Studying barriers of smaller affiliates/communities in CEE Region and ways to create more engagement and connections, based on their context and needs

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September – December 2023

Introduction and methodology

The **Wikimedia CEE Hub** is a network of communities and Wikimedia affiliates that have been organised in the [Wikimedia CEE](#) (Central and Eastern Europe) group since 2011. The goal of this [regional hub](#) is to formalise the ongoing collaboration within the CEE region and provide services for communities that support them in their work and enable them to grow how they see fit for them.[1] The CEE Hub was initiated to empower and to provide support structures that enable closer cooperation, capacity building and the transfer of knowledge between communities and individuals who work in the CEE region. CEE Hub is a sort of a back-office of the CEE, offering support in 3 fields:
- administrative,
- programmatic, and
- related to communications.[2]

Aligned with this goal and mandate, CEE Hub hired an external consultant to undertake research to understand more deeply the barriers that various smaller communities in CEE face and ways to create more engagement and connections depending on their context, needs, reality and relevance.
The consultant's background and experience focus on participatory approaches for group work, capacity development of grassroots civil society actors, social learning and collaboration in Central Eastern Europe.

Research questions:
- Who is the community/affiliate in selected countries made of, what are community members' roles, time spent on tasks etc.? What motivates/drives them to do this work?
- What barriers are impacting community members participation in WM related activities in a more organised way (organisational, context specific etc.)?
- What are realistic ways to support members to strengthen their capacities and, at the same time, not to overburden them?
- What are possible approaches to engage community members and create more connections:
    - between them (inside country)
    - cross border (between a few countries)
    - them and CEE Hub/Wikimedia Movement?

Based on the research questions, a more detailed set of interview questions were created.

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[1] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_CEE_Hub
[2] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Project/MSIG/Stronger_CEE_Hub

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The research process consisted of the following stages:
- Desk research of previous relevant research, reports, analyses
- 11 semi-structured interviews with relevant representatives of affiliates and communities (offline and online) from the CEE region, referred as affiliate/community throughout the report
- 1 interview with Wikimedia Foundation Program Officer
- Semi-structured discussions with CEE Hub team
- Processing of data and compiling the report

9 interviews took place in English, 1 respondent submitted their answers in writing (English), 1 interview took place in Russian. The interviewees were invited to participate based on the recommendation of the CEE Hub team, based on their size and level of development.

To capture the data accurately, the findings were organised into 8 thematic clusters, each containing a set of relevant recommendations for additional support and further engagement.

The thematic clusters are as follows:
1. Structure, governance and management
2. Fundraising and resource mobilisation
3. Maintaining current community and attracting new members
4. Partnerships
5. Engagement in the wider Wikimedia movement
6. Capacity development
7. Context influence
8. Role of CEE HUB and motivations for work

The main limitation of the current research was the lack of availability for interviews of invited affiliates and communities. It is therefore recommended to triangulate the main findings and recommendations with the CEE Hub team and relevant community/affiliate representatives.

Below are included the main findings and recommendations.

Executive Summary

1. Affiliate/community structure, governance and management

The study investigates the diverse organisational structures and governance of affiliates/communities associated with Wikimedia movement, ranging from affiliates with established structures to scattered groups with minimal organisation. Notably, the importance of a paid part-time member for administrative support in smaller affiliates is highlighted, acknowledging the strategic value of not relying solely on volunteer work. It emphasises the need for clearly defined roles to prevent burnout. The significance of building a sustainable community, with ongoing processes to facilitate volunteer succession, is underscored.

Two contrasting views on registering as a civic association emerge, with some groups seeing it as beneficial for partnerships and legalities, while others find it administratively burdensome. Regular meetings are seen as vital for community engagement, varying decision-making systems, and conflict management. Addressing the challenges of disruptive contributors requires consistent communication, and there's a suggested need for workshops on conflict management policies.

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Recommendations include tailored strategies based on the group's structure, urging the application of an equity and inclusion lens. For less structured groups, hosting events and follow-up engagements are proposed, while those with a small core are advised to attract more members and initiate regular meetings. Larger groups are encouraged to secure administrative support, conduct strategic planning workshops, and ensure functional policies and procedures. Regular mentoring and peer learning are recommended across all levels to facilitate sustainable community development.

2. Fundraising and resource mobilisation

The Wikimedia grant system exhibits flexibility in accommodating diverse organisational structures, including individuals, groups, non-profit organisations, and fiscal sponsorship, providing a more adaptable framework compared to traditional donors. Interviewees largely opt for rapid grants and general support funds that align with their developmental needs. Registered non-profit groups leverage their countries' 2% income tax donation system as an additional funding source, adhering to income diversification principles. The CEE Hub aids groups in understanding requirements and administrative navigation. One interviewee proposed decentralising funding models, introducing regional sources for quicker distribution.

Recommendations include encouraging registered non-profits to diversify funding sources, supporting affiliates/communities with flexible funding for administrative costs, integrating learning and reflection into programmatic activities, balancing resources for programmatic and capacity development, and leveraging CEE Hub to enhance fund access in the CEE region. The call for regional funds to support emerging communities and lower-income countries is emphasised.

3. Maintaining current community and attracting new members

The findings from interviews with community contributors highlight the importance of maintaining the current community spirit and addressing challenges in community building. Interviewees stress the need for a dedicated part-time person to handle community building tasks, emphasising the importance of understanding members' strengths, motivations, and capacities. Some contributors prefer individual tasks or online interaction, necessitating tailored engagement strategies.

Maintaining the social side of the community is challenging, particularly due to low event attendance, possibly linked to the pandemic or introverted personalities. Strategies such as one-to-one connections are suggested for inclusion. Regular meetings play a crucial role, but some groups face obstacles like last-minute cancellations or lack of interest.

Attracting new members is a shared priority. Interviewees plan events, emphasise onboarding processes, and adopt quality over quantity in engagements. Social media visibility is crucial for attracting contributors, but capacity constraints hinder regular updates. Legacy cultivation is urged, with an emphasis on engaging old and new members.

Recommendations include finding a balance between engaging existing communities and attracting new members, implementing robust conflict management systems, leveraging social media, and learning from diverse volunteer-based movements. CEE Hub is suggested to support smaller groups in finding this balance, providing skills development, peer learning, and support for organisers.

