Community Organising:

What It Is and Where You Stand

Stronger Roots Mid-term Workshop

21–23 September 2026, Bratislava, Slovakia

CENTRUM
KOMUNITNÉHO
ORGANIZOVANIA

YOUR FACILITATOR / A LITTLE ABOUT ME

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Justice



Freedom

SELF / NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Who are you?

Introduce yourself to the person next to you.

What matters to you — and why?
Share a small moment that shows it.

One minute for you. **One minute for your partner.**

While your partner speaks, just listen. Share only what you feel comfortable sharing.

Let's get to know the room.

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OUR ORGANISATION

CKO

Centre for Community Organising · Slovakia · since 1999

We support people to solve shared problems and build their own capacity to act.

OUR PROGRAMMES

Community organising

Schools for Democracy

Not in Our Town

OKO Civic Centre

Community Organising Academy

Europe Direct Zvolen

SINCE 2026

Organising in practice.

2013–present

Nie v našom meste

Not in Our Town

Community action against extremism and intolerance.

2018–2020

Za slušné Slovensko

For a Decent Slovakia

Civic mobilisation for a decent Slovakia.

2022–present

Za dôstojné a dostupné bývanie

For Dignified and Affordable Housing

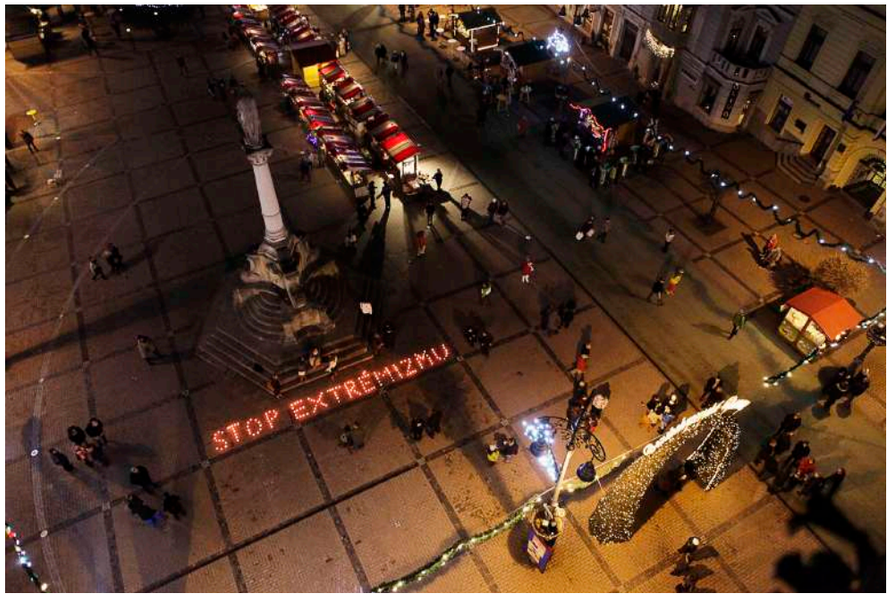
Organising around dignified, affordable housing.

2026–present

Supporting Roma women leaders

Leadership & connections

Support and networking for Roma women leaders. A new initiative taking its first steps.



Nie v našom meste · Early days



Nie v našom meste · Today



Za slušné Slovensko · 2018–2020



Za dôstojné a dostupné bývanie

■ US / THE ESSENCE

The room is too cold.
Who controls the thermostat?

Or too hot. You look for a window, a door, a way to change it.

01 / YOUR STAKE

You are uncomfortable.
Why does it matter to you?

02 / THE POWER

The thermostat is locked.
Who has the key?

03 / OUR CAPACITY

Others feel it too.
What can you do together?

Organising connects what people care about with the relationships and collective power to change it.

Trust is part of the work.

25.6%

say most people can be trusted.

69%

are more likely to trust a nonprofit with a presence in their local community.

25.6%: Slovakia, WVS / FOCUS 2025, DEKK 2026. 69%: USA, 2022 survey, Independent Sector, p. 21. Different questions and populations; not a before-and-after comparison.

US / FOUR RESPONSES

Who acts? Who gains power?

The same cold room. Four different ways to respond.

Service

Bring people blankets.

Meet an immediate need.

