



## Community Alphabet 2023-24

*How can we build trust and inclusivity in our communities today? How can we invite people from across the community, people with different lived experience and/or divergent views, to engage in dialogue and citizen-led action? How can we help neighbors open up to one another despite their differences?*

Community Alphabet is a long-term peer learning program in 2023-24 for community leaders and practitioners in Central, Eastern & Southern Europe who are interested in **inclusive participatory processes**. Through the program, they will deepen their knowledge, build skills and reflect on their practice together. The program is based on **learning by doing and individual and peer reflection on practice**.

The central focus of the program is each participant's community building project. The purpose of the project is to give each participant an opportunity to test community building ideas and practices such as identifying and mobilizing local skills, knowledge and other resources through asset-based community development (ABCD), participatory mapping, or other forms of dialogue with people in their communities. These projects should involve relationship-building, engagement and collaboration based on the diverse skills and interests present in local communities with particular emphasis on enabling residents to become aware of and/or connect with others outside of their own social circles.

The project can form part of a larger, pre-existing initiative, but the project itself must be flexible enough to be refined in reaction to ideas and approaches raised in the Community Alphabet program.

Examples of pax projects in the 2020-2022 pilot program include: developing a village museum and related activities to link long-term residents and newcomers around rural traditions; mapping diverse assets and connecting residents across a village; helping residents mobilize local resources to create a community school garden; and connecting active citizens across a city to share resources such as space, equipment, news, etc. and explore mini-collaborations.

As participants ("pax") further develop and implement their projects, they will be supported by other participants in the program, the program's resource people and learning introduced through workshops, site visits and e-learning. Individual and peer reflection on each project, i.e. around field testing of community building ideas and practices, is a key part of the program, intended to harvest learning for each pax, the group and others in the broader practitioner community.

Pax and program staff will also collaboratively create a resource tool for active community-oriented citizens beyond the program.

### Program vision

Ensure that community initiatives in Central, Eastern & Southern Europe have the knowledge, tools and support to confidently pursue inclusive participatory processes with communities so that they can, over the longer-term, play a meaningful role in developing places where:

- people with different opinions and lifestyles work towards shared community goals in an environment of listening, trust, respect and mutual recognition,
- people thrive on a shared yet inclusive identity and strong sense of belonging,
- people enhance the community through use of local skills and resources,
- and people assume shared responsibility.

### Who should consider applying

In 2023-24, the program will work with a group of carefully selected 22 pax from at least 5 countries<sup>1</sup> with demonstrated interest and potential to assist others in and beyond their own communities. Pax may be:

*Community development practitioners* currently serving as supportive consultants or mentors to citizens involved in longer-term community development processes/initiatives in a specific, geographically-defined locality.

OR

*Active residents* currently engaged in longer-term community development processes in a given geographically-defined locality and who also have a wider influence, e.g. are involved in supporting other community initiatives (in the same locality or others), provide advisory services to foundations or other bodies supporting community initiatives, or are interested in and demonstrate potential to develop their professional work or volunteer activities in this direction.

Pax do not need to be affiliated with a registered NGO. The program is not designed for municipal employees or elected officials, but such individuals may be considered in exceptional cases.

### What pax will gain and contribute to

- exposure to **community building approaches** that are inclusive, participatory and asset-based and skills to help pax work within communities (mapping, trust-building, dealing with tensions/conflicts, etc.)
- **engagement** with other people doing community building across Europe for support, including national, regional and/or cross-country interaction to further pax projects and/or pursue common interests
- exploration of **own role** in community building and ways of approaching work with communities
- **testing of community building ideas and practices** in pax communities
- development of a **resource tool** for additional community practitioners, leaders and citizens/citizen initiatives outside of the program

### Program elements

- 3-4 workshops (each 3 days + travel, in Europe) focusing on asset-based approaches to community development, participatory mapping, trust-building practices, conflict analysis and responses to conflict, etc. and exchange of relevant skills, methods and experiences.
- site visits to innovative community building initiatives in Europe
- self-directed e-learning on asset-based community development

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<sup>1</sup>Program outreach will concentrate on the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Austria and Spain but community development practitioners from other EU and Balkan countries are welcome to apply.

- field testing of community building ideas and practices, supported by peer reflection sessions
- small grants to advance learning and work in program themes (EUR 500-1000/pax)
- advisory/mentoring opportunities from relevant experts and practitioners to advance pax work at local level
- co-development of a supportive resource tool for a wider group of community practitioners/leaders, including identification of case studies of inclusive community building in pax countries

### **Expectations**

**Pax are expected to dedicate time and energy to designing and/or reviewing/reflecting on, refining and implementing their own community building project.**

**Pax are also expected to attend all workshops and site visits and take part in online sessions (min. 15 days)** from late spring 2023 through fall 2024 and dedicate time to the self-directed e-learning course (est. 2-3 days). Proficiency in English is necessary. Pax must bring a willingness to share and reflect about their own efforts with communities and, we hope, curiosity about other pax and their contexts.

Travel, accommodation and some dining costs are covered by the program. All other costs (visa, insurance, etc.) are the sole responsibility of the participants.

**If you are intrigued by this learning opportunity, please consider applying!**

### **Application and Selection**

**Please note that we are looking for people who:**

- are actively engaged in/with a smaller, geographically defined community (city, town, village, micro-region). Those working at national level or solely with a 'community of interest' are not eligible.
- have previous experience engaging other people in community activities
- have previous experience or interest in sharing insights beyond own community (as a mentor, advisor, etc.)
- have a keen interest in expanding their understanding of how to bring diverse groups together for community purposes
- are willing and able to reflect on work individually and with peers
- are able to discuss complex program themes in English
- are able to commit the capacity required for the program from late spring 2023 through fall 2024.

**Who have a project that:**

- engages multiple (different) groups in the community, consider overlooked groups or individuals
- presents opportunities for trust-building, space for innovation and application of learning from the program
- expands the pax's learning/experience/skills
- does no harm to the community or individuals in it
- can be feasibly implement in whole or part during the program timeframe
- is managed by pax or in which she/he plays a central role (not out of his/her control)

To apply, please send the completed application form by **31 March 2023 23:00** to [helenlenda@nadacevia.cz](mailto:helenlenda@nadacevia.cz).

We will conduct interviews with short-listed applicants between 17 and 28 April 2023. The results of the selection process will be communicated to all applicants by 12 May 2023.

**Contact**

For more information or if you have questions, please contact Helen Lenda at [helenlenda@nadacevia.cz](mailto:helenlenda@nadacevia.cz).