



ASHOKA

ASHOKA ROMANIA

# IMPACT REPORT

2019

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## Foreword

by **Corina Murafa**, Ashoka Romania Country Director

How was 2019 for our society? How was 2019 for Ashoka? I am writing these lines from deep within the worst health, mental, economic and social crisis the world has experienced probably since World War II: the COVID-19 pandemics. I cannot even comprehend 2019 happened in my lifetime. Nevertheless, as I look back towards what social entrepreneurs achieved in 2019 and how our team at Ashoka Romania managed to cultivate resilience and a systems-changing approach in an ecosystem that is often transactional and short-term oriented, I become an optimist again.

In 2019 **Romanian changemakers** seem to have multiplied and diversified. We have seen a genuine concern for social impact and the good of all from sectors and professional fields we thought were dormant. With low trust in institutions and politics, and with a feeling that the most important venue for sustainable change - the educational system - is ineffective, no wonder Romanians are starting to take things in their own hands. Still, as we have been told by the hundreds of changemakers that interacted with us throughout the year, the significant danger in Romania remains growing poverty, but also something we call “the new inequality.” In an ever-changing world, one must be a changemaker to play. Being a changemaker requires agency and adaptive skills that many Romanians are not mastering, from cognitive empathy to sophisticated teamwork. Hence, income distributions are getting worse and an “us versus them”

social and political discourse is gaining traction.

2019 marked **30 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain**. I was a child when the 1989 Revolution took place. Many of my colleagues at Ashoka Romania, who are now tirelessly dedicating their youth years to social impact, were far from born. We should all take a step back and look at what our society has achieved in 30 years: **we have come a long way** because of the incredible Romanian citizens who built our democracy from scratch, who defended civil liberties, who built support infrastructures for the most vulnerable when the state was either too corrupt or too ill-prepared to live up to existing social challenges, who built advocacy coalitions and networks and who turned a passive citizenry into one in which more and more Romanians are contributing and making a change.

**These are the changemakers whom Ashoka Romania supported in 2019.** They are the ones we have coached into accessing large international opportunities for funding and growth, like the Google Impact Challenge and the European Union Social Innovation Competition. They are the ones whom we have trained as part of our rigorous screening and vetting process to elect Ashoka Fellows. We also worked with small business owners together with our partners from UniCredit and Fonduri Structurale and realized an incredible number of Romanians, from Galați to Sibiu to Timișoara, are thirsty and eager to make a difference. To lead from any seat.

We unearthed close to 200 names of changemakers who play a role, in Romania, in building a more balanced relationship between humanity and the planet, in a complex ecosystem mapping we concluded with EIT Climate-KIC. Social entrepreneurs, from the changemakers who prototype solutions for energy poverty, whom we have supported in our solutions accelerator with the Schneider Electric Foundation, to Elena Calistru, a champion of civic activism in the country and abroad, whom the global Ashoka Board elected as Ashoka Fellow with the support of the Romanian American Foundation and Enel - they all bring us one thing: hope.

**Hope** is what we all need. But we also need **resilience, empathy, and solidarity**, no matter our profession and what sector of our society we play a role in. We are both frailer and more connected than ever. **United we stand, divided we fall.**

Join us in building a resilient

**“Everyone a Changemaker Romania”!**

**01**

# **Introduction**



# Why This Report

**Ashoka Romania has arrived at its third yearly finish line as part of the largest global network of social innovators**, and, since the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2019, its first year of existence as a legal entity, consolidating our presence in the local ecosystem of social entrepreneurship. This report aims to be a reflection on our work in 2019, narrating our activities and their outcomes, evaluating and rewriting our strategy, action plans and overall impact of Ashoka Romania as we grow our organization.

**The first two chapters offer an overview of our global organization** and how its mission is translated in Romania through our strategy and undertaken initiatives and events.

**The third chapter presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis** depicting the perception of our impact in the ecosystem we act in, containing assessments based on data derived from semi-structured interviews and targeted surveys. They include responses from a wide range of stakeholders, including Fellows, partners, changemakers, social entrepreneurs, to ensure all perspectives are captured in our analysis.

**The fourth chapter offers insights into our team, fiscal year financials, and our current partners.** The report concludes with our call to action on how all Romanians can get involved to have an impact together, under our goal towards an Everyone a Changemaker World.

**Through this analysis, we are re-assessing how Ashoka should continue to contribute to a Changemaking Romania.** We value feedback and the process of reflecting on our actions to depict new insights and inspiration that can guide the way to even more effective decision making and actions.

# Ashoka Around the World

Ashoka is the largest global network of social entrepreneurs in the world, founded in 1980 by Bill Drayton, 20th-century visionary leader and pioneer. Ashoka is a worldwide organization that has been supporting, within its flagship program - "The Ashoka Fellowship" - more than 3,800 leading social entrepreneurs originating from more than 93 countries. We create networks of social innovators to tackle the world's most pressing problems.

North America  
**302** Social  
Entrepreneurs

Europe  
**575** Social  
Entrepreneurs

Middle East and North Africa  
**115** Social  
Entrepreneurs

Asia  
**1029**  
Social  
Entrepreneurs

Latin America and Caribbean  
**1027** Social  
Entrepreneurs

Africa  
**466**  
Social  
Entrepreneurs



“Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry.”

— Bill Drayton, Ashoka Founder



# Systems Change

Ashoka's work has been focused on raising funds to identify and support those social entrepreneurs around the world who work to achieve **systems change** – develop ideas and ventures that address the root cause of a problem rather than its symptoms. This is achieved through altering, shifting, and transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics and rules that the sectors and ultimately the societal structures have been based on, despite their inefficiencies to serve everyone. A system change leader fosters collaborations across a diverse set of actors, with the intent to trigger lasting improvements in pressing issues.

A 2019 report co-authored by Ashoka, Catalyst 2030, Co-Impact, Echoing Green, McKinsey, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, the Skoll Foundation, and SystemIQ, called [“Embracing complexity – Towards a shared understanding of funding systems change”](#) identified five principles for funding systems change. Ashoka not only applies these principles in its own global partnerships, but amplifies them in its work with fellows.





## Embrace a systems mindset

Systemic funders have a clear vision of their targeted “end state” of the system, they acknowledge their part of the system and understand what needs to be changed to reach said end-state.



## Support evolving paths to systems change

This principle emphasizes the need for offering flexibility to social entrepreneurs to act in the ways they consider best. The relationships created by social entrepreneurs leave room for them to create their own course, create trust among other leaders by supporting them, and helping each other.



## Work in true partnership

Funders and social entrepreneurs must establish a framework to manage expectations in a written agreement that highlights contractual equality, but at the same time nurture a partnership that goes beyond a transactional relationship. A true partnership is one in which both sides bring different resources to the table and are equally necessary to work together.



## Prepare for long-term engagement

Directly visible results in a short period of time are quite rarely in line with a systems change approach, as it takes years to successfully implement a strategy working at such a large scale.



## Collaborate with other stakeholders

Systemic funders align with other funders to enhance efficiency through coordinated action.

“There’s no systems  
change without  
organizational change,  
and no organizational  
change without  
individual change.”

—Jonathan Raymond, Stuart Foundation  
(quoted in Kania, Kramer, and Senge, 2018)



# The Old Game Is Over!

The complexity of human-made systems is further increasing with time and technological advances. However, some systems do not always serve the needs of all. Sometimes they need to be redesigned. How can we organize to redesign or improve systems? Relying on centralized decision-making and rigid hierarchies in which the few command the many is no longer effective or even desirable. Why? Because this approach fails to unleash the human creative energy. Nowadays, cross-sectoral, horizontal and dynamic collaborations are crucial to producing sustainable change.

## A World of Changemakers

Complex social challenges require self-empowered citizens, able to take responsibility, lead their communities, and collaborate with others for the good of all. We call these people changemakers. Changemakers are people who, no matter how old they are or what their profession is, feel empowered to lead change for the good of all. Changemakers need continuous learning, skilling, and creativity to be resilient, namely, to adapt to this changing context. Their new leadership cannot be authoritarian but inclusive, embedded with personal credibility and ethical fiber.

**Our mission is to build an “Everyone a Changemaker™ (EACH) World.”** This will empower not only crucial members of local communities but all citizens; they can all have the freedom, skills, confidence and societal support to address whatever problems or challenges they find and to drive change. In this way, everyone can unleash their potential to solve systemic problems.



## Changemaking CORE skills



Empathy



Creative problem  
solving



Readiness to  
implement change



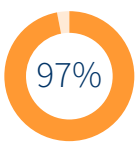
Collaborative  
leadership



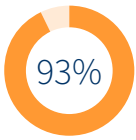
Teamwork

# Ashoka Fellows

Among changemakers, some people go beyond building one organization and developing important services or products. These people undertake systemic measures to address a deep-rooted problem by changing flawed systems. We call them social entrepreneurs. Ashoka identifies and supports leading social entrepreneurs and helps the world recognize their achievements.



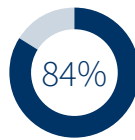
of Fellows reported that their idea focuses on **influencing societal mindsets/cultural norms**



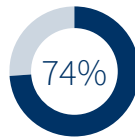
of Fellows have achieved **change in market systems**



of Fellow have seen their idea replicated by independent groups



of the Fellows working with young people reported encouraging young people to create independent initiatives to spread and scale the Fellow's work\*



of Fellows have achieved change in legislation or influence public policy

55% of Fellows focus on people living in poverty

55% of Fellows focus on children and youth

48% of Fellows focus on women

\*(Unlonely Planet – Ashoka Global Impact Report, 2018).

# What Ashoka Does for Unleashing Societal Change

Ashoka creates and supports networks of social innovators who deal with the most pressing societal issues globally.