Community building

Bring people together for warm drinks and mutual support.

Build belonging and trust.

Advocacy

Ask the building manager to change the heating.

Represent people's interests.

Organising

People form a team, share roles and act together to win a solution.

Build people's own power.

Think of one activity you run. Who decides? Who takes responsibility? These approaches can work together.

Every action starts another cycle.



01 Mapping

Explore the place, people, relationships and decision-makers.

> Learn to notice assets, exclusions and who holds power.

02 Conversations

Listen to people's experiences, interests and hopes.

> Learn to build trust and recognise potential leaders.

03 Community meetings

Bring people together to choose a shared problem.

> Learn to facilitate decisions and share responsibility.

04 Campaign & strategy

Agree a winnable goal, decision-maker, allies and sequence of actions.

> Learn how your people and resources can create leverage.

05 Direct action

Act together: make a public demand and bring people's power to the decision-maker.

> Learn to mobilise, negotiate and take leadership roles.

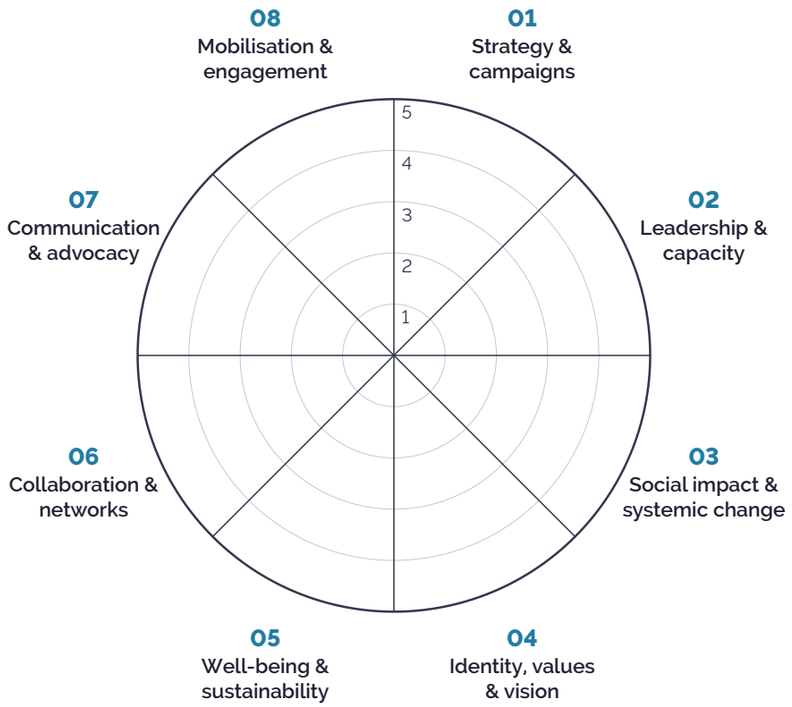
06 Reflection

Review what changed, who grew and what needs care.

> Learn to adapt, then map and listen again.

Reflection → new mapping → new conversations. We revisit stages as the situation changes; relationships and leadership grow throughout.

Your initiative. Your first impression.



Start with the blank map.

Choose your own initiative or organisation. Using only the eight area names, mark where you think it stands: **1–5**.

Work on your own, before seeing any level definitions. Leave unknown areas blank.

> Choose **two areas** that matter most to your initiative.
> Explore one in each conversation.

Keep this first map. You will return to it.
Inner ring: 1 · Outer ring: 5 · No total score.

ROUND 1 / YOUR FIRST AREA

Talk with your neighbour.

Where did you place your initiative — and why?

Choose the first of your two areas.
Have a conversation. Then swap.

PAUSE / NOTICE HOW YOU TALKED

What helped you understand each other?

Did you ask, listen, explain or offer advice?
Did you discover what mattered personally?

Connect → Explore → Find common ground → Agree a next step

A 1:1 builds a relationship around people's own interests and a possible shared action.

Listen more than you speak — roughly 70/30. Ask one open question at a time. Follow a real example. Share your own reason briefly. Check your understanding before offering solutions.

ROUND 2 / SECOND AREA · NEW PARTNER

Try a more intentional conversation.

Turn to a different neighbour. Use your second area. One asks and listens; then swap.

