

Stories that Change Ukraine

A Project that Inspires Stories

The Council of Europe project "Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine"



IT ALL STARTED WITH THE KYIV CIVIC PLATFORM



STORY 1

Association of NGOs “Kyiv Civic Platform”, Kyiv

Non-governmental organisations represent the people who are often the drivers and leaders of change. And when these change makers come together in the Association of NGOs “Kyiv Civic Platform”, the number of initiatives and reforms grow exponentially. The main purpose of the Platform is to promote the culture of civil participation in Ukraine and in particular in Kyiv City and to foster the engagement between the public authorities and civil society in decision-making, as well as promote linkages, partnerships and engagement between citizens and NGOs themselves.

The path to the establishment of a platform that unites civil society organisations started back in 2017, with the short-term Council of Europe pilot project that brought together more than thirty Kyiv NGOs that worked in various sectors of municipal development: initially into an informal coalition, and during the following year into a registered Association of NGOs “Kyiv Civic Platform”. The Academy of Civil Participation, Platform strategic sessions and dialogue building events with Kyiv city authorities have kicked off new collaborative projects, participatory processes and advocacy campaigns.

The results and pace of the Platform’s initiatives are inspiring. Only in 2019, the Platform conducted or helped to carry out more than 100 events involving more than 21 586 participants (gender-balanced approach always taken into account), including 13 public consultations, 7 strategic sessions, 6 studies and 2 policy monitoring exercises, 11 analytical reports and 3 information campaigns.

The experts of the Platform helped to develop and successfully advocate the adoption of the Regulations on Public Consultations in Rivne city, amend the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 196 and develop the template regulations on “All-Ukrainian Participatory Budgeting”, amend the “Rules for keeping dogs and cats in Kyiv”, conduct an expert evaluation of a number of regulatory acts and support the research of Kyiv’s gender passport, assist in the development of an integrated strategy for the development of the Podil district of Kyiv.

In addition, the Platform’s proposals to the draft law “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Increasing the Responsibility of Animal Owners” were taken as a basis by the profile Sub-Committee of the Verkhovna Rada. The draft law implements the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals and forms the basis for a humane state policy on human-animal interaction.

The Platform also works in the area of social policy and protection. It successfully advocated the national petition and promoted the registration in Ukraine of a unique medication “SPINRAZA” used in treating spinal muscular atrophy. Currently, the advocacy campaign is underway to allocate funds from the city budget for its purchase.

In addition, the Platform developed the concept of European Cultural Centres, which was submitted for consideration to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Ukraine and Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The concept has been already supported by a profile Committee and by the members of the Verkhovna Rada. The Platform brought together representatives of Ukrainian diaspora from more than 20 countries and launched the initiative called the “Alley of Ukrainian Diasporas” in Kyiv.

And that’s not all! The platform has developed a technical specification for the Kyiv city state administration for the online module of public consultations and helped to launch a beta version of the platform, which aggregates all the issues that form the agenda of public consultations. This will allow opening a dialogue with the authorities and ensuring more effective public consultations in the decision-making process.

No project of the Kyiv Civic Platform would be realised if the participating NGOs did not acquire new competences and skills. The Council of Europe helped to enhance competencies and increase the capacity of the Platform to facilitate inclusive, participatory and effective public consultations, workshops and events that bring together various stakeholders at the table, including public officials and civil society representatives. After the ‘invention’ of its own facilitation methodology - CivicLab - the Platform has already helped to carry out 10 thematic events within the project that brought together various stakeholders, resulting in new projects and concepts for documents and policies. In particular, the concept of a school participatory budgeting, the concept of the law on urban public spaces, the strategies in the field of ecology, water strategy, development of the charity sector and state policy of promoting civil society development in Ukraine. In addition, the Platform has developed a new interactive training module CivicLab UChange, a digital mentoring game that teaches residents how to work with civil participation tools, solve local problems and engage with public authorities.