Around the world Ashoka:

- Identifies and supports leading social entrepreneurs and changemakers to maximize the positive impact of their work;
- Nurtures collaborations of changemakers from different sectors;
- Accelerates solutions for systemic global impact through impact programs, social impact investment opportunities, senior mentorship, and trainings that support ecosystem growth;
- Shares lessons from Ashoka Fellows, knowledge and deep analysis on specific challenges;
- Ensures that young people grow up practicing changemaking and empathy;

Ashoka acts as an ecosystem builder, connecting social entrepreneurs to one another, and to different stakeholders from the business sector to civil society, including public institutions.



02

# Ashoka in Romania





# Where

# Are We?

For Ashoka, supporting more than **3.800 leading social entrepreneurs in over 90 countries** has many prerequisites: one of them is the deep knowledge of the territory in which we operate. Being well connected with a great international network of social innovators cannot by itself create impact; for that, every Ashoka national team must know the local challenges and the local system.



# The Romanian Landscape

Nowadays, Romania is a country with an emerging economy and many challenges and opportunities ahead. Romania's economic growth has been driven by Bucharest, which has already exceeded the EU average income per capita. Although economic growth is not an exhaustive way to measure neither progress nor prosperity, Romania remains by far the country in the EU with the highest percentage of people in poverty or at risk of poverty: more than 25% of the population lives with less than \$5.50 a day (2011 purchasing power parity). In 2020, economic growth is expected to slow down as drivers such as export growth and domestic demand are entering a recession mode.

The areas with fewer opportunities are driving a constant outward migration: between 2000 and 2017, Romania's population fell from 22.8 to 19.6 million, and the fall is expected to continue. According to Eurostat, the number of young Romanians (15- 29 years old) has fallen even more dramatically, down 28% from 4.86 million in 2008 to 3.52 million in 2016. This has a severe impact on the workforce and thus on overall growth.

A lot more needs to be done to let the youth express their own potential. In fact, 40% of 15-year-old Romanian students are functionally illiterate and early school-leaving—at 18.5 percent—is one of the highest in the EU. Public spending on education is low compared to other EU Member States, so if the sector needs major reforms, additional funding and more robust efficiency mechanisms are required (European Commission, 2019).

The World Bank highlights that the skills mismatch between demand and supply goes beyond technical skills and touches a lot on socio-emotional skills. Globally, Ashoka has developed expertise in the core skills needed in a more and more complex society in order to tackle social inequality issues identified above. Today, one of Ashoka's main pillars is making sure that practicing changemaking skills early on becomes the norm and not the exception.

The World Bank report points out several other weaknesses in Romanian society, ranging from weak primary care in the healthcare system, to the exclusion of Roma, and the

inefficient expenditure in social services. Romania also needs improvement in basic sanitation infrastructure, but also a better natural risk management system in the face of climate change. Bucharest is considered among Europe's most polluted cities, ranking sixth among 76 cities in Europe Pollution Index 2018. One of the country's drivers of climate change is energy poverty, which affects close to a quarter of the population (Center for Democracy Studies, 2017).

Finally, the political distrust generated by overall uncertainty and corruption remains one of the major impediments in the social and economic development of Romania. However, according to the Economist's Democracy Index, there were significant improvements made in 2019. While Romania was at the bottom of the flawed democracy category, the growing frustration with incumbent parties has led to an increase in the citizens' public and political participation.



# The Role of Social Entrepreneurs

Ashoka's Learning and Action Center conducted a report to document the rising issues concerning Europe and the approaches taken by social entrepreneurs in tackling migration, security, unemployment, and segmentation of the labor market, economic stagnation, demographic changes, and social inequalities. The 2015 refugee crisis, the security and governance challenges arising from more complex cross-border activities, disproportionate youth unemployment rates, the challenges of urbanization and underdevelopment of rural areas, or aging populations, are all problems that have a direct impact on the economic and social development of all EU Member States.

Social entrepreneurs and Ashoka Fellows have been mediating these issues by building collaborations between communities, businesses, state institutions and social sector organizations. They are working with civil society actors to address security concerns, key stakeholders to enable young people to change their future through education, technology, and sports. Moreover, they are present in vital rural areas that represent a pillar for Europe's economic growth and tackle economic stagnation. They are working for the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable populations, fighting against religious intolerance, ensuring the inclusion of the Roma population, empowering homeless people, using new methodologies for the inclusion of people with disabilities and addressing gender biases in the labor market.





# Social Entrepreneurship in Romania

Ashoka has officially opened an office in Romania on May 18th, 2017, almost 28 years after the 1989 revolution. As elsewhere in Europe, Romanian social entrepreneurs can and must be enabled to tackle the country's most pressing issues.

Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy in Romania are relatively new concepts. Social services and civil society interests have been represented in Romania mainly, but not only, by associations and foundations carrying out entrepreneurial activities, mutual aid associations, cooperatives pursuing general interest aims, or NGOs. Their historical path after the 1989 revolution and the new societal needs and organization have paved the way to today's social entrepreneurship emerging reality in Romania.

NGOs have evolved in the last 30 years of democracy, from advocacy for human rights in the 90s to education, culture, and welfare service provision (Erste Foundation, 2017). **The Romanian NGO sector has constantly been developing in**

Romania. Today, the non-profit sector contributes 1.59% to the GDP of the country and employs over 100.000 people, as evidenced by the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF). **The social/charitable field is the main component of the sector, both in terms of the number of organizations and main economic and financial indicators (CSDF, 2017).** This field is the largest employer in the NGO sector: 30% of all NGO employees work in this subsector (CSDF, 2017).

**In 2015 it was estimated that 6.000 social enterprises operate in Romania, totaling a number of 19.065 employees in the sector. However, after the introduction of the Law on Social Economy in 2015, only 103 social enterprises were included by the National Registry of Social Enterprises, mostly due to the bureaucratic registration process and lack of fiscal incentives.**

The main impediment to an accurate analysis of the current environment is the difficulty to find exhaustive data on social enterprises in Romania, as the term was introduced into



legislation in 2015. However, there is a proven gradual increase in general activities pursuing explicit social purposes and multi-stakeholder governance models. Supported by and enlarging ecosystems formed by the government, research and education institutions, social enterprise networks and coalitions, media outlets and communities, social entrepreneurs will be able to further develop and enter into their next stage of maturity.

While the novelty of the term in Romanian legislation, lack of access to funding opportunities, awareness and strategic approaches to the more effective inclusion of social enterprises as a working model in the sector remain key constraints and challenges to the acceleration of social entrepreneurship, there are still some enabling factors and opportunities to be mentioned. These are outlined in a study presented by the European Commission on “Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe.”

Romania’s accession to the EU opened the possibility of new policy measures with regards to the social economy, social entrepreneurship and the development of social enterprises. There are several funding opportunities accessible through EU grants. The non-profit sector in Romania urges Romanian authorities to considerably invest in the quality of public programs that may enhance the investment outcomes of European Funds in Romanian social enterprises.

Moreover, another opportunity is driven by an identified strong leadership and advocacy for ways to finance missions of social enterprises, also outlined in private initiatives. Cross-border cooperation and innovation are more possible now, while access to European networks and research through experience and exchange programs or study visits allow the sector to achieve growth more rapidly and gain international experience.

The development of the ecosystem is also supported by the emergence of education programs related to social entrepreneurship and management, which tighten the educational gap and empower decision-makers, practitioners, and the general public to transform the ecosystem.

Finally, support from the private sector is perhaps more visible now than in previous years, mainly through a rising popularity of CSR-related activities and innovation hubs offering business grants to social entrepreneurs. These are just an indicator that new actors arise in the ecosystem, which can build on an opportunity for social entrepreneurs to gain access to a diversified network of investors, partners and mentors, in order to be better sustained in scaling their social enterprises.

“Social Entrepreneurs are the essential corrective force. They are system-changing entrepreneurs. And from deep within they, and therefore their work, are committed to the good of all.”

-Bill Drayton, Ashoka founder



# Ashoka Romania Results in Numbers in 2019



2250+

Changemakers mapped



1860

Changemakers engaged in Ashoka hosted & co-hosted events



100+

Romanian Changemakers actively participated in international Ashoka experiences

7

International Ashoka Fellows brought to Romania

4

Ashoka Fellows in total, one elected in 2019

4

Reports Released

1

Climate Innovation Ecosystem Study



498,740

page views



28,646

page engagements



2,037

newsletter subscribers



120+

press appearances





# Ashoka Romania Enabling Systemic Change

## Ashoka Romania's New Strategy

For the next years, taking into consideration the continuous feedback loops and actively listening to our constituencies, our strategy will shift towards three main strategic external directions and one internal.

### External

1. Establish a balance between social impact and profit by promoting new values and indicators in the checks and balances systems. In an adequate social entrepreneurship environment, where more access to resources is granted and facilitated, individuals will be more incentivized to **become social entrepreneurs**. We will focus our Venture and Fellowship activities in this direction, maintain the target of minimum 1 Fellow per year, help shape the social finance ecosystem and strengthen our local communication and transfer of Ashoka's knowledge, impact and methodologies.

2. Form Core Groups of Change collaborations to promote **collective impact as a norm** within the civil sector. In an informed society, in which people are made aware of their rights, these will be demanded as a standard of exercising democracy. We will focus on creating experiences aimed at stimulating collective impact outcomes as well as scaling Ashoka's solutions and impact on other Romanian cities, especially Timișoara for 2020.

3. **Create strategic and in-depth knowledge transfer programs** to sustain the development of new solutions, projects and interventions in the civil sector and get involved in the process of systemically revolutionizing products, markets, and ultimately, systems. We will focus on thematic ecosystem building, in fields such as Planet & Climate, Health, Human Rights, Strengthened Societies (Financial Inclusion, Emergency Response, etc.), with a maximum of 5 thematic tracks per year.



## Internal

We aim to have a strong, open, and healthy workplace based on a framework of empathy, teamwork, new leadership, changemaking and organizing in an open and fluid team-of-teams. We intend to introduce new ways of organizational development and focus on immediately consolidating and increasing efficiency in our operations and administration activities, while strengthening our fundraising capacity. Moreover, bridging teams-of-teams between Ashoka and Romanian Fellows and their organizations will increase the level of cooperation and impact in activities.