01

Where are you now? Tell me about a moment that led you to that mark.

02

What did you do — or choose not to do? Why did it matter to you?

03

What followed? What does it tell you about what you value?

04

Where would you like to be? What could you do next, with whom?

Listener: "I hear that __ matters to you." Share what matters to you too. Find one connection.

FROM THIS EXERCISE TO THE COMMUNITY

Same skills. A different starting point.

Here, in the workshop

We started with an area and a score. We explored an initiative we already knew and reflected with a peer.

At a first community contact

Introduce yourself and why you are there. Ask whether it is a good time to talk. Start with the person's life and concerns; discover their priorities together.

01 Connect

"I'm __. I'm meeting people in this neighbourhood. Is now a good time?"

02 Explore

"What matters to you here? When did you feel that most strongly?"

03 Common ground

Share your own reason. "It sounds like we both care about __."

04 Agreement

"Would you be willing to __?" Agree who does what and when to reconnect.

When: entering a community, following up after a meeting, inviting someone into a role, or reconnecting after action. A first doorstep chat may simply lead to a longer meeting.

Be curious, not persuasive. Respect a "no" and personal boundaries. A concrete next step must be freely agreed.

US / SECOND LOOK

Same initiative. A shared language.

Now take the level definitions. Score all eight areas again, using a recent example as evidence. Use a second colour; keep your first marks.

Compare the two maps. A changed score may mean clearer understanding, not a change in your organisation. There is no total score.

> "I first chose __. With the definitions, I chose __ because __. The next level would look like __."

REFERENCE / LEVEL DEFINITIONS

Eight areas. Five levels.

01 Strategy & campaigns

Can we connect today's action to a clear goal?

1. **Reaction.** We act spontaneously, without a plan or review.
2. **First plans.** We can name the problem, but not yet its cause.
3. **Basic strategy.** We set goals, steps and small wins.
4. **Strategic thinking.** We plan over time, assess impact and learn.
5. **Strategic culture.** Our campaigns connect and sustain change.

02 Leadership & organisational capacity

Who carries responsibility when you step back?

1. **One person.** One person decides, communicates and acts.
2. **An emerging core.** A small team forms; roles are still unclear.
3. **Learning to lead.** We meet regularly and people take responsibility.
4. **Shared leadership.** We share decisions, rotate roles and grow leaders.
5. **Community power.** Leaders act independently and develop new teams.

Eight areas. Five levels.

03 Social impact & systemic change

What changes beyond your own activities?

1. **Local impact.** We change small things; wider recognition is limited.
2. **First connections.** We start talking to the city, media and public.
3. **Public visibility.** Our issues enter public debate.
4. **Real influence.** Our campaigns change institutional decisions.
5. **Systemic change.** We help shift policies, approaches and narratives.

04 Identity, values & vision

Can people explain what holds you together?

1. **Finding ourselves.** We have different ideas of what we do and why.
2. **Shared language.** We begin discussing values and direction.
3. **Shared vision.** A picture of the future brings us together.
4. **Rooted in place.** Our identity and vision connect to our locality.
5. **Lived vision.** Our work expresses values that people can name.

REFERENCE / LEVEL DEFINITIONS

Eight areas. Five levels.

05 Well-being & sustainability

Can your people keep going at this pace?

1. **Constant pressure.** We are overloaded, with no rhythm or rest.
2. **Awareness.** We begin talking about fatigue and boundaries.
3. **Balance.** We plan breaks and attend to ourselves and the team.
4. **Collective care.** Mutual care is part of our team culture.
5. **Sustainable rhythm.** We maintain balance even through difficult periods.

06 Collaboration & networks

Who shares resources, trust and action with you?

1. **On our own.** We work in isolation, without connections.
2. **Getting acquainted.** We know other initiatives and meet occasionally.
3. **Project collaboration.** We work together on specific issues or needs.
4. **A common goal.** We share resources, information and plans.
5. **A network of trust.** We share power, support each other and act together.

Eight areas. Five levels.

07 Communication & advocacy

Can your story move people and institutions?

1. **Silence.** We are afraid to speak publicly about our work.
2. **Trying our voice.** We use channels, but without a strategy.
3. **A clear voice.** We have a message and story we can communicate.
4. **A respected voice.** Media know us; we engage institutions in dialogue.
5. **Shaping narratives.** We shift public debate, stereotypes and perceptions.

