

The Budapest Declaration

**Building European civil
society through
community
development**

For further information contact any of the following:

Professor Gary Craig
International Association for Community Development
Email: g.craig@hull.ac.uk

Margo Gorman
Combined European Bureau for Social Development
Email: margogorman@eircom.net

Ilona Vercseg
Hungarian Association for Community Development
Email: kofe@kkapcsolat.hu

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Preamble

One hundred and thirty community workers, researchers, donors and policy-makers, and representatives from government, civil society organisations and community groups, from 33 countries across the European Union and beyond, met March 25-28 2004 at an international conference, to prepare for the accession of ten new countries to the EU. The conference - focused on *building civil society in Europe through community development* - was sponsored by the International Association for Community Development, the Combined European Bureau for Social Development, and the Hungarian Association for Community Development under the patronage of the President of Hungary.

Community development is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy. It seeks the empowerment of local communities, taken to mean both geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organising around specific themes or policy initiatives. It strengthens the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks; and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. It plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. It has a set of core values/social principles covering human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity; and a specific skills and knowledge base.

Delegates attending the March 2004 Budapest conference, representing civil society organisations, governments, donor agencies and community groups, acknowledge the priority now being given by the European Union to strengthen civil society and emphasise the important role which community development can play in supporting that process and protecting the human rights of all. They request the EU, national, regional and local governments - as appropriate - to commit themselves actively to build a socially and economically inclusive, diverse, environmentally sustainable and socially just society, and to ensure the structures, policies and mechanisms are in place to support dialogue between the EU and members states on the one hand and civil society on the other. This will require both moral and practical support for community participation, and appropriate legal, institutional and material conditions, but with specific support for community development itself.

Delegates wish to stress the importance of community development in building mechanisms to promote the inclusion of all residents of Europe – whether permanent, seeking permanency or migrant. They reject both the increasingly explicit manifestations of racism and xenophobia and the implicit racism manifested in those current immigration policies, which lend credence to the notion of 'Fortress Europe'. They also acknowledge the strengthening of social, cultural and economic life, which will be consequent on the enlargement of the EU.

Delegates wish to emphasise the importance of developing mechanisms which could facilitate the sharing of best practice both within the EU but also between the EU and those many countries and institutions outside the EU (including other European countries) where community development has played a significant role in addressing poverty and social exclusion, including in situations of conflict and peace-building. Finally, they also wish to stress the need to understand the differing ways in which poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation may impact upon cultural and national minorities, on migrants and on those living in rural as well as urban areas. Delegates emphasise that the practice of community development strives to endorse and give voice to minority perspectives on policy and practice development; the distinct experience of Black and Minority Ethnic communities should be an integral part of the development of policy and practice.

A key conference objective was to agree a common statement on community development in Europe, to be directed to the EU, national governments and other key stakeholders. The following is the text of this agreed statement. The conference commends the Declaration to you and urges support for the proposals below.

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□ Community development policy and legislation at European, national and local levels of government

1. The EU Director General for Employment and Social Affairs should take the lead in publishing a cross-EU policy statement in 2005 highlighting the necessity of community development in facilitating citizen participation and in building social capital. The role of community development should explicitly be recognised in this process, and coherent and sustainable funding streams be made available through the 2007 EU Structural Funds for local, regional and European networks and through better coordination with and between independent trusts, foundations and NGOs.
2. All national governments should consider the appointment of a Minister with specific responsibility for creating and implementing community development policy, by 2006. That Minister should have a cross-departmental remit. We also ask that national governments should consider introducing a statutory responsibility for community development.
3. Regional and local authorities should publish from 2007 and implement annual action plans which outline the relevant special measures including investments, monitoring and evaluation of community development in facilitating effective citizen participation. These plans should be formulated on the basis of extensive community consultation.

□ Community development training

4. For community development to make the most effective contribution to building civil society, the EU needs to facilitate a common framework for training and learning for community development based on core community development values, knowledge and skills, with training materials based on best practices. The development of training is at present quite uneven but good experience should be used to suit local conditions.
5. This common framework for learning and training needs to be resourced and adapted for use in each member state, based on dialogue with all stakeholders, and developed from the 'bottom up'. The common overarching framework should not be used to export any one particular political or economic perspective.
6. Learning and training for community development and for active citizenship must be part of a continuum for lifelong learning and critical reflection – from citizenship education for children and young people through to community activists and volunteers, professionals working with communities and decision-makers at different levels. There should be pathways for progression through and across different levels of learning and training.

