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Community Foundations vs Coronavirus



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Background

In the current situation of an ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which is an extraordinary test for all of humanity, community foundations have a huge role to play. As they are close to people on a local level, they can serve as both a source of information and a refuge of peace in these difficult days for us all.

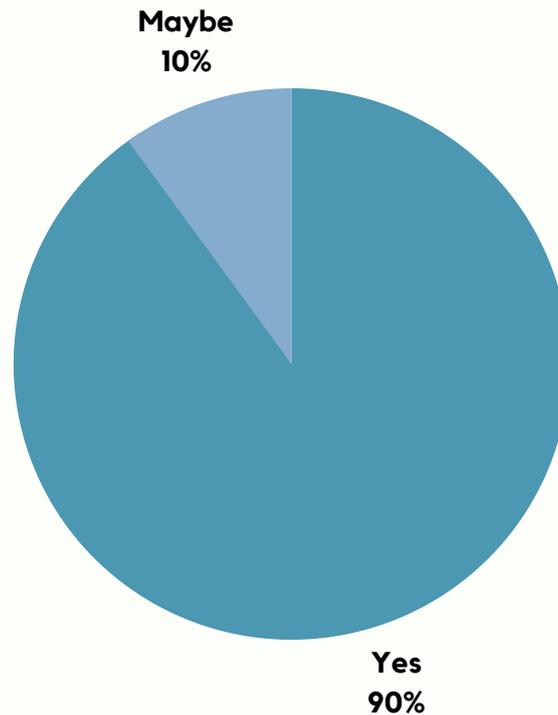
This ongoing pandemic is a model example of a global challenge to which we should try to find local answers.

About the research

The Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland decided to take this opportunity to find out how the organizations across Europe are coping with all the obstacles in this difficult time.

We prepared a questionnaire asking several questions regarding the organizations' functioning which was then sent out to the CFs, you will find their answers on the following pages.

Do you talk locally about the pandemic?



We have started our survey with the basic question regarding the relevance of this issue to the CFs in their local communities. We observe that a huge majority of respondents indeed talk about the coronavirus pandemics locally, therefore they sense the influence of this global issue on their everyday life and work. No matter the location, many CFs initiated new activities in response to the urgent needs of the most vulnerable groups, some organisations had to face the need of substantial changes in their mode of functioning. All things considered, there is an urgency to continue this conversation and to further address the issue of CFs' role in their local communities during the pandemic.

How do your communities approach it? What do they feel?

A clear majority of respondents claim that people in their community feel anxious, uncertain about the ongoing situation and the future. They can sense the general alert feeling. Many companies suspended their activity and people are working remotely, which is a new situation for them. CFs observe that some of the community members ignore the gravity of the situation.

One of the respondents says that the local government established several committees to handle and manage the crisis, however failing to include civil society and to establish meaningful and transparent communication channels with the community.

Furthermore, people feel fearful of having to give back the funding that they have been awarded to deliver particular programs, which now may not be able to happen.

But there are also some positive responses:

1

"Community members follow information, orders and measures that come from national authorities. People follow instructions to reduce staff, stay at home, keep personal hygiene high and organize with on-line communication possibilities."

2

CFs observe "good neighbour schemes, looking after the elderly and the vulnerable, tackling social isolation and mental health issues coming from self-isolating."

3

They "follow Public Health Advice, look after neighbours, support each other."

4

"You can see the local collaboration, especially in helping the elderly."

Do you carry out activities aimed at making the local community aware of the current situation - webinars, skype meetings etc.?

The situation is very dynamic as it drastically changes everyday. Therefore, some of the organizations, which have not yet been affected by this situation, do not carry out any particular activities in response.