# Searching for Ashoka Fellows: Venture

## Why

In Ashoka, we believe that in today's world of unprecedented change, leading social entrepreneurs can provide answers on how to ensure these changes will happen for the good of all.

That is why, in 1980, Ashoka developed criteria and a rigorous selection process meant to guarantee that only social entrepreneurs of the highest quality would enter Ashoka's network. Ever since, we have been diligently and universally applying this golden standard selection process across all countries where we elect Fellows. Today we are confident in the quality of the social entrepreneurs identified through this process.

## What

Ashoka Venture is the constant process and professional system that helps us identify system-changing social innovations and the people driving them forward. Although a complex process for all stakeholders involved in the process, our evaluations always rely on our five core criteria:

- **A new idea** – an innovative solution that can address systemic problems
- **Social impact** - an implemented solution that proved it can have a positive social impact in society
- **Entrepreneurial quality** – a strong-willed person with a clear vision who will overcome any challenge in order to achieve the needed systems change
- **Creativity** – a person capable of developing and continuously refining a solution that can address the evolving systemic problem
- **Ethical Fiber** – a person with strong values that has her motivation drawn from a strong commitment to the problem and the people affected by it

**Ashoka Venture** is much more than a selection process. It allows us to open doors to build networks with and to learn from diverse experts in various fields of society. It allows us to inspire diverse stakeholders through insights from our global network and experience.





# The path for selecting an Ashoka Fellow

## comprises the following steps:

### SOURCE NOMINATIONS

Ashoka is in constant search of nominations, which we get through online nomination, from an active network of nominators, from partner's referrals or through our internal research. In 2019, we increased the network of active nominators by engaging new faces from different sectors. We held two workshops for nominators and one on one conversations with more than 20 highly networked and influential people to explain in-depth our selection criteria and impact logic. Our internal research also proved to be highly efficient in finding candidates.

### IN-DEPTH DUE DILIGENCE (1st Opinion)

The local team handles the first part of the process, which consists of interviews with candidates, reference checks with experts in the field (including Ashoka Fellows), benchmarking with local and international solutions, legal reviews and site visits. **In 2019 we ran three full in-depth due diligence processes and additional eight partial ones, with other potential candidates.**

### IN-DEPTH EXPERT INTERVIEWS (2nd Opinion)


An international senior Ashoka expert from another continent interviews the candidate to find their life story and evaluate how the five criteria are met. Based on the conversation, the expert can propose the candidate for the next stage. **In 2019 we had three candidates that were evaluated by an international Ashoka expert, with two of them passing on to the next stage.**

### EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT (Panel)

3 to 5 external partners with strong entrepreneurial and social innovation track records and/ or Fellows interview the candidate, assessing the same five criteria. Together with international senior Ashoka staff, they take a consensus decision regarding the fit of the candidate with Ashoka's criteria and whether to propose the candidate for Fellowship or not. **In 2019, both our candidates that reached this level were approved and proposed for the board review.**

### GLOBAL BOARD REVIEW

The Global Board of Ashoka critically assesses profiles of all advanced candidates from across the world and provides an informed international perspective on the novelty and impact of presented solutions. Successful candidates enter a lifelong Fellowship within the international Ashoka network and are officially named Ashoka Fellows.



In 2019 we elected a new Ashoka Fellow, **Elena Calistru from Funky Citizens**. A second candidate that passed through the process will be reviewed by the Global Board in spring 2020.



# Supporting Leading Social Entrepreneurs: Fellowship

## What

The Ashoka Fellowship is the process through which we build a customized experience for social innovators to help them achieve greater impact. It is a joint journey: social entrepreneurs provide us with a day-by-day tutorial in how the world works and where it is going, but also in courage and values. Ashoka, in return, both invests in Fellows and commits to support them for a lifetime. Our support has different dimensions and evolves as a social entrepreneur and their venture go through different stages of maturity. The Fellowship is a highly personalized lifelong support tailored to the needs of each Fellow. This support comes in a variety of ways:

**1. UNLOCKING TIME AS A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR'S KEY RESOURCE** with a personalized stipend for up to 3 years. Similar to an investment fund, we raise needed funds from business entrepreneurs, investors, companies and foundations that understand and share the approach of our international network and offer Fellows, if they need it, a three-year personalized stipend to help them focus entirely on their new idea.

**2. PROVIDING STRATEGIC ADVICE AND ACCESS TO KNOW-HOW & PRO BONO PARTNERS**, focusing on increasing systemic impact, organizational health, revenue models, management and leadership skills or scaling. We also build partnerships with top-notch consultants that are willing to provide pro bono advice to Fellows on important topics.

**3. INCREASING VISIBILITY AND OPENING DOORS** Our goal is to make Ashoka Fellows visible to decision-makers from all sectors and enable real conversations and connections between them. Cross-sector interactions we facilitate take different forms, including:

- introductions of new Fellows to decision-makers
- collective problem-solving and acceleration sessions
- access dinners, inspirational talks, individual matching
- long-term mentoring.

**4. LOCAL AND GLOBAL IDENTITY, RECOGNITION AND CONNECTIONS** with social entrepreneurs, investors, and changemakers.

**5. EUROPEAN FELLOWSHIP OFFER** with online and offline courses on:

- Scaling & System change
- Transfer & Replication
- Wellbeing
- New Leadership
- Impact orientation



# Ashoka Romania Support for Our Fellows

## International Network and Events

Our four Romanian Ashoka Fellows, Florin Stoican, Elena Calistru, Dorica Dan and Paul Radu, have access to the global network of the organization and the opportunity to participate in our international events. Three Romanian Ashoka Fellows participated at the European Changemakers Summit in Barcelona, where they connected with our vast global network of Fellows, changemakers and supporters. Florin Stoican participated in a local Ashoka ecosystem event in Puglia, Italy, and was invited to be a co-creator of our new global initiative on Planet & Climate. Dorica Dan was able to join the Accelerating Healthcare Access (AHA!) Program, powered by Philips Foundation and Ashoka. It addresses the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all) by scaling social innovation. Among the different initiatives organized within AHA!, Dorica was selected for the Globalizer Program, which will take place in 2020. The latter is an international program, powered by Ashoka and Philips Foundation, that allows Ashoka Fellows to scale their impact thanks to the support of Philips leaders and employees, industry experts, healthcare leaders, businesses and citizen-sector organizations.

## Strategic Support

Ashoka Romania organizes yearly Organizational Health Assessment with our Fellows and connects them with specific resources and low-bono/pro-bono partners tailored to their organization's specific needs. We paired members of the Romanian Ashoka Support Network (ASN) with our Fellows based on common interests and skills in order to have exploratory/mentoring sessions. Dorica Dan (Fellow) and Ciprian Morar (ASN) worked on Dorica's intentions to develop a digital case management system, while Andrei Pogonaru (ASN) helped Florin Stoican (Fellow) to create bridges with public authorities and to have a stronger investor pitch for the Văcărești Natural Park.

# Paul Radu

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM



**YEAR OF ELECTION:** 2018

**ORGANIZATION:** Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)

**OCCRP NETWORK:** 45 non-profit investigative centers in 34 countries

“The network of Fellows allowed me to learn from other domains and adapt to journalism specific tools and methodologies typical for other areas of work, such as the OCCRP software.”

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Paul and his colleagues built the world’s largest decentralized and collaborative global network of 400 local investigative journalists, which spans four continents, and fights money laundering and organized crime. He is also assembling a global movement of civic investigators from all paths of life: scientists, programmers, civic hackers and journalists, and ordinary citizens who are equipped with tools and the global data infrastructure necessary to expose the world’s best-hidden dirty money and crime schemes.

## HIGHLIGHTS

By 2020, OCCRP’s 308 official investigations led to US\$6.5 billion in fines and money seized and 442 arrests, indictments and sentences, and over 1,400 company closures, indictments and court decisions. The organization’s work also led to 53 resignations and sackings, including the President of South Africa, and CEOs of companies such as Danske Bank or TeliaSonera.

## WORK IN 2019

In 2019 Paul Radu researched the human, geopolitical, and historical context of organized crime. He conducted field research to understand better how organized crime groups form, how they organize themselves, and what kind of methods they use in their illicit activities, such as the use of technology for money laundering.

## PLANS FOR 2020

Based on the extensive research he conducted last year, now Paul Radu will integrate the findings to improve his organization’s tools and will publish articles, infographics, and a feature documentary about organized crime.

## SUPPORT FROM ASHOKA

After becoming an Ashoka Fellow, Paul had more time to think about how he can change journalism to meet the most vital interests and needs of the public. He had access to new contacts, which allowed him to develop new ideas through interdisciplinary conversations.

# Dorica Dan

RARE DISEASES



**YEAR OF ELECTION:** 2018

**ORGANIZATION:** Prader Willi Association Romania & NoRo Center (Norwegian Romanian Partnership for Future in Rare Diseases)

**STAFF:** 23 people

“I have reorganized my priorities, so I began to focus on the sustainability of my services, and changed my focus towards capacitating other organizations to deliver similar services to mine in order to achieve increased impact and more structural change.”

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dorica is developing blueprints for a new rare diseases care system, aiding the 6.8% of the world population who suffers from one of the 8000 known rare diseases. She connects all stakeholders in the field, including patients, advocates for policy changes and builds national and international networks of specialists. Dorica prototyped her vision of care through NoRo, the only patients-run reference center for rare diseases in Europe.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Dorica convinced the government to set up an Advisory Council for Rare Diseases and to increase the national budget allocated to rare diseases by 46% in 2014 while adopting a National Action Plan for Rare Diseases. Dorica is an active influencer of EU policy in the field, as a board member of EURORDIS. With support from local and regional authorities and EU funds, today the center supports 60 children with daily services and 12 youth involved in the “Trial for Flight” autonomy program. Over 1.200 patients from across the country joined NoRo’s summer camps, therapeutic weekends, support groups and 5-day residential programs.

## WORK IN 2019

Last year, Dorica and her team improved their activity at the NoRo center with new specialists who were trained on rare diseases, and presented their activities at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. She also conducted advocacy and awareness campaigns on rare diseases, and as a result, they grew the number of expertise centers on rare diseases accredited by the Romanian Ministry of Health.