FROM MUNICIPAL "RULES" TO URBAN GREENING, OR HOW CIVIL SOCIETY CHANGES KRAMATORSK



STORY 2

Oleksandr Ivanov

From the public organisation "Movement of Active Citizens Together",
Kramatorsk

The "Urban Beautification Rules" have been developed in Kramatorsk since April 2019. These rules cover not only beautification, but also municipal cycling infrastructure development. The draft document that had been proposed for a public discussion was totally unsatisfying for the civil society, as it failed to introduce effective measures and policy on the city beautification.

Nearly 50 activists appeared at the first public consultation. And afterwards everybody decided to create an informal working group to enhance such "dysfunctional" rules. Unfortunately, that's how it ended for the majority, and at the next meeting less than ten activists showed up. The activists faced also the obstruction of their work: long breaks were made during the meetings, and the departments responsible either did not show up at all, or delegated officials unable to give any explanations. So, the desire to continue was slowly fizzling out.

Fortunately, the CoE project "Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine" came into Oleksandr's life. Oleksandr participated in the Summer School for NGOs, as part of the Academy of Civil Participation Programme, within this project, "Civil Participation: Policy Analysis, Advocacy, Bringing About Change". As Oleksandr put it, he was seeking knowledge that would help him to develop his own city. "After the Summer School Academy, I changed my approaches to advocating the Rules..." We engaged the local council deputies known to activists, and they raised the issue of the enhancement and adoption of the Rules at the meetings of City Council permanent commissions. We also successfully arranged a meeting with the relevant Deputy Mayor. After the meeting we finally received the feedback from the City Council departments regarding the compliance of the amendments proposed by the activists with the legislative framework, but it was still a long way to go", says Oleksandr.

"The proposals on the Rules received from the city council deputies, what had not been the case earlier, significantly accelerated the process and thereafter we began to receive comments from them much more quickly. At the spring session the deputies gave a task to develop and finalise the rules, what hadn't been the case earlier. If there is a task, it must be fulfilled, and so everybody got once more to work, and the new version of the Rules appeared in the middle of December 2019, ready to be submitted to the regulatory service. The safeguards guaranteeing the continuation of the work have been developed in parallel, as we ensured that the Rules would require to be complemented and extended", Oleksandr adds.

The draft Rules are currently under review and consideration of the relevant regulatory authority. However, Oleksandr has no intention to limit his work only to the advocacy of the development and adoption of the Rules. "Now I continue to monitor in person everything related to city beautification, housing and utility sector. For instance, for the next meetings, I prepare a policy brief concerning the issue of destruction of green spaces. I plan to involve the city residents to the national movement "Make Ukraine Green". And I will myself plant trees near my house".



"PLASTIC BAGS: GAME OVER" OR HOW LAWS HELP ENVIRONMENT



STORY 3

Oleksandr Yurchenko,
People's Deputy of Ukraine,
Kyiv

Environment protection is a topic of particular concern to activists in Ukraine. It became mainstreamed in Ukraine in recent years, when enthusiasts began to organise clean air actions or explain in many ways how to sort waste. Oleksandr Yurchenko from Kyiv feels very keenly about this topic too. However, he decided to focus on a lesser but still very common issue of the use of plastic bags, which we do not even notice in our daily lives. This issue was one of the focus areas of the send Academy of Civil Participation held in Kyiv in May 2019, where activists and public officials worked together on the policy recommendations in this area. At the Academy, Oleksandr together with his Academy work group members, has founded the Kyiv initiative "Plastic bags: game over".

Soon after the Academy, Oleksandr became a People's Deputy of Ukraine and remained actively involved in the matters of reducing the use of plastic bags, waste recycling development and the waste treatment culture. The results were not long in coming, as the draft Law "On reducing the circulation of plastic bags in the territory of Ukraine" (No. 2051-1 dated 18 September 2019), which Oleksandr was working on, has passed through first reading on November 12, 2019.