4. Partnerships

The findings from interviews with 11 affiliates/communities indicate varying experiences and capacities in building external partnerships. Six groups expressed openness to cultivating

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partnerships, emphasising project-based collaborations with entities such as universities, libraries, ministries of education, and private companies. Challenges include potential disruptions if partners' priorities or budgets shift and delays in cooperation, especially with larger institutions. Existing resources on partnerships include a page initiated by the Partnerships & Resource Development group[3] and the Learning Patterns[4] page on meta, offering practical advice and documentation. For smaller groups, it is crucial to assess capacity for sustained partnerships, prioritise quality over quantity, and involve community members in decision-making.

Recommendations include matching with similar-sized partners, assessing mutual needs, developing regional guidance, establishing a partnership development fund for smaller groups, and creating a system to promote regional guidance utilisation.

5. Engagement in the wider Wikimedia movement

The findings on larger movement engagement reveal challenges for contributors, citing the overwhelming volume of possibilities, time constraints, and language barriers. The CEE Meeting, while seen as important by one respondent, was perceived as lacking a genuine community feeling due to limited collaboration and perceived political agendas. Despite these challenges, affiliate/community representatives emphasised the importance of maintaining connections with the larger movement. Good practices include attending wider events for knowledge exchange, having an internal communication channel with a designated bridge person for information filtering and translation, and considering paid or semi-paid roles for managing external relations.

Recommendations propose a strategic approach to information management within the community, involving a designated person or a rotated approach based on agreed criteria. The role of CEE Hub as a facilitator and connector is highlighted for fostering a sense of belonging and providing tailored information to affiliates/communities.

6. Capacity development

The findings emphasise the diverse nature of capacity development, which is as a process occurring at individual, organisational, and community/system levels. Context, encompassing political, cultural, and technological aspects, constantly influences this dynamic process. The report underscores the importance of tailoring capacity development to the unique goals, capabilities, and constraints of affiliate/community groups.

Based on a Grantees Learning Report Analysis for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA), while grantees show a tendency to focus on areas related to events and contributions to Wikipedia in terms of their capacity development, the report emphasises the interconnectedness of capacities, urging investment in foundational aspects like governance, strategic planning, and conflict management.

Interviews with affiliates/communities reveal specific needs in communication skills, confidence building, strategic planning, volunteer attraction and management, conflict resolution, funding, tech tools, and capacity self-assessment. The majority of groups are encouraged to self-assess, mapping their structures and relationships, leading to a Capacity Development Action Plan.
Strategic planning is highlighted for groups with reduced capacity, emphasising adaptability to shifting capacities and obstacles. The report recommends a functional, guiding strategic plan for smaller volunteer-based teams.

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[3] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Partnerships_%26_Resource_Development/About
[4] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Learning_patterns

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In terms of capacity development methods, a holistic approach combining training workshops, mentoring, and peer-to-peer learning is suggested. The significance of peer-to-peer learning is underscored, with national and regional events facilitating meaningful exchanges and collaborations. Mentorship is deemed crucial for some groups, with mentor visits providing guidance and acting as catalysts for internal development.

Recommendations include more in-depth facilitated capacity self-assessment for smaller groups, prioritising capacities like governance, strategic planning, and volunteer management. Focused mentorship visits are proposed, and the report recommends expanding the CEE Hub mandate to include a 4th Pillar dedicated to **community engagement and capacity development**. Structuring peer learning based on asynchronous, synchronous, and on-demand principles is suggested, with the CEE Hub playing a facilitation and coordination role.

7. Context influence

The report explores the impact of the current political context on affiliate/community work, with a focus on EU and non-EU countries. In EU countries, diverse democratic challenges arise, influenced by political shifts and governmental actions. An affiliate/community dealing with tensions between in-country ethnic communities emphasises inclusivity in its core group to ensure diverse perspectives. The war in Ukraine causes content-related conflicts, revealing capacity imbalances between volunteer contributors and those working creating false/distorted content on Wikipedia. Unequal distribution of tasks, affecting women due to caregiving roles, is noted. In a country facing increasing restrictions, concerns about source validity and reliability emerge.

In non-EU countries, migration affects contributor groups, but it is seen as an opportunity for integration and community building. Economic and free time disparities impact volunteering dynamics, with challenges in dedicating time and resources. Linguistic issues and perceived inadequacies in decision-making processes are reported. In a closed democratic space, a state institution supports challenges the notion of non-remunerated contributions, and the suppression of women's voices affects their participation.

Recommendations include introducing scenario work in strategic planning, considering risks in restricted regimes, developing safeguarding mechanisms, and amplifying efforts for diversity and inclusion. Covering costs for volunteers, including transportation and meals, is emphasised. The CEE Hub is urged to monitor democratic space fluctuations and offer intentional support in obstructed spaces.

8. Role of CEE HUB and motivations for work

The CEE Hub has significantly benefited 9 out of 11 affiliates/communities, offering crucial support in grant access, budget allocation, guidance for resources and connections. Affiliates/communities acknowledge its role as a turning point, a strategic presenter of wider movement-related information, and a sounding board for discussing ideas. The Hub aligns well with its three pillars — Administrative, Communication Enhancement, and Programmatic Assistance — demonstrating a good level of support for smaller affiliates.

Interviewed individuals express a profound motivation rooted in values, including contributing to universal knowledge accessibility, promoting democracy through shared knowledge, and addressing gender inequalities. These motivations, essential for sustaining engagement, need periodic revisiting

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during planning meetings and effective communication to showcase their impact, demonstrating the ongoing commitment to making knowledge accessible for all.

Below are included the main findings and recommendations in more detail.

1. Affiliate/community structure, governance and management

Findings

The interviewed groups were diverse in their structure and governance: from affiliates with 1 or several full/part time staff with a functioning general assembly, board and implementing volunteer team to groups having a core of 5 – 6 active volunteer members who meet regularly and share responsibility for tasks (may or may not have a functioning board), to communities with 1 -2 volunteer members with varying degrees of motivation to maintain the affiliate/community, to more fragmented, scattered groups who do not have regular meetings or event organising.

From the perspective of group organising, in the majority of interviewed groups, there is a core of active members (within formal or informal structures) and a periphery of contributors to Wikipedia who may or may not participate in group organising and regular meetings.