## PLANS FOR 2020

In 2020 Dorica will conduct an ample program to train community medical assistants who will work on rare diseases in rural or remote communities and will consolidate CareBoard, a virtual case management system.

## SUPPORT FROM ASHOKA

As an Ashoka Fellow, Dorica accessed new networks and realized how essential and helpful relationships with other organizations are.

# Florin Stoican

NATURE CONSERVATION



**YEAR OF ELECTION:** 2018

**ORGANIZATION:** Kogayon Association Romania & Văcărești Natural Parc Association

**MEMBERS:** 200 volunteers' members (Kogayon), 14 staff members and 50 volunteers (Văcărești Natural Park)

“Compared to previous years, I felt more supported by Ashoka in 2019, as I received access to richer resources, a wider network, especially in the Romanian corporate sector, and more visibility.”

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To trigger a bottom-up transformation of the way conservation is undertaken across the country, Florin has developed a three-tier strategy targeting citizens, businesses, and leaders of protected areas. His goal is that the state takes responsibility for conservation, through citizen pressure, while encouraging citizen-led and participatory projects to preserve the natural heritage.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Florin founded the Buila-Vânturarița National Park of 4,500 hectares of land, and as a consequence, 3,000 hectares of forests were saved from exploitation. He then co-designed an ecotourism offer with the local community, which generated EUR 300,000 and added value of EUR 30 million to the local community, increasing the number of tourists over 100 times in a few years. He also co-founded the first urban park in the country, the Văcărești Park, which comprises 183 hectares of protected wetland and 150 species of birds. Over 60,000 people have been engaged in the park's activities.

## WORK IN 2019

Last year, Florin and his team successfully made the Văcărești Park a protected area after lengthy negotiations with the Romanian Parliament and he introduced a new law for protected urban areas, which is set to be discussed in the Romanian Parliament. Florin started novel collaborations for creating new parks, such as in the area of Oltenia de sub Munte, a UNESCO geopark. Florin initiated new collaborations with organizations from various Romanian cities to propose and establish new urban protected areas and a national network of such areas. He also set a comprehensive strategy and fit objectives for his two organizations, Kogayon and Văcărești.

## PLANS FOR 2020

In 2020 Florin will launch a competition for the design of the Văcărești Park, which will include the National Center for Environmental Education. The park's team will grow by four people and its management plan will be finalized by the end of the year. Moreover, in 2020, Kogayon will apply to obtain the UNESCO geopark status for Oltenia de sub Munte region.

## SUPPORT FROM ASHOKA

Thanks to the Ashoka Fellowship, Florin started to dedicate full-time to his nature conservation projects.

# Elena Calistru

CIVIC EDUCATION



**YEAR OF ELECTION:** 2019

**ORGANIZATION:** Funky Citizens

**STAFF & VOLUNTEERS:** A core team of 7 people and 5 long time active volunteers, 8 people working for Factual, 8 people working for Buletin de București

“For me, Ashoka means access to an international network through which we can learn and build together.”

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Even though Romania is being perceived as the least democratic country in the EU and also has one of the lowest levels of civic engagement, Elena has rebranded what citizenship is, made civic engagement mainstream and transformed it into a desirable, fun and aspirational way of life. Through Funky Citizens, she uses technology, social media and non-formal education methods to facilitate access to previously hard to find public information and to build the next generation of engaged Romanians who are “civically fit.” Touching on civic education, monitoring public money, conducting fact-checking, focusing on justice and anti-corruption, Elena’s organization is one of the most remarkable and versatile Romanian organizations which work on political and civic engagement.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Funky Citizens is able to reach with its tools and easy-to-read information, more than 5 million people via social media on a yearly basis. Elena’s organization works with over 3000 young people each year and engages them in concrete initiatives. As a result of Funky Citizens’ efforts, Romanians start to see being civically engaged as the norm.

## WORK IN 2019

Elena’s work in 2019 focused on political monitoring and civic involvement. She organized the largest cohort of independent election monitors for the European Parliament election, started working on data transparency in public procurement, and continued her work with Factual, the first fact-checking website for politics and political declarations in Romania. Elena organized numerous civic education workshops and events, including a civic caravan which traveled in 21 cities around Romania. She also inaugurated 80east, a typical 80s apartment that hosts interactive learning experiences on the rights and liberties of Romanians under communism.

## PLANS FOR 2020

In 2020 Elena is planning to concentrate more on small and medium cities in Romania, where she plans to work with regional partners to raise the capacity of local groups for monitoring budget allocations, the decisional process, conduct fact-checking and data journalism.

## SUPPORT FROM ASHOKA

Even though Elena was elected to become an Ashoka Fellow towards the end of 2019, she already benefited from the connection with the other Romanian Fellows, with whom she started collaborating on projects at the intersection of civic activism and environmental protection. She also participated at the European Changemakers Summit in Barcelona and was showcased in Ashoka’s Report “Doing Democracy – How Social Entrepreneurs Bridge Divides, Fight Against Apathy and Strengthen Civil Liberties.”



# Main Initiatives in Romania

Through our events and programs in Romania, we are motivated to generate debates on social issues, inspire audiences to take a stand, as well as pave the road of changemakers for new opportunities for collaboration both on a national and international level.

## International Activity

### 1. She Says

Together with the Open Society Foundation, we are running a program on **gender disparity**. Our early research results show that, in the context of large European conferences, only 3 out of 10 speakers are women. Female social entrepreneurs identify their lack of public visibility as one of the main barriers to their success. Thus, in order to contribute to diminishing gender inequality, local Ashoka offices from Romania, Poland and Germany aim to connect conference organizers with at least 50 female entrepreneurs from their global network. The end goal of this initiative is to offer a platform where women social entrepreneurs gain access and visibility while adding value through their experience and expertise.

### 2. Climate Innovators Map by Ashoka and EIT Climate-KIC

Together with EIT Climate-KIC, Ashoka conducted a study in 9 countries (Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) to identify the most important **changemakers in the area of climate innovation**. Over 800 changemakers, identified in the Climate Innovators Map, tackle issues across various fields, including

energy efficiency in buildings, climate-smart agriculture, socio-economic actors supporting the transformation in post-coal regions, or air quality/pollution. Drawing upon these areas, a qualitative and network analysis was conducted for each of these chosen countries, on which trends and patterns were depicted and aggregated on a regional level. Our research showed the local and regional context for green energy, the level of innovation engaged by countries, public opinion and public policies in place.

### 3. Social Innovation to Tackle Energy Poverty

This initiative, co-created by Ashoka and the Schneider Electric Foundation, together with our local partner Enel Romania, aimed to identify and support innovative ideas in the field of **energy poverty** in 5 countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. After two selection stages, 15 finalists joined the mentoring phase, in order to improve their strategy and amplify their impact. During the final events in Brussels, one finalist from each country was awarded a prize of €3.500. World Vision Iași/Vaslui was the Romanian winner with a project called Winterization. We had the chance to present the program



at big events (launch of the Open Energy, Schneider Electric Romania annual gathering, Innoteque and Efficient Romania, Energy Poverty Clean Energy and the European Energy Divide Conference) with a total attendance of around 510 people, and gathered around us 17 partners to amplify the initiative.

Thanks to our local outreach efforts, we managed to help changemakers outside Bucharest understand that their work directly tackles energy poverty. The Romanian finalists also started to talk more about the topic of energy poverty. For example, Răzvan Munteanu from District 1 Bucharest Municipality was invited to talk at the Efficient Romania conference, where both him and Cristinel Popa from World Vision Iași/Vaslui were interviewed about their projects. Even more, during our final event in Brussels, the Romanian Member of the European Parliament, Dragoș Pîslaru, was one of the hosts for a high-level dinner on the topic of energy poverty.

#### 4. Changemakerxchange

CXC is a global community, co-created by Ashoka and the Robert Bosch Stiftung, providing a safe, fun, and empowering space for **young changemakers**. It fosters profound and lasting connections while nurturing wellbeing and enabling peer-learning and meaningful collaborations. CXC enhances the individual and collective impact of its members and envisions a world where everyone can be a changemaker.

#### 5. Google Impact Challenge

The €10M challenge on Safety asked social innovators to find solutions in tackling **hate and extremism** in their communities in order to help young people thrive both online and offline. The program supports organizations across Europe whose mission is to help young people become confident digital citizens.

#### 6. EUSIC

The European Social Innovation Competition (EUSIC) is the largest social innovation competition organized by the European Commission, in which Ashoka Europe is a partner. The 2019 edition aimed to support early-stage ideas that **challenge plastic waste** and facilitate a network of radical innovators shaping society for the better.

Outcome: Romanians were overrepresented as candidates in the competition with 61 candidates, one of whom entered the semifinal. Compared to the previous competition on Youth & Education, when Romania had more finalists and a winner, 2019's competition revealed that the ecosystem of changemakers who work on plastic waste has a relatively weaker capacity and projects maturity, which raises the importance of support and empowerment of the Romanian actors in the field.

EVENT	OUTCOMES
CXC	5 participants from Romania in 4 summits
EUSIC	61 applicants from Romania
Google Impact Challenge	28 applicants from Romania, 2 Romanian finalists, one winner (Iarina Taban's <i>Growing GREAT and Safe</i> from the Lindefeld Association)



## Local Activity

### 1. Ecosystem Work in Timișoara: PLAI Festival and Beyond

As part of Ashoka's long-term goal to nurture the process of building self-organizing and self-aware ecosystems, we aim to strengthen the level of conversations with local key stakeholders. We intend to level the playing field for social entrepreneurs in Timișoara and other Romanian areas through building trust locally, sharing ideas, know-how, and fostering positive synergies. We started through an active presence at the Timișoara PLAI Festival, where we organized a two-day stand and several workshops for local changemakers, decision-makers, entrepreneurs, and corporates.