□ Community development theory and research

7. EU and national governments to the process of research as a vehicle for participation and the development of research skills within communities should give more attention; research should be as much a tool for communities as for policy-makers.
8. To promote ownership and mutual commitment, an active dialogue should be fostered between research and practice involving all stakeholders; this will require a greater degree of reflectiveness on the part of researchers as to how their skills can be made available to local communities
9. Research policy at EU, national and local level should be responsive to these needs and principles and direct funding to support them.
10. The EU and national governments should build on research, which has demonstrated the effectiveness of community development; and create more effective mechanisms for

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sharing and exchanging the findings of research relevant to the needs of local communities.

□ Community development and rural issues

11. Rural community development should be a specific and explicit priority within national and EU community development, social and economic programmes.
12. National governments and the EU will need further to activate and sustain voluntary and community action in rural areas. This should be based on a well-developed rural infrastructure; access to services for all based on need; and effective and appropriate training and support for rural community development.
13. At the EU level, it is necessary to establish a framework for rural community worker competence standards.
14. Recognising the specific challenges facing rural communities, EU and national policies should provide incentives to rural communities to mobilise their members and their resources to address local problems, strengthening their capacities to do so. As part of this process, the EU should encourage working partnerships between communities and local authorities, and between communities themselves, and ensure that appropriate government and EU mechanisms are created to respond to local initiatives.

□ Community development and urban regeneration

15. Whilst aiming for the common goal of an inclusive and socially just civil society, to achieve effective urban regeneration through community development, it is necessary for governments and the EU to be aware of and acknowledge differing national contexts (political, cultural, historical etc) and to respond appropriately.
16. All people in areas subject to regeneration should have the right to participation at every stage in its regeneration and future, with a special focus on socially excluded groups and those who traditionally have not had a voice in these processes.
17. Sustainable and inclusive urban regeneration requires that all involved players are open to change and accept it as a learning process; this requires that community development must play a key role in the process of regeneration.

□ Community development, sustainable development and the environment

18. Starting from a recognition that an environmentally sustainable society cannot be built without healthy and active communities (and *vice versa*), the EU should support the production of a handbook, which identifies and disseminates good practice for sustainable, ecological development and community development efforts both within Europe and outside it.
19. The EU should provide support for the establishment of a European community development network, which can disseminate better knowledge of sustainable projects, for example through a European Ideas-bank. The Bank should map experiences and support information exchange in ways, which will enable it to reach a broad public.
20. The EU or member states, as appropriate, should extend financial support in particular to local projects, which seek to integrate sustainable ecological, social, economic and community development.

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□ Community development, lifelong learning and cultural development

21. Adult education should extend beyond vocational training and should be seen as a right and provided on a non-commercial, not-for-profit basis.
22. Lifelong learning should be defined in policies as including community-based and citizenship education. By a community-based model, we mean building on local skills, resources, strengths and needs, and recognising issues of gender, cultural diversity, sustainable development and inclusion; in short, offering 'access to diversity and diversity of access'.
23. There is a continued need for experimentation, within a secure and sustainable funding framework at local, national and EU levels. This implies a commitment to medium and long-term funding and provision. Programmes such as Grundtvig should be further developed with increased budgets and should prioritise trans-national mobility for community activists and local groups alongside community development professionals.

□ Community development, local economic development and the social economy

24. Every national action plan – including plans to combat poverty and social exclusion - should be required to include a section, which addresses the role of the social economy and local community economic development.
25. The EU should seek to disseminate existing experiences and practice both from within the EU and from outside it; networking of this social economy experience should be stimulated and supported within the EU with a specific focus on the acceding countries and those seeking accession in the near future.
26. Local communities should be recognised as active and legitimate partners in the development of plans, structures and policies for local economic development.

□ Community development, minorities, migration, racism and discrimination

Whilst all of the issues listed above need to focus on the needs of differing minorities, there are also additional specific issues related to their needs.

27. The EU should ensure free movement of all EU citizens accompanied by social protection, promote cohesion and solidarity for host communities, migrants and communities of origin, and combat racism and discrimination in all its forms.
28. In support of these goals, the EU and member states should create and support structures and agencies, which pursue the aims of racial equality and cross-cultural understanding and awareness. The EU and member states should at the same time emphasise the positive aspects of a wider and more diverse Europe.
29. The EU and member states should acknowledge, through policy and funding development, that community development has a critical role to play in engaging people in increasingly diverse communities through inclusive methods. This may be done by building bridges between majority and minority communities, including in situations of conflict.
30. The EU, national governments, donors and community development organisations and agencies need to work collaboratively to promote cross-border and national co-operation in relation to the position of minorities and the particular challenges they face within specific local contexts.