Why it is so important to ban plastic bags? The answer is simple: they are non-compostable and are not subject to recycling, and moreover they pose threat to plants and animals. However, there is an alternative to plastic bags and it is called reusable bags (or "torbyny" in Ukrainian). That is why the initiative got its name "Plastic bags: game over". Among other things, there is a wordplay here, as "torba" in colloquial Ukrainian means not only "bag" or "satchel" but also an end to something.

The next legislative proposal of Oleksandr Yurchenko's authorship was the law draft registered with the No. 2207-2, aimed at creating recycling industry in Ukraine. Our country suffers from environmental disaster while thousands of illegal garbage dumps and landfills, which do not comply with norms and environmental standards, still exist.

In some places, garbage dumps are uncivilized, they are being created in forests and green areas, destroying and polluting nature and the environment, poisoning soil and water, leading to massive diseases and threatening human life and health. All this happens due to the absence of laws regulating waste treatment.

"To approve the draft laws on waste is only the first step. For all this to become reality, and not to remain ink on paper, one should lead advocacy campaigns, engage civil society in treating waste responsibly, organise lessons at schools, run information campaigns for every citizen to understand that a bottle thrown away or a plastic bag bought is a step to an environmental disaster", Oleksandr comments.



TO CONTINUE FATHER'S LEGACY, OR HOW RADA KALANDIIA HELPS ROMA COMMUNITY



STORY 4

**Rada Kalandiia,
Public organisation "Romen",
Vuhledar**

The "Romen" NGO was founded back in 2003 by Volodymyr Nikolaenko, Rada's father. "He was very anxious for his people and always wanted to help them. Throughout these years the "Romen" organisation has united many like-minded persons. We provided help for thousands in need. And the help was much diversified, including financial, psychological and legal assistance", Rada tells. "My father had lots of ideas, preliminary projects and plans he did not have enough time to make to finish. I am very proud of him and have the honour to continue his legacy".

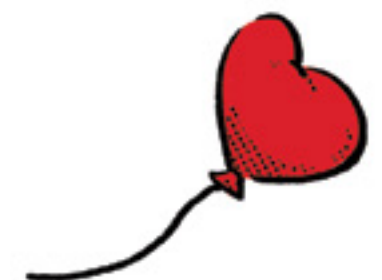
Rada lives in Vuhledar in Donetsk region with the population of 21 967 people where small Roma community became subject to discrimination from law enforcement authorities. Therefore, there was a need of searching for new opportunities and ways of interaction with the community, helping it and influencing on government structures.

"It was very difficult to work for my community as efficiently as possible without prior experience of project implementation, cooperation and engagement with public authorities and other activists", Rada points out. However, dreams began by and by come true after the series of trainings on project management for Roma activists within the Council of Europe project "Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine".

Following a series of trainings, close cooperation was established with the Vuhledar Centre of Development, where the Council of Europe Project held its trainings, and its result was the joint elaboration of a grant application and a mini-project together with the UNDP on protection of rights of Roma women.

"I lacked knowledge and mentor assistance in my activity and in that of the public organisation. However, trainings and joint meetings with authorities have helped me to establish such cooperation. At the CoE Project activities I met potential donors and that enabled me to represent the organisation and strengthen our work. I began working according to a clear plan having a strategic vision of the organisation's development", Rada shares her story.

Now she is proactively collaborating with the regional administration and local authorities. She assists low-income families and undocumented people. Actually, one of the most common Roma problems is passport issuance, as many Roma community members still do not possess passports. Rada has lots of plans ahead, in particular, as to fighting discrimination, but she is positively minded. "There's lots of work ahead, we are learning, finding new partners and opening new perspectives. I hope we can do everything as unity is our strength!"



#WHEREISTHEWATER? OR HOW WATER SHORTAGE HELPS STUDENTS TO UNITE



STORY 5

Bohdan Myronenko,
Chairperson of the Youth council of Pokrovsk

The Council of Europe experts, who have been following up to the project initiatives, note that the project trainings had a great impact on the activists from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. However, positive news was not only that cities and towns, which lived through the war, began to rebuild, as did their civil society. The majority of activists are young people who do not want to leave their small communities. They strive for changes and are ready to become themselves changes in their hromadas (communities).

