

# Decentralized Cooperation Belgium - Romania

4<sup>th</sup> Forum October 25-27, 2013 Leuven

## Fostering local governance between Romania and Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels

**Workshop Civil Society:** A society reduce to a collection of inhabitants is a very poor and individual definition. Since human memory people are organising themselves in associations (social organizations) at local level, even at supra local level. In these social organizations, people can empower, develop and protect themselves. Not only the citizens have their benefit from social organizations. Also the society and (local) policy makers can have their benefit of these “forces” who do actions, have their opinion, have their expertise, defend their good.

Social organizations creates emancipatory persons and a “warm and strong” society. You can't get round that social organizations are a healthy good for society. It is fact that social organizations can help to implement decisions and are a strong part in the making of opinions. Therefore, local policymakers have their advantage to coop with them and give prominence in the municipality and at regional and national level. In Belgium the law put the authorities under an obligation that they have to consult the civil society in certain issues. This is a win-win situation for both.

### 1. Presentation of good practices in Romania:

#### a. OLF en OLB

Both Organizatii Locale de Femei (OLF) and Organizația Locală de Bărbăți (OLB), are active at the local level; village, municipality, city. In Romania these OLF's and OLB's have a high potential to spread themselves in new municipalities. At this moment more than 30 local organizations are active and are united in a national network. OLF and OLB organise a spectrum of activities in which inhabitant can participate. This way, a lot of new elements are given to the community: a social network start to grow, people take responsibility, socio-cultural events are set up, etc. Also new insights can find their way to families. For the authorities, these organisations are a good place for consultation when new dilemmas are on the agenda: mobility, health, education, etc.

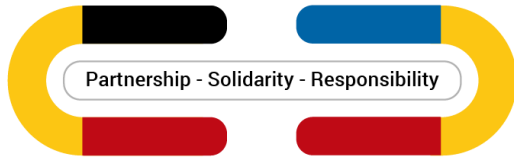
#### b. Vizidom

Vizidom (Vizită Domestică) is a service provided by volunteers. To prevent that ill persons, due to their health situation, become isolated from the outside world, the volunteers organise house visits. Through the volunteers, the persons are able to maintain contact with the rest of the community. This initiative took life 8 years ago.

#### c. AGLT

In Romania AGLT is growing to a big youth organisation with a lot of local youth groups all over the country. At this moment they have local leader teams in more 35 municipalities. Furthermore, AGLT developed also a special service for “children with special needs” (handicap), called SPEAS.

In an organised context, children and youngsters will learn a lot of social skills: show consideration for each other, mutual help, sense of public responsibility, taking responsibility, show emotions, etc. In a word: these youngsters will make the society more rich. Moreover, with a clock-like regularity universal examination proves this each time. It is evident that authorities, both local and supra local, have to develop a youth policy plan to develop local youth work.



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## d. Omenia

Omenia is an organization which unites the pensioners. The goal is to set up mutual help and social activities. More than 1 million members are member via a local group. In both cities and rural municipalities, Omenia has volunteers to organise the local association. Omenia organises different activities. Some of them have a cultural or social spirit. Others are organised to protect or to support the most vulnerable persons.

## 2. Speakers:

- Belgium:
  - Local level:
    - Ex-aldermen city of Geel & volunteer local level: **Ria Caers**.
  - National social organization (umbrella organizations):
    - Femma, women organization: **Eva Brumagne**.
    - MOC, umbrella organization: **Christian Kusch** (*question is sent; waiting for answer*).
- Romania:
  - Local level:
    - Volunteer-president: **person will come** via The Open Network Romania
    - Mayor who have good expertise with this: **person will come** via The Open Network Romania
  - National level:
    - The Open Network Romania: Professional worker with helicopter view: **Cristina Chert**
- Moderator:
  - **Mon Verrydt**

## 3. Possible outcomes / Points of interest:

- **Local organizations:** development of civil society.
- **Supra local level & network:** development of supra local level to support the local initiatives: education, regional and national meetings, exchange, etc.
- **Recognition:** estimate civil society at its true value.
- **Cooperation:** cooperation between policymakers and civil society: advice, clarify and defending of choices, ... .