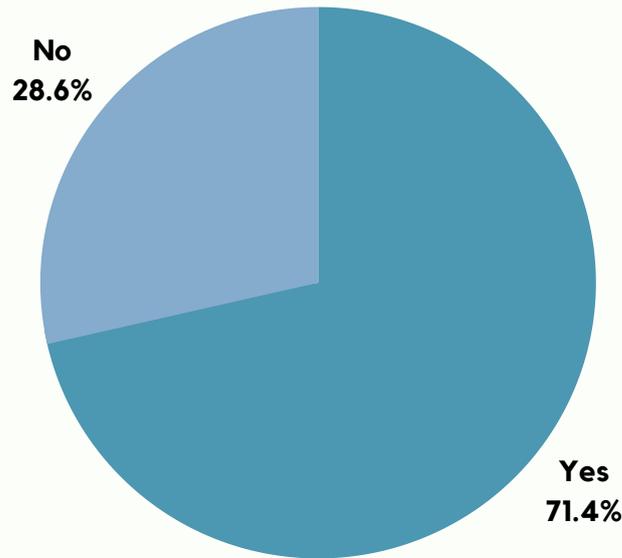
Some of the CFs go on with initiatives such as webinars or Skype calls with the community:

- "We plan to launch a series of webcasts involving people of different professional backgrounds from the community to talk about the situation, seeking to respond to citizens' questions made through Facebook comments."
- "We have launched an online fund to support vulnerable people most affected by social isolation."
- "First of all we are daily in contact with our partners to listen to their needs, then to manage our emergency plan of intervention, starting from Milano and Lombardia and extending to other Italian region. We are implementing three pillars of projects: 1. Strengthening of the IT equipment for operators and families of study aid centers, 2. Listening and psychological support for children and families, 3. Starting an education digital platform to help teachers, parents and operators to spend these days at home with their children."

Some Cfs believe that carrying out the activities related to information campaign is the role of the authorities, and they perform it very well:

- "(...) there is lots of information. The Irish Government is doing a good job of communicating",
- "People receive the necessary information from state authorities via TV, radio, internet..."

Do they seek your support, and if so, what kind of support?

