

SURVEY ON COMMUNITY COHESION HABITS IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

IN HUNGARY



Recent years have seen major changes in our social and cultural life. After COVID, the war in our neighbourhood has recently disrupted our lives. In this and similar crisis situations, we increasingly need cooperation, communities helping each other.

The EU supported [Crestart project](#) assessed changes in local small communities due to COVID in the 4 partner countries. The survey was carried out through a questionnaire and personal interviews. The interviews and international aggregated results are not yet available, but the national questionnaire responses have been summarised. A surprisingly high number of people want to contribute their knowledge and skills to improve local community life.

106 residents completed the questionnaire entitled „[Közösséget összetartó szokások krízishelyzetekben](#)”. 30% of respondents were male, which was a positive surprise. Equal proportions of respondents aged 35-44 and 45-55 responded 28%, with a very small gap between young people aged 21-34, and the smallest proportion of respondents aged 76+. In the project, we looked at a selected municipality in each country, in Hungary Érd was the pilot settlement but only 31% of respondents live in Érd, compared to 18% who live in the countryside. In terms of educational attainment, 64% have a college or higher education, 23% who have a high school diploma. 14% of respondents live alone, while most live with a partner and the rest with a family. 40% of respondents are employed, while 20% are self-employed and 14% are students.

At a surprisingly high 82%, most cultural events are organised by the municipality, followed by more than 60% of individual or community initiatives organised by local people. 82% of respondents think that local cultural events and activities are easily accessible. The top reason given by the 18% who think not all local cultural events are easily accessible was the cost of admission.

What makes you think is that the largest percentage of respondents, 82%, find out about local cultural opportunities through social media. However, posters and leaflets come in second place, with 43% finding out about local events through hearsay.

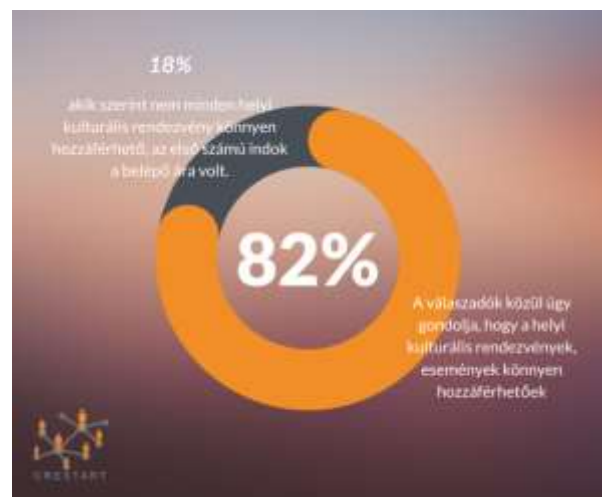
A higher proportion of respondents felt that there was nothing missing from the local cultural offer, but 36% felt that more local cultural or community events were needed.

Without wishing to be exhaustive, the following would be in demand by local residents: the classics: cinema theatre performances, quality outdoor concerts, live music, literature, cafés, terraces, community-building activities for the elderly, community space for informal discussions, family days, neighbourhood day, street parties, exchange events, village guest tables, farmers' markets, outdoor theatre, activities that appeal to young people or even those that bridge generation gaps, activities for young people to meet and talk informally.

There is a lack of events that encourage the local community to work together towards a common goal, and there is a need for professional self-improvement circles, green programmes, city-building programmes, and health events and health promotion. It would be useful to be able to attend outsourced senior university courses locally or to have a local community garden for seniors, for which it was stressed that it would be important to better inform seniors about local programmes.

74% of respondents attend local events and 53% are satisfied with the facilities, but only 9% are completely satisfied with local events. 75% of respondents think that local cultural events help to build relationships between residents. This compares with a relatively low proportion of those who are active in shaping the local community, 7% who are fully active, 27% who say they are active, 31% who are neutral on this issue and around 35% who are inactive.