### 2. Social finance and Inspiring new potential social entrepreneurs

Ashoka Romania's definition of social entrepreneurs allowed us to spot in Romania more than 1.000 changemakers in a first but certainly not exhaustive mapping carried out in 2017. Between 2017 and 2019, we supplemented that original public database with an internal database of over 1.500 changemakers that we supported through our national and international programs.

Nevertheless, according to the National Report on Social Entrepreneurship (Ashoka Romania, 2018), lack of public and private funding was mentioned as a first barrier to social innovation in Romania. Since then, Ashoka Romania organized several short-term capacity building programs for social entrepreneurs on social impact, system change, and social reporting. As of 2018, 3 events focusing on social finance have been organized with international leaders in the field such as Mark Cheng, member of Ashoka Leadership Group, who has helped raise over \$200mn for more than 60 pioneering social enterprises around the world, Mrs. Silke Horakova, social impact investor and co-owner of Albatros Media, the largest publishing house in the Czech Republic, Marcus Freiburg, Managing Director of the Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurship (FASE) and Rareș Pamfil, Proposition Lead for Impact Agora, an institutional marketplace for early-stage impact ventures and funds, sponsored by Barclays.

In 2019 Ashoka and UniCredit started a journey that offered knowledge transfer, inspiration and new perspectives on their contribution to society to more than 250 small entrepreneurs. Topics tackled include social innovation and impact, systems change, and co-creation mechanisms that were introduced in the conversations we engaged in with Academia Minților Creative. Participants and alumni joined from Bucharest,

Timișoara, Cluj, and Iași. Ashoka delivered workshops on social entrepreneurship and developed a methodology based on the Business Model Canvas in order to strengthen operating models in terms of pricing systems, supply chains, and human resources, among others. We ran a similar, yet more intensive capacity building program with over 150 small entrepreneurs from Sibiu, Timișoara, Galați, and Iași, that had accessed European funds through the business incubators developed by Fonduri Structurale and their partners.

Finally, the "Journey to Social Entrepreneurship" event, co-organized with UniCredit, presented a series of speakers to empower the community to understand the necessary skill-set to transform a social entrepreneurship idea into a working business model, gain access to finance and gain insight into current initiatives in Romania that were able to achieve scalable effects in their local community. Through this partnership, great minds and social innovators such as Dennis Karpes and Tristram Stuart were brought to Romania, while new conversations were initiated between investors with the special participation of Marcus Freiburg from the Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurship (FASE).

### 3. Social Journalism

Together with DoR, Lidl and UniCredit, we launched five grants ranging between €600-€1,000 to support Solution Journalists, who focus on conducting journalistic materials covering solutions for societal problems and promote social innovations in a thorough, fact-based and rigorous way.

### 4. Sports for Social Good Changemakers Map

Together with Decathlon, we designed a mapping process to uncover who are the changemakers that tap into the resources sports offer and use them to address societal/community challenges through developing creative solutions. We want to understand better the field, but also the challenges, and opportunities for supporting changemakers in this field in the coming years.

### 5. Impact Transfer

While this program, formerly known as Localizer, has been on hold for the past year in order to integrate lessons learned from the previous experience, we strongly consider that this initiative can bring a significant contribution to the local market by supporting the implementation of models from the global Ashoka network. The effects of the first year still have

an impact, as Romanian entrepreneurs are replicating the ideas of current Ashoka Fellows. We helped two organizations, Cooperativa de Energie (the first green energy cooperative in Romania) and Sieureusesc.ro reach the stage of maturity. We have also supported a local NGO to gain international support in reorganizing its mission, strategy, operating structure and model, resources and services, as well as achieve integration in a more global network. Finally, with the help of PwC, our pro-

bono partner, we were able to offer consulting services to local organizations.

## International Ashoka Fellows in Romania in 2019



**Alaa Murabit**

Women's Rights



**Karl-Henrik Robert**

Sustainability Education &  
Environmental Protection



**David Boardman**

Solutions Journalism



**Jeremy Drucker**

Solutions Journalism



**Vincenzo Linarello**

Anti-corruption & Local  
Economic Development



**Dennis Karpes**

Environmental Protection &  
Soil Restoration



**László Jakubinyi**

Disability & Local Economic  
Development



**Tristram Stuart**

Food Waste & Environmental  
Protection





## CALL TO ACTION

**Impact Transfer initiatives gathered a network of Ashoka Fellows open to providing their expertise to other changemakers interested in adopting their operating model, offering tips and support to their growth by sharing their lessons learned, approach, and challenges.**

**We invite anyone interested in adopting the solutions of the following Ashoka Fellows to contact our local office.**

### Selection of Ashoka Fellows profiles:

**Albina Ruiz** – her organization seeks to build healthy, inclusive cities where everyone can live in harmony, by improving the living conditions, income and health of millions of poor people in Peru and Latin America, creating efficient solid waste management systems and sustainable micro-enterprises, and empowering local waste picker enterprises that collect and process garbage.

**Antonio Bello** - building a solution for the thousands of people who suffer from degraded living conditions without having the support to overcome these conditions. He engages municipalities and parishes as the key actors in the rehabilitation process, creating a network of over 3000 volunteers and training them not only to have basic construction skills, but also bring a spirit of joy, hope, and empathy.

**Anna Bella Estévez** - works to empower abused women by leveraging their strengths and capabilities in order to regain self-confidence. She creates peer-to-peer support networks of surviving women, as over 20.000 women form transnational networks of survivors of domestic violence in Spain, Latin America and the US.

**Rafael Alvarez** – helping industry leaders, schools, and disadvantaged youth discover that they have much to offer each other. Rafael gives low-income teens training in high-tech jobs and exposure to professional work environments. More than 135 companies employ Genesys Works students, 90% of whom go to college.

**Jerome Deconinck** – has recreated the first agricultural land trust to mobilize the French population to preserve their agricultural heritage and to promote the development of a more unified small-scale organic farming culture



## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The activities we have organized throughout the year aimed to support our strategic pillars to:

- Empower and incentivize social entrepreneurs
- Forge more strategic (local) collaborations across social innovators as well as businesses and corporates
- Explore opportunities and collaborations with other Ashoka European offices and Fellows to sustain innovation
- Raise awareness on most pressing societal issues arising in Romania

Building on our success in 2018 organizing the Energy Poverty Solutions workshop and coordinating this year's Social Innovations to Tackle Energy Poverty, we have consolidated our access to a global network of sponsors, experts, and professional pro-bono support to enhance visibility and access for European innovators. These opportunities represented an essential learning curve for the Ashoka Romania country office, as they consolidated our local presence and involvement in bridging national and European expertise.

Moreover, our initiatives strengthened our collaboration with corporate partners and paved the way towards scaling opportunities across current Romanian challenges, such as hate speech and social inclusion.

Overall, in 2019, we have co-organized around 58 workshops, collaborating with various partners such as Fonduri-Structurale.ro, Școala de Valori, or Impact Hub, reaching an estimated direct audience of over 5.000 changemakers.



**03**

# **Community Engagement Impact**



# Perspectives and Impact Study

We are firmly convinced that to improve our work in Romania, we need to listen to our stakeholders: Fellows, partners, social entrepreneurs and changemakers. That is why, after almost three years in Romania, we conducted semi-structured interviews for qualitative data, complemented by an online targeted survey for quantitative data between February and March 2020.

The survey addressed to various stakeholders included three kinds of questions: open questions, on a scale from 1 to 10, and Likert Scale questions. The in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with selected partners, Fellows, and changemakers. The criteria used to select interviewees implied their level of involvement with Ashoka, the types of activities they participated in, as well as their knowledge of Ashoka operations.

The final results are presented from a sample size of 27 respondents and 11 in-depth qualitative interviews.



# Romanian Challenges

Within the interviews, before entering an evaluation of Ashoka Romania's actions, we asked the changemakers, partners and Fellows about the most critical challenges for Romania's society.

## Top Challenges for Romania



Poverty



Education



Public Sector



Trust



Civic Engagement

### Poverty

Most interviewees found that poverty, in some form or another, is the main issue Romania must confront. On the one hand, energy poverty, access to electricity, heating, and clean cooking facilities, was seen as an essential prerequisite for human development that Romania fails to address appropriately. On the other hand, financial inequalities mean that power is concentrated in the hands of a few, while the majority of the population lacks opportunities for economic and social empowerment. The underdevelopment of rural areas and the country's precarious infrastructure are considered critical constraints for the fight against poverty.

### Education

Education is considered to be the most efficient path to address Romania's poverty issues, but the Romanian educational system is largely regarded as inefficient and obsolete. Not only does it fail to support the most vulnerable, such as students from rural areas, but is also unequipped to deliver the 21st-century skills people will need in a world increasingly defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, and hyper-connectivity.

### Public Sector

The current political class of Romania seems to be defined by corruption, inefficiency, and lack of strategic leadership. A commonly identified issue created by this political environment is political instability, which threatens and hinders the work of our Fellows, partners, and Romanian changemakers. Other issues associated with politics are the excessive political involvement in the education and health sectors, the limited funding for the public and third sector, as well as spending public money on patch solutions rather than attacking the root causes of Romania's issues.

### Trust

The lack of transparency of public institutions, along with the described political issues, leads to low trust in public authorities. More than this, our interviewees found it problematic that people also do not trust each other, which makes it difficult for them to build larger coalitions to work together.



### Civic Engagement

Not surprisingly, in an ecosystem with low trust, civic engagement in Romania is perceived as being very low. Our interviewees believe that in order to achieve change in Romania, we must empower citizens to fight for their own causes.

### Others

The aging population and brain drain, the flow of young minds abroad, are also seen as highly problematic. Digitalization and the use of new technologies are considered tremendous opportunities for change but are underutilized in Romania.

## Top 3 Constraints for Changemakers

### 01

Difficulty to reach and collaborate with public authorities

### 02

Political and financial instability

### 03

Lack of funding

“Living with such great political instability is like trying to build something on quicksand.”

- Elena Calistru, Ashoka Fellow





# Ashoka's Role in Romania

Being eager to address such issues in Romania, we asked our stakeholders what Ashoka's role should be.