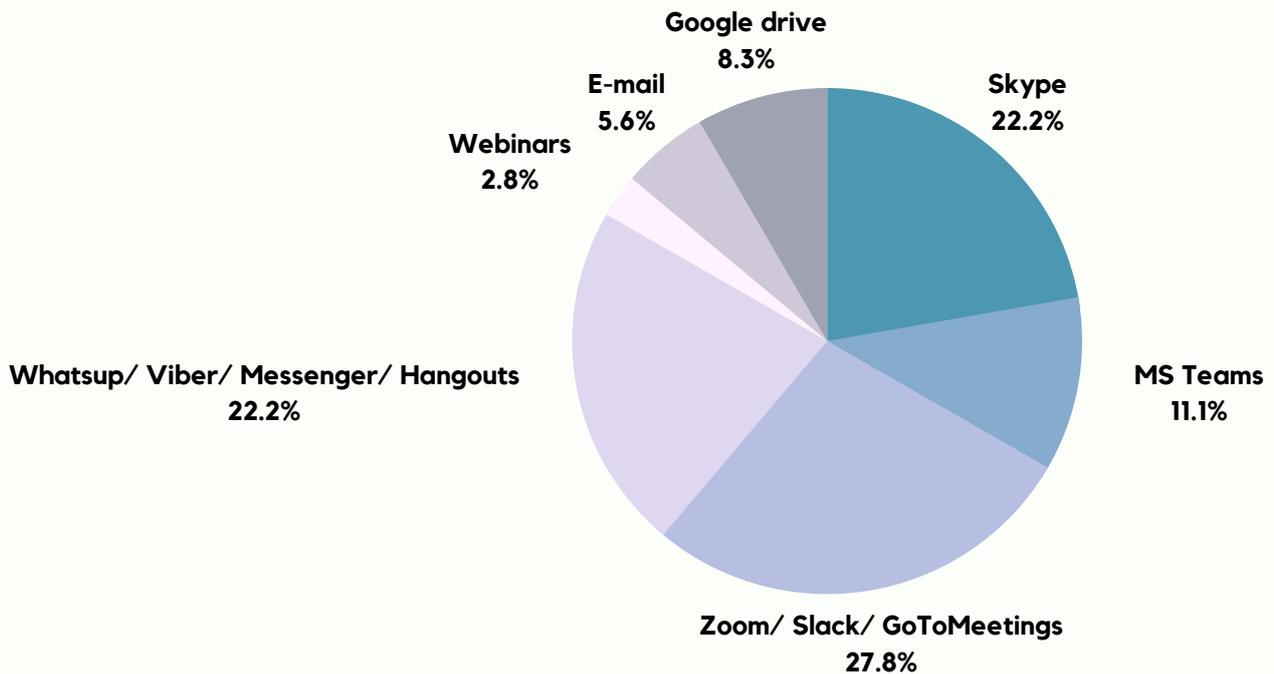


Community foundations, among other activities, build local trust which is quite essential during these tough times. In effect, local communities know that they can rely on them and ask for help, both in financial way as well as in relation to their activities. There are also those individuals who simply want to share and talk about their concerns.

Examples:

- elderly need support with making shopping
- local hospital seeks support in finding equipment to deal with the upcoming crisis
- community groups are approaching the CF for additional help, also in order to be able to make changes in spending plans of the grants that they received
- small voluntary groups are looking for support in order to help the most vulnerable individuals survive financially
- asking for technology and training volunteers on working remotely
- asking for examples of local cooperation

Do you use any technology to work remotely? If yes, tell us which one(s).

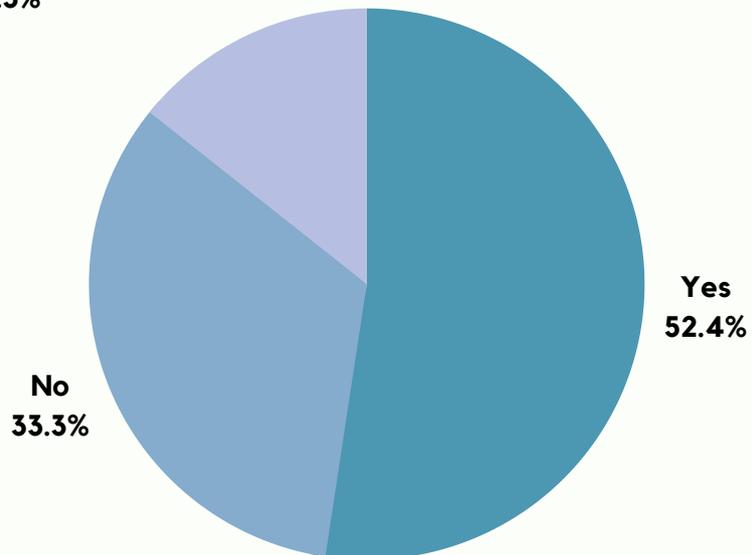


A great majority of CFs use primarily the online meeting and video conferencing softwares, as visible in the chart above. The answers given by CFs point to the fact that, in this type of work, direct meetings and the possibility to interact with others are essential in carrying out their activities.

Do you have to change your activity profile in order to adapt to the current community needs?

E.g. sewing masks, support for older people who had to stay at home, etc.?

Not yet, but we are planning to
14.3%



Examples:

- purchasing medical tools and equipment for the NGO workers
- creating fast response grant programs
- special financial support for older members of the community
- extension of the projects' implementation phase, adapting activities, flexible spending policy of grants awarded



We would like to **thank** all the **community foundations** which took part in our survey and shared their experience in this extremely difficult time for us all.

We hope to resume normal functioning soon - to continue working out solutions for global problems on a local level together with you.

As Academy, we will try to implement the GCLS competition in such a way as to respond to the current needs of CFs and their communities.

More information about **Global Challenges Local Solutions Program**:

<http://www.localsolutionsfund.org/>