



CASE STUDY

Building trust and cooperation among competitors within the civil society organisations sector

This case study was developed by Glopolis and it captures the story of the most significant change that happened to the civil society organisations (CSOs) network thanks to the Stronger Roots Program. The network was awarded EUR 7,000 under the project and was provided with 27 hours of capacity development support.

Network

Common Ground

Country

Czech Republic

Period when the change was observed

October 2020 – October 2021

The most significant change that the network achieved

In recent years trust in CSOs has been declining across Czech society, while political attacks on CSOs have increased. There is concern that further deterioration of trust could marginalise civil society, turn it into a pawn of political polarisation and eventually disable it from fulfilling its role. The Common Ground network, which associates PR professionals in the CSO sector, seeks to build public confidence in civil society by strengthening trust and collaboration between CSOs and improving communication about the civil sector to the public.

Through Stronger Roots, organisations in the Common Ground network began **working together much more closely**. Members collaborated to issue **joint media outputs**. They self-organised, chose a suitable topic, exchanged ideas about approaches, shared journalists' contacts and also shared the satisfaction of seeing their joint work printed in the media.

By exchanging know-how and collaborating on joint media outputs, the **CSOs developed relationships based on trust**. While some of the CSOs had previously viewed one another as competitors, during this collaboration they had to be open with one another, disclosing internal information, their own expertise and contacts and above all, trusting one another to treat the shared output and materials fairly, without diminishing the role of the other organisations.

The discussions in the Facebook group and regular online meetings helped the CSOs understand and get to know one another. The network managed to establish a **professional community space among the organisations**.

How the project contributed to the change

Joint development of media outputs together was tested at the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic, when the network released a report on crisis hotlines in collaboration with 5 organisations. The organisations



“Joint media activities show the diversity of CSO’s work and break down the narrative of competition and mistrust among organizations. This, in turn, strengthens the sector’s resilience against efforts to discredit it as a useless or even damaging parasite on public funding.”

Tomáš Urban, People in Need

found that working together on media outputs **expanded media reach and know-how with a reduced time commitment.**

The network took a similar approach when it issued a joint statement #NekašlejmeNaDruhe (#DontCoughOnothers) focusing on compliance with the basic rules against the spread of the virus. Over 70 organisations were involved. Later, the #EmpathyVirus2020 social media chain event encouraged donations in the run-up to Christmas.

Without the incentive and commitment to Stronger Roots, the network members would have been hard pressed to find time to plan strategically, formulate milestones or schedule key topics for the group to develop, including joint outcomes. They would not have set a timetable to devote time to these goals. The grant money helped in engaging experts to help raise awareness of how to transversally collaborate among non-profit organisations and deal with journalists across media.



Joint media output of members of Common Ground network on Czech Radio related to a joint statement #NekašlejmeNaDruhe (#DontCoughOnothers)

**STRONGER
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The Stronger Roots Program is jointly implemented by a consortium created by Open Society Fund Prague (CZ), Open Society Foundation Bratislava (SK), Glopolis (CZ) and the NIOK Foundation (HU). The Program aims to increase the resilience of civil society organizations and their networks in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, strengthen their social capital and embed them in the communities and societies in which they operate. Within the Program, the concept of transversal collaboration was developed and tested on 9 networks of civil society organizations.

| Nadace **OSF**



Glopolis is an analytical and networking center with an 18-years long outstanding think-tank experience in research, policy monitoring, advocacy and campaigning, relationship development, resource mobilization and facilitating collaboration at the Czech, CEE and EU-wide levels. Glopolis mission is to support transversal collaboration beyond the non-profit sector towards resilient civil society and sustainable democracy. Therefore, it seeks out and expands the field of shared aspirations of the CSOs, governmental and business representatives and engages them in solving common, societal challenges.