A very important potential is that 55% of the population said they have skills and knowledge that they would like to contribute to local community and cultural life. Going further, 71% said they would dedicate 1-5 hours a week to this. The skills and knowledge offerings listed are very varied with soft skills being offered alongside practical knowledge. Reading the list below, it is striking to see the diversity of opportunities and willingness to do something that is present in the population:



Mutual assistance to neighbours, presenting local artists, small concerts and performances for a small regional community, many years of experience as an event organiser, good organisational skills, communication, PR writing, artistic qualification, medical qualification, budgeting, organising sporting events, organising exercise groups, organising leisure activities, organising joint tours, travel reports, organising foreign language clubs, organising bridge clubs. Some people would like to offer their baking skills, organise parties or share

their local networking capital, or have experience in youth community organising. Further offers include the organisation and hosting of literary and cultural events (book launches, authors' evenings), the organisation and opening of exhibitions, theatre, theatre "making", singing, concerts. Other services offered are humour, sales knowledge, sound systems, moderation, training, dance classes, story-telling, pilgrimages, roller-skating, guided tours, activities for children, handicrafts, baking cookies/soap for charity fairs, organising a tent for events, mental health activities for parents, programmes to promote tolerance between people, there is a clear demand for events.

When asked about the areas in which they would like to improve their organisation and local activities, communication and marketing were the most frequently mentioned. In addition to communicating about the organisation, using social media, brand building, developing individual communication skills such as public speaking. Human resource management, engaging and motivating volunteers, connecting people was another area where respondents wanted to improve. Several would need more knowledge and help in fundraising. There was a need for networking, learning from good examples at home and internationally, and connecting with other organisations.

During COVID, 95% of local events were not organised at all - mainly indoor or otherwise, requiring personal presence. Here are some of the things that people came up with during COVID to have some community and cultural life.



In the online space there has been a lot of new initiatives: online chats, online theatre, online art and knowledge sharing events, recording a cultural programme at home and then editing it together in a shared space, online professional forums, online carnivals, online yoga classes, dance classes, and even online running. Virtual photo exhibitions, online spiritual exercises, online evening prayer, online events recorded or streamed, many

activities were online, e.g. cake baking contest, pumpkin carving contest, music lessons, drawing contest, training sessions.

Other ideas and good examples of human ingenuity: home delivery library, skype book launches, introducing new members, discussing plans. Phone, e-mail, SMS: contact, literary quizzes, research, quizzes, analyses of works, writing paraphrases, haiku on a given theme,

image, etc. Members sent in files of our own voices reading classic or their own individual poems -- for occasions (e.g., writers, poets' birthdays or Poetry Day) or just for fun.

A retirement club has taken on, in other words "adopted", an incoming first grade class and will patronise them until their graduation.

Another has organised a bake-off competition for the whole village. They went to the houses to collect the scones they had baked and gave a number of portions of bean goulash equal to the number of scones in the family in exchange for the scones. Local entrepreneurs offered special prizes and as a result, the first 14 places received a prize.



There is a strong case for local governments to harness the potential of local people, as they can be the building blocks of local life that can support the real connection of local people, helping to create quality of life at the local level, not only in times of crisis.

The project was already well underway when the Ukrainian refugee crisis rocked the country. So we also asked questions on this in the

questionnaire. Some quotes from respondents on how they were affected by this situation:

- "initially I watched the news helplessly for the first few days, then I decided to actively help"
- "It was scary. I mean the war itself. And those who are fleeing from it need to be helped."
- "I was emotionally touched, because I often saw refugees at Nyugati station with small children and desperate sad looks."

Those who have responded have mostly helped refugees through donations, interpretation, authentic information and a range of other volunteer activities. The main motivation for helping refugees is clear from the following response:

"Unfortunately, life has shown me that anyone can find themselves in this situation, I felt empathy for them, I felt their insecurity."

Among the organisational good advices, several respondents highlighted that before we start helping on our own account, it is very important to carefully inquire with refugee support organisations and help with what is really needed.

CRESTART - CReative rESilient leARning communiTies meeting COVID challenges

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