In case of smaller affiliates one finding emerging from the interviews is connected to the importance of having at least one paid part-time member supporting the affiliate/community with administrative tasks (annual reporting, documentation, answering emails, office work, event organising, financial management, communication and outreach). Out of 11 interviewed groups, 5 have this model, 1 sees it as a next step in their planning and 3 would be open to explore options, but would need to find a motivated individual first or register as an organisation.

Not depending 100% on volunteer work is a beneficial strategic choice, however it will be important in teams with reduced capacity to define roles and responsibilities for the paid member, so that they are able to prioritise workload, avoid burnout and switch successfully to the set of accountabilities coming with a paid role.

This is in line with another pattern shared by an older affiliate who seized their activities because their life priorities of their core volunteer group changed. This points out to the importance of building community as an on-going process, so that the next generation of volunteers can take over, combined with the needed minimum structures and processes to maintain engagement.

Registering a civic association in the country was viewed as beneficial by 2 community groups because it is necessary to be able to build partnerships (ability to sign contracts/agreements) and have a legal entity for activities implementation. It was also viewed as something tedious and burdensome from the administrative perspective by other 2 groups who do not plan to do it and do not see immediate benefits for them at the time of the interview.

Regular meetings (online or offline for smaller geographic areas) are a contributing factor for community engagement, group motivation and activities implementation, although this can vary and depends on volunteers' available time.

The decision-making systems also vary among the interviewed affiliate/communities. Decisions may be taken by the core group if they meet regularly, or by the designated structures (general assembly or board if they exist), or by 1 most active person in consultation with other members who respond

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to requests/questions. Having internal online chats and discussion forums for decision making are a helpful element.

An important finding emerged around the importance of conflict management, cultivating a respectful community environment, and maintaining a productive atmosphere for collaboration within 2 affiliates/communities. This tends to be an on-going issue. One interviewee mentioned that trainings do not seem to be the solution because disruptive contributors do not attend and those who do, already are better at communicating. What is required is consistent and regular communication and addressing the issues in real time, which involves high energy costs and may not be realistic, in the context of reduced capacities.

Another interviewee indicated the need to develop the skill of strategic communication connected conflicts and misunderstandings within the affiliate/community. Developing, revisiting, and reinforcing friendly space policies with a clear definition of what abusive language and behaviour are a need as well. The need for workshops on conflict management policy, conflict mediation with study cases/scenarios were indicated as beneficial by the interviewee. Also, the assistance of an experienced professional mediator or a neutral trust and safety person can be key for old conflicts and be conducive to creating the much-needed safe space.

As part of a broader, global initiative, depending on who can lead on it (it may be outside of the CEE Hub scope), in the medium term, it is also recommended to work on designing and testing systems which give power especially to new contributors to rate their experience and quality of interactions (based on predefined friendly space criteria) and a set of consequences for consistently lower rated administrators and long-term contributors.

Recommendations

Below are included a set of recommendations for further development based on the various affiliate/community structures:

Level of structure	Types of affiliate/community	Recommended next steps (depending on group's vision and motivation). Mainstream the application of an **equity and inclusion** lens for all stages.
1. No core group, fragments only, members scattered and dispersed.	Formerly active or not recognised affiliates, not registered in their country as a non-profit organisation.	● Hold an edit-a-thon/other event to create new inspiration and catalyse a new wave of contributors. If possible, ensure international presence at the event to attract more attention. ● Have a system/process for follow up and regular engagement after the event, focusing at the beginning on quality rather than quantity of contributors.
2. Small core of 1 – 2 active members.	Can be a mix of recognised and not recognised affiliates, not registered as a non-profit organisation.	● Attract and motivate more people to be part of the core for activity implementation. ● Start regular meetings. ● If more members will come to the sessions, run a participatory strategic planning workshop, as the first step to expand the core. ● Follow up with mentoring or peer learning based on the group's needs.

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3. Bigger core of 4 - 7 active members.	A mix of recognised and not recognised affiliates, with or without a functioning board. Can be registered or not registered as a non-profit organisation in their country.	• Get or maintain support for at least 1 paid person (part-time or full-time) for administrative tasks. If needed, CEE Hub can offer additional support to design this process (job description, selection, onboarding, key performance indicators, accountability, learning and evaluation, valid policies etc). • Maintain regular meetings of the core group. • Have a strategic planning and capacity self-assessment workshop to determine priority actions and fundraising approaches for further affiliate/community development. • Make sure there is a minimum set of functional policies and procedures. • Benefit from regular mentoring or peer learning based on a group's needs.
4. Have 1 or several part/full time paid staff, with a functional board and implementing team.	Recognised affiliate with a registered non-profit organisation in their country.	• If not updated, review and update Strategy documents and perform capacity self-assessment to determine priority actions for further development. • If not existing and deemed beneficial, work towards ensuring a separation between the strategic/governing body and operational/executive body to avoid conflict of interest and ensure effective use of time and resources. • Review and improve existing policies and procedures. • Develop/revise the affiliate role and capacities for advocacy to raise awareness and advocate for key relevant issues together with strategic partners.

2. Fundraising and resource mobilisation

Findings

The Wikimedia grant system offers a sufficient level of flexibility to work with a diverse level of organisational structures: individuals, groups, non-profit organisation, fiscal sponsorship. This level of flexibility is higher, compared to the one offered by classic institutional donors and International Non-Governmental Organisations, where a common requirement is for a group to be a registered organisation (which excludes civic activists and movements who do not fit this box). This setup is complemented very well by the CEE Hub role to provide the necessary resources, guidance, and orientation to match the funding system to the specifics of the affiliate/community.

Majority of the interviewees applied or plan to apply for rapid grants and general support fund, which correspond to their needs and current level of development.

A good practice shared by the groups who have a registered non-profit organisation is to benefit from the 2% of income tax donation system available in their countries, as a supplemental source of

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funding, in line with the income diversification principle. As these groups' capacity grows, it would be beneficial for them to explore funding opportunities outside of Wikimedia as well, available for non-profits in their country in order to increase resilience.

For groups who do not plan or are not ready to register an organisation, the CEE Hub plays a role in helping them understand the requirements and navigating the administrative specifics. Fiscal sponsorship model was reported as an appropriate option for 1 group who is not yet ready to expand capacities on the grant administration part.

An idea shared in one of the interviews was around decentralisation of the funding models, for example for CEE Hub to offer an additional funding source that would be distributed regionally in a much quicker and flexible manner.