Bohdan Myronenko is a student of the Donetsk national technical university, which moved to Pokrovsk. The majority of the university students moved there too from the occupied Donetsk. So did even the professors. However, modern university facilities remained naturally in Donetsk.

And there arose a need to solve the problem of water supply to dormitories. The problem could not be solved by replacing old water pumps; the Soviet-time badly designed buildings should be re-designed. For example, there was a nine-storeyed building next to the five-storeyed ones, and the town lacked capacities to provide water to its upper floors. Another dormitory was included to a private construction zone and was highly dependent in its water supply on the so-called summer cottage retreat season.

It would seem that this is not such a significant problem. But if basic things are a problem, then what about city development, culture, or civil involvement? So Bohdan thought that the CoE project initiative, the Summer School for NGOs "Civil Participation: Policy Analysis, Advocacy, Bringing About Change", that is part of the Academy of Civil Participation, could help him find levers of influence over the city authorities. New competencies and skills in developing of effective advocacy and communication campaigns helped get such levers through information events, as local TV channels began to trumpet from the housetops about students' problems. The initiative was tagged #Щозводю? (#Whereisthewater)? It was possible to follow the history of the initiative through this tag, and this approach became a part of the sensible information campaign.

"In my capacity as the chairperson of the Youth council of Pokrovsk I launched the appeal to help solve the problems of the university's dormitories. The main problem can be described by the famous sentence "No money, but you gotta hold on!", and the bureaucratic procedures laid out by our Ukrainian legislation. Now we are drafting an additional appeal to the executive committee and searching for opportunities to find money to solve this problem", says Bohdan. However, this is not the end of his activity, and currently Bohdan and his team are implementing the voluntary programme of business education for the students of Pokrovsk schools. And as the chair of the Youth council he continues to learn youth problems in order to solve them efficiently.



INTEGRATED SOCIAL SERVICES FOR AN AMALGAMATED TERRITORIAL COMMUNITY: DECENTRALISATION AT WORK



STORY 6

Rozaliia Hakh,
Civil activist,
Mariupol

Decentralisation became one of the most important reforms of recent years in Ukraine. Its benefits are particularly highly visible for small towns and villages, which, after merging into amalgamated territorial communities, can independently manage their budgets to address problems in the communities. This is why Rozaliia Hakh got to grips with problems not of a large city or a village, but of an amalgamated territorial community (ATC).

“Our team is now dealing with the villages and townships of the future Sartana hromada. We strive at enhancing quality and accessibility of social assistance and social services for children and adults who take care of them”, Rozaliia says.

The team had an ambitious objective of establishing an innovative social assistance service. They had to train skilled professionals and establish a system of interaction between all responsible stakeholders in the fields of education, health care, social security and justice. The team solicited support from activists and civil society organisations of the amalgamated territorial community and met representatives of the authorities. Due to the efforts of Rozaliia and the activists, the community was mobilised and a continuously active and open working group was established composed of representatives of villages and townships: their active residents, representatives of various institutions and civil society organisations. The objective of the working group is to promote social initiatives locally.

Rozaliia and her team, who care about the future of children, have worked for almost four months and their work has brought positive results. They decided on the building where the future service would be stationed and transferred it to municipal ownership. In addition to this, the activists have found four project managers and two social workers and proposed to them to provide services within the part of the future hromada territory. All of them received training by the special training programme, and the town council of the administrative centre of the future community (Sartana) has provided guarantees of financing their wages after the launch of the service.

The Academy of Civil Participation has helped to start a campaign in the framework of the project “Together. Social Services for Families in the Community” that is now being implemented by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the consortium of civil society organisations and with the financial support from the German Government and the KfW Development Bank.



