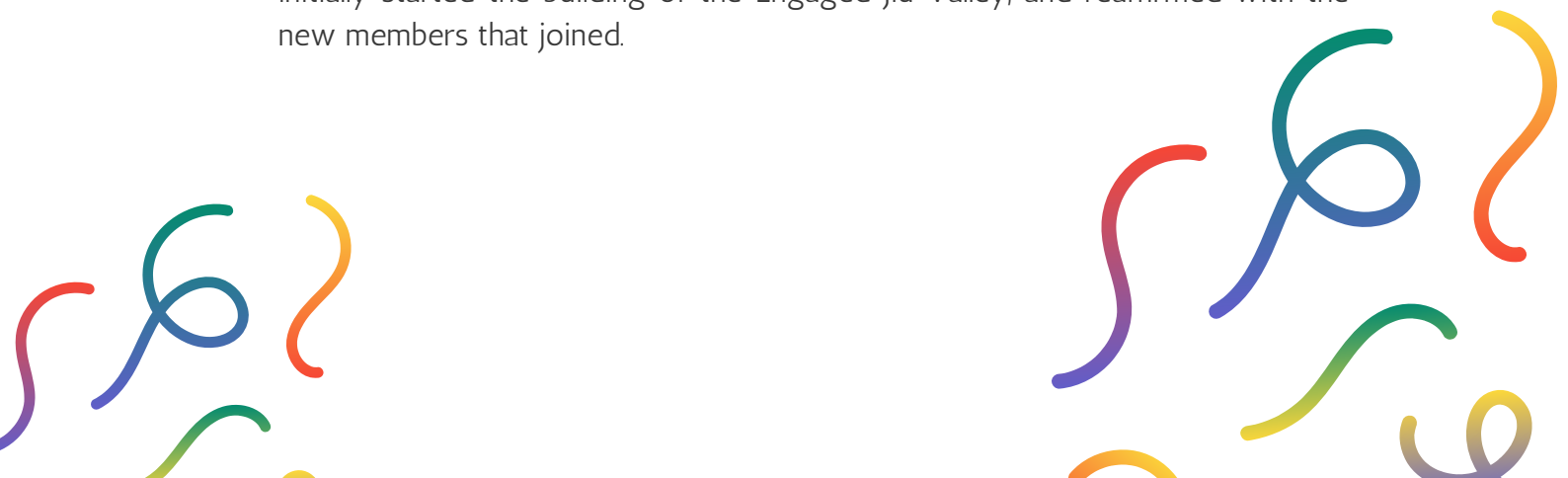
The scope of the volunteers that founded the Engaged Jiu Valley was always the improvement of the quality of life for the inhabitants, together with the social, economic, and cultural development of the region.

The strategic goals of the Engaged Jiu Valley are:

- Strengthening the civil society in the Jiu Valley, by encouraging civic engagement, best practices exchanges, and better collaboration among its members.
- Promoting the principle of good practice in the sustainable development of the Jiu Valley, strengthening the crucial role of the civil society in the process of developing the strategic documents for the region.
- Promoting the collaboration between the Jiu Valley civil society and the public authorities at local, county, regional, national, European, and international level, as well as the private and academic environment.

The shared values of the founding members are altruism, inclusivity, dignity, integrity, and professionalism.

The common goals and shared values were identified by the 4 NGOs that initially started the building of the Engaged Jiu Valley, and reaffirmed with the new members that joined.



BUILDING THE NETWORK

The members that initiated the creation of the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition started to reach out to other civil society organizations they heard about, and also to citizens eager to get involved in the development of their community. This was done either in person, at different events, gatherings, or by talking with friends and colleagues, but also online, through emails and social media platforms.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The Engaged Jiu Valley coalition quickly reached 10 members at the end of 2019, when they also organized their first networking event. This event presented the scope and objectives of the coalition, and it also promoted more the civil society organizations in the region. Each of the 10 NGOs briefly presented themselves and their activities in front of their colleagues, but also to the representatives of the public authorities, private sector and academia, that were invited to the event. Moreover, the local media also participated in this first event and the coalition had a beautiful public start.

ESTABLISHING THE STRUCTURE AND THE GOVERNANCE

Shortly after the first public event, the coalition's members gathered to establish the structure and the governance of the newly formed coalition. They talked about the decision-making processes, they established departments for every major field, and they talked about the communication channels. Immediately after their organizational meeting in January 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic period began, and the coalition's members started to get involved and to collaborate from home. Taking into account the challenges during the pandemic period, the planned structure didn't function, but the volunteers got involved even with no structure, respecting, in any case, the established procedures and regulations. The first impactful joint projects were implemented during the painful pandemic period.

DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN

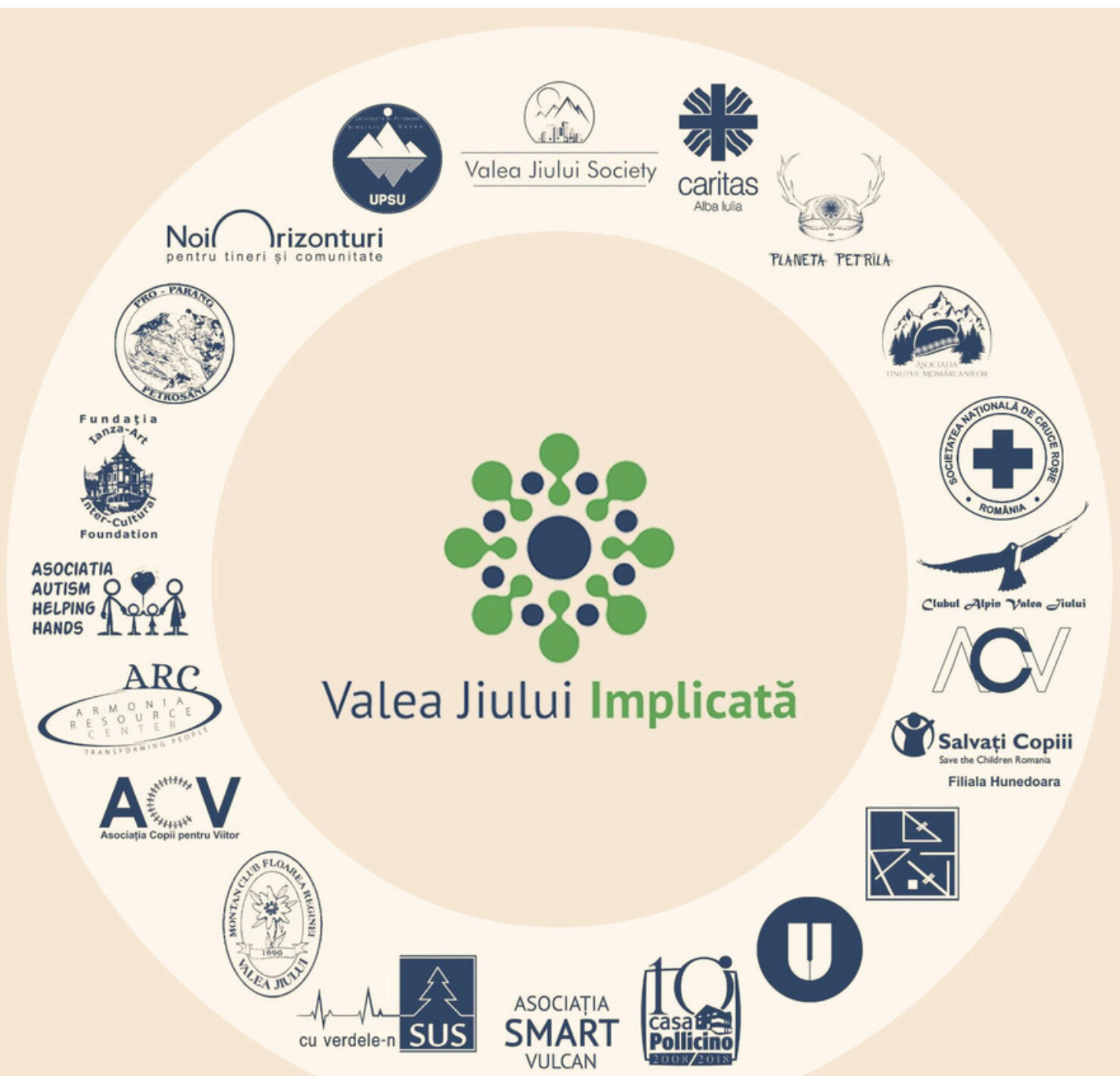
A brief plan was developed soon after the coalition was formed. Its implementation was done step by step. The coalition got an online platform (www.valeajiuuiimplicata.org) to promote the joint activities, but also each of the coalition's NGOs members. The social media account for the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition was created. Several trainings to increase the capacity of the NGOs members were also organized. Starting the joint projects just before the Covid-19 pandemic period, most of the activities were prepared from home. Most of the activities implemented came as proposals from the volunteers and were led by the ones that proposed them.



ESTABLISHING CLEAR COMMUNICATION

The most efficient communication channel among the coalition's members is provided through a WhatsApp group where everybody is included. Initially, the communication was done by email. This way of communicating is also used.