Recommendations

- For registered non-profit organisations with sufficient level of capacity, strive towards complementing inside movement support with diversification of funding sources by applying for external opportunities.
- Continue exploring and supporting affiliates/communities with flexible "funding that covers key administrative/staffing costs, in order to reduce administrative burden, mitigate turnover, and encourage uninterrupted programming…"[5].
- Mainstream learning and reflection as part of programmatic activities required by the grant proposal. Part of this would be for teams to allocate sufficient time to develop learning questions, testing hypotheses and setting the feedback loops that would feed the information into the lessons learnt and future actions. Groups are encouraged to increase the amount of time spent on these tasks, particularly in the context of current crises where adaptability and resilience capacities become essential. Grant reviewing committees are encouraged to prioritise these points in their assessment process, as well. This may also feed into current/future efforts to measure outcome and impact level results (longer-term effects, behaviour changes, societal improvements) achieved by the groups.
- When designing a grant proposal, balance resources for the programmatic side with allocating money and time for capacity development (training, mentorships, implementing new and relevant organisational management systems etc.) and MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning). Affiliates/communities should reach out for support from CEE Hub to think through these approaches.
- Leverage on CEE Hub role and positioning to increase the number of affiliates accessing funds in CEE region, especially those from emerging communities and lower income countries. Explore creating a regional CEE fund to offer rapid/flexible support to smaller affiliates/communities.

3. Maintaining current community of contributors and attracting new members

Findings

Maintaining current community of contributors
Interviewees pointed out the importance of maintaining the spirit of the current community of contributors, so that members have a sense of belonging and feel appreciated. One example shared was inviting them for a lunch once a year to express gratitude for their hard work and contributions

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[5] Source: Grantee reporting Analysis: Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA)

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or covering the transport and coffee costs for the events they attend. Activities which can strengthen relations and help members get to know each other are beneficial for community building.

3 interviewees pointed out their need for a dedicated part-time paid person who can have community building and organising tasks (combined with other priorities as well), as it was perceived by them as an important area for affiliate/community development. The tasks of that person would be cultivating the community/relationships, keeping track and understanding members strong/weak points, how to motivate each person, reshuffling capacities if someone needs to take a rest or experiencing burnout. Part of this process would be capacity mapping of available members (skills sets, number of hours available on average, other resources they can bring like connections). It will be important to have a system where this gets reviewed regularly due to frequent changes and fluctuations, or alternatively members themselves can update the information in real time. For some groups who are not yet ready to employ a part time person, it would be more feasible to rotate this role among a few members (if they exist) for a more effective distribution of capacities. One interviewee shared that they took the role of community organising on purpose to have a difference of activity compared to their tech related full-time job. So, tapping into the interests and strong points of volunteers is key.

Another interviewee shared that maintaining the social side of their community has been difficult, due to low numbers of people showing up for events. The reasons for this were assumed to be connected to the pandemic, or people having more introverted personalities and not being comfortable socialising. This points out to the need to acknowledge the dual nature of affiliate/communities: a core of individuals who are ok to connect, meet, communicate and implement activities, and another part, made of contributors who are more comfortable to do individual tasks or interact online. One interviewee shared the example of a contributor doing more than the entire affiliate/community together, but not coming to any meetings or activities. So, the implications for community building lie in setting up systems to ensure the relevant information and feedback flows between these two dimensions, but also tailoring levels of engagement based on available capacities and interaction appetite. Also, inquiring what does inclusion mean for introverted personalities who are not used to socialising. One idea generated was around building one-to-one connections which is a slower process requiring patience and care. Inclusion of women and underrepresented groups remains an issue that requires constant attention as well.

Nevertheless, regular meetings play an important role for building the current community of contributors and organisers. One interviewed group has a physical space for meetings which happen once a week. Another group shared about meetings once in two weeks, however they have frequent last-minute cancellations. Another group shared about monthly meetings combined with a demonstration of a new tool, or a competition with small prizes. This approach has generated a good turnout which creates more information exchanges and collaboration opportunities but it takes more capacity to organise and prepare, which is currently handled by one part-time paid staff member.
2 groups did not have regular meetings at the moment of the interview, due to member's lack of interest and absence of a community organiser.

Approximately 2/3 of the current volunteer base of 1 interviewed affiliate are not able to successfully balance professional work/other tasks and volunteering time, stating that they would like to do more but do not have the necessary time or not managing the current load they committed to. Constant inclusive community building should be a priority task for volunteer-based groups, so that the next generation of available volunteers can take over, as the previous group's priorities shift, combined with the needed minimum structures and processes to maintain engagement, outlined in the previous section. Part of this is setting and applying robust conflict management systems for

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community health (policies, access to training and learning opportunities, safeguarding and mediation experts, regular community discussions and sense-making around this topic).

Attracting new members
Attracting new members and expanding the volunteer base is perceived as an important priority by all the interviewed groups.

One interviewee is planning events to attract diverse new members from underrepresented groups. They stressed that the onboarding process of newcomers is important. Part of this is creating guidelines for new members so that they know their rights, obligations, feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging.

Another interviewee mentioned the importance of having a system of care and motivating volunteers based on their interests and learning needs, because they need to be respected and understood. They adopt an experiential learning approach, allowing new contributors to make their own mistakes and acquire the lessons learnt and, at the same time, offering support.

Another interviewee shared about their approach of quality over quantity of engagements by having one on one meetings with new members to gauge their interest and motivation but also tap into the networks they are connected to attract more contributors. Other 2 groups shared about their approaches of working with organisations/groups like for example university students from a certain department (English language) or youth council representatives from various cities, on a more long-term basis with regular engagements.

In the case of 4 interviewed affiliates/communities there is a link between attracting more contributors and level of group's visibility on social media (platforms and channels). While they realise this is important, there are not always sufficient capacities to perform these tasks on a regular basis. However, having a team member whose job it is to make the community/affiliate's activities more visible, will project an image of an active, thriving, interesting group, which will create more engagement and attract more contributors.

Another interviewee shared about a pattern of old editors being very hard on accepting new members. So, a reminder is needed that it is important to cultivate a legacy and create a new wave of volunteering, as the older group will not last forever. In this context, the interviewee is in discussion with CEE Hub to organise a meeting/edit-a-thon to create new inspiration and catalyse a new wave of contributors, as well as an opportunity for meeting between old and new members. In their case, securing some international presence will attract more attendees. A clear approach for follow up and engagement with new members post-event will be needed in this case.