IT IS BUT A STEP FROM IDEA TO PROJECT



STORY 7

Sofia Mazur,
An intern of the Youth Internship Programme at
the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine,
Severodonetsk – Kyiv

People become activists as a rule when they are concerned with a particular problem and take control over its decision, or it all starts from school, as it happened to Sofia Mazur. She began to engage in social activities from the school age and constantly improved her efficiency and skills. In 2019, Sofia participated in the Council of Europe training programme “Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine”.

“I attended two events in the framework of the CoE Project “Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine”. Of course, I received practical knowledge, but I value the most the expansion of my mind-set that happened thanks to brilliant speakers and sessions”, Sofia has shared her impressions. During the workshop “Ideas that change the East. Cooperation that changes Ukraine” she got the idea of establishing the Centre for the Civil Society Development in the East of Ukraine” and the Council of Europe experts helped her to improve her plans.

“This event has helped me in a way that I began structuring my ideas and they started being more like projects. I contemplated a lot why there are many creative and active people in the East who do not know what to begin with, how to organise things and do not possess enough resources”, says Sofia.

Sofia’s project is about creating an expert centre employing a project manager, a lawyer, an accountant, a fundraiser, a PR professional, a monitoring and evaluation expert, able to provide information and coordination services to support newly established civil society organisations and the development of their projects. “I started creating a group of people who could implement this (experts engagement) and elaborate plans to implement the idea”, Sofia comments.

Thanks to the Council of Europe experts, Sofia gained an opportunity to present her project to the representatives of donor organisations. Knowledge obtained helped Sofia Mazur to pass the contest and get into the Youth Internship Programme at the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. That is why Sofia stays now in Kyiv but tells of her hope to see her idea implemented by her colleagues and civil society supporters in Donbass.



"NOTHING FOR THE YOUTH WITHOUT THE YOUTH" OR WHAT TO DO TO BE HEARD



STORY 8

Kyrylo Dubrovin,
The chair of the public organisation "The Youth Council of Severodonetsk",
Severodonetsk

Well, you could be rather astonished, but the youth issues still are being decided without the youth itself. It is so not only because the young people do not know how to advocate their needs, but also because authorities are unwilling to engage youth to decision-making. But Kyrylo Dubrovin has no regard for this and states: "Nothing for the youth without the youth!"

So he started his advocacy campaign "The youth of Severodonetsk", aimed at improving the youth policies and youth outreach in Severodonetsk, Luhansk region. Kyrylo was able to achieve a lot after he undertook training at the Summer School for NGOs "Civil Participation: Policy Analysis, Advocacy, Bringing About Change", that is part of the Academy of Civil Participation within the CoE project.

"After the programme I gathered a working group comprising of representatives of the civil society sector dealing with youth and voluntary youth groups on the basis of the "KhochuBudu" civic space. Afterwards we met the acting Mayor of Severodonetsk and discussed our concepts. Together with the working group we have elaborated recommendations for the improvement of the youth policy, delineated priorities and measures," says Kyrylo.

The advocacy campaign is not finished yet, but it has already brought results. In addition, it seems that the most important result is the consolidation of the community in order to face the challenges of the youth of Severodonetsk. Although the objectives relate to practical things like increasing the funding for the youth policy of the city, they are no less ambitious.



THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO GAIN CONFIDENCE



STORY 9

Zhanna Soloviova,
NGO "Modern format",
Zhytomyr

Sometimes even experienced civil society organisations lack knowledge to implement efficient changes. The world is changing; new opportunities and instruments are emerging, so you always need to improve.

The non-governmental organisation "Modern format" is the public organisation being engaged in implementing socially useful projects in the Zhytomyr region and beyond since 2007. In 2018, the non-governmental organisation "Modern format" became a regional hub for the civil society of the Zhytomyr region and joined the Network of hubs in Ukraine. The organization is working to develop civil engagement, improve administrative services, the environment, and community well-being.