In terms of communicating outside the coalition, there is a dedicated website where each NGO member has a dedicated space and where the joint projects are promoted. Also, the website includes an events section where the events of all the members are posted, and also a blog section where articles from all the members and volunteers are promoted. Moreover, the public communication is done on the joint social media accounts, where representatives from each organization are invited to promote their initiatives and projects.





THE ENGAGED JIU VALLEY PROJECTS

After the launching of the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition in December 2019, several joint activities were organized, mostly for planning, meetings, and training sessions for the coalition's members. In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic period started, and the coalition's members were active from home, getting involved in initiatives related to the pandemic, as organizing awareness campaigns about the threads and ways to get protected, helping the persons in need, and providing support for the medical staff in the Jiu Valley. Moreover, they were very engaged in the development of the strategic documents for the region as the Jiu Valley strategy for the transition from coal, or the Hunedoara County Just Transition Plan, as well as other specific strategic documents. The Engaged Jiu Valley was also the initiator of the Protocol of Collaboration for the Jiu Valley which was signed by all the local actors involved in the development of Jiu Valley: public authorities, the University, research institutes, private sector, syndicates, and civil society.

The first most popular joint project of the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition was the collaborative creation of the first mural picture in the city center of Petrosani, the largest town in the Jiu Valley. This project brought a most wanted short term visible result, after a long waiting period, and built community by the various public consultation methods and the collaboration with all involved citizens in the creation of the painting. The mural picture painted by IRLO expresses the story of the Jiu Valley imagined and told by the community.

Following this first collaborative mural picture, the Engaged Jiu Valley created the Vibrant Jiu Valley, a project aiming to revitalize the public spaces left behind through art and culture and lots of activities for people of all ages. The collaboration among the NGOs members of the Engaged Jiu Valley also made possible the implementation of the project Vibrant Communities in the Jiu Valley, aimed to revitalize both public spaces and marginalized communities situated nearby the former largest underground coal mines in the region.

Lots of beautiful projects and activities followed, and the volunteers of the Engaged Jiu Valley also started to represent the region to different events at regional, national, European, and international level, making the Jiu Valley more visible and improving the public image of this region among its inhabitants, but also at national level and abroad.







THE IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

The Engaged Jiu Valley stands out as an active and cohesive coalition of the local civil society organizations in the Jiu Valley. The Engaged Jiu Valley also closely collaborates with the local public authorities, the academic environment, and the local private sector, trying to coagulate all the local stakeholders involved in the development of the region and the improvement of the quality of life for the inhabitants. Moreover, the Engaged Jiu Valley established strong partnerships with other regions in the process of transition to climate neutrality in Europe and beyond, and it is also involved in the European Union initiatives, as well as of other international entities. This collaborative effort is unique at the functional area level, fostering a culture of partnership among diverse stakeholders and bringing impactful results for the region and the local community.

Coordinated efforts to improve the local economy. The collaboration between the local authorities and the NGOs within the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition led to the establishment of the Invest in Jiu Valley initiative (www.investinjiuvalley.com) aimed to promote the region as an investments destination and to attract investors to the Jiu Valley. Moreover, a series of initiatives to support the local private sector in applying for European funds were organized by the NGOs members, as well as financial education and entrepreneurial workshops for the community's members.

Multi-level governance to support the region's transition towards an inclusive and sustainable economy. Four local NGOs, selected through a transparent process coordinated by the Engaged Jiu Valley, are among the founding members of the Association of Integrated Territorial Development Jiu Valley, along with the local authorities, representatives of the private sector and the local academic institution. This association coordinates the implementation of the Jiu Valley Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) tool, with the scope of implementing the region's development strategy.



THE IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

Collaborative and participatory process in developing the region's strategy.

Addressing historical economic challenges, brain-drain phenomena, and untapped potential, the Engaged Jiu Valley coalition has emerged as a proactive advocate for the region's interests, leading to an engagement throughout the process of developing its strategy. The Engaged Jiu Valley also conducted public consultations and encouraged citizens engagement and a participatory process in developing the strategic documents.

Improved collaborations at regional, national, European, and international level to foster innovation and knowledge exchange.

The Engaged Jiu Valley coalition has extended the area's reach through collaborations at regional, national, European, and international level, fostering partnerships with international NGOs, participation in EU initiatives (e.g., Just Transition Platform Working Groups), and beyond (initiatives in Western Balkans and former coal regions around the World), making the region and its potential more visible in the World, but also among its citizens.

Increased cultural vitality, enhanced urban regeneration, and innovation.

Civil society initiatives have revitalised former mining sites through cultural events and street art interventions, such as the Planeta Petritola cultural project, the Vibrant Jiu Valley, and the Robotics Valley Festival, contributing to the region's rebranding efforts.









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