01

## Mapping Changemakers

Our stakeholders believe that it is important to first identify people who have the potential to implement solutions or people who already have an impact in their communities.



02

## Bringing Changemakers Together

After identifying the changemakers, the interviewees expect Ashoka to create networks between them and build communities that work together and learn from each other.



03

## Empower and Capacitate

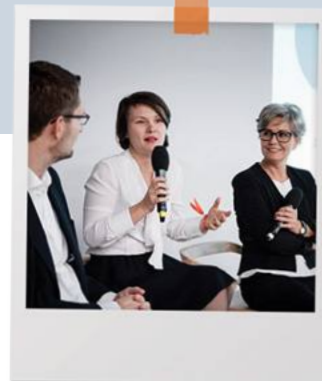
Considering Ashoka's extensive international network, we are considered as a powerful disseminator of best practices to be replicated in Romania, as well as an important capaciator through relevant know-how (monitoring, evaluation, efficiency, management, internal procedures).



04

## Mediate

Ashoka is expected to play a role in creating trust between the three sectors and mediate their interactions and conversations on problems and solutions for fruitful collaborations.



“Ashoka should work from within the triangle formed by the private, public and civic sector, so it can bring them closer to each other.”

- Ashoka Romania Partner

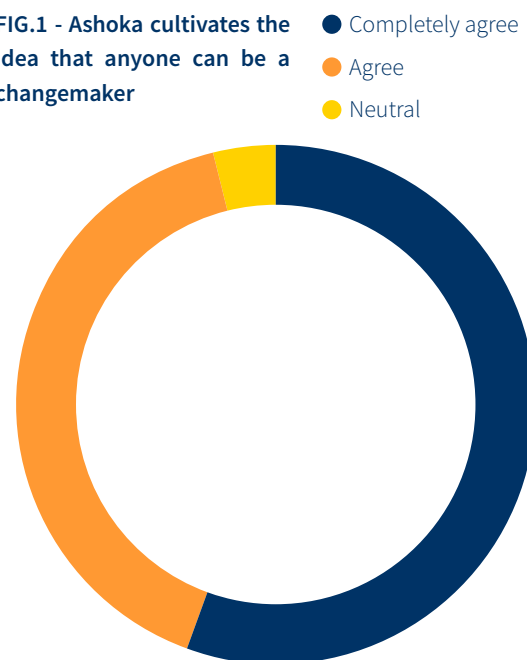


# External image of Ashoka: How stakeholders actually see us?



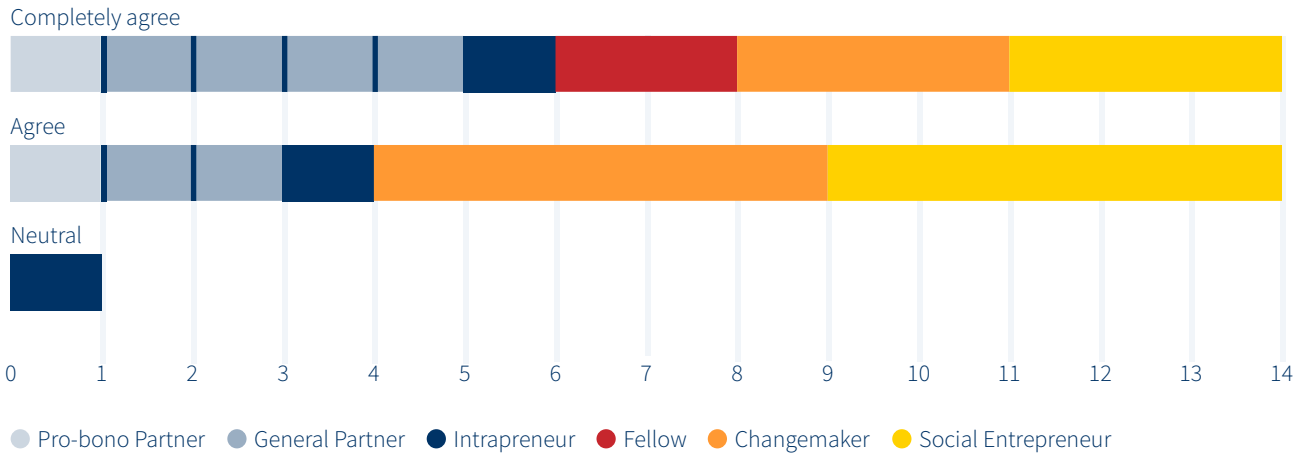
When we embarked upon the journey of bringing Ashoka to Romania, we had in mind to foster **A Changemaking Romania**, one which not only recognizes and celebrates changemakers, but also actively supports them to anchor their innovations at the systems' level. We thus started to not only identify changemakers and select some of them as Fellows, but also to offer them support instruments and international opportunities. We firmly believed that by connecting them to ecosystem players from other sectors, from corporate executives to business entrepreneurs, to public officials and journalists, we can accelerate social change in Romania. After our third year of activity, **89%** of our respondents claimed that our activity for 2019 has at least met their expectations. Thus, because of our sustained effort and the strong partnerships and collaborations we have established with communities across Romania, **96%** of our respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that Ashoka Romania cultivates the idea that everyone in their society can become a changemaker.

**FIG.1 - Ashoka cultivates the idea that anyone can be a changemaker**



# Ashoka Reputation

Each year, we aim to become more trustful, strengthening our local involvement and identifying the right changemakers and partners to stir positive change and increase the impact of promising initiatives. This year, **95%** of our survey respondents agreed or completely agreed that Ashoka Romania is an organization to be trusted in approaching social innovation issues and opportunities.



**FIG. 3 - Ashoka's image improved compared to previous years**

Our stakeholders consider our brand to be strong, and changemakers recognize the importance of our mission. **78%** of our respondents perceive that our image has improved compared to the previous two years of activity.



**FIG. 4 - Ashoka Fellows can bring true change in Romania**

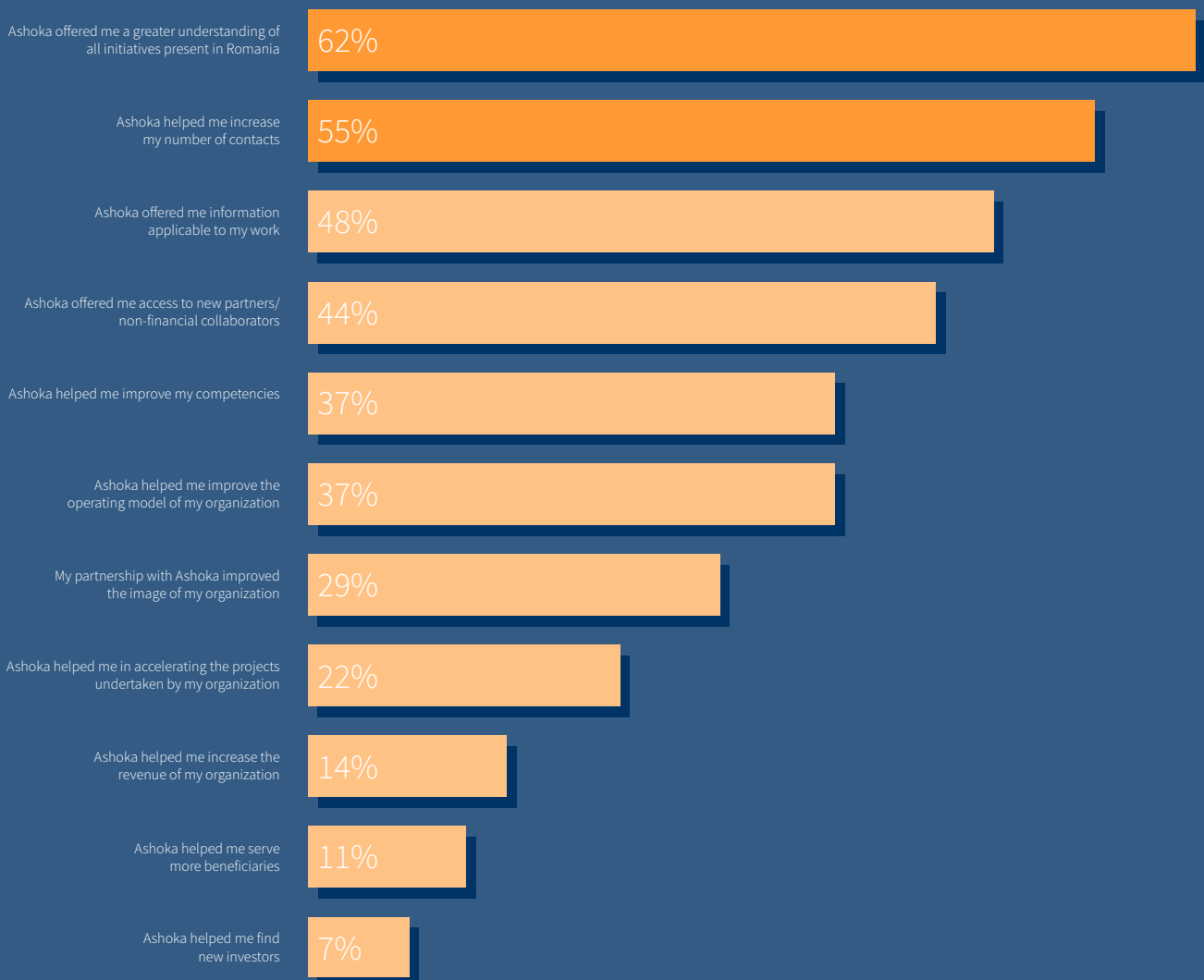
We continue to have a well-established reputation around our Fellowship process. In our survey, **85%** of people agree or strongly agree that our Ashoka Fellows are able to produce relevant change in Romania. We are happy to observe that this belief has been confirmed throughout our semi-structured interviews with people from our ecosystem of stakeholders.