Both agendas are important for affiliates/communities: new members attraction and old members retention which will require diverse approaches. Key approaches outlined are connected to having a volunteer care and management system, assessing realistically capacities for quality follow up and support post-events and implementing robust conflict management systems so that new members do not get put off by an existing hostile environment.

Recommendations

- The much-needed balancing between engagement and motivation of existing communities and attracting new members will be a demanding task for the majority of smaller affiliates/communities. CEE Hub can play the role of the sounding board in helping find the right balance combined with available resources and current/future capacities.

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- Implement robust conflict management systems for community health and inclusion (policies, access to training and learning opportunities, safeguarding and mediation experts, regular community discussions and sense-making around this topic).
- Consider the role of social media and channels like WhatsApp and Telegram to attract attention and visibility to projects and activities (for environments with good internet connectivity and where these tools are effective).
- Due to the high level of diversity and complexity of levels of volunteer paths of engagement, map other volunteer-based movements (online and offline) to learn from their experiences. If not done until now, analysing how various volunteer-based movements retain, motivate, safeguard, keep accountable and attract new members will be of significant benefit. They can also provide connections to regional expertise for additional consultations/research.[6]
- In attracting new contributors, apply more awareness in terms of quality versus quantity and when each approach is useful, based on the group's capacity and level of development, for example balancing one-off edit-a-thons with longer-term, more in depth approaches to engage the same group on a regular basis and create peer learning connections between different groups or programs.
- In line with previous Wikimedia findings,[7] focus on attracting and maintaining organisers for smaller affiliates/communities as a valuable skill to retain and distribute workload. CEE Hub can play a role in their skills development, peer learning and support.

4. Partnerships

Findings

When referring to external partnerships, interviewed groups have varying degrees of experience in building and cultivating them and capacities connected to this. 6 out 11 interviewed groups referred to their experiences with partnerships or an openness to dedicate attention to cultivating them. They referred to project based or ad-hoc partnerships serving a particular purpose of goal. Among types of partnerships mentioned in the interviews were universities, libraries (in case of smaller community/affiliate, without any paid members), ministry of education, private company with a large digitised database (in case of bigger affiliate with at least 1 paid staff).

One affiliate/community (with no paid staff) referred to their lessons learnt connected to Partnerships, mainly if the partners priorities or budgets shift, then there is a significant risk that they stop cooperating with the group. The team commented that this impacts the success of projects and can be demotivating for them. This indicates a degree of variation of partnership dynamics which would require a good level of communication between the parties and monitoring of each other's shifting priorities and needs. Another situation is that in some instances, the partners are slow in responding and cooperating, particularly if they are a bigger size institution or have competing priorities and agendas.

There are existing resources on Partnerships on meta, among them it is worth mentioning a page initiated by Partnerships & Resource Development group.[8]

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[6] This in line with previous findings:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/Grantee_partners%E2%80%99_intended_programming_and_impact_Report%2C_2022%2C_CEECA_Regional_Learning_Session_%28English_version%29.pdf
[7]
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/Grantee_partners%E2%80%99_intended_programming_and_impact_Report%2C_2022%2C_CEECA_Regional_Learning_Session_%28English_version%29.pdf

[8] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Partnerships_%26_Resource_Development/About

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It contains a very useful *Questions* section covering practical advice, including for external partnerships, in the context of attracting funding. The *Resources and Documentation* page contains a compilation of resources, including questions to ask when building partnerships, handout to evaluate partnerships, tips and suggestions to building successful partnerships, writing agreements with GLAM institutions etc. The page also offers a useful definition of Partnerships,[9] acknowledging the necessary resources to set up and maintain productive partnerships (funds, knowledge, working hours), which in most instances will be a challenge for smaller affiliates/communities.

Also, the *Learning Patterns* page on meta[10] contains a set of useful resources on clarity of expectations when setting up partnerships, successful GLAM partnerships, partnerships with ministries of education etc.

In the case of smaller affiliates/communities, it is important to evaluate own capacity to set up and most importantly to sustain an external partnership. Prioritising on 1 – 2 strategic partnerships, depending on the sought activity and the groups strategic goals for that particular time period, would be important. The main approach here would be quality over quantity, because maintenance of the external Partnership requires staff capacity. This would go hand in hand with availability of staff/volunteer time to coordinate this process and ensure timely communication and smooth decision making process with the partner. Also internally, making sure that the board/community members are informed/involved in making decisions at critical points in time and setting up internal processes to evaluate and capture the lessons learnt from the partnership experience. All of this requires staff capacity.

Recommendations

- Matching similarities in capacity and size. For smaller community groups it is recommended to connect with smaller size partners, acknowledging that the affiliates/communities in most cases are run on a volunteer basis, so the capacity to manage partnerships will be reduced.
- Assessment of mutual needs and interests, benefits, resources available within a partnership. Signing a Memorandum of Understanding (if possible) and monitoring progress or changes at key stages are highly recommended.
- If not existing, it is recommended to develop additional Regional Guidance on external Partnerships, capturing in more detail practical advice and lessons learnt valid for the CEE space taking into consideration contextual differences between open democracies and more restrictive contexts, as well as level of development of affiliate/community, ensuring sufficient attention for groups working with reduced or minimum capacity.
- Developing a system to stimulate the utilisation of Regional Guidance, either through support/meetings offered by CEE Hub or peer learning opportunities.
- A Regional level **Partnership development fund** is recommended to offer the resources to smaller affiliates/communities to cover staff time to map, reach out and maintain key strategic partnerships able to add value, enhance and contribute to their work and strategy in a meaningful way. The administrative burden to apply and manage the fund should be adapted to the level of group development (in line with current eligibility options for funding: individual, group of individuals, registered organisation, fiscal sponsorship, etc.).

