



ASHOKA ROMANIA

Impact Report

2020



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Introduction



Ashoka Romania has arrived at its fourth yearly finish line, a year that challenged us, brought us together, but also offered new opportunities to connect and innovate under a lot of uncertainty. Ashoka Romania is part of the largest global network of social innovators, an organisation that for four decades has identified and supported social entrepreneurs whose impact change the world for the better. This report aims to be a reflection on how we coped during a year of unforeseen events, a global pandemic, as well as how we managed to inspire and support our ecosystem. It is a narration of our activities and key outcomes, an evaluation and presentation of our strategy as well as overall impact of Ashoka Romania as we grow our organisation.

The report has two main sections – a reflection on the past year and an outlook for the future. The year we learnt from and the road to a changemaking Romania. In the first section we take a deep breath and present our key lessons depicted from 2020, the emotional rollercoaster year. We relate our sector findings, build on our programs, experiences and initiatives together with our partners, process feedback from our ecosystem and our impact. Then, we get a dose of inspiration and empowerment from our Ashoka Fellows, through a series of portrayals about how they adjusted and continued to inspire others in 2020.

We put these reflections on the whiteboard and started to prepare and design for the future. We allow for the past year to lay the foundations achieving an Everyone a Changemaker word. To guide us towards our role in accelerating social change in Romania. Firstly, we try to dig deeper into what social innovation requires to truly bloom. Afterwards, we create clear objectives on how to be the positive catalysts that contributes to achieving systems changing impact.

Foreword



Ana Murray
*Country Director
Ashoka Romania*

There will be novels and movies made after 2020: the year of the pandemic, powered by social media. Beyond everything that happened for Ashoka Romania together with the people, partners and the organizations around it was a humbling experience. Firstly, being able to have trust-based relationships and honest conversations and support with our partners, especially Romanian American Foundation and NN, but also new ones such as Black Sea Trust. Without them, the financial pressure wouldn't have allowed us to be able to be that support shoulder for the ecosystems around us. And this, we did: over 29 organizations were involved in a unique program to try to uplift those working with the most vulnerable; we almost became a media house with over 50 hours of webinars hosted together with our Ashoka Fellows and our colleagues from Ashoka offices all over the world. We rediscovered who we are as a team and as each individual. For the first time, our personal lives were intertwined with our professional lives on a daily basis and without a time frame in sight. We took calls and collaborated with our colleagues' kids, pets, parents, walking in the park or sitting in the same "office" space from home that we all got to know so well. This is how we also re-learned how important it is to take time intentionally to reconnect, design peer-to-peer spaces, nurture trust and vulnerability and allow for uncertainty in all our processes.

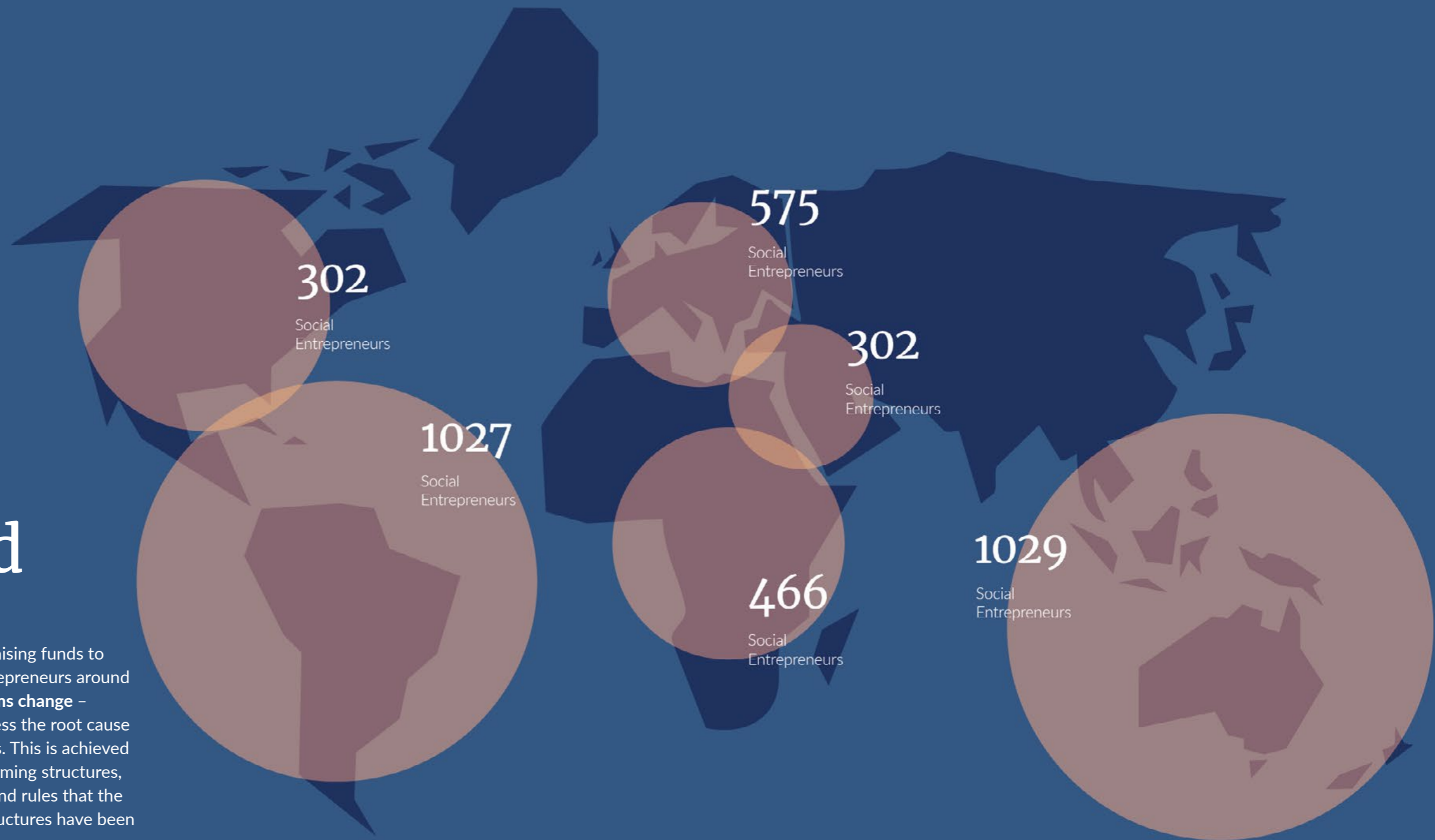
Hopefully, all these will take us to a new normal, wiser and more connected, accepting who we are together and each one, and striving for more collaboration, more long-term thinking and having social impact at heart.

Thank you for every thought, every feedback, every new avenue you brought into our lives!

Ashoka Around the World

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.

Ashoka is the largest global network of social entrepreneurs in the world, founded in 1980 by Bill Drayton, a 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.



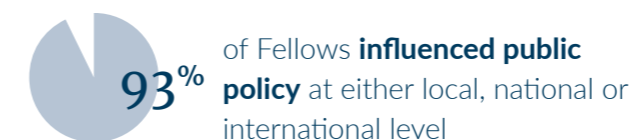
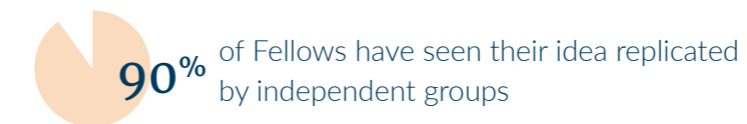
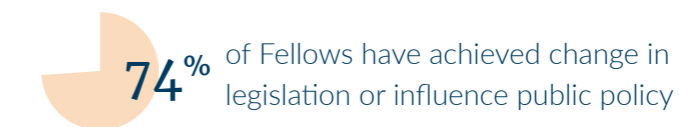
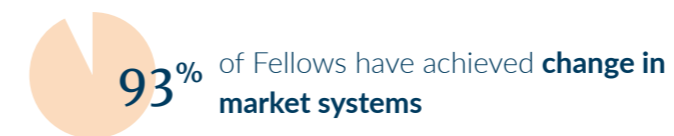
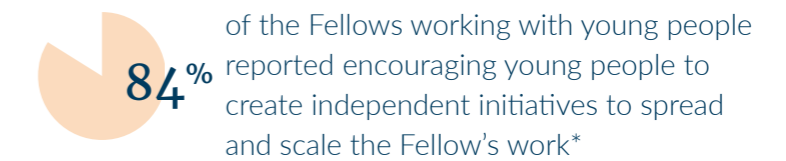
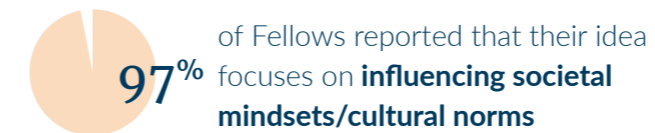
Building an Everyone a Changemaker World

Complex social challenges require complex solution, driven and led by 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 bring change around them. Changemakers need continuous learning, re-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 identify and to drive change. In this way, everyone can unleash their potential to solve systemic problems.

Our 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.



- Achieved legislative change or influenced government policy
- Provided research and/or previously missing data to policymakers
- Advised policymakers/legislative bodies as an expert
- Represented marginalized populations and/or challenged laws in court

- Increased the flow of market information (e.g. about prices or products to different market actors)
- Made it easier for people to trade or access certain goods or services in the existing market
- Created a new market that allows people to trade or access a product or service they previously could not
- Provided new ways for low-income people to generate income
- Led to changes in the code of conduct or official policy of a large organisation or industry
- Encouraged for-profit organizations to allocate dynamics in a new way to include previously excluded people

Ashoka's Next Now

The world is better than we think. In pockets across the globe, humans are pioneering and implementing real-life solutions – answers to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Powered by Ashoka, Next Now identifies, supports and lifts up these examples, and the changemakers behind them. From a bird's eye perspective, we see patterns and frontiers of innovation that show a way to a better future. We weave a community of innovators committed to building it, and share our findings and insights with the world.

Planet & Climate

Through **Next Now: Planet & Climate** we aim to identify the key insights and mindset shifts that will revolutionize the field of climate. Equipped with a new vision for Planet & Climate, we will mobilize teams of outstanding changemakers to make it a reality.

Tech & Humanity

Next Now: Tech & Humanity aims to change the course of history by uniting leaders behind audacious goals that bring humanity and technology to a new equilibrium. Together, this ecosystem of visionary changemakers will shape the future of technology and the digital world for the good of all. A future in which no one gets left behind.

Gender

Equality is a moral and a business imperative. Unconscious bias remains prevalent across geographies, and in every venue imaginable—from classrooms to board rooms. Fortunately, some key innovators are identifying the acupuncture points capable of shifting entire systems. Their solutions combine behavioral design with empowerment; they focus on sectors of strategic importance; and they re-frame and deconstruct gender, to name a few.

New Longevity

Guided by these and future insights, **Next Now: New Longevity** aims to change the course of history by uniting leaders around audacious goals that promote intergenerational harmony, dignity and purpose for all seniors. Together, this ecosystem of visionary changemakers will build a brighter future. A future that addresses and anticipates our most urgent aging challenges. A future in which no one gets left behind. Because the world is changing fast and the time to act is Now.



Part One: The Unusual Year

Setting the Scene





2020 was an unusual year that shifted not only the dynamics of the social sector but the entire world. In our report, **EMERGING OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**, we aimed to better grasp how this year transformed us, from civil society we worked closely with to the private sector, public authorities and ultimately, people. As we outline in this report, it has become a well-known fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on everyone's daily lives – our “normal” has been threatened on all fronts. To name a few, schools have been closed down, a measure that has pushed classes to migrate online; people with chronic health conditions or those which require urgent medical attention have been facing additional challenges and delays while interacting with overstretched medical systems; the political arena has been transforming; and the risks for climate hazard have been accelerated. With particular concern regarding education and employment, the majority of sectors have been forced to become compatible with remote connectivity.

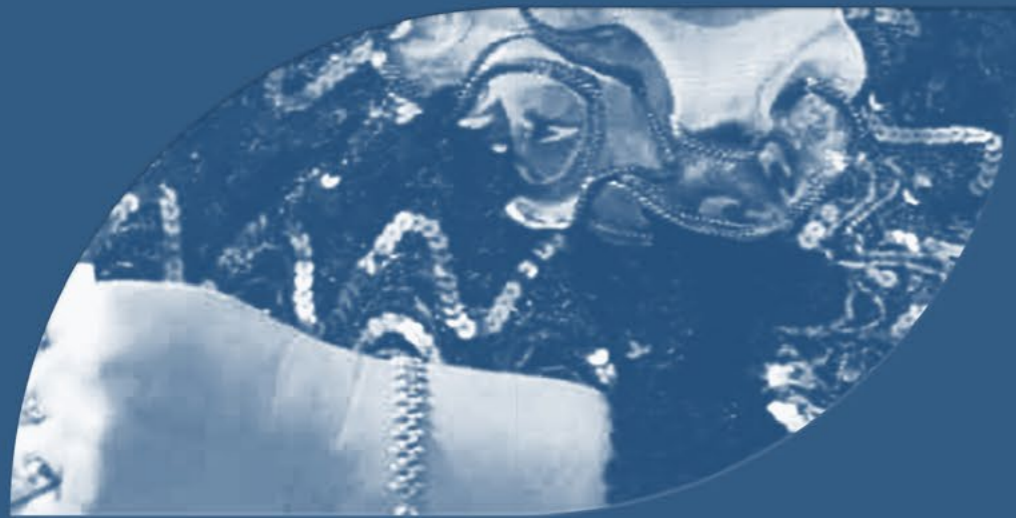
Ultimately, it changed everyone's perspective – the way we see relationships with the people around us. It changed how we become mindful of our mental health. It triggered us to do more, work more and help more. It has shown us once again the power of networks and community crowds.

Our support for early-stage entrepreneurs has been leveraged many times over: through organizational growth, policy change, independent replication, and more. In these times of hardship, we are still here to support social entrepreneurs and changemakers everywhere. Perhaps more than ever, we remain humbled by the resilience, creativity and strength of our Ashoka Fellows and changemakers to bounce back, adapt, and innovate for the greater good, despite the difficulties that arise, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, an atypical year, our main mission was to support civil society leaders and social entrepreneurs get past the hardships presented by the event that changed the course of everyone's lives.