# Ashoka Position in Romania

From our previous chapter, we were able to depict that from a brand recognition perspective, our image became stronger than in previous years, as a result of our constant involvement in bridging and supporting communities across the country, together with our Fellows, changemakers, partners and social entrepreneurs. All our responding partners and changemakers agree or strongly agree that they trust our approach in supporting the social entrepreneurship environment in Romania.

Regarding our contribution to Romanian ecosystems, the respondents pointed out that our efforts make stakeholders more aware of existing social initiatives in Romania (62%), and contribute to connecting people and communities. This helps to enrich their organizations' number of contacts for possible future collaborations (55%). Our contribution is also seen through delivering workshops and events that are applicable to the type of work undergone by the organizations we serve (48%), while bridging new opportunities within sectors, communities, or non-financial collaborators (44%).

**FIG. 5 - Choose the most appropriate statements**



# Fellows as Examples, and “Everyone a Changemaker” as Mission

Supporting social entrepreneurs on their way to maximizing social impact becomes the first pillar of Ashoka’s work. We also work towards a world where every citizen has the skills and the will to be a changemaker. In our Romanian journey so far, Fellows are very appreciated by all the stakeholders and are able to inspire changemakers; Ashoka in Romania and in the rest of the world works restlessly towards an Everyone a Changemaker World, where all citizens and in particular youth are equipped with the right skillset and mindset to make a positive change. Fellows remain role models and systems-changers, but we have developed a set of instruments, not least international development opportunities, to support many other changemakers.



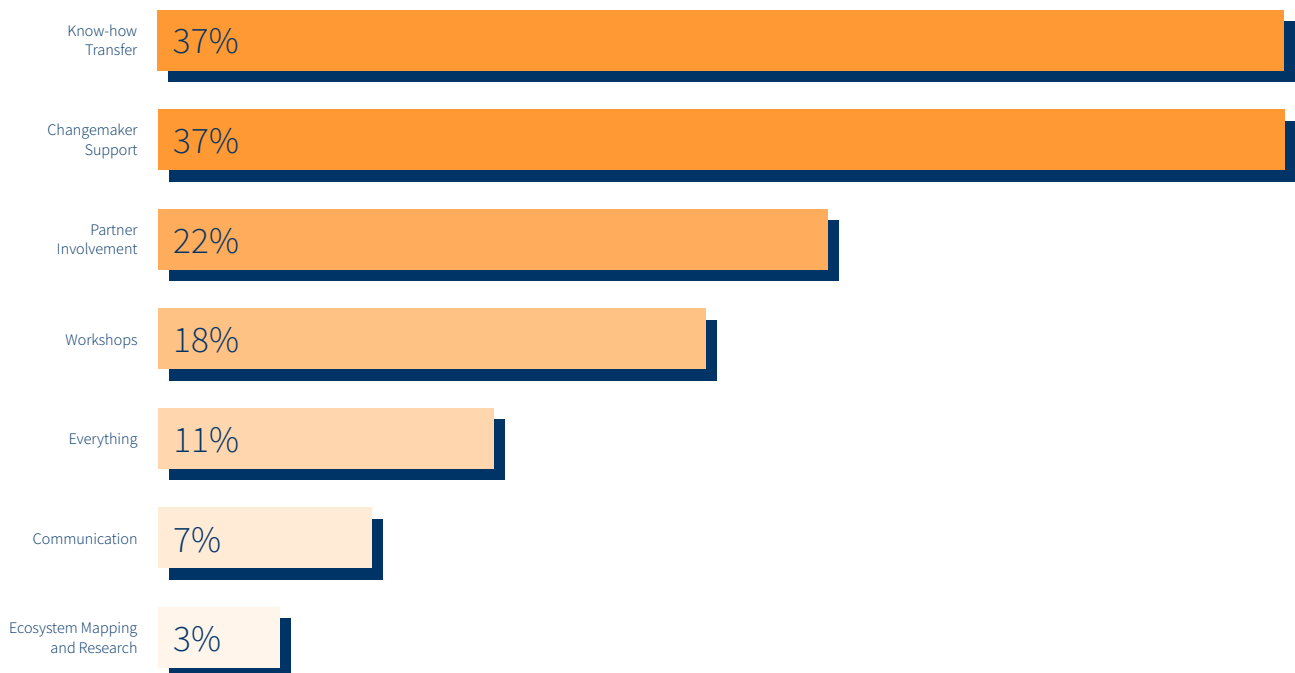


# Supporting Social Entrepreneurs throughout the Country

We also invited our respondents to share their opinion on which activities they believe we should keep, improve and abandon. We are happy that our respondents confirm our beliefs in the importance of conducting knowledge workshops, offering constant support to changemakers through the involvement of our general and pro-bono partners, and organizing networking opportunities with international Fellows or changemakers. In terms of redundant activities, our respondents reported that they gained value out of all of our initiatives this year, meaning that the needs of the ecosystem have been correctly identified.

When it comes to things to improve, Know-how transfer opportunities ranked the highest, with 27% of respondents mentioning the need for more events addressing a more sectorial approach to knowledge transfer across organizations and changemakers. Equally, we identified that changemaker support, under any form, is welcome by our stakeholders and encouraged to continue to do so in the upcoming years. Much like last year, our respondents identified the need for workshops on social entrepreneurship, education, and networking.

**FIG. 6 - Activities Ashoka should keep focusing on**



In terms of the activities Ashoka should improve, our respondents expressed interest in further developing our **know-how transfer** to be more segmented across topics and industries, in order to improve further collaboration across actors that operate in the same environment. While our **workshops** included methodologies and discussions relevant to all organizations, such as methodologies for capacity management and social finance, more specific knowledge transfer programs are required to address the needs of certain sectors. Other significant mentions were related to improved **partner involvement** and liaising with the corporate and non-governmental sectors as an intermediate actor.

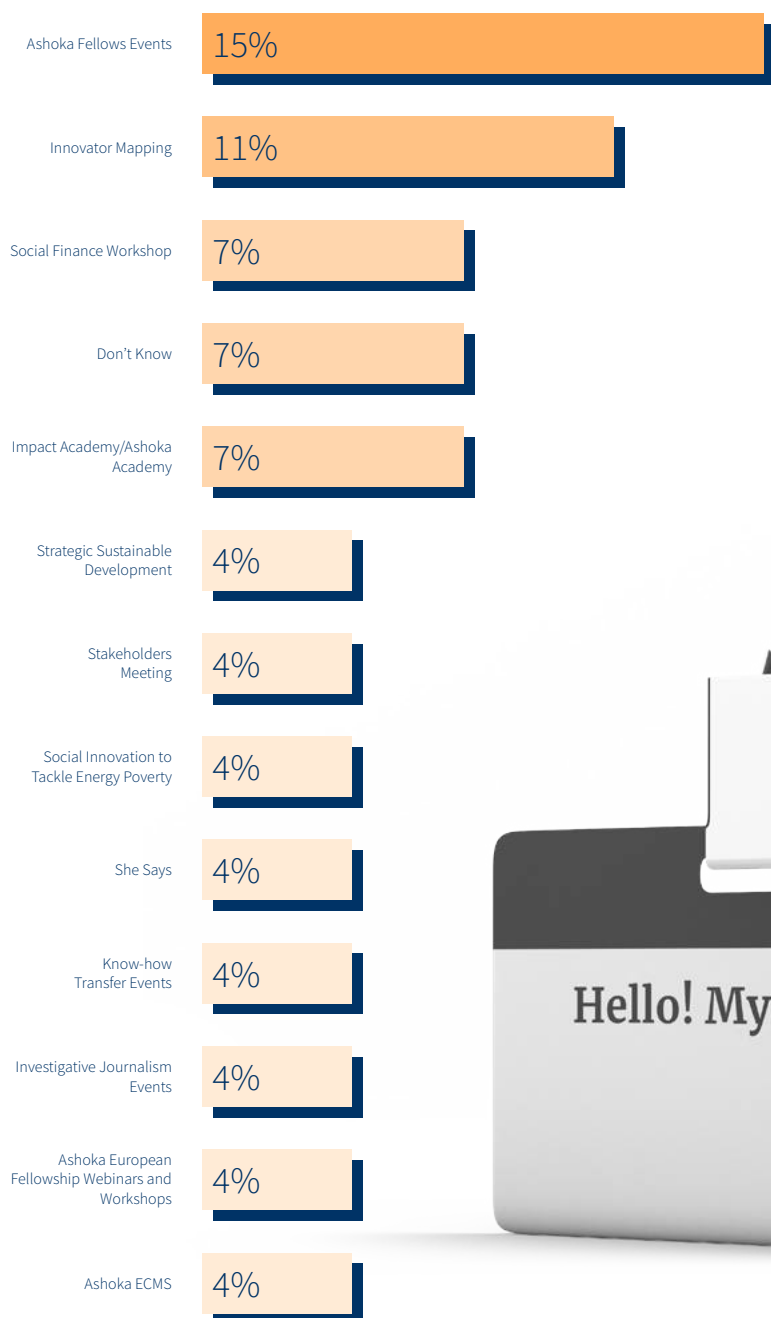
The survey also revealed that Ashoka should continue those initiatives related to the general education of the public with regards to what social entrepreneurship entails, including workshops on good international practices and achieving strategic, systemic change.

**FIG. 7 - Initiatives Ashoka should improve**



When asked about the most relevant events of the year, **Journey to Social Entrepreneurship** and **Social Innovation to Tackle Energy Poverty** were mentioned most often. Interestingly, among our respondents, all events offering the opportunity to interact and network with both Romanian and International Ashoka Fellows seem to be of utmost importance. Ranking on second place was our **Climate Innovators Mapping**, as respondents pointed out the lack of such visibility and access of changemakers to their peers as a barrier to development. Given the lack of maturity in various sectors in Romania, innovators mapping initiatives are seen as a resource for having a better understanding of the ecosystem and efforts currently in place, and for stirring a better collaboration in the future. A full list of our most relevant events, as considered by our respondents, can be seen in the graph below.