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[9] "Partnerships, describe any individuals or groups of people working together towards a shared goal, or a joint vision, sometimes based on an agreed upon strategy or a stated collective impact. Such partnerships are happening within the Wikimedia movement – among affiliates, communities and committees – as well as with external partners such as institutions, organisations, foundations and businesses. A partnership may involve funding, sharing content, engaging in advocacy, shared outreach, or a combination of these. This definition is intentionally broad and inclusive. In any case, setting up new partnerships requires resources; be it funds, knowledge, or working hours."
[10] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Learning_patterns

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5. Engagement in the wider Wikimedia movement

Findings

In terms of larger movement engagement, the findings are consistent with previous research done.[11] For contributors it is not realistic to be involved in the activities of the larger movement to a significant degree, due to the large volume of possibilities, the amount of time needed to process/comprehend the information before deciding for relevance and applicability for the contributor, and language barriers. One interviewee indicated that a sense of fairness, relevance and respect for people's reality and time constraints is important.

For another interviewee, the CEE Meeting represented an important opportunity to discover how the movement works. The respondent noted that at the CEE Meeting they did not have a sense of 'a real community' in comparison to other movements they participated in the past, explained by lower degree of collaboration observed and a perception that there is 'a lot of politics' and 'personal agendas' involved.

The interviewed affiliate/community representatives, however, did not dismiss the importance of maintaining connections and involvement with the larger movement, among good practices mentioned:
- Attending wider events for exchanges and connections live or online to learn about the movement, get updates, expand knowledge (tools, resources), create new connections, exchange experiences and lessons learnt. With this, however, frequency of engagement matters, for example one interviewee mentioned that attending wider movement regional or international events once or twice a year would be realistic and sufficient. In this context, sponsorships for event attendance to ensure representation from smaller/more remote affiliates/communities are essential.
- Having an internal communication channel where information is shared. It is important that there is a person taking the role of a bridge between community members and wider movement. This bridging person may take the task of an initial filtering of information for relevance, translating into the local language and presenting it clearly and concisely, as to respect contributors time and attention span available. This indicates the need for a more strategic approach (based on the group's goals, activities) for information management connected to the wider movement. One interviewee mentioned they volunteer to do this task, however the level of response/reaction from affiliate members has been historically low, this not being in their interest or priority. If there is respect and previous relationship built between the person sharing the information and the contributors, this tends to generate more responses to this type of information.
- 2 interviewed communities mentioned plans of having a person on a paid or semi-paid basis who would take on administrative tasks, including responsibilities connected to managing external relations with the wider movement.

Recommendations

- Considering the costs of participation (time, effort, relevance, language) in the wider movement activities for the contributors, it is beneficial and recommended to have a person inside the community who would carry the role of selecting relevant information and sharing

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it. With this however, it is important to find the necessary capacity within the group (is it one person taking the role, or is it more of a rotated approach) and decide as a group what are the mutually agreed criteria based on which the information gets selected and prioritised (alignment with group's strategic goals, activities, capacity needs, directions of future development etc.). The person should strive to continuously build connections and relationships so that they get responses from members.

- To continue working on increasing the sense of belonging to the wider movement, the role of CEE Hub as a facilitator and connector gains particular importance in this context, offering access to relevant wider movement information tailored to affiliate/community specifics and needs, provided either within regular calls or office hours.

6. Capacity development

Findings

There is no single definition for **'capacity development'.** The Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development (OECD) defines capacity development as "the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and countries develop their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives".

The definition reveals multiple levels at which capacity development can take place. These can be:
- **individual**, related to development of skills of individuals,
- **organisational**, related to strengthening organisational processes and systems,
- **community/system**, related to advocacy and influencing system-wide change.

It is important to consider the **context or enabling environment (**legal, informational, political, cultural, economic, technologic etc.) which can shape and influence this process constantly. Whichever level is focused on, capacity development is a dynamic process interacting and affecting other levels at the same time. So, performance depends upon individuals within a team, the processes run by those individuals, and their interaction with its external environment.

The concept of 'capacity' is often narrowly understood, typically focusing on gaps and promoting the transfer of predetermined knowledge and skills to improve the function of specific areas of an organisation to fill those gaps. What makes more sense is a tailored, affiliate/community-led approach to capacity development, designed to reflect their particular goals, capabilities, constraints and the environment in which they operate.

Based on the Annex document of Grantees Learning Report Analysis for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA), the chart on page 2: *% of grantees that state they need to develop each of these capacities*, most grantees indicated the following capacity development needs:
- Growth path for different volunteers (92%)
- Evaluating and learning from our work (92%)
- On-wiki technical skills (83%)
- Recruiting new contributors (83%)

The following capacity development needs were selected by the least % of the grantees:
- Governance (50%)
- Program design and management (50%)
- Strategic planning (58%)
- Conflict management (58%)

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This indicates a grantee's tendency to strengthen capacities for important areas connected to running high quality events/activities, learning from them, and focusing on ensuring a continuous flow of contributions to Wikipedia. However, all of these will require a solid backbone consisting of structures, effective management skills, forward strategic thinking, and conflict management without which the activities and volunteer base would be weak and ineffective. These areas are all interconnected and it would be wise to invest time and resources in developing key capacities from both above-mentioned groups.

Capacity development needs expressed based on the interviews with the affiliates/communities:
- **Communication skills and confidence building**
  - Communication and visibility, placing information on social media regularly, updating web pages etc. This is connected to the capacity of having a person perform this task.
  - English language terminology helpful to take part in events.
  - Confidence/courage building, creating conditions for users to step up and participate.
  - Working with introverted personalities: how do we make them feel welcome, motivated, included.
- **Strategic focus and organisational planning**
  - Strategic focus and inspiration for the community: 'what else we can do in the future, seeing the potential and what the movement can give us'.
  - Effective HR allocation and distribution of tasks.
- **Volunteer attraction and management**
  - Attracting/maintaining new and diverse community members. Developing an onboarding process of newcomers. Guidelines for new members: rights, obligations to make them feel welcome and create a sense of belonging. How to reflect the diversity and inclusion aspects in the process.
  - Developing a system of care and motivation of volunteers, community building practices.
  - Preventing and managing burnout as a volunteer.
- **Conflict management**
  - Workshops on conflict management policy, conflict mediation with study cases/scenarios.
  - How to ensure a healthy and respectful community environment, in which arising conflicts are well addressed and a positive atmosphere for collaboration is maintained.
  - Developing strategic communications skills connected to managing conflicts and misunderstandings in the affiliate/community.
- **Funding and resource mobilisation**
  - Support and guidance on rapid grants and other types of relevant grants/funding: how to request bigger amounts and navigate administrative requirements.
- **Tech tools**
  - Tech tools: how to make it less complex to contribute to Wikipedia?
  - New tools, once a month an introduction of 1-2 tools would be useful.