**How
We Coped**



**How
We Inspired**



(Civil) Society Response



World Bank's ["Rapid Assessment of Romanian CSO in the Context of COVID-19"](#) puts into light the tremendous efforts done by civil society to continue its activities and be close to the people who needed it the most in these trying times. We have witnessed great resilience and solidarity with the stakeholders that were involved in managing the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a crisis in the world, forcing just about everyone around the globe to adapt. Romanian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) were no exception to this, however the crisis contributed to shaping the Romanian CSO landscape. Driven by inadequate distribution of vital supplies, shortages and growing inequalities, the Romanian civil society joined the battle against the virus. This initially started among a small number of medical NGOs, but soon enough spread to all areas of civil society. **We saw communities get engaged in grassroots organisations, non-medical NGOs refocus their actions to respond to the crisis, and engagement range from companies to informal citizen groups. This widened the response from emergency medical supplies delivery to supporting the vulnerable population and communities throughout the crisis.**

During the pandemic, the Romanian CSOs rose to the challenge, by showing their ability to be flexible, quick to learn and adapt to a new and previously unseen set of circumstances. All of this was done outside of their usual area of expertise and intervention in many cases. We saw a great ability for resilience and adaptation, with many NGOs moving towards supporting the education sector, and focusing to help children and their families during the multiple lockdowns. This is not the first time that the CSO landscape in Romania was reshaped by a crisis. Indeed, the 2008 financial crisis as well as the 2017 anti-corruption protests also changed the Romanian CSO ecosystem. During the COVID-19 crisis, it demonstrated once again its ability to mobilize and adapt quickly and efficiently.

Our Part

Our Two Latest Ashoka Fellows

Ioana Bauer
eLiberare

With the committed support of our strategic partners, Romanian-American Foundation and NN, we elected Ioana Bauer from eLiberare as Ashoka Fellow, whom we officially inducted into our network in May 2020. Her organization has already achieved great impact by giving new roles that social actors (i.e. families, communities, state institutions) in preventing human trafficking. Her team introduced a replicable curriculum in the national educational system, having developed human trafficking classes for teenagers. There are 5,384 teachers who run awareness classes on human trafficking with the use of eLiberare's curricula and over 2,764 professionals, such as social workers or law enforcement, having completed trauma-informed care trainings and general human trafficking capacity-building sessions. The teachers participating in eLiberare's program trained 190,230 students in 640 schools. She has already begun testing out this method in Moldova, with Bulgaria to follow.



**Carmen
Gheorghe**
E-Romnja

We announced our next elected Ashoka Fellow, the first Roma woman to be inducted into our network, in November 2020. She is Carmen Gheorghe who established E-Romnja, the first Roma feminist organization in Romania. Her goal is to build a new narrative with Roma women about Roma women. She boldly weaves together different layers of intervention such as empowering Roma women to become bottom-up change agents and uses their insights to reshape legal and societal frameworks. All of this, while creating knowledge pieces that can capture the story told by Roma women about Roma women. After working with over 900 women in 7 communities across the country where the profoundly racist and sexist mentalities have sent Roma women on the outskirts of the society, significant changes happen. Roma women become aware of the multiple elements of their identity and how to use them to be active changemakers in their communities and in the relationships with the public authorities. They organize their own events (celebrations for international Roma day, cooking competitions to bridge the communication gap between mothers and daughters) and self-represent during local council's meetings, organize peaceful marches to increase awareness about their needs, and petition for change.



Local Initiatives

Impact Communities

Together with our strategic partner, NN, we embarked on an initiative for collective action by creating the premises of communities of change under the topics of social and financial inclusion, e-health and prevention, as well as developing community resilience in case of emergencies. Together with each community and based on strategic directions and objectives established together with its members, solutions from the Ashoka Fellow network were brought locally for an impact transfer process. We strongly believe in the impact of the Fellows network and trust that local organisations have the knowledge and drive to understand and adapt models from the network to the Romanian context. 2021 will be an exploratory year, where many organisations from the communities will be implementing new solutions with the help of the Fellows.

International Fellows in the Impact Transfer Process

Social and financial inclusion community



Theo Vaes

Ashoka Fellow from Belgium, who involves thousands of citizens in his effort to change the condition of people living in poverty by raising their self-esteem and stop their societal stigmatization. He measures every step of this journey to build economic and social arguments aimed at changing policy-makers' behavior. In doing so, he is building a case to move away from funding approaches that retroactively heal symptoms of poverty in favor of preventing its root causes. Theo created ArmenTeKort (ATK), an action research organization offering a new space for poor people and volunteering citizens to meet and create trustful relationships on an equal footing.

Emilie Schmitt

Ashoka Fellow from France, who aims to tackle the economical problem with widespread negative psychological consequences of unemployment. Emilie wants to turn it into a positive "learning life experience". To equip unemployed persons and society with the core capabilities to seize such an opportunity to learn and grow, Emilie came up with a unique framework for the unemployed to self-organize in local optimist communities.

E-health and prevention



Mohammad Al-Ubaydli

Founder of Patients Know Best (PKB), which is Europe's largest personal health record platform, enabling patients and healthcare professionals to access real-time health information - anytime, anywhere. PKB is a proven solution, with a track record of supporting patients with rare diseases. Their first ever deployment, in 2010, supported pediatric patients with intestinal failure treated by Great Ormond Street Hospital. Co-lead for implementation of this solution in Romania is our Ashoka Fellow Dorica Dan.



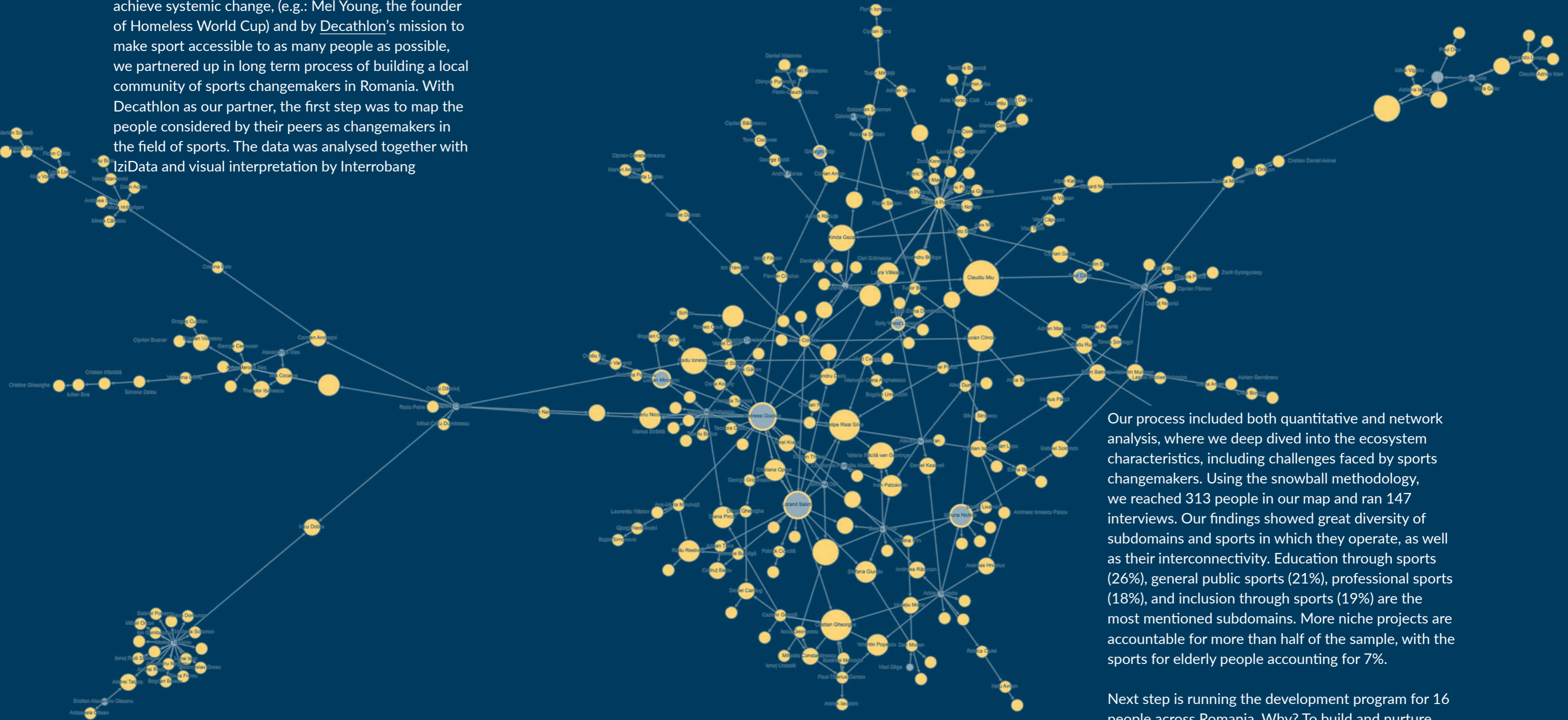
Resilience under emergency situations

John Kearney

John is breaking down the traditional structures of emergency care and creating volunteer networks of responders to dramatically transform rural medicine. Through his organization, Irish Community Rapid Response (ICRR), he is creating desperately needed care systems for patients in rural areas, dramatically improving survival rates for time-urgent medical issues and saving lives.

Sports for Social Good Changemakers Map

Being inspired by our Ashoka Fellows, who use sports to achieve systemic change, (e.g.: Mel Young, the founder of Homeless World Cup) and by Decathlon's mission to make sport accessible to as many people as possible, we partnered up in long term process of building a local community of sports changemakers in Romania. With Decathlon as our partner, the first step was to map the people considered by their peers as changemakers in the field of sports. The data was analysed together with IziData and visual interpretation by Interrobang



Our process included both quantitative and network analysis, where we deep dived into the ecosystem characteristics, including challenges faced by sports changemakers. Using the snowball methodology, we reached 313 people in our map and ran 147 interviews. Our findings showed great diversity of subdomains and sports in which they operate, as well as their interconnectivity. Education through sports (26%), general public sports (21%), professional sports (18%), and inclusion through sports (19%) are the most mentioned subdomains. More niche projects are accountable for more than half of the sample, with the sports for elderly people accounting for 7%.

Next step is running the development program for 16 people across Romania. Why? To build and nurture a community of sports changemakers who can drive irreversible changes in society.

Timisoara – Ashoka & Ambasada

With extensive community experience on the ground, making connections between very different communities, Ashoka Romania has teamed up with AMBASADA to build together a new framework in which cities and areas can be solution seekers, changemakers and resilient masters in a future in which external factors are less predictable than ever. Following a local mapping of relevant stakeholders in Timisoara, the project continues in 2021 to bring these stakeholders together in co-creation workshops to unleash the power of social entrepreneurship through collective action.

Unlonely Civil Society

Unlonely Civil Society was a six-month program funded by Black Sea Trust and implemented by Ashoka Romania, aimed at supporting civil society as a response to the pandemic. We reached out to the civil societies of Romania and Republic of Moldova, two of the countries which have been hit the hardest in Central and Eastern Europe. We facilitated spaces for the participants to understand how organisations can develop anti-fragility and resilience to cope during uncertainty. In a peer-to-peer learning journey alongside 29 organisations, we conducted different engagements with the purpose to address the challenges of the technical shift towards online environment, create new fundraising strategies, support the organizations' wellbeing, and build a new cross-sectorial alliance that can act as a support community. More information about this project's outcome can be found in our report **"EMERGING OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE"**.

Impact Academy

Impact Academy (IA) was a program where we sought to achieve collective impact by engaging with eight civil society leaders. For five months, IA highlighted the importance of shifting from hero-preneurship to collective action by developing relationships and trying to find solutions for the root causes of societal issues rather than their symptoms. IA organized a series of meetings and encounters with trainers and mentors to boost the participants' existing skills as leaders within civil society, through four modules and a coaching dimension. More information about this project's outcome can be found in our report **"EMERGING OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE"**

International Events and Opportunities



Ashoka Changemaker Summit

The Changemaker Summit is the world's largest online gathering of system-changing social innovators and changemakers, bringing together Ashoka's global network of world-class social entrepreneurs, business and philanthropic leaders.

In 2020, together with a global community of changemakers we focused on Rediscovering Certainty, exploring the ideals which provide consistency in our lives, even in times of crisis and channelling them in order to create a more sustainable future. In four days we hosted 100 sessions leveraging the insights of Ashoka Fellows and our partners in a journey to find out how social entrepreneurship can be one of the solutions for a more just and fair world.

Fellows and members from Ashoka Romania also took part in panels together with Ashoka Fellows from the international network.

<u>Revealing the convergence of institutions, systems, and categorizations in the fight for equity</u>	Carmen Gheorghe (Romania) , <u>Emilia Roig</u> (Germany), <u>Sarah Zouak</u> (France), <u>Veronica Escalante</u> (Mexico)
<u>Civic Participation reinvented</u>	Ioana Bauer (Romania) , <u>Arturo Hernandez</u> (Mexico)
<u>Strengthening Democracy Together</u>	Elena Calistru (Romania) , <u>Eric Liu</u> (US), <u>Ronaldo Lemos</u> (Brazil)
<u>Addressing corruption to promote and attain the SDGs</u>	Paul Radu (Romania) , <u>Flavio Bianchini</u> , <u>Greta Rios</u> (Mexico)
<u>How to fill the financial gap for boosting social entrepreneurship in the Danube Region</u>	Paul Radu (Romania) , <u>Christoph Schmirz</u> (Germany), <u>Robert Greve</u> (Germany)

Climate KIC

In 2020, Ashoka, through its offices in Romania and other Eastern European countries, joined a consortium founded and funded by EIT Climate-KIC, with the aim of identifying the most important players and changemakers in the climate innovation area.

Starting with September 2020, the consortium designed a series of activities to **promote new ways of thinking and working to maximise the positive impact regarding the climate in the region. It also aimed to increase the level of trust and collaboration between changemakers in CEE and offer support in order to promote innovations addressing the climate emergency.**

Withing the Climate Community Lab, a series of events were organised in October, November and December of 2020, the events brought forward stakeholders who were interested in conceptualizing and implementing innovative collective actions (social innovations) targeting Smart Agro-Food cross-cutting topic in their local or regional communities. **The events also encouraged funding for different initiatives, for example, the winning project, composed of Catherine Zanev (Bulgaria), Romain Coudrec (Romania) and Epp Maria Lillipuu (Estonia), won a seed funding of 20.000 EUR for developing a concept of intergenerational food cooperative.**

Guests, social innovators and changemakers, including Ashoka Fellow Florin Stoican (Romania), delivered presentations, and facilitated workshops on climate-positive agriculture, the new Economic Model, energy efficient perspectives as well as the Green Deal and its impact in CEE.

Social Finance in Romania



Social finance became a strategic direction for Ashoka Romania in the past year. A key finding in all the studies we had conducted so far, such as the National Report for Social Entrepreneurship (Ashoka Romania, 2018) as well the multitude of bilateral conversations we have had with social entrepreneurs and changemakers was the lack of access to funding.

Thus, a key objective for 2020 was to host workshops and roundtables for the most nominated changemakers from the mapping process and bring together local foundations, social entrepreneurs, philanthropists and companies to share their experiences of social innovation and changemaking, build momentum, create knowledge and stimulate commitments to support Ashoka and social entrepreneurs.

40 key stakeholders were brought together around the social finance universe in 2 high level meetings (roundtable with investors, social entrepreneurs and the expert input from Barclays specialist Rares Pamfil and from Ashoka's global leader on social finance Mark Cheng on global insights on how boosting social finance in Romania and business breakfast with expert input from Markus Freiburg, founder of FASE, the Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurs on 29th of November) and 1 public expert panel, attended by approx. 100 aspiring social entrepreneurs .

She Says



Together with the Open Society Foundation, we implemented 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. Thus, we created a platform for a global community of female experts to host a community process and to showcase the power of female leadership - <https://www.ashoka.org/fr-aaw/program/she-says>

We want to create a community of women social entrepreneurs. Topics that emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, will find their place in the virtual community, like funding sources for women and women led start-ups, well-being sessions for home office with caring responsibilities, voices of women in economic policy making. Organized webinars and online gatherings will circulate around building connections between existing experts per field, exchange of central topics defined by the community and specifically to overcome the gender disparity in their field.

European All Staff Meeting



In 2020, 120 of our colleagues across all of our European offices travelled to Bucharest for our European All Staff Meeting. Our overall theme was our “Everyone a changemaker” movement and the impact we want to achieve in Europe and beyond. During our sessions, we explored the building blocks of what it means to live in an Everyone a changemaker world and focused on our existing strengths to discuss how to further leverage them. We looked at how our teams bring our vision alive in our communities regionally and on a European and global level.

Being a global organisation organised in Teams of Teams, we were used to working remotely and connecting with our colleagues from all over the world digitally. However, the European All Staff Meeting that took place in January was a great opportunity for us to connect and create space for each other to learn and co-create together.

Other International Competitions We Promoted Locally

Competition	Output
Changemaker Exchange COVID-19 Summit	3 participants from Romania
European Union Social Innovation Challenge (EUSIC)	61 applicants from Romania, 4 short-listed, 1 winner
Google Innovation Challenge (GIC)	28 applicants from Romania, 1 winner
Purina (Better with Pets)	5 applicants from Romania, 1 semifinalist
Vittel	Florin Stoican as applicant
Civic Europe	76 applicants from Romania, 1 winner
Accelerating Investment Readiness	Competition and Blended Learning - aim at joining impact investing and social entrepreneurship for more positive social change

Third Party Events We Took Part in

We delivered two workshops for the Occupy Library community. Occupy Library brings together innovative ideas that are implemented in libraries in the Central, Eastern European, Black Sea, Caucasus, and Caspian regions and provides a virtual space for sharing good practices and support best ways to make libraries more involved in their communities. One of them focused on ecosystems of innovation, through the lenses of the 5R model (resources, roles, relationships, rules, results), an acclaimed methodology for large scale social impact initiatives, developed by USAID. As large-scale change necessitates large-scale collaboration, the other one tackled the topic of building networks of allies, having Cynthia Ong, Ashoka Fellow from Indonesia, as a guest speaker..



Fundatia Noi Orizonturi

The organisation organised [EduLab](#) – entrepreneurship in education, which was a program designed to encourage high-school youth from rural areas delve into the world of entrepreneurship with social impact. Teams from all over the country designed ideas that support elementary school students from their area in coping with the disruption of school due to the pandemic. Ashoka team members had the privilege to become the jury of this process and get to know the teams and their ideas. It was a great partnership with a driven organisation that empowers youth to take ownership on their changemaker capabilities. Their values align strongly with ours as well as with our priorities on children practising changemaking.

Future Summit – Speakers

In the 2020 edition of the [Future Summit](#) Ashoka Fellow Florin Stoican was a speaker to host a session about the crisis of biodiversity. Another Ashoka Fellow from Poland, [Jacek Bozek](#) and Ashoka Fellow from Colombia, [Luis Camargo](#), were invited to a session on the climate action together with our former Country Director, Corina Murafa.

[Jacek Bozek](#) is building a citizen's movement to preserve Poland's rivers and to stop ecologically irresponsible development projects. His project thus far has focused mainly on Poland's largest river, the Vistula, which is one of Europe's last great "untamed" rivers. However, Jacek is expanding his work to other rivers in Poland and is working to export his model to the remaining natural river ecosystems throughout the continent. [Luis Alberto Camargo](#) is fostering a lasting and important connection to nature for all youth. Through savvy business strategy and an innovative teaching methodology, he reaches rich and poor alike while providing powerful experiences to promising environmental leaders.

ALEG – Forumul Invingatoarelor

ALEG represents our first success stories for an impact transfer initiative conducted by Ashoka Romania in 2018 under the name of Localizer. The organisation established [#SiEuReusesc](#), a peer support network women survivor of abuse. The model was inspired by Ashoka Fellow [Ana Bella Estevez](#) from Spain.



Our Impact



How We See Impact

In our work with our Fellows, we have seen that they all change systems through the power of their ideas. They build organisations around those ideas – organisations that are the vehicles with which they transform the status quo and significantly contribute to strengthening society. Like any successful organisation, theirs are built around a framework: vision, problem, strategy, partnerships, impact, challenges and learnings. We believe that this framework contains the building blocks for systems change.

Three Levels of Impact

Symptoms

Root Causes

Direct Service

Addressing the individual needs of specific individuals or community

Scaling Direct Service

Solving a social problem at a regional or national level

Systems Change

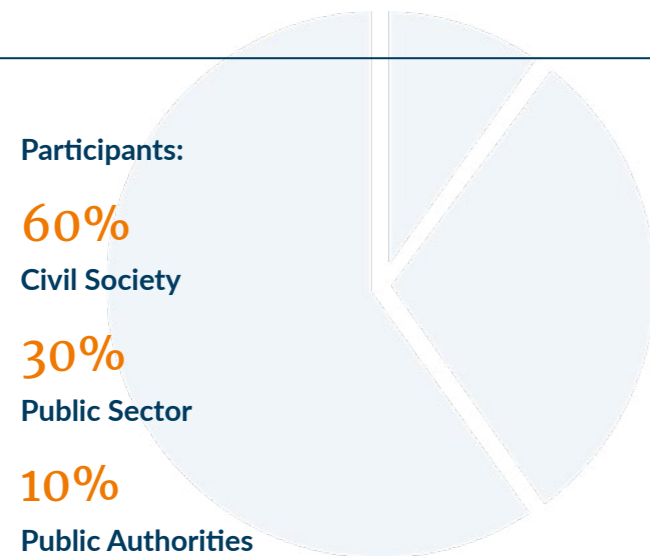
Tackling a root cause for a social problem, in such a way that it changes the way a system operates

At Ashoka, we aim to be present across all levels of impact:

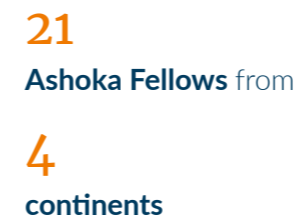
- 1 Firstly, by directly impacting the organisations in the ecosystem we work with, from participants in our programs to partners, mentors and key stakeholders. Our goal is to support the ecosystem at large have access to resources, contacts and know-how.
- 2 Secondly, to scale our impact and support outside of Bucharest and find allies across all regions of Romania. The pandemic was a great opportunity for us to connect with changemakers all over the country, and we hope to sustain this effort in further regional projects, starting with Timisoara in 2021 to other counties.
- 3 Finally, our most important objective is to be a key actor in accelerating the environment and infrastructure for social entrepreneurship to grow, for social entrepreneurs to become more visible and to have access to tools and resources for them to succeed. Systems change is well embedded in our work at Ashoka as well as our Fellows'. We want to bring the systems supporting social entrepreneurs to a higher stage of maturity and empower people to embrace the mentality that everyone can be a changemaker

Ashoka in Numbers

Our Reach



Number of Ashoka Fellows we virtually brought in Romania:



We worked with organizations from



Social Media Outreach

1.423.867

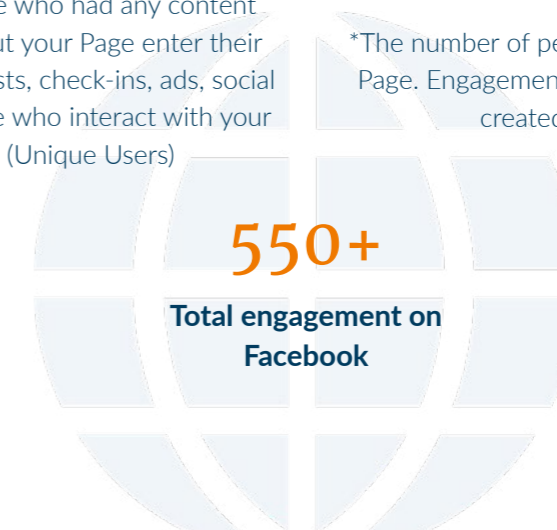
Total reach on Facebook

*The number of people who had any content from your Page or about your Page enter their screen. This includes posts, check-ins, ads, social information from people who interact with your Page and more. (Unique Users)

48.100

Total engagement on Facebook

*The number of people who engaged with our Page. Engagement includes any click or story created. (Unique Users)



Our Online Communities

6.6k+ Facebook

1k Instagram

350+ LinkedIn (a community started this year)

What Do Our Stakeholders Say?

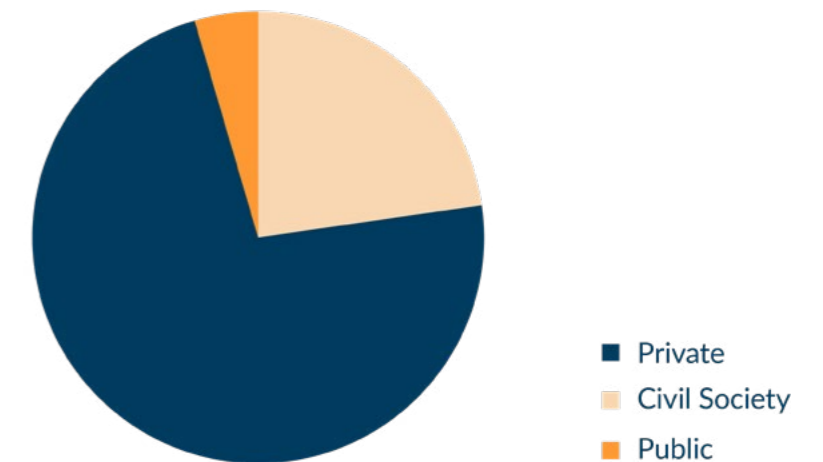
It is very relevant to us to understand how our work influences our stakeholders. We ensure that we offer the space for the ones we work with to support us in how to improve and reach a bigger impact together.

Like every year, we ask our stakeholders to give us feedback. Apart from the multitude of 1 on 1 conversations we had throughout the year, we also sent out a targeted online survey sent out to our partners, collaborators, and the changemakers community to receive their input and insights.

The survey addressed to various stakeholders included three kinds of questions: open questions, on a scale from 1 to 5, and Likert Scale questions. This complemented the 6 interviews we conducted with the Romanian Fellows.

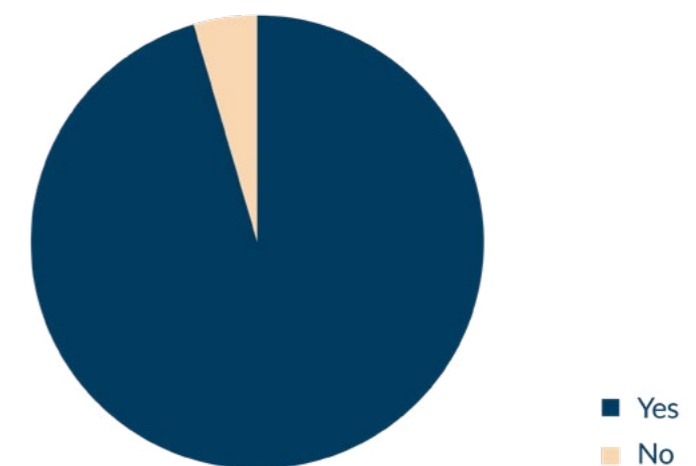
Below we outline the results, presented from a sample size of 22 respondents. 72% represent civil society, 22% the business sector and 1 representative from a public institution.

Which Sector are you a part of?



95% of our respondents identify as Changemakers, which is re-enforcing our vision to achieve an Everyone a Changemaker world. In November 2020 we conducted another survey on changemaking, where 8 out of 10 Romanian believe that change starts within all of us, while 7 out of 10 consider themselves changemakers. You can read more about that study [here](#), or by accessing our website.

Do you consider yourself a changemaker?



Our positioning and reputation

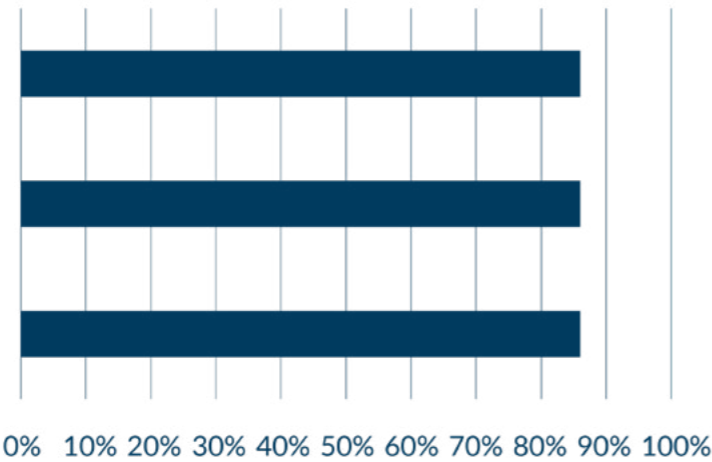
Our stakeholders position us as an organisation committed to promoting and accelerating social entrepreneurship, with 87% respondents recognising that Ashoka Fellows bring systemic change, associating our initiatives as under the umbrella of social entrepreneurship, and pleased with our collaborations.

% of respondents who agree or partially agree to our statements of positioning

Ashoka Fellows bring systemic change in Romania

Ashoka is an organisation that implements their initiative at a high quality

When you think about social entrepreneurship, Ashoka comes to mind



Moreover, 67% agree or partially agree that our image is more recognisable than in our previous years and 77% agree or partially agree that 2020 was a year that met the expectations of our respondents.

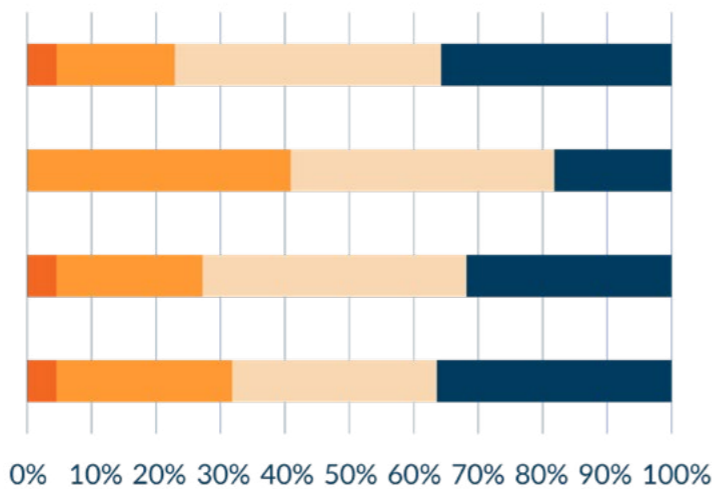
% of respondents who agree or partially agree to our statements of brand

Ashoka's activity in 2020 raised to my expectations

Ashoka Events improved compared to previous experiences

The Ashoka Brand is well seen

The Ashoka Brand is more recognisable



Supporting the ecosystem

We asked a series of questions with regards to the impact we have on our ecosystem. It appears that our strengths lie acting as a resource organisation for the ecosystem, with 87% of respondents claiming that Ashoka enlarged their knowledge on other ecosystem actors they could collaborate with. This is also highlighted in the fact that 73% of respondents mentioned that they gained access to new non-financial resources through new partnerships.

Another supporting pillar is empowering organisations through access to new knowledge and best practices – 78% recognise Ashoka helped them improve their skillset.

The most relevant learning point is that we do not have a more direct impact in supporting organisations in increasing their income or bridging a path to new investors – 45% do not feel our work affected their income or that they reached new investors. Committing to develop a diverse social finance market will become a more strategic direction for Ashoka starting 2021.

% of respondents who agree or partially agree with our indicators

Ashoka offered me access to new non-financial partners

Ashoka helped me improve my skillset

Ashoka expanded my network

Ashoka helped me improve my organisation's operating model

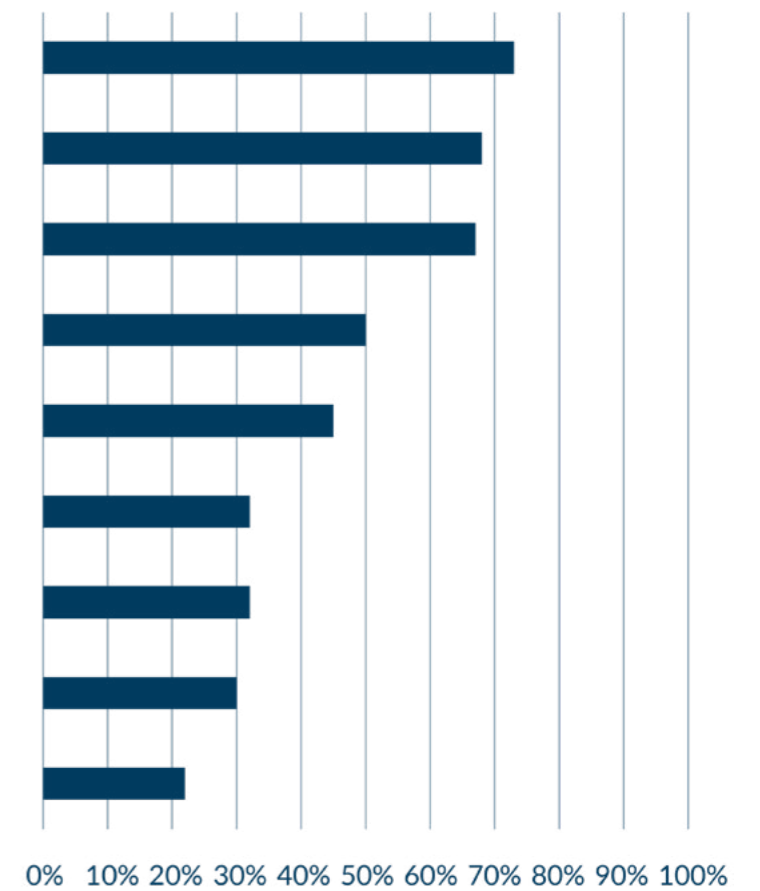
Ashoka accelerated my projects

Ashoka helped my projects' image

Ashoka helped me increase my organisation's income

Ashoka helped me serve more people

Ashoka helped me find new investors



Strengths and weaknesses

In terms of strengths, 50% of respondents mentioned our international access to know-how through our Ashoka Fellow networks and support organisations, while 25% mentioned the access to resources we offer to the ecosystem.

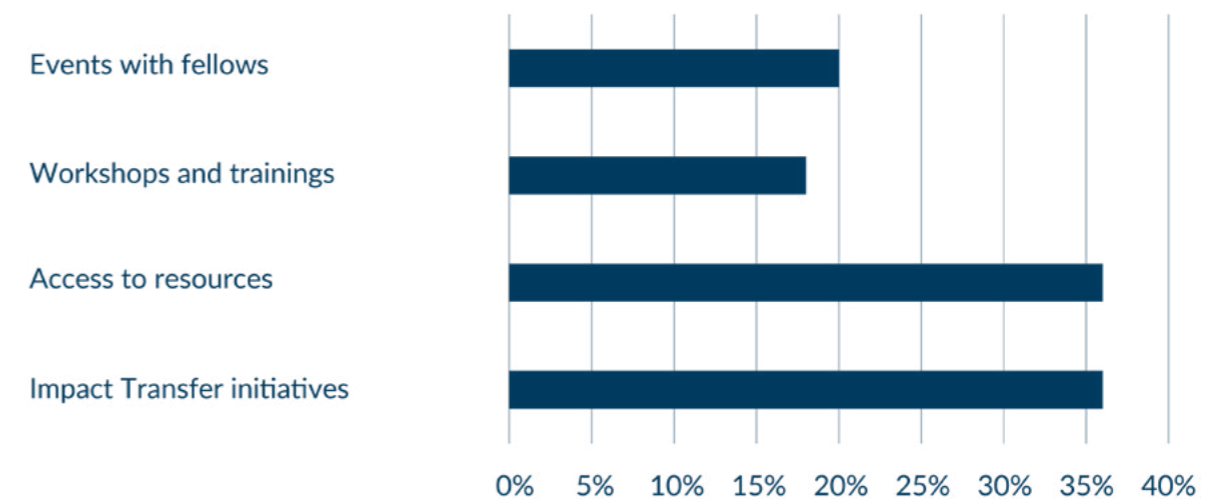
In terms of weaknesses, our respondents mentioned limited visibility to more grassroots organisations in 10% of cases as a main inhibitor to our impact.

In terms of current initiatives that should be kept and improved, 36% of respondents mention impact transfer projects from the international Ashoka Fellow network a key activity, together with access know-how and resources exchange on social entrepreneurship.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Access to international know-how	Small local team
Access to resources on social entrepreneurship	Lack of visibility in rural areas
Well-prepared team	Limited grassroots involvement
Perseverance	Complicated Vocabulary
Agility	Regional direct impact
Global Brand	
The Fellows Network	

While we take our weaker points into consideration in planning for the future, we were pleased to see that none of the respondents consider that there are any elements of our strategy and approach that should be discontinued from our work. We are happy to know our initiatives are all viewed as relevant to the sector.

Key elements of our activity (as aggregated from open question)



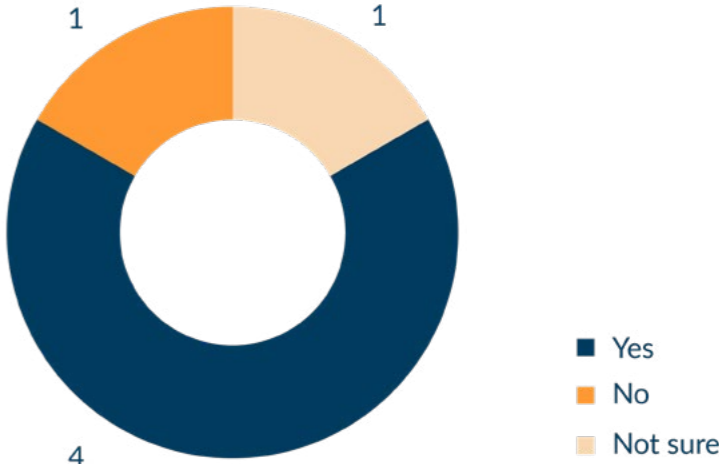
In understanding the priorities of our stakeholders in shaping our strategy, access to finance scored highest with 55% of respondents taking it as a top priority. Ashoka's role to act as a know-how and international best practice hub should be strengthened, while it is most prevalent to contribute to the creation and promotion of a social entrepreneur identity. An identity that empowers individuals to become changemakers.

We are constantly making tweaks to our approach in a way that each year we get closer to the ecosystem. Yearly feedback from our stakeholders makes us reflect towards our priorities and areas of change.

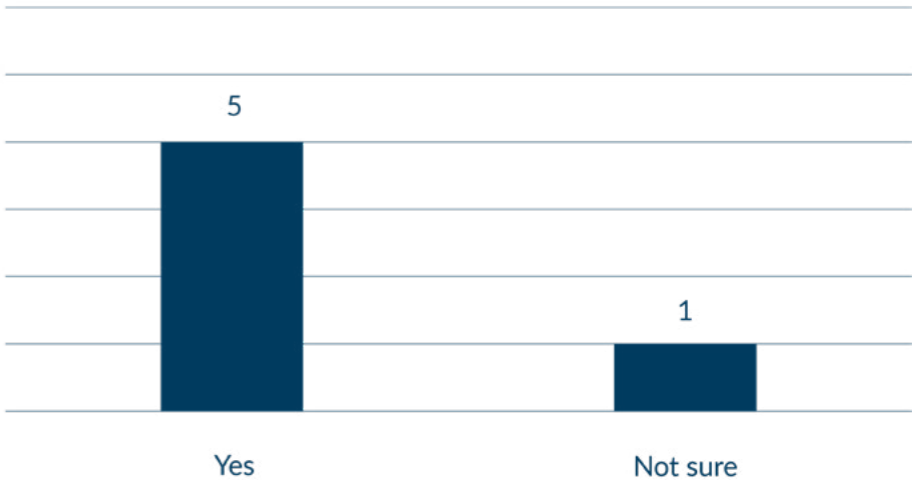
Ashoka Fellow Global Survey Romanian Results

In terms of perceptions on our mission for social entrepreneurship, 4 out of 6 Fellows believe Ashoka has been a leader in founding the field of social entrepreneurship in Romania, while 5 of them believe that we are enabling the ecosystem so that social entrepreneurs have the necessary tools to thrive.

In your country, has Ashoka been a leader in founding the field of social entrepreneurship?



Do you consider Ashoka a leader in your country in fostering and enabling an ecosystem for social entrepreneurs to thrive?



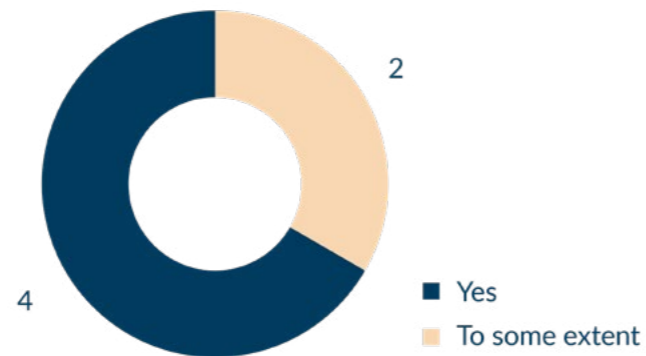
Every three years Ashoka conducts a global survey on the Fellows, in order to assess worldwide how well we are able to support our social entrepreneurs in their mission to change the world for the better. We are happy to be sharing the results of the survey on the sample size of our 6 Ashoka Fellows from Romania. We wanted to isolate these responses in order to better grasp our office's capability to support the Fellows and to analyse their perception of our collaboration.

In terms of Ashoka's influence on the work of our Fellows, we looked at various dimensions that include changing perspectives, leadership and collective mindset, idea replication, impact, as well as Fellows' collaboration with other Fellows.

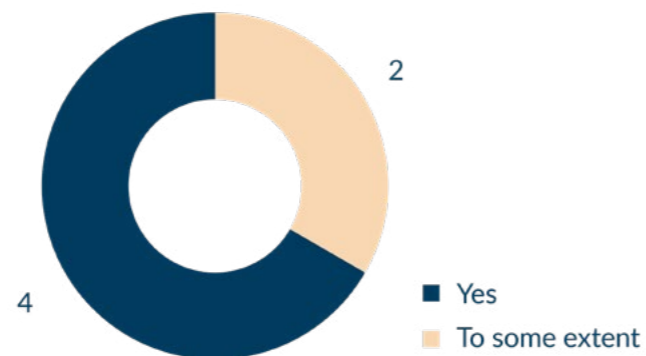
Firstly, all of our Fellows agree to some extent that Ashoka helped them see the importance of changing the mindset on the social issue they are trying to address. They all agree on the importance of finding the right allies in their work, including the importance of their idea being replicated by other organisations and institutions. We constantly seek to offer the space for their ideas to be more visible and connect them with the stakeholders that would get involved in taking up their model.

When talking about impact, we value both the direct impact we are able to offer, but also how we contribute to the Fellows' perception of how their work can become systems-changing. **66%** of our Fellows ranked that Ashoka helped them increase their impact greatly (on a scale from 1 to 5). Our office commits to a long-term approach that will offer the Fellows the space to increase their impact and scale their model in other regions, locally or internationally.

Has Ashoka helped you see the importance changing collective mindset on the social issue you are trying to address?



Has Ashoka helped you see the importance of other organisations / institutions independently replicating your idea?

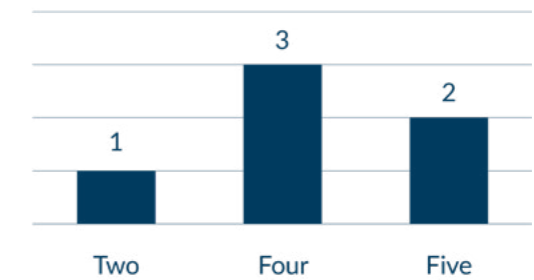


All things considered, to what extent has Ashoka helped you increase your impact?



1 represents the lowest help; 5 the greatest help.

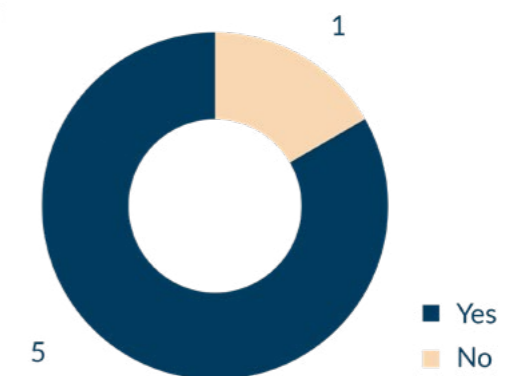
Do you believe that Ashoka helped you understand how your work can contribute to generating a systems change?



1 represents the lowest help; 5 the greatest help.

All of our Fellows worked and collaborated with at least one Fellow since they joined the Fellowship, which contributes to our mission to create a well-connected network and bridge long-term collaboration to scale impact. This is also highlighted from the fact that 5 out of our 6 Fellows have had their idea replicated by other groups or institutions.

Since becoming an Ashoka Fellow, has your idea been replicated by other groups or institutions?



Team Statements for 2020



Ana Murray
Country Director of
Ashoka Romania

What did 2020 mean to you?

Experiencing a more agile mindset and a more fluid set of expectations, allowing for more uncertainty, more co-creation, less control. 2020 for me will be the year of another growth journey.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

An incredible sounding board of hearts and minds that still keep that idealistic spark in their eyes.

Corina Murafa

Next Now Planet & Climate
Co-Leader

What did 2020 mean to you?

Time for what matters most. New challenges. Adaptation.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

Family.



Ovidiu Condurache

Community Builder and
Ashoka Fellows Scouter



What did 2020 mean to you?

2020 brought back a level of creativity and connectiveness I forgot I was capable of. At the same time, 2020 reminded me of how our institutions are not build to be citizen centric and how much we need to act as changemakers.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

A space where I can show up with all sides of my identity and contribute in an authentic way to a world where we all act more empathically.

Tomina Vodarici

Partnerships
Management Associate



What did 2020 mean to you?

I am among the lucky ones for whom 2020 was a good year. It was my year of change. It was the year I realized I am not made for the career path I had initially chosen and sought to find a place where I can be a positive driver for changing the world for the better, no matter how little. It was at the same time difficult, but it taught me more about empathy, friendship and being there for each other than any other experience in my life.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

A group of inspiring people that I learn from and make me want to be better every day. A space where being empathic, understanding, creative and committed drive all our decisions.

Ana Marica
Learning Architect



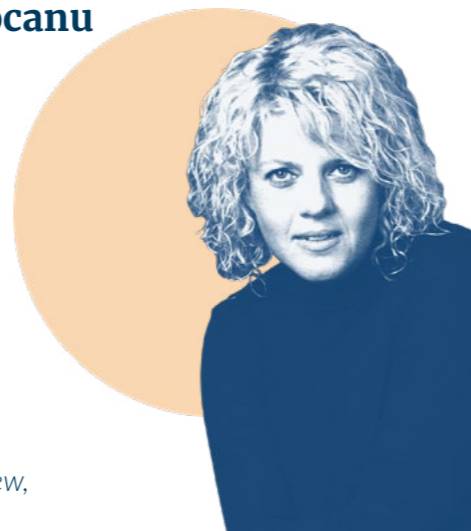
What did 2020 mean to you?

2020 was an exercise in reconnecting with what is important to me and what defines me at my core – and was also an exercise in letting go of the things that were not bringing value anymore. It was the year that I feel tested our humanity, our ability to react and adapt to the unexpected and to find solutions that accommodate new realities.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

A group of awesome individuals that push themselves every single day to make the world around them better. A team that supports collaboration through fluid, transparent and flexible ways of working together and empowers each member find their own role and way to contribute.

Ruxandra Mocanu
Senior Ecosystem Builder



What did 2020 mean to you?

The year of deconstruction of the world as we knew it, an opportunity to rebuild it while addressing its systemic weaknesses for a more resilient society.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

A team of people willing to connect their ideas, vision and network in order to create and co-create programs for a new, better society, from which everyone can benefit.



Mihaela Vasilo
Finance Manager

What did 2020 mean to you?

It may not be a year I want to remember, but it is one I have been part of and will never forget. It was a year of big changes, reorganizing priorities and hope.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

A sea of new and challenging ideas.

Alexandra Caraman
Former Communications Manager



What did 2020 mean to you?

2020 has been one hell of a ride – probably the toughest and yet one of the most rewarding years I have ever witnessed and lived. Probably one of the most important lessons I will take with me is gratefulness.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

The Ashoka team was the best team to spend 2020 with.

Andrei Bulearca
Former Finance Manager



What did 2020 mean to you?

2020 was the year of pushing my limits, learning and growth in both my professional and personal life.

What does the Ashoka Romania team mean to you?

The Ashoka team meant unity in diversity. In Ashoka I was part of two main teams, the Ashoka Romania Team and the Europe Finance and Operations Team. Throughout my experience with Ashoka I got the chance to work, laugh, learn and most importantly share core values with a lot of diverse and amazing people from all over the world.

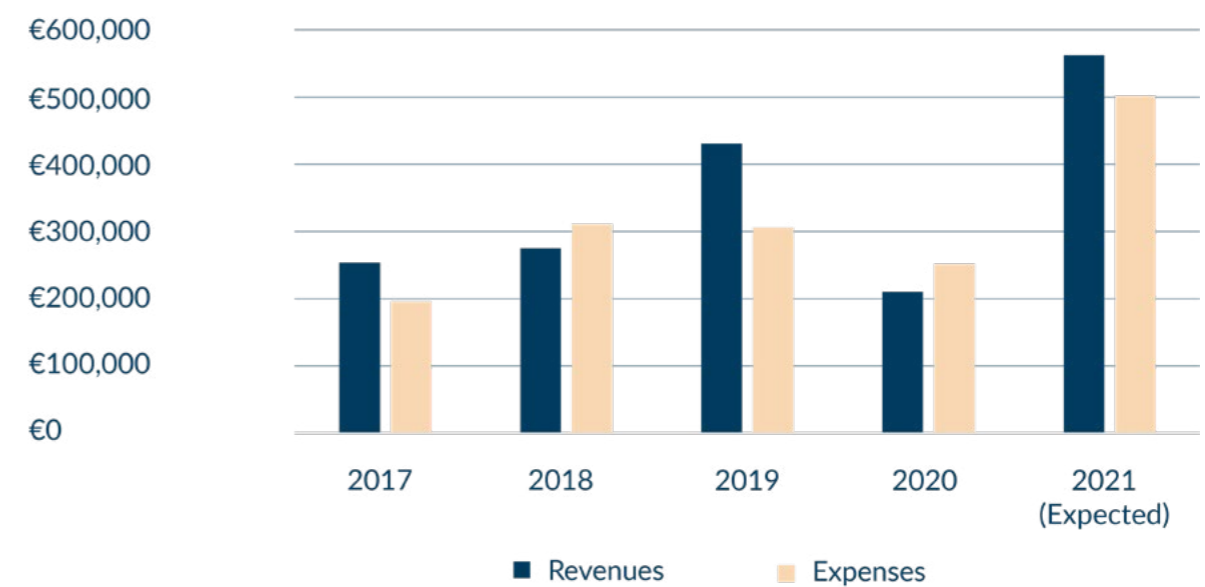
Team Financials

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 were committed to establish a stable local team and presence. 2019 was the milestone when we officially became a legal entity in Romania, registered under the Associations and Foundations registry – “Fundatia Ashoka”.

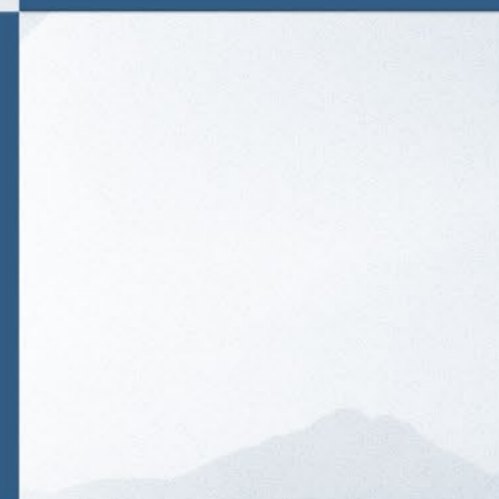
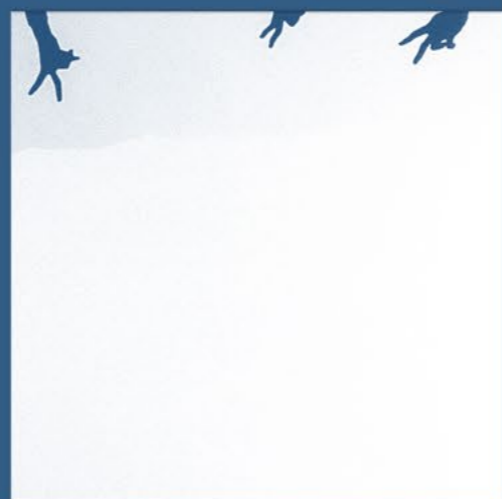
The first two years of activity were possible thanks to the strong contribution of Ashoka Romania’s founding partners, the Romanian American Foundation and Enel Romania. In 2019 we entered a long term partnership with NN, who became a strategic ally to identifying and supporting Ashoka Fellows. We have diversified our sources of revenues with local, corporate, pro-bono and international partners.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (Expected)
Revenues	€252,000	€273,000	€429,000	€208.889	€560.000
Expenses	€193,806	€308,757	€304,000	€249.924	€500.000

*Ashoka Romania
Financials*



How Our Fellows



Coped and Inspired





There's no way around it – 2020 was a challenging year for everyone, changemakers included. Social distancing rules and financial struggles made the work of our Fellows all the more difficult. Even though they all work in different fields, the problem was the same – they could no longer be physically involved in their work.

Nevertheless, all of our Fellows felt that their work was evolving, that they better understood what social impact is and how to create it and that society as a whole, despite still lacking in many aspects, was moving forward. There is a general consensus between Fellows that in many areas there were positive changes – less stigma, better cooperation with state authorities and more support from the general public for their efforts. However, they all admitted that this is only the beginning and that the road to a socially equitable society is long and arduous.

Florin Stoican

Nature Conservation

“If we’re to learn anything from this pandemic, I hope that it’s listening to the scientific community.”

Florin is one of Romania’s leading ecologists and biodiversity advocates at a European level. His work in Buila-Vanturarita Park and Vacaresti Natural Reserve has been instrumental in changing the way in which Romanians interact with nature and take care of it, as Romania has the largest biodiversity in Europe. By connecting urban and rural communities through nature, he is creating incentive structures for businesses and individuals to unlock and exchange resources, showing how they can gain benefits from conservation.



The Pandemic – Struggles and Opportunities

On the nature side, Florin said that 2020 did not impact his work massively – in his own words “natural research is done in small groups or alone, following the tracks of wild animals”. Florin did appreciate the increase in interest towards nature from the general population, however, he expressed concern about overcrowding of popular sites.

However, Florin felt that during the pandemic, his work in creating awareness for biodiversity and promoting the two areas that he is involved with did not progress. He and his team were unable to continue efforts to reach target audiences, hold public debates and bring groups of people in nature. His association could no longer hold children’s camps or accommodate day-trips, an aspect which he considers essential to educating responsible citizens.

Together with Ashoka

Florin says that he’s glad to have expanded his network and to be able to interact with people (nationally and internationally) with whom he can exchange ideas and validate concepts. He recognizes Ashoka’s efforts in creating links between social entrepreneurs who at first might not have much in common, but over time develop mutually beneficial relations.

Another aspect which Florin considers to be very important when it comes to Ashoka is financial support: since accessing the grant, he’s been able to dedicate himself full time to his multiple projects and achieve more in a shorter time span. Furthermore, he says he appreciates Ashoka’s support in finding new fundraising opportunities and increasing his and his organizations’ visibility.

Advice to Social Entrepreneurs

When asked what advice he would give to changemakers, Florin simply said: “Be strong and persevere through whatever comes up in your path.”. He expressed the need for strong leaders and entrepreneurs that could change the Romanian social and environmental landscape and overcome the bureaucratic red tape.

2021 and beyond

When asked what the most important lesson we can learn from the pandemic is, Florin promptly responded: “we should start listening to scientists”. He underlined the need for data-backed and science-driven public administration and for governance that sees the environment as being just as important as social and economic security. As an outlook for the future, Florin has hope for the way in which nature and society interact and looks forward to being able to scale his impact by educating people directly.



Paul Radu

Investigative Journalism

“It takes a network to fight a network.”

Paul Radu started his career as an investigative journalist, looking into corruption and organized crime in Romania. Although he was very successful in exposing illegalities and inequalities in the system, he decided that acting locally was not impacting enough, and that a global network of journalists could be much more efficient in the fight against organized crime. “It takes a network to fight a network”. Thus, in 2006, Paul and his partner Drew Sullivan started the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, a worldwide network of journalists, collaborating transnationally in order to expose big criminal organizations.

The Pandemic – Struggles and Opportunities

Even though the majority of the world’s activity came to a screeching halt in early 2020, Paul says that organized crime never slowed down, it actually accelerated while all of the authorities’ focus was on handling the COVID outbreak. OCCRP benefited from being decentralized and spread out across the world, so their efforts were not that affected, they even expanded their network and created a new hub in Central Asia.

Paul and Drew used the lockdown as an opportunity to rethink their goals and structure, “to crystalise things”. They changed their strategy in order to focus on their people, to make sure that everyone had adequate help and appropriate resources, such as mental health counselling. Furthermore, they looked to support the OCCRP journalists working from dangerous environments by helping them decentralize their work.

One of the major struggles during the pandemic came from governments themselves, that increased surveillance efforts and pressured journalists much more than before. From the beginning of the pandemic, OCCRP tried to expose as much as possible the work done by organized crime in relation to PPE, hospitals or access to medication.



Together with Ashoka

Perhaps one of the landmark moments of 2020 for the OCCRP was the Skoll Foundation Grant which they were awarded. Worth \$1.5 million, the grant will help the OCCRP scale its efforts even further, getting even closer to the core mission of any Ashoka fellow – creating grass roots change. Paul emphasised that seminars and preparation sessions with Ashoka consultants were of great help when applying for the grant. Furthermore, the networking opportunities gained through the Ashoka network helped Paul validate ideas and learn from the other Fellows’ experience.

Advice to Social Entrepreneurs

“You need to build a solid foundation to your idea, don’t give up on the things that you believe in”. Paul thinks that good things come after years of hard work. After you have built this foundation, Paul considers putting the focus on quality and efficiency to be key. He identified the need to stay true to your mission at all times and not to divert to unrelated causes, even if they seem worthy.

2021 and beyond

Ultimately, Paul envisions the OCCRP becoming completely integrated into society – his organization aims to give everyone the tools to investigate crime and corruption. On the shorter term, the OCCRP is looking to expand, hiring editors, writers and even cybersecurity experts to tackle the digital sector. On a wider level, the OCCRP wants to become a globally diverse organization, tackling crime and corruption wherever they appear.

Dorica Dan

Rare Diseases

“The collective impact is so much greater than the individual one.”

Dorica is an established international leader in the field of rare diseases, she revolutionises the healthcare field for patients with rare diseases, transitioning from an inflexible system to a more collaborative approach. She is working towards a world in which all patients have equal and free access to diagnostics and treatments. Dorica and her association seeks to give patients with rare diseases or rare cancers access to a tailored set of integrated services and therapies to increase their quality of life.



The Pandemic – Struggles and Opportunities

The pandemic hit the healthcare system very bad, the patients with rare diseases were most at risk, for Dorica and her organisation the isolation had a powerful impact, it made the treatment even harder for their patients, some of them were even denied treatment at overseas institutions. The fear of the unknown was always there, however they sought to make the best of it by trying to maintain the team connected through online meetings and helping the patients at home, through telephone and even WhatsApp.

After the Healthcare System has been overwhelmed by the pandemic and failed to answer as well as it should have to the problem of people with rare diseases and rare cancers, Dorica and her organisation saw themselves forced to organise and help the patients themselves as much as they could as well as try and ensure they could continue their treatment at home. They helped the community with testing, protective and breathing equipment and tried to rise up to challenges and the needs of their patients and, at the same time, tried to collaborate together and create pressure for the instalment of a legislative board that will help. Some legislative measures were ensured to help the at home treatment, which Dorica considers to be one of their small victories together with the fact that the case management regarding rare diseases is finally widely recognised.

They adapted to the rapid digitalisation by transferring everything from consultancy and therapies to workshops and events online. They managed to get other organisations fighting against rare diseases together assess the impact they suffered due to the pandemic and find ways to help and support them as well as create services that will ensure connectivity with the patients, advocacy and support for patients to allow them to get help at home.

Regardless of the challenges, Dorica believe the pandemic had an overall positive impact on the organisation since the process of digitalisation was greatly sped up, 'right now we are prepared to face situations face-to-face as well as online'.

Together with Ashoka

For Dorica, the 3-year journey with Ashoka helped her realise how important social entrepreneurship is, most importantly, how important it is to find the partners in order to scale the social impact. 'Solidarity is very important, and I learned that, in Ashoka, there are many people that, when they say their support for a fellow is for life, I actually believe it. The people here are really doing their best to find the resources and help their selected fellows in every possible way and contribute to their social impact.'

Dorica underlined that, even though she has long been a part of international organisations, with Ashoka was different, the people are really oriented towards the social impact, they are united, they are empathic and also relaxed, they always try to help as they know this is helping the community. From the networking point of view, Dorica believes Ashoka played a crucial role in helping her become much more open to communications, partnerships and collaborations. In the same time, Ashoka has helped her develop a better social image, in her own words: 'we have never been good with promoting ourselves and Ashoka was a huge asset and an enormous help, I knew right away that most of the invitations I got to give interviews were facilitated by Ashoka.'

Overall, Dorica fully believes that the Ashoka fellowship has helped her, and her organisation gain a positive and impactful image, it allowed her to direct all her efforts towards my organisation.

Advice to Social Entrepreneurs

'First of all, you have to be patient and learn from your mistakes'. From Dorica's point of view a successful social entrepreneur must have empathy, be collaborative, trust their team and be able to find suiting partners.

In Romania, there is an increasing lack of trust between one another and between the people and the system, she believed that this lack of trust makes us hesitant to collaborate and form partnerships, especially with NGOs. There is also a culture of waiting for help, people hesitating to take action, however, she believes that a true social entrepreneur should be able to take matters into their own hands and believe in their goals.

'A social entrepreneur has to believe in themselves and believe in their idea and their goal, to be patient and never give up.'

2021 and beyond

In 2021, Dorica and her organisation will continue training medical assistants in hopes of offering people from less fortunate backgrounds and more remote locations equal opportunities and resources that will allow them to bring the patients the appropriate treatments.

They are also working towards creating a horizontal communication systems, similar to the ones in Europe, and seeking to include them into the national health care System. Dorica is also part of an international commission that is working towards transferring the European reference systems to the global level, such that the gained European expertise can be extended worldwide by implementing communication systems at a global level.

Overall, over the next few years, Dorica and her organisation will focus on allowing even isolated patients access to the proper treatment and facilitating the communication between the medical, social and educational services that will help the patient.



Elena Calistru

Civic Participation

“If you want to change things, you need to understand that people need hope.”

Elena Calistru is the founder Funky Citizens, whose aim is to build a new generation of “civically fit” Romanian citizens. She founded Funky Citizens to use modern tools such as social media and non-formal education in order to make traditionally hard to find public information easily accessible. With a fresh tone of voice and unmatched energy, she has is continually looking to engage citizens and improve public participation.



The Pandemic – Struggles and Opportunities

The pandemic, similarly to most of us, meant a rethinking of plans and having to adapt to a new reality. For many ongoing projects, reconfiguring to the virtual world was a challenge. However, Elena mentions that in many ways, she was lucky. Being already involved in many cross-country projects, the adaptation to Zoom meetings was not the shock it was to many others. She also mentions a reshuffling of priorities. For example, she was already dealing with disinformation, but requests for workshops on this topic sky-rocketed. Of course, she notes that despite the context in which this has come about, the activity is welcomed. This also gave the opportunity to interact with people she may not have interacted with otherwise.

Together with Ashoka

The process of becoming a fellow allowed Elena to acquire a bird’s eye view of her work, and to think in more strategic terms. Of course, one of the pandemic’s many drawbacks was that developing a network became much more difficult. But she notes that collaboration with her fellow Ashoka fellows has been very fruitful. Elena reflects on the fact that her support system has changed, and that she is looking forward to exploring this further in a post-pandemic world. She also notes that the media coverage concerning her organization has become much more diversified.

Advice to Social Entrepreneurs

Do not do anything on your own! Thinking about new ideas is great, but validating them with others is crucial. Otherwise, you risk getting lost in your own thoughts. Tackling problems alone means that you are likely to not distribute your energy efficiently. You may lose enthusiasm and not have the impact you want to (or can!) have.

In more general terms, Elena tells us that it’s vital to remember that if you want to change the world, you need to understand that people need hope. You cannot effect change without painting a new horizon where things are better. “I’m a cynical idealist”, she tells us. We need to know that no matter how bad things may look, the situations in which nothing is left to do are extremely rare.

2021 and beyond

Her plans for the future are simple: change the world! If we want social change, we need to invest a lot more in getting to know the people around us. In an increasingly polarized society, this has never been more important. What are people’s fears? Why are they reacting in the way they are? How can you reach them? We need to dig as deep as possible in this direction, with an emphatic ear, trying to understand and listen to them, and adapting our solution to their needs.

Ioana Bauer

Human Trafficking

“This is a teamwork, there is no lonely knight in shining armour to save the story.”

The Pandemic – Struggles and Opportunities

Ioana Bauer is a very well-known name, since 2005, she has been involved in fighting for human rights and dignity and in 2010 she started focusing on preventing and combating human trafficking. She is the president of eLiberare, an organisation that works against modern slavery and sexual exploitation in Romania. Ioana is very passionate about combating injustice and is a firm believer in the power of teamwork and collective action.

With a clear focus on public policy, Ioana has advocated for victims' rights, a better legislative framework for protection and prosecution, proactive identification and creating political will behind the subject.

While being both an Ashoka Fellow and a Resilience Fellow, Ioana is also recognized as one of the few women leaders advancing the UN SDGs globally.

For Ioana and her organisation, 2020 was full of opportunities and challenges. As time and energy became some of the most valuable commodities, the eLiberare team had to choose carefully what they were investing all their efforts in.

She also said that, due to the pandemic, she feels like she missed out on a lot of opportunities in her first year of fellowship, so she did not get the full Ashoka face-to-face experience and it was increasingly hard for her to connect with the other fellows. 'It seems it will be much harder to create a community feeling between the old and the new fellows, the pandemic makes it harder, there is only so much you can do with online interactive events'.

Nonetheless, they managed to pull through the hard year and many opportunities followed, together with Ioana's Ashoka Fellowship, eLiberare was the only European organisation to be chosen for a Resilience Fellowship. After a long time of hard work, projects like the standards for minors as victims of human trafficking got approved and they finally launched the Protect platform, a platform for specialised organisations fighting against human trafficking.

Together with Ashoka



2021 and beyond

Ioana started her fellowship in May 2020 and stated she felt a huge positive impact right away. For her, Ashoka 'acted as a sounding board', it gave her the possibility to consult with people who know her and what she stands for as well as the Romanian background and the impact of her organisation. Through Ashoka she was offered consultancy and advice she considers to be invaluable in helping her achieve what she set out to do.

'Ashoka really supported me in finding opportunities, making connections and extending my team with people from so many domains, it makes you feel part of a community, they were very helpful. The diverse Ashoka network allowed us to establish valuable relations, but, most of all, it helped with the media exposure. Ashoka helped put me and my organisation out there.'

One of the main impacts Ashoka had for Ioana was the direct financial help, she felt that this gave her a great deal of much needed flexibility. The extra financial stability also allowed eLiberare to better their development side, allowing them to hire help with developing further projects and a financial officer. 'We used to have collaboration contracts, now we have full time employees, therefore, the organisation can now enjoy a much better organisational health than they did last year. With Ashoka's help she finally gets to dedicate all her time to the organisation and developing her team

'I have many expectations for myself in the future, I am looking forward to making the most of my Ashoka Fellowship'. For 2021, Ioana underlines that they will continue to help the development of communities, she chooses to see the good they had already done and looks forward to continuing to make it even better.

eLiberare is going to continue with the training and formations, bringing people together, finding resources and creating connections. Ioana says she seeks to invest even more time in network building and coordination. They will focus on their future and on-going projects, such as the survivor consultancy, government consultancy and raising awareness.

She also looks forward to more well-focused and result-oriented collaborations with the other fellows.

Carmen Gheorghe

Roma Women Rights

“I am not Roma women’s saviour.”

Carmen Gheorghe is a Roma woman, founder of Romania’s first Roma feminist organisation E-Romnja. With over 16 years of activism under her belt, she talked to us about this year’s challenges and lessons, her vision for change and her plans for the future.



The Pandemic – Struggles and Opportunities

The pandemic was a shock and disruptive to everyone, and E-Romnja was unfortunately no exception. It has affected relationships at every level – not just interpersonal relationships, but also the relationship that E-Romnja has with the community. It was a year of being in crisis mode, delivering humanitarian aid for needs such as hygiene. The relationship with local authorities has also seen a rapid degradation in 2020. In places, a blockage of communication has happened, due to a reshuffling of priorities. Women and Roma women’s needs were not considered a priority during the COVID-19 crisis. In all her working years, Carmen has had the opportunity to develop intersectional alliances and networks through interacting with diverse people. This is much harder to do in the virtual environment, which makes the task of developing such networks much harder.

But 2020 was also a year that showed us solidarity. E-Romnja has raised record-breaking funds, including from new donors who chose to donate monthly. They also saw the confirmation that the kind of grassroots community work they do is sustainable. Even if they were largely absent from the field, the women have risen to the occasion and have continued to turn up and organize events.

Together with Ashoka

Although Carmen has only been a fellow for a few months, she has had the opportunity to learn new things and interact with people who are outside of her bubble, perhaps most notably through the selection process that took place in Vienna. In particular, she has had the opportunity to interact with people whose structured thinking is different from hers, but that helped her reorient her goals, and think strategically about how to achieve them. A new experience was talking to the press, which brought about the realization that she is now addressing a larger audience, who may not know about her work. While this is exciting, she is very adamant that she should not be painted as Roma women’s savior. Collective voices are important, much more so than any individual’s voice.

She also reflects on how her reputation and impact have developed, with a better contoured reputation. The fact that her impact has widened has been apparent through the increase in the number of collaboration requests. She was happy to receive these from politicians, national and international, as well as institutions.

2021 and beyond

There are many challenges lying ahead. We should encourage civic participation in citizens, as well as critical thinking. We should all think about our implicit prejudices, particularly regarding racism, sexism and prejudice towards the poor. Put simply, we should think critically about our own biases, in an intersectional manner.

Carmen’s plans for the future include focusing on sexual and reproductive rights. In particular, she is hoping to help to change the way interventions are conducted when it comes to sexual violence, especially in cases where minors are involved. Too many times the default position is to not believe girls and women, and that is unacceptable. She also is looking forward to extending her network and hopes to be able to replicate her working model in other organizations.



The background is an aerial photograph of a winding road in a desert landscape, overlaid with large, dark blue geometric shapes. The shapes include a trapezoid at the top left, a semi-circle at the top center, a circle at the top right, a large semi-circle on the right side, a trapezoid at the bottom right, a large rounded rectangle at the bottom left, and two semi-circles at the bottom center. The text is centered on the left side of the image.

Part Two: The Road to Changemaking Romania



In 2020, the year that marked our 3rd anniversary, we grew a lot. When we look back on it, we are grateful that we are surrounded by such inspiring changemakers, partners and collaborators. What is most important for us right now is to take all these learnings, our stakeholders' feedback and our motivation and energy to build for the future – a future where everyone is a changemaker, in an ecosystem of support that unleashes everyone's potential to be a positive force for the world.

The road to a changemaking Romania requires everyone to play a role. And at Ashoka, throughout this year, we looked within to better understand what our role should be to reach this objective. This process was crucial in tweaking and revising our strategy going forward. We looked at what happened in 2020, as well as in the 3 years of activity, took all feedback from everyone we worked with and began unpuzzling how we should continue supporting this journey – our own and the changemakers and Fellows we wish to support in the future.

Our mission is to accelerate social change in Romania, to contribute to building an ecosystem prone to social innovation. Our mission is thus to support social entrepreneurs and changemakers scale their impact. So, we started by asking ourselves – **Who is a social entrepreneur?** What are the skills required and how do we identify them? How do we empower people to identify as social entrepreneurs? And once they do, **what do they need?**

Who is a Social Entrepreneur?



To deep dive into this complex question, the Ashoka Fellows network represented a great pool of inspiration. Even though the identity of the social entrepreneur is very nuanced and hard to standardise, we believe there are a series of traits and ways of thinking that are very present in the social entrepreneur's mindset.

First of all, we referred to the Ashoka Changemaking skills. A changemaker is someone who is taking creative action to solve a social problem. And changemaking involves empathy, thoughtfulness, creativity, taking action and collaborative leadership. Of course, these are not necessarily exhaustive, as social entrepreneurs thrive in complexity.



Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social, cultural, and environmental challenges. They are ambitious and persistent – tackling major issues and offering new ideas for systems-level change. Ashoka has pioneered the field of social entrepreneurship, identifying and supporting the world's leading social entrepreneurs since 1980. These changemakers measure their success not in revenue or increased stock prices, but rather in the "return to society" - creating change through sustainable processes and long-lasting mechanisms.



What really stands out for the social entrepreneur is the desire to achieve grassroots change - it's not enough to help one person, rather, you have to ensure that you can change society in such a way that nobody else ever experiences that problem. Many of our Fellows come to this realization once they become part of Ashoka. Being well intentioned goes a long way, however, shifting your perspective to changing the system altogether can result



in great progress. This is why great deal of importance is on scalability - effective social entrepreneurs are those that create scalable processes and ensure fairness and equitability all throughout society.

Social entrepreneurs are also rooted in their deep sense of community. Since they are not competing with others, they thrive in collaboration. They validate ideas together, share past experiences and motivate each other. Support networks such as Ashoka help connect these individuals and their organizations with peers around the world and share their issues in order to find common, universal solutions.

In 2020, social entrepreneurs around the world rose to the occasion and helped communities handle the pandemic and rebuild after one of the most disastrous periods in recent history. Not limited to one field, many of these entrepreneurs switched gears and went from trying to be changemakers to helping others limit damages and reconstruct. Not only did many entrepreneurs help provide essential resources to those that needed them the most, but they also looked at how what they were doing before the pandemic could be applied to the current situation. This ability to understand the context that surrounds you and adapt to the new circumstances is a hallmark of a successful social entrepreneur.

For a fully functioning creative society, where everyone identifies as a changemaker, this identity must be brought forward closer to all individuals, so that it becomes recognisable in society and empowers people to nurture these traits from an early age. While we are still learning, the social entrepreneur is a powerful tool, both for Ashoka and society.

What Do They Need?



After getting into the social entrepreneur identity, it is crucial to understand what they need in order to thrive and build solutions that make systemic changes. In our previous reports the [National Report on Social Entrepreneurship \(2018\)](#) and **EMERGING OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE** we delved into the needs of social entrepreneurs and changemakers in light of the past events that 2020 brought. In this report, we wish to complement those findings.

In 2020, Ashoka commissioned an impact report from CSR BootIQ in order to firstly analyse its role in the ecosystem, but to also better understand the needs of social entrepreneurs in the fight for a better society. The comprehensive third-party report highlighted great insights about how Ashoka operates and provided helpful recommendations into how it could become more impactful.

Increased number of local organizations able to create systemic changes and to manage and communicate their social impact

Ashoka's reflection: Impact Academy Program

First of all, even more resources should be allocated towards making the changemaking process as systemic as possible i.e. help social entrepreneurs tackle the problem at a grassroots, local level and then assist them in scaling their impact globally, one step at a time. Making sure that all relevant parties are involved (not just the NGO sector, but also for profits, academia and government) is also underlined as a critical component of effective social entrepreneurship. Creating strong links with local forces when dealing with certain problems should be a top priority, as Ashoka is perceived as a potential ecosystem architect that customizes its tools, methodologies, and metrics to fit the local context and pass them over to the local social actors.

The intended longer-term outcome is an increased number of local organizations able to create systemic changes and to manage and communicate their social impact by using appropriate tools and processes, including the use of evidence-based impact measurement.

One prerequisite to meet the longer-term outcome is that the social actors experience a shift of paradigm from addressing the symptoms of a situation/ problem to look into its root causes and base the interventions by addressing those causes. A second prerequisite is that the social actors switch from focusing on outputs to outcomes as the main results of their projects/ programs. These two changes of paradigm set the basis for impactful interventions that should contribute to systemic changes. Therefore, it was necessary for the social actors to becoming knowledgeable about system thinking, impact management within an organization, and impact measurement. Their exposure to the Impact Academy development program filled in this need.



“They were the first to talk about the potential of a venture capital fund for social entrepreneurship and they had a pool of individuals willing to be part of the conversation on the topic.”

Elements of social finance in place

Ashoka’s reflection: current social finance initiatives

This means that a small number of organizations have become intentionally active in this area. Among them, financial institutions (banks) and private investors started to look into the topic, although their initiatives are mainly internal or insular. This is true mainly for Bucharest area, yet slim developments towards such elements of a local social finance ecosystem are observed in Timisoara area as well. Two of the organizations (fonduristructurale.ro & Ashoka Romania) drafted a joint strategy for social financing and submitted a joint proposal for EU funding for sustaining the development of social entrepreneurship ecosystem under the umbrella of a consortium with other organizations in the region. The proposal was very recently approved for funding.

Social financing is one of the most important aspects of any changemaking community, and Ashoka is seen as a potential pioneer of the establishment of a legislative framework regarding social financing. An augmented profile of the organization as catalyser of public authorities and institutions (even regulators, see the Romanian National Bank) in the field of social financing might be considered. Countries in the region have established guarantee funds structures to support the financing of social entrepreneurs, which does not exist in Romania. If a plan to build such an infrastructure becomes successful, it would be a breakthrough and many positive changes are possible afterwards.

Furthermore, another need identified was in regard to educating and preparing of (social) businesses. A possible solution is establishing an Accelerator of social business (in partnership with other actors) and have a first generation of businesses with social impact. This would bring benefits on two levels:

- 1. it would bring consistency among the social start-ups, strengthening their knowledge about how to run a business and prepare them for the investment stage**
- 2. it would increase the number of success stories, something which is missing from the present local landscape of social entrepreneurship.** It is considered that more success stories of (social) entrepreneurs will attract many others to become entrepreneurs by getting more courage to start. Once the interest increases for such businesses, there will be established venture capital funds for start-ups and social impact. It has potential as it is of interest for the new generations.



Cross-sector Collaboration

Ahsoka's reflection: Timisoara initiative

Collaborative impact requires for various actors to come together and address a shared problem understood in the same way by all, and each do the work they know to do best in a complementary manner towards agreed outcomes. Without a solid collaboration infrastructure among the various local social actors, collaborative impact would remain only a desideratum. For this reason it becomes particularly relevant to sustain Ashoka's plans to build such a collaboration infrastructure, as an underlying condition to ensure sustainability and growth for present interventions and future initiatives.

The intended long-term outcome regarding the local ecosystems is for the representatives across sectors to collaborate around pressing local issues in a natural, legitimate manner.

One of the root causes for seldom cross-sector collaborations at local levels is the lack of trust at both levels: individual as well as organizational. Since trust represents one of the basics in any collaboration rapport, this aspect disrupts most of the attempts for cooperation among local (and central) organizations which hampers the efforts of spreading social innovative solutions among local communities.

These were some of the pillars we took up for reflection following the insights gathered from this assessment. These insights, together with all feedback loops we have gathered from our stakeholders, really contributed to what will be Ashoka Romania's strategy in the next years.



Ashoka Romania's Strategy

2021–2025

Social Entrepreneurship

Selecting and Supporting Social Entrepreneurs

This pillar is dedicated to select the Ashoka Fellows (10 months selection process, 1 in every 10 million people/year in average) to join the global network. Being Ashoka Fellow means being part of the largest global network of social innovators. Every fellow has passed a very complex selection process that allowed them to finally be empowered by Ashoka in terms of knowledge, experience, financial, legal and technical resources to develop and scale up their project. If by 2020 we elected 6 Fellows, our next objective is to elect another 10 Fellows by 2025.

Apart from selecting them, the lifetime membership to the Ashoka Fellow network entails continuous support to grow and scale their impact. We commit to support Ashoka Fellows by



Unlocking time as a social entrepreneur's key resource with a personalized stipend for up to 3 years.



Providing strategic advice and access to know-how & pro bono partners



Increasing visibility and opening doors, making ashoka fellows visible to decision-makers from all sectors



Local and global identity, recognition and connections with social entrepreneurs, investors, and changemakers.

Selection Criteria	
New Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New, effective approach to solve a social problem • Innovation was successfully implemented in a pilot project at least once
Entrepreneurial Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with entrepreneurial spirit and passion to implement the idea widely • Clear strategic plan and vision on which steps are needed to ensure system change
Social Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scalable approach • Potential to fundamentally solve roots of social problem
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person capable of developing and continuously refining a solution that can address the evolving systemic problem
Ethical Fiber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person with strong values that has her motivation drawn from a strong commitment to the problem and the people affected by it

Social Entrepreneur Identity

As touched upon in the previous section, the social entrepreneur identity is a crucial step in achieving an everyone a changemaker world. We commit to democratising access to resources and tools in any form, such as articles, campaigns, or podcasts. The main objective is to bring the role closer to individuals so that people understand what social entrepreneurship entails and wish to identify as a social entrepreneur. This vision will contribute to the repositioning of the social sector as an equal in the debate with the private and public sectors in order to de-stigmatise perceptions on social entrepreneurs.

Systems Architecture

This pillar aims to contribute to enriching the ecosystem for an environment more prone to social innovation,

Social Finance

Develop the capacity of the Romanian social finance market and create the conditions for launching at least one financial instrument for Romanian social enterprises.

With the premises previously described, creating a healthy ecosystem is challenging but possible considering the growing interest of institutional and non-institutional investors towards impact investment and social finance and taking into account the increasing level of maturity of the social entrepreneurship world in Romania, as well as the entry into the “impact market” of newcomers with a business background (e.g.: corporates in search of purpose who open up new impact businesses, entrepreneurs who steer their ventures towards more social impact and hybrid financing models, etc.).

Ashoka Romania has a strategy focused on the following drivers, to act in the social finance domain:



1 Knowledge sharing for investors and SEs



2 Synergies with incubators and support organizations



3 P2P platform for changemakers

The 1st driver is specifically focused on bringing knowledge in the Romanian ecosystem that will help:



the interested SEs to understand how to scale their impact and to improve their investment readiness



potential investors (commercial banks, premium clients of commercial banks, equity investors, etc.) in understanding the potential of the social innovation world, SEs and to open their perspectives to fund systems change.

The 2nd driver is strictly connected with the 2nd one: in the next years, a larger alliance with incubators and other organization could actually amplify and make the impact transfer work in Romania more systemic, with the crucial contribution of Ashoka in terms of social innovation anchor, neutral facilitator and change enabler.

The 3rd driver should be the natural result of the Ashoka systemic activity: a P2P community of changemakers, coming from the profit, non-profit, academic and public sectors, able to self-organize and manage an offline and eventually online platform that could enable investors and investees (changemakers) to communicate and to advocate for a finance and regulatory system that work for the good of all.

Social Business Intelligence

There is a strong lack of centralised, accessible data when it comes to fully understanding the social problems in Romania in a holistic and interconnected way. In many cases the data gathered by public authorities is incomplete, thus many social entrepreneurs and relevant communities cannot fully grasp the dimensions of the Romanian socio-economic context. This leads to an unreliable process of problem-understanding which severely affects the perceived impact of solutions that stakeholders put to action in solving these issues. Hence, the media and other reporting entities can only present bits of the complex puzzle that can lead to identifying the root cause of a problem.

Ashoka aims to create a Social Business Intelligence Hub that better centralises and increases data transparency in achieving more reliable intelligence with regards to social issues. Ashoka is undergoing several research initiatives resulting in a series of sectorial reports that aim to present a holistic landscape to topics such as the Real Cost of Poverty, Sports for Social Good, or The Complexities of Education. To deepen this effort, these insights are transformed into open-source, digital, accessible tools that can be leveraged in the work of social entrepreneurs, changemakers, public authorities and citizens at large to take informed and collective action for future initiatives.

Involvement of Civil Society in Decision Making

Building on the efforts on portraying the social entrepreneur identity, a main objective is to overall increase sector's participation in decision making processes and design better collaboration for a better society.

At local level we aim to deliver an Engagement Roadmap in Timisoara. Taking a bottom-up, holistic community process we will identify building blocks to co-create local strategies for social impact where all stakeholders have share of voice. Initially, 60 stakeholders will gain knowledge around collective impact and 30 people will develop co-creation initiatives in ideation workshops. The process will be documented so that the methodology can be replicated across Romania. We aspire to have 4 ideas for cross-sector collaboration turned into implemented initiatives.

Education

Starting in 2021 we aim to explore and map potential interventions that Ashoka Romania could initiate within the Romanian educational ecosystem in order to ensure that a new generation of young changemakers is equipped with the skills necessary to navigate change for the good of Romanian communities and the society overall.

This exploratory process laid the ground for Ashoka Romania's 'Children & Youth' strategy, which will be rooted in the 'Everyone a changemaker' framework and will encompass Ashoka's two strategic directions:

- Every child masters empathy - In a changemaker world, empathy is as fundamental as reading and math. This creates a new social imperative to ensure that every child fully develops their own innate capacity for empathy.
- Every young person practices changemaking - Empathy for more fluid collaboration, Co-creative teamwork, New leadership, Changemaking and Organizing in open, fluid teams of teams

Impact Communities

Embracing the 'Everyone a changemaker' philosophy, Ashoka's focus on education is to enable young changemakers from all over the world to become drivers of change in their communities and to support them in developing changemaker skills.

After mapping, analysing and understanding the particularities of the Romanian educational system, we have come to the understanding that the working environment and organizational culture of educational institutions in Romania is, in the majority of cases, the inhibiting factor which limits the exposure and understanding of youth to changemaking skills by suppressing the teaching staff's drive and interest to embed changemaking skills in the learning experience of children and youth.

Therefore, we consider that, in order to achieve our purpose in Romania, supporting educational institutions all across the country transform their organizational culture is key - and will be our focus in the years to come. We aim to support institutions transition towards organizational cultures that foster collaboration, embrace change, encourage constructive feedback, support the constant pedagogical development of teachers - and understand the value of co-creating their processes and curricula together with students, moving towards educational models 'designed for, with and by children and youth'.

Knowledge and impact transfer activities within the Ashoka global network to the ecosystem of social entrepreneurs and other architects of transformation in Romania, in order to increase the ability of local organizations to build programs and projects together. The program will bring engagement of social innovations founders/leaders, represented by Ashoka Fellows and their partners. We wish to firstly support changemakers with tools, knowledge, and inspiration to continue their work and expand their impact. Secondly, to host a space for connections and collaborations to be built to create a strong community.

Impact transfer communities also represent an important driver for our social finance mission. A driver that focuses on the capacity of Ashoka Romania to contribute to knowledge creation and to bring new ideas in the country. The Impact Transfer program, previously called localizer, has brought more than 17 ideas in Romania, adapting and replicating social models focused on different subjects such as green energy (Cooperativa de Energie) and domestic violence (#SiEuReusesc).

Plug-in to International Opportunities

Curated Opportunities for the Romanian Ecosystem, which includes plug in to international challenges and funding opportunities, meetings, workshops or impact transfer initiatives with Ashoka Fellows from the network, learning opportunities, and co-bidding with Ashoka Fellows.



Internal – Healthy Workplace, Healthy Organization

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.

To achieve this goal, there are many internal processes and interactions within the team we try to adopt and improve so that we work more fluidly.

Sharing Insights Meeting

Having different roles, motivations and passions, we often find ourselves involved in very different activities – be it fundraising events, international competitions, community building efforts, impact measurement workshops, gaming, LGBT+ rights, we together make a quite diverse mix. Once a month we meet to discuss in a more informal manner various insights we have gathered throughout a month that could be useful for the team and the organization going forward. It is a moment for us to pause and to reflect on the past month in a way that also enriches our knowledge as an organization.

Feedback Loops

In our team, every member is responsible for giving and receiving feedback, while we collectively are also responsible for making the space to allow for honest feedback to be given. Thus, every beginning of the month is an opportunity to ask our teammates for feedback in case we feel the need to get advice, support, or have a check-in with each other about our efforts. This is a voluntary process, however we keep stressing on the importance of allowing our colleagues to give us feedback when they feel the need to do so. This is a process that is in continuous growth and improvement so that we make honest, constructive and regular feedback a norm in our organizational culture.

Fundraising Status Check Meetings

We are aiming to nurture an everyone a fundraiser policy, where all colleagues are somewhat involved in strengthening our fundraising capabilities and bring new partnerships in the organization. This process does not only imply having a transparent process to become aware of our pipeline and efforts, but it must also hold space for sharing insights on meetings, learn how to develop these capabilities, create materials, building a digital database of contacts, all to support each other better develop this skill. During these bimonthly meetings we come together to delve into each other's knowledge and support each other in improving this process so that we all have the necessary tools to be a good fundraiser.

Monthly Team Meeting

Every month we meet to go over our internal processes, the internal team meetings, and our behaviour as a team, to assess how they contribute to strengthening our organisational culture and how they complement our efforts. This is a space to reflect on everything we do and improve these internal interactions in a way that serves all our objectives and goals. We are always learning and there is always space to accommodate new methods and try new things to see what works.

Thematic Workshops

Any of our team members can suggest having workshops on topics that are of interest for the entire team as a method to hold space to learn new things about ourselves or about a subject. For example, we held workshops on business continuity to pinpoint our vulnerabilities in case of emergency situations, crises or disasters, in order to form an action plan that will close these gaps and make us more resilient.

We also looked into our biases and how they limit our perception of other people and society. Our latest Ashoka Fellow, Carmen Gheorghe, was a great facilitator in driving such conversations.

“Roshokans’ Day”

Once in a while, we take a Friday to disconnect from our daily activities and spend some team time to connect with each other. This allows us to enjoy each other's company, celebrate the good things that we have achieved, and allow space to also relax around each other, eliminating the more transactional dialogue that takes place during working hours.

Become an Ally on Our Journey





For 40 years, Ashoka has bet on the adventurous-on people with a fundamentally new vision of what is possible in the world. We coined the term social entrepreneur and have since grown a global network of 3.800 extraordinary changemakers who we celebrate as much for their empathy and authenticity as for their entrepreneurial skill. We have set the global standard for how to find local talent and how to nurture that talent via a vibrant peer network. Our support for early-stage innovators is leveraged many times over: in the form of organizational growth, policy change, independent replication and more. Ashoka Fellows have gone on to improve the lives of tens of millions. They have won Nobel Peace Prizes, facilitated the global spread of breakthrough innovations like rotational grazing and microfinance, made major inroads in ending child labour, established key aspects of the sharing economy, championed cross-national treaties to reduce overfishing, and more. We have been present in Romania since 2017 and have selected 6 Ashoka Fellow who are at the leading edge of the most significant social and economic issues of our time—human trafficking and modern slavery, lack of collaborative approaches in treating patients with rare

diseases, climate and environment degradation, civic education and engagement, international corruption and crime.

In Romania, in 3 years, we mapped around 2.500 changemakers around the country and have reached half a million people. From our interactions, a troubling pattern has surfaced: the energy and resources for social entrepreneurs have overwhelmingly concentrated in a handful of big cities and on topics which are popular. This contradicts what we know to true: that ideas emerge from everywhere, often from the people who have lived the problems they are trying to solve and from overlooked fields of work that constitute taboo subjects for our society. Combining this pattern with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is enough fuel to intensify mistrust, and division within the country, with too many Romanians feeling overlooked and voiceless to change the conditions that affect their lives. It also means a wealth of creative solutions go unnoticed and unfunded. We all lose out as a result, more likely to get stuck thinking the same way about old problems and failing to anticipate new ones.

As an Ashoka ally you can be an engine for change in Romania:

Deepening Impact

Support Romanian social innovators in investing the time to scale their operations and maximize impact,

Form Partnerships

Become a strategic partner to Ashoka to build an ecosystem prone to social innovation,

Improve Branding

Positioning as a thought leader committed to identifying and supporting the most impactful social entrepreneurs,

Peer-to-Peer Exchange

Engage with an ecosystem of entrepreneurs part of the Ashoka Fellow Network.



Join the Ashoka Support Network

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

Become a Strategic Partner

Our Strategic partners are forward thinking and leading companies/ organisations 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 organisation and to contribute to systemic change

Become a Volunteer

Support us in increasing our impact and reach our objectives in accelerating social entrepreneurship in Romania

What You Can Do Right Now

Subscribe to our newsletter [here](#).

Become an Ashoka Fellow nominator and help us identify and elect a new Ashoka Fellow. Check our criteria and nominate an Ashoka Fellow [here](#).

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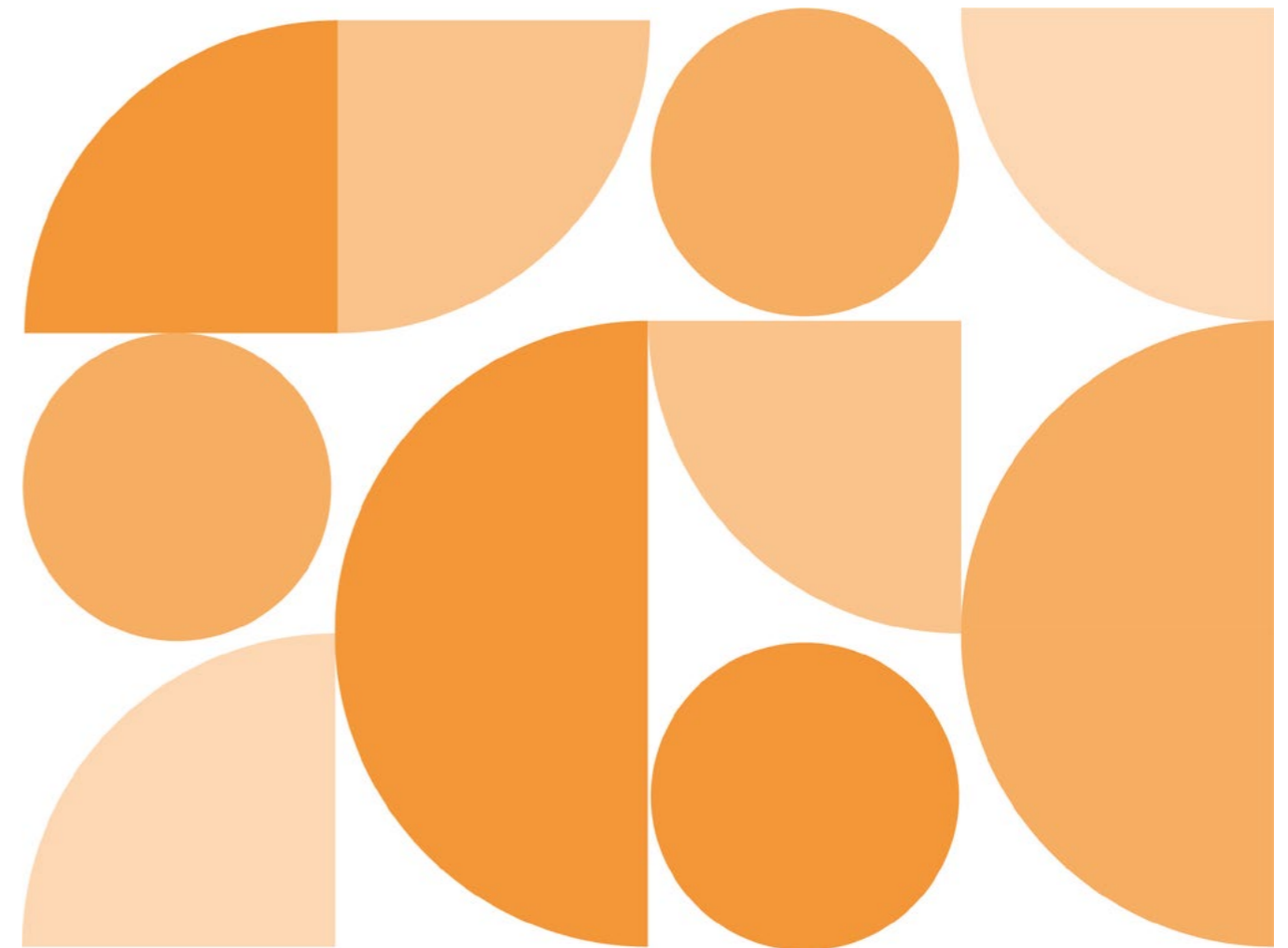


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Thank You.



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