"The fruitful cooperation with the Council of Europe project has allowed us to strengthen our capacity and bring the impact of our organization to a higher level," said Zhanna Soloviova, member of the Board, Executive Director of the NGO "Modern Format". There is quite a number of achievements. For example, the professionals from the organisation gained knowledge and practical skills on how to use civil participation tools provided by the Charter of the amalgamated territorial community of the city of Zhytomyr – a comprehensive regulatory city council framework document that was developed by the project experts and successfully adopted by the city council. The "Modern format" has begun to organise more awareness-raising events for colleagues from the civil society to promote the use of the civil participation tools in Zhytomyr.

Now the team works on the advocacy campaign "Zhytomyr is a safe community" which envisages the development of the integrated programme "Safe community". The deputies of the Zhytomyr city council have to adopt it. The activists acquired their advocacy skills from the project experts thanks to the trainings held, in particular, during the Workshop of the Future, organised by the Council of Europe project "Promoting civil participation in democratic decision-making in Ukraine".

"We are also currently working to shape a coalition of local civil society organizations that would be involved in promoting the advocacy field mentioned above. And all this became possible thanks to cooperation with the Council of Europe project. The most important thing is that we could locally strengthen our influence and confidence in the NGO "Modern format".



EACH PROCESS SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT, OR HOW TO MAKE THE BUDGET REPORTING LESS FRIGHTENING



STORY 10

Mariia Makarovych,
NGO "Local development of communities",
Soledar city amalgamated community, Donetsk region

People in the NGO "Local development of communities" think that transparency and openness are a road to mutual understanding, changes and better community life.

And so the young activists from the Soledar amalgamated territorial community began their actions with the project "Open budgets". At the end of last summer they explained to the community what was their budget spent on, how it looked in numbers and, mostly important, where the money came from. They did it using graphs and colourful visualisation as Mariia Makarovych believes that complex things should be explained simple and clear. If even budget experts need to spend lots of time to understand the documents, than what about the rest of the public. But she didn't want to leave it at that. Therefore, Mariia decided to extend her knowledge on advocacy at the Summer School for NGOs "Civil Participation: Policy Analysis, Advocacy, Bringing About Change", that is part of the Academy of Civil Participation within the CoE project.

"We wanted to start cooperating with the education sector. There are many students in our organisations, who some years ago were schoolchildren yet. This is why this topic is close to our hearts", Mariia tells of her idea. The project "Education under protection of the community" was aimed at increasing the volume and quality of information in the "Education" section of the web site of the local community. During the implementation of the project, the activists established effective communication with the representatives of the education department, developed a guideline with recommendations and submitted a draft decision with a list of measures that should increase the level of transparency and accessibility of information on educational programs and events on the local council web site.

The project was implemented with the financial support from the UN Development Programme and the team used methods learned during the Summer School. Due to qualitative planning and work management, they were among the first to end the implementation and report.

Mariia says this is a step toward transparency of processes within the authorities. "The education sector is only the beginning. We will further work with budgets, but I am sure we will arrive at other sectors too". For the time being, the "Local development of communities" continues to communicate with the representatives of the local council to provide the approval of necessary decisions at the session.



INNOVATIONS FOR THE YOUTH AND TOGETHER WITH THE YOUTH, OR HOW TO TRANSFORM THE DILAPIDATED TEACHER'S HOUSE INTO A MODERN EDUCATION HUB



STORY 11

Lesia Slyvka,
NGO Drohobych Youth Space

Old premises, abandoned houses that are not in use and are being covered with dust... unfortunately, this is the reality of many cities in Ukraine today. Such was also the Teacher's House in the city of Drohobych in west Ukraine. The building would have remained empty for years if Lesya Slyvka and the public organisation "Youth space of Drohobych" did not take on its transformation.

The Drohobych Youth Space NGO had a dream of efficiently and creatively transforming the old education facility for the benefit of the community. The idea of the project, born within the NGO, amazed everybody. The non-governmental organisation took the premises on lease at reduced rates and plans to create there a modern youth centre in the closest time. The centre will function as an out-of-school education facility. Lesia Slyvka and her team want to create a training centre, equipped according to all modern technical standards, a conference hall where more ambitious events could be held, and a dance hall for various sports activities. Their objective is also to create a coworking, or a space for creative cooperation of youth and business.