Capacity self-assessment

Majority of interviewed affiliates/communities are defined by the quality of their relationships and the set of patterns this creates within the group. This varies from group to group. These patterns influence the quality of communication and the likelihood of collaboration. Based on this, it would be beneficial for the groups to self-assess themselves, by mapping their current group structure and relational connections, as well as look at their strong points and determine capacity development

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needs, under the guidance of a skilled facilitator, making sure all the voices are included. To generate ownership of the outputs, the process should be also discussed and agreed with the group in advance, so that it makes sense to them and matches their current stage of development.

Possible key capacity areas for self-assessment:
- **Purpose** (sub-areas: goals, context and strategic directions).
- **Relationships** (sub areas: stakeholder engagement/partnerships, community development (current and new members), communication approach).
- **Projects/activities** (sub areas: projects/activities, team capacities, diversity and quality of teamwork, resource mobilisation).
- **Governance and administration** (affiliate/community structure, decision making and administration).

A self-scoring system to track development should be used. The output of this process would be Capacity Development Action Plan for the group, prioritising key capacities to be developed/strengthened within a predetermined period of time.

Strategic planning
For groups with reduced capacity, strategic planning becomes of utmost priority helpful to make critical choices and decisions based on existing resources and constraints. However, in case of smaller, less organised volunteer-based affiliates/communities, it is important to adjust the strategic planning process to their needs and development stage. It should not be a lengthy, sophisticated document but a functional one serving as a helpful guiding tool.

It is important for volunteer-based teams to set direction, look at results they would like to work towards and decide on ways how to get there, as reflected by the combination of programs/activities and available/future capacities. For these types of groups, a degree of adjustment of their strategic plan will happen based on shifting capacities and arising obstacles/possibilities within a given time period. It will be important to cultivate a balance between future strategic goal setting and adaptation to respond to the present reality and needs. This approach was in fact reflected by 3 interviewed affiliates/communities.

Capacity development methods
In terms of capacity development methods, it is best to combine training workshops with more hands-on, participatory methods such as mentoring and peer-to-peer learning, to reflect a holistic approach towards diverse ways in which individuals and groups can learn and grow their capacities.

Based on Grantee reporting Analysis, for CEECA, '**59%** of grantees in the region attribute their capacity building to robust peer-to-peer learning activities, whilst only 17% felt they were built primarily by formal training provided by Wikimedia and 25% by online resources shared throughout the Movement'. While in the same Analysis, 'grantees', 'recognise the value of in-depth training experiences' delivered 'by knowledgeable organisers and affiliates within the movement', it is important to note the significant role that peer-to-peer learning plays in the capacity strengthening process.

9 out of 11 affiliate/community representatives interviewed referred both to the importance of peer learning or mentoring during the interviews and are connected or collaborate with other user groups/chapters for knowledge and topical exchanges, resource access, activity implementation. To draw a main distinction between the peer learning and mentoring, while mentoring relationships are primarily one-way helping, sharing of expertise between mentor and mentee, peer relationships

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offer a higher degree of mutual assistance, with both counterparts exchanging, giving and receiving support. Both methods are beneficial depending on needs and context.

Peer learning
The following types of peer-to-peer activities were mentioned during interviews: topical exchanges with another chapter/user group, like for example, education exchange, participation in summer camp organised by another chapter, exchanging list of relevant topics from one country to be included into Wikipedia of another, focused edit-a-thons during CEE Spring. One interviewee stated the need and their openness to organise a knowledge exchange among contributors, the idea being to bring someone from another user group to their country to share their experience.

National and regional face to face events/conferences/meetups were reported as excellent ways to facilitate meaningful peer learning, connections, and collaborations.

One interviewee commented that besides the learning and capacity development value that peer-to-peer exchanges are creating, they also create a common unity spirit that the participants are doing similar things as volunteers, reinforcing the belonging to a wider movement.

An important factor influencing the quality and results of peer-to-peer learning stressed by 2 respondents was around the value of personal connections created at events. Based on identified synergies, personal connections tend to generate more meaningful collaborations.

Connected to collaboration opportunities more specifically, one interviewee pointed out that the collaboration with paid Wikimedians happens on an unequal footing. They can suggest meeting in normal work hours because they are paid, while for a team of volunteers this can be problematic. Also, in this context, deciding how many tasks a volunteer-based team takes on can be unbalanced, due to low volunteering capacities.

Mentoring
1 affiliate/community representative referred to their readiness to support the group in the neighbouring country as the group has language barrier and internet connectivity problems.

2 affiliate/community representatives mentioned that guidance through mentorship is very important for them considering their current stage of development. For example, having someone from the regional community visiting and offering a session on Wikipedia specifics: how to edit, the principles etc. or share other types of expertise based on affiliate/community needs. The person would also act as a catalyst: work with the core team for their internal development, bring additional inspiration to the group, tap into their potential, connect them with the wider movement resources and discuss future activity options based on their current vision, and development goals. The mentor however, should be aware of the power dynamics between mentor and mentees and create an enabling environment for the group to move forward in practical ways. Another respondent mentioned that in case of such a mentorship visit, finding a good match for the right type of mentor, will play an important role reflecting a suitable combination between the skills, expertise, new perspectives contributed and sufficient knowledge about the local context.

Recommendations
- For smaller affiliate/communities offer possibilities for more in-depth facilitated capacity self-assessment and strategic planning tailored to their current development stage and group specifics.

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- Focus on strengthening the following capacities for smaller affiliate/communities as priority areas: governance and HR, strategic planning, conflict management, attracting diverse new members, volunteer management and motivation.
- Offer the opportunity for focused mentorship visits for affiliates/communities needing them.
- Taking into consideration the level of support which affiliates/communities may benefit from, it is recommended to expand the CEE Hub mandate by adding to the 3 Pillars (1. **Administrative**, 2. **Communication enhancement**, 3. **Programmatic assistance**) a 4th one, connected to **Community engagement and Capacity development**. The agenda under the 4th Pillar can focus on coaching affiliates/communities towards developing the specific skills, knowledge, resources, and structures needed to support affiliates/communities' strategic directions and mission and serving as connector, catalyst and facilitator for information exchange, peer learning, mentorships, and other learning opportunities, fostering a sense of belonging to the wider movement.
- To reflect the complexity, diverse needs, and capacities of the affiliates/community ecosystem, it is recommended to structure the peer learning according to the following principles in the CEE region, with CEE Hub playing an important facilitation and coordination role:

  - **Asynchronous principle:**

    This would mean creation and/or consolidation of a repository of various contextualised resources, good practices, case studies, examples organised per topic (or other principle that makes sense) which CEE region affiliate/community members, especially newly joining ones, can search in their own time. The material should be easy to navigate and include relevant contact details (if possible), to stimulate further connections and exchanges. As much as possible, it would be important to make the material available in local languages (especially the ones not available on free translation apps like DeepL).