**FIG. 8 - Ashoka's most relevant events**



# Strengths and Weaknesses

During the interviews, we found that one of Ashoka's main strengths is its extensive network, both globally and nationally. Having access to thousands of Fellows from abroad, as well as a wealth of knowledge accumulated during the 40 years history of the organization, means that Ashoka Romania can support solution-driven Romanian changemakers like no other organization. Our rich network in Romania, including high-level decision-makers, strong partnerships with businesses, and non-governmental organizations alike, allow Ashoka Romania to bring very different actors together in order to build and grow robust ecosystems in key domains for the country.

While some of our stakeholders found that we achieved accelerated visibility and reputation in a short time span, we still have to work on increasing the profile of our office, especially outside of Bucharest. Moreover, as we cover a variety of domains and issues, the focus of our organization seems to be ambiguous.

Even though we are appreciated for creating synergies in the ecosystems we are working for, our stakeholders feel we must nurture relationships for a longer time to achieve more concrete results.

One of Ashoka Romania's strongest perceived advantages is its dynamic and professional team, which our interviewees felt it should grow for increased impact.

## STRENGTHS

Rich Global Network

Access to and strong partnerships with the Romanian private and public sector

Focus on ecosystem building and growing

The Ashoka Romania team

Interventions in key domains

Brings international events to Romania

Accelerated visibility and reputation

Great leadership programs

## WEAKNESSES

Lack of focus as we cover multiple areas and issues

Not enough visibility, especially outside of Bucharest

Limited nurturing efforts for consolidating networks

Few concrete results from the collaborations we create between changemakers

Limited human resources

“Ashoka has access to the most varied expertise from all over the world to empower Romanian ecosystems exactly on what they need.”

- Ioana Bauer, Social Entrepreneur



## Progress in 2019

Most of our stakeholders found that Ashoka Romania is on an accelerated ascending trend, having achieved higher visibility, a better presence, and stronger networks of changemakers and supporters.

## Desires for 2020

While our presence surely has increased compared to last year, there is still a need for ongoing support for changemakers and social entrepreneurs, as identified by all our research approaches and by our team as well. Based on the continuous feedback we receive and on our newly developed strategy, we aim to further improve our activity through:

- Ongoing support to increase the impact of Romanian Ashoka Fellows
- Plugging in local changemakers to Ashoka international opportunities
- Developing an ecosystem that actively promotes and understands social finance in Romania
- Raising awareness about what a social entrepreneur is and does
- Develop capacity-building programs and knowledge transfer activities in various sectors

Our stakeholders expect not only to preserve this year's results and ensure our successful events become recurring, but to further invest our efforts into bringing communities as well as international opportunities closer together in a more targeted and scalable way.



“Ashoka Romania could help many organizations develop more strategic approaches to their work, and could share from its extensive experience on how to better engage with corporate partners.”

- Mihnea Florea, Changemaker



# Partners Perception on

## Ashoka Romania

We value and appreciate the support of our partners, without which none of our activities would take place or be so successful.

According to our survey:

100%

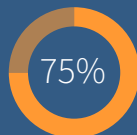
of our partner respondents agree or strongly agree that Ashoka is a trustful organization when it comes to social innovation initiatives

100%

of our partner respondents agree or strongly agree that Ashoka Romania's activity for 2019 has met their expectations



of our partners believe that our brand image has improved compared to the previous years



believe that Ashoka helped them become more aware of the initiatives in Romania



believe Ashoka helped them develop competencies relevant to their work



believe their brand image improved since becoming an Ashoka partner

**04**

**Team  
Financials  
Partners**

**How to get  
involved**



“Alone we can do so  
little; **together** we can  
do so much.”

- Hellen Keller, Author & Activist



# Team



**Corina Murafa**  
Country Director



**Ciprian Stănescu**  
Partnerships Manager (until April 2019)



**Ovidiu Condurache**  
Venture Manager



**Alexandra Caraman**  
Communications Manager



**Marie Ringler**  
Ashoka Europe & CEE Leader



**Anna Schaden**  
CEE Operations Manager



**Ana Murray**  
Strategy & Partnerships Manager



**Ramona Rusu**  
CEE Finance Manager



**Domenico Pellitteri**  
Projects & Operations Manager



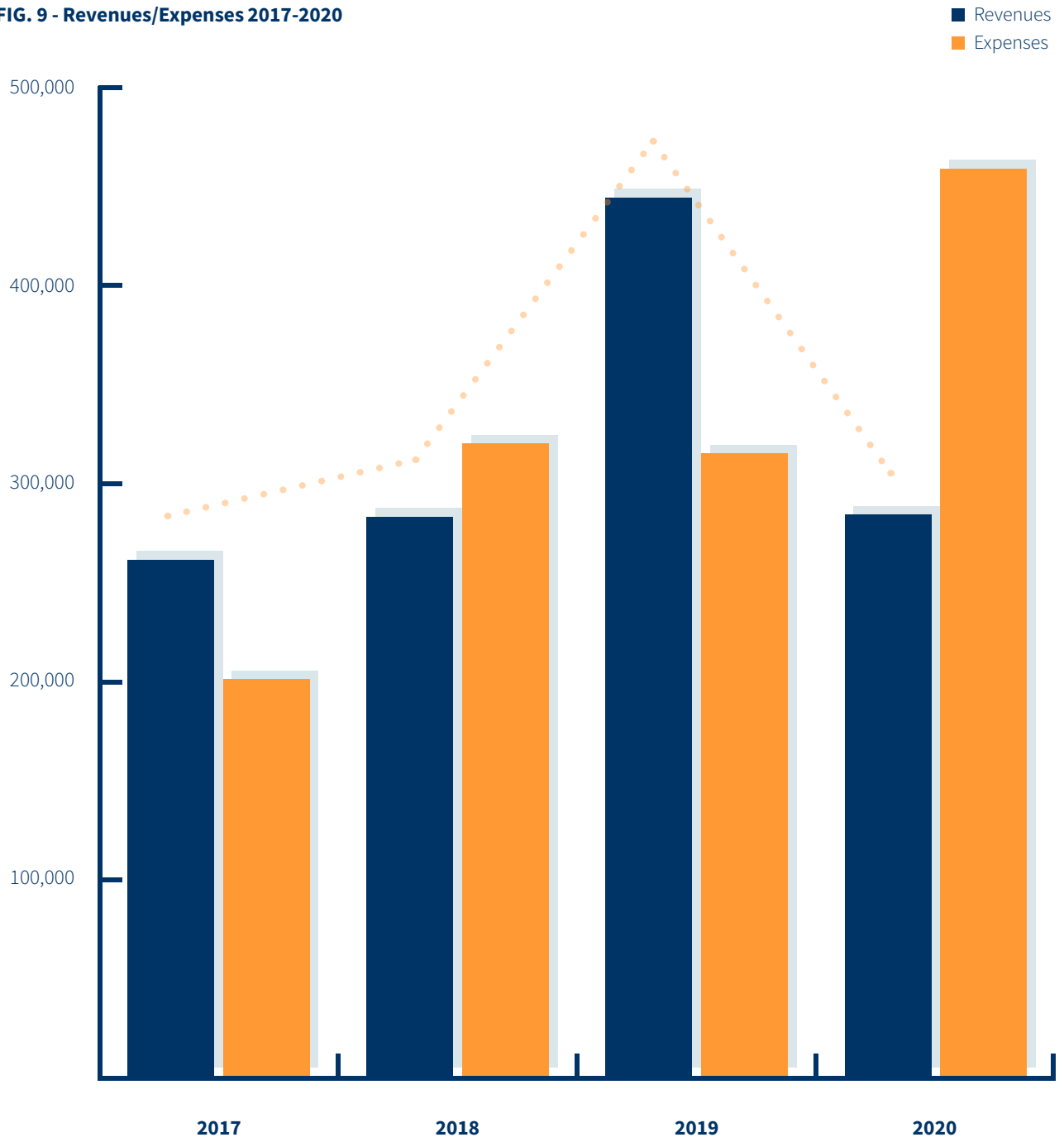
# Ashoka Romania Financials

As a pilot start-up, Ashoka started to operate in Romania under the legal identity of the Ashoka gemeinnuetzige GmbH, a non-profit company registered with the Vienna Trade Register and with an office in Vienna. From the very beginning, we set to establish a stable local team and presence. Looking at the healthy development of the local office, the needs in the ecosystem for the type of support and opportunities provided by Ashoka and partners' interest, the Global Board of Ashoka has decided, in May 2018, to set up a local legal entity. 2019 was a new milestone for Romania, when we set up our own legal entity - "Fundatia Ashoka."

The first two years of activity were possible thanks to the strong contribution of Ashoka Romania's Founding partners, the Romanian American Foundation and Enel Romania. We have diversified our sources of revenues with Ashoka Support Network Members and numerous local, corporate, pro-bono and international partners.

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (expected)
<b>Revenues</b>	€252,000	€273,000	€429,000	€274,000
<b>Expenses</b>	€193,806	€308,757	€304,000	€443,000

**FIG. 9 - Revenues/Expenses 2017-2020**



# Our Partners

## Founding Partners

Romanian-American Foundation  
Enel Romania

## Strategic Corporate Partner

NN

## Corporate Partners

Decathlon  
Lateral  
UniCredit Bank

## Pro-bono Partners

Graffiti PR  
PwC  
Schoenherr  
SHL

## International Partners

Schneider Electric Foundation  
EIT Climate-KIC  
Open Society Foundation

## Ashoka Support Network Members

Andrei Pogonaru  
Ciprian Morar

## Local Partners

Fonduri Structurale  
Red Bull

# How to get involved

## Join the Ashoka Support Network

Global community of 450+ successful and innovative professionals in 25 countries who invest in Ashoka and support Fellows.

## Be an Ashoka Volunteer

Being a volunteer in Ashoka is a journey with one destination: the social innovation world.

## Become a Strategic Partner

Our strategic partners are forward-thinking and leading companies/organizations who invest in Ashoka to increase our collective impact.

## Become a Pro-bono Partner

Connect your services to the greatest network of social entrepreneurs to inspire your organization and to contribute to our systemic change.

# Special Acknowledgments

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