08 Mobilisation & public engagement

Do people attend, or help decide and lead?

1. **An isolated core.** Only a few take part; the community is unaware.
2. **First connections.** We reach out, build contacts and hold 1:1s.
3. **Active participation.** People join concrete actions and events.
4. **Shared decisions.** Community members plan and lead with the team.
5. **An organised base.** The community acts independently on new challenges.

US / WHOLE-GROUP REFLECTION

What changed in how you see your initiative?

What shifted between your first and second map — and why?

What did your neighbour's questions reveal that the definitions did not?

Which area matters most now? Where does your next step fit in the cycle?

FROM DIAGNOSIS TO STORY

How do we invite others to act with us?

Your map named a priority. Your conversation uncovered why it matters. Now turn that experience into a reason to act together.

SELF

Why does this matter to me?

Return to one real moment from your second conversation.

What happened? What did you choose? What does that reveal about what matters to you?

Write three or four sentences: a challenge → your choice → what followed and what you learned. Remember Maroš's opening: you heard a reason for organising, not just a job title.

US

Why does this matter to us?

Think of a moment when your group stood up for someone, achieved something or faced a setback together.

When have we acted on a value we share?

What did that moment show about who we are together?

Draft a few lines to test with your organisation. A shared story helps members recognise what connects them and helps others understand why to join. Ask: “Do you recognise us in this? Whose experience is missing?” If you are just starting, name the experiences you still need to hear.

NOW

What can we do together now?

Return to the priority you chose on your diagnostic map.

What needs to change? What could we achieve together? What exactly are you inviting people to do — and when?

Connect a shared value to a possible change and one specific invitation. Leave room for people to shape the next step.

For example / shared leadership

> "Too much of our work depends on two people. We want a group where more people can shape what happens. Will you join us next Thursday to choose one activity we can lead together?"

> Try your SELF → US → NOW with your partner.
> Listener: "I heard the value __. The invitation was __."

Your US is a first draft to explore with your people. Share only what you choose; ask permission before retelling someone else's story.

YOUR NEXT STEP / AFTER THIS WORKSHOP

One area. One person. One conversation.

Within 7 days · 20–30 minutes

Choose one priority from your diagnostic map. Have a 1:1 with someone in your organisation or initiative to understand their perspective and find one small step you can take together.

01 / SHARE YOUR REASON

"I chose this area because _. It matters to me because _."

02 / LISTEN TO THEIR EXPERIENCE

"How do you see it? Can you describe a recent example? Why does it matter to you?"

03 / EXPLORE A BETTER SITUATION

"What would you like to be different? What would you like to contribute?"

04 / AGREE ONE SMALL STEP

"What shall we try together? Who will do what, by when?"

Leave the conversation with: one new insight and one freely agreed step, with a person responsible and a date.

If you do not agree on an action, name what you still need to understand. Do not force agreement.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Name the person. Set the date.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE TODAY · WRITE IT DOWN AND TELL YOUR PARTNER

"I will invite **[name]** by **[date]** to talk about **[area]**. We will meet on **[date within 7 days]**."

Agree when you will tell your workshop partner what you learned.

Organising is a practice you can learn.

CKO's Community Organising Academy turns your own initiative into a place to practise: experience → reflection → another step in real life.

The Academy's learning path

1. Foundations of community organising
2. Relationships, groups & trust
3. Power, story & collective identity
4. Defining problems & facilitating a shared vision
5. Strategy & campaigns
6. Well-being & sustainable engagement
7. Sustaining your initiative & continuing the work

Plus an in-person Learning Circle and a closing reflection.

What participants bring

A real issue and a willingness to learn with others. Practise between modules, try conversations and organising tools, reflect honestly, share responsibility and stay with the process.

How we learn

The 2026 programme combined online and in-person learning from March to June: short inputs, small groups, practical tasks and peer reflection.

CKA · Hungary ↗

Community organising and advocacy training

CeRe · Romania ↗

SOCA: Community Organising & Advocacy School

ECON · Europe ↗

European Community Organizing Network: training, mentorship and peer learning

Ask Maroš about learning with CKO and our European partners. maros@cko.sk

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH



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