"We have plans to create a mini-shop for young people to craft: they could produce there something or print on 3D printers, and afterwards such products could be sold," Lesia Slyvka shares her dreams. But the most fascinating idea of this project is to place a hostel on one of the floors of the former Teacher's House!

No idea of that sort would have entered the heads of the Youth Centre team without the help of the Council of Europe. Thanks to the Council of Europe project, the Drohobych Youth Center had the opportunity to visit Vinnytsia, and learn and use the experience of Vinnytsia youth civic hub "Kvadrat" and best practices for civil participation that are in place in Vinnitsa. "We saw the success stories which have inspired us and we shared them after our return with our city authorities and the community. We shared our opinions on the practices of the youth outreach, which we want to implement in Drohobych, the approaches to be changed, and the concepts worth improving.

And in addition to this, the Council of Europe project which assisted in drafting the new municipal Charter of the Drohobych amalgamated territorial community, engaged the Youth Center in the work on the new civil participation tools and organisation of public discussion of this document. The new Charter became a kind of a city's constitution. It sets up not only the way local councils function, but prescribes the mechanisms for civic engagement in the decision-making process and local public life. Most importantly, citizens can from now on participate through a variety of online and offline public participation tools. We hope very much that the Academy of Public Participation, to be held in Drohobych in April 2020, will provide the necessary knowledge and skills on how the residents and civil society organisations can efficiently use instruments of participation and how the city authorities can engage the civil society and cooperate with it in the decision-making process in order to hear all voices. After all, close cooperation and involvement of the civil society in decision-making is a way of ensuring good democratic governance and is one of the basic principles written into the updated community charter.



URBAN GREENING AND SPORT AVAILABLE TO ANYONE, OR HOW THE NGO "BEAUTIFICATION OF A HOME CITY" CHANGES LVIV



STORY 12

Natalia Finkanin,
Chairperson of the NGO "Beautification of the home city",
Lviv

How to introduce changes in a city efficiently and excitingly? The essence of social changes lies in involving ordinary citizens and their creative ideas into common and consolidated actions for modernizing their lives. Such is the objective of the NGO "Beautification of the home city", which already improves the public space of Lviv.

"Beautification of the home city" and Natalia Finkanin, its chairperson, found new decisions and advocacy approaches during the Academy of Civil Participation: considering the interests of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, organised in Lviv within the CoE project. The NGO team has got paramount experience for implementation of its own projects, learned how to identify and overcome barriers in the local authorities-civil society engagement, and effectively communicate and engage with both authorities and other non-governmental organisations, but most importantly, with the citizens. The Academy helped "Beautification of the home city" to search for decisions of the "unsolvable" problems through the engagement of Lviv residents to democratic decision-making.

"Beautification of the home city" is currently implementing a project created by the participants during the Academy of Civil Participation. The Organisation will plant trees in their city together with other activists in the framework of the all-Ukrainian action "1 million of trees in 24 hours", and this will help revitalise the ecosystem of Ukraine. The chairperson of the "Beautification of the home city" stresses that this project could not be implemented if the Council of Europe project did not help the organisation to single out their target audience in a seamless way. "Very soon we and the team are releasing a promo clip where Lviv school students will be engaged. We will tell about them as about volunteers who will plant new trees and so create new life", Natalia Finkanin passionately adds.

The Lviv NGO "Beautification of the home city" has a track record of many social projects implemented. Natalia Finkanin and her colleagues succeeded in helping many schools and kindergartens to build football and basketball fields. The organisation is also proud of the fact that many times it brought together the whole city districts in order to hold culture festivals and concerts.

However, "Beautification of the home city" is planning even more! The organisation got the opportunity to implement another project, but now within the framework of the Lviv Participatory Budgeting: soon the city will install street workout grounds, which will become an alternative to expensive gym simulators. The team dreams to make sport available not for the elites but for everybody.



The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 27 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

