

The Krakow Declaration

As members of the European Community Development Network we recognise that the world is not equal, that some communities in all of our countries are excluded and unequal as a result of structures and policies that our political and economic systems have created. The defining purpose of community development is to transform that reality through the involvement and actions of people as their own agents of change.

Achieving real and lasting outcomes for communities requires that communities are at the **heart of the process** of action for change, and that the experiences, **concerns** and interests of communities are central to the analysis. The issues associated with inequality and **social injustice are addressed** an approach which is **participative**, bringing together community and other interests to look to the future and establish a shared vision of sought outcomes

We aim to bring about a more equal, just and sustainable society through working to build knowledge, skills, analysis and action to support people to be central to the achievement of the changes they desire. Our fundamental belief is that people have the right to meaningfully participate in society, also participating in decisions that are made about them.

These rights are denied to many groups as a consequence of poverty, exclusion, ill-health, discrimination or oppression. We in community development prioritise work with these groups to bring about stronger civil society, greater equality, and less conflict. In our work we adhere to firmly held values and principles of collective learning, empowerment, meaningful participation, active citizenship, collective action and equality, as follows:

We start with **collective learning**: understanding that people learn and build confidence by reflecting critically on their circumstances, and from their experience, building solidarity and support through emphasising the common aspects of individual experiences.

We encourage and sustain **empowerment**, which happens when communities collectively build power for change through awareness raising, critical analysis and developing and sharing skills and knowledge to become actively involved in addressing both the causes and consequences of their marginalisation.

Meaningful **participation** is essential for **active citizenship**. The health of communities, and society as a whole, is enhanced when women and men are motivated and able to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. It is achieved by addressing barriers to participation and facilitating the involvement of groups who experience social exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination in decision-making, planning and action. It succeeds by creating spaces and opportunities for lived experiences shared and voices to be heard, from local to global levels

Collective action for collective outcomes involves communities developing an analysis of their circumstances, identifying priority needs and issues and addressing these through collective action. The focus is on achieving positive outcomes for the community as a whole rather than simply the advancement of individuals. It requires the building of solidarity through alliances with other groups, organisations and agencies in order to advance key community objectives as well as learning from others, nationally and globally.

Equality involves challenging the attitudes of individuals, and the practices of institutions and society that discriminate against or marginalise women and men based on ability, age, gender, marital or family status, socio-economic status, nationality, skin colour, ethnic group, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs.

As community workers we use tried and tested mechanisms informed by these core purposes and values. Across Europe, community development methods include:

- ✓ Bringing people together around their shared experiences and interests such as community meetings; advocacy; social events; festivals and street parties; arts and music activities
- ✓ Identifying and exploring the factors underpinning their marginalisation or exclusion, such as story-dialogue, theatre of the oppressed, conflict resolution, management or transformation; facilitation; group work
- ✓ Building and owning evidence and a future vision, such as community-led research including community profiling and needs analyses; future visioning; focus groups; community meetings
- ✓ Developing confidence, skills and understanding, such as community education and learning; support; encouragement; evaluation
- ✓ Mobilising and organising, networking and strengthening visibility. such as strategic planning; forming and supporting community groups; communications; alliance building
- ✓ Taking action, such as campaigning; lobbying; engaging with public bodies and political processes; self-directed projects; fundraising.

Community development outcomes are changes which occur at various levels - at the community level, at the policy or structural level and at the broader level of ideology and culture. All these levels are connected. In order to transform the concerns and realize the interests of communities, the ambition of community development is to achieve outcomes which address both the causes of issues and their consequences.

EuCDN Mission 2017

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 more 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;
- ✓ secondly, the migration crisis and the need to ensure effective policies and programmes for integration and empowerment for migrants and refugees;
- ✓ thirdly, 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;
- ✓ fourthly, 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
- ✓ fifthly, the environmental crisis and the need to connect environmental and social justice issues in building a sustainable and fair future.

As well as continuing to promote exchange and learning between community development practitioners and as well as ensuring that a community development voice is heard on these key issues at European level, the European Community Development Network can do more. It can also 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 challenge we all 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. Indeed, there are many emerging such movements around Europe that need to be linked together.

Despite the differing national or regional contexts, the member organisations of the EuCDN have achieved a high degree of agreement with regard to the basic principles of Community Development. For us, community development:

- ✓ delivers 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 whether or not Community Development goes forward depends on a combination of factors:

- ✓ the recognition of autonomous Community Development organisations and/or of a separate Community Development discipline;
- ✓ a 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 base for Community Development practitioners;
- ✓ horizontal learning by bringing groups together,
- ✓ exchanging and disseminating good practice in Community Development;
- ✓ 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.

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