  - **Synchronous principle**

    Peer learning group meetings organised online using the Open Space Technology method, reflecting an overall Theme and a marketplace of opportunities for small group conversations, generated by the participants during the session. The participants then choose which session to offer and which to attend based on their experience, interests, and needs. The frequency of the meeting should not be more than once or maximum twice a year, to match current time constraints of member contributors.

  - **On demand/tailored principle**

    Based on their knowledge of affiliates/communities specifics, CEE Hub continues to play a role of connector and facilitator between them. This may include twinning 2 affiliates for a fixed-term, needs-based mentorship relationship or bringing 2 – 3 affiliates/communities together which have a similar level of development and needs/issues for joint exchange, collaboration, research or testing of new approaches.

7. Context influence

Findings

Current country and regional political context influences affiliate/community work in varying degrees. Below are reflected several relevant findings from affiliates/communities from EU and non-EU countries.

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EU Countries

For some of the interviewed affiliates/communities from the EU countries, political shifts and governmental actions play a significant role across the countries. Some experience stable conditions, while others face increasing restrictions, indicating diverse democratic challenges within the EU.

For a country with historic tensions between ethnic communities living there, it is of utmost priority for the affiliate/community to make sure that they have good levels of inclusivity from all sides, so that a sufficient level of knowledge and perspective representation is achieved. Thus, the team is making efforts to reflect this in the composition of their core group and community of contributors.

The war in Ukraine is causing fights over content related to it between the pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian sides on another country's Wikipedia. The interviewee reported that in the last months before the interview, their page was taken over by Russian trolls, creating false/distorted content. A disbalance in capacity is becoming evident, as most likely trolls are paid and have dedicated time for this kind of work, while the community volunteers have limited time to dedicate and check the edits. A sufficient level of proactivity and frequency cannot be provided based on current editors' situation and capacities, to clean the distorted content, combined with weaker political interest from current editors, who prefer to focus on other topics such as history. The fact that there is no community which meets regularly, at this stage of their development, is also impacting the ability to respond in a more cohesive manner and act as one voice.

Another specific feature reported for this affiliate/community country was around unequal distribution of tasks, connected to nurturing and child care roles affecting women. As a result, women have less time available to edit Wikipedia compared to men, which impacts representation of more diverse perspectives and voices.

Currently the political context in another interviewee country is becoming more restrictive. According to the respondent, the country is not following EU regulations for transparency/access to information. Various attempts have been made by the Government to restrict civic freedoms. The question arose about validity and reliability of sources in the context when a country's media are reflecting mainly the Government's side. There are negative scenarios foreseen for the near future by the respondent. The affiliate/community is prepared to exercise care and vigilance, because there is the risk that the Government will position Wikipedia as a tool that foreign countries use to push their agenda. It can affect their community and organisation at any time, but, at the moment of the interview, this was not deemed to create strong problems.

The threat to democracy posed by Russian aggression in the region is becoming a strong driver for EU and non-EU countries in Central Eastern Europe, and continues fuelling disinformation, propaganda and divisive content. Considering this, it is important to adopt flexible strategies and mechanisms that respond to false content and attempts to use the intentions behind the access to free knowledge for all, to serve antidemocratic agendas. Also raising awareness on how the various crises impact the preservation of culture and heritage becomes of utmost importance in the current context.

Non-EU countries

Migration is affecting the group of contributors of an affiliate/community from a non-EU country (for example they had most recently 3 contributors who joined but then moved abroad). Once the contributors move abroad, they tend not to be active anymore. This is natural due to the efforts needed to integrate into a new country. However, this is also seen as a potential development opportunity by the interviewee, because the newly emigrated persons can become contributors for

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the Wikipedia of their new country which is beneficial for integration and community building purposes.

It is noteworthy to mention that the majority members of that affiliate/community are men and they are striving to achieve more gender balance in the group and attract more women.

Another, relevant finding which surfaced in the same interview is related to the cost of volunteering in lower income countries, which would typically mean that individuals have to put in more work hours or maintain a few jobs to make a living. Individuals with demanding work schedules in non-EU countries might find it challenging to engage in longer term volunteer work without adequate financial support. These interconnected factors emphasise the impact of economic and support system disparities on volunteering dynamics in the Central Eastern European context.

Another interviewee shared about their situation, connected to the specifics of linguistic context in their region. The interviewee detailed a situation where the Language Committee rejected their country's Wikipedia test page due to linguistic similarities with other regional languages. The primary concern is the perceived inadequacy in the decision-making process as opposed to the decision itself. Despite multiple inquiries, the interviewee felt the answers provided lacked sufficient justification beyond citing language similarities. Attempts to present alternative solutions were reportedly met with a lack of response. This poses questions about the system's ability to explore and navigate diverse conditions, give timely, transparent answers, and cultivate a dialogue in the spirit of free knowledge for all. The current communication style appears as not meant to invite dialogue but rather communicate a decision in a detached, non-participatory manner, which one is expected to comply and move on.

Members of an affiliate/community from a closed democratic space, reported strong support from a state institution they work in, for example them being allowed to edit Wikipedia during work hours or members of their institutions being assigned by their superior to participate in editing activities. While contextual specifics of restricted citizen freedoms and serious negative consequences for claiming human rights need to be considered, this, however, challenges the idea that editing Wikipedia is a non-remunerated contribution and also that it should be a completely voluntary activity based on the free choice of each individual to take part.

Also, due to funding restrictions in closed democratic spaces, alternative models like paying for food, accommodation, and venue costs directly by transfer from abroad in connection to organised events, were advised by the interviewee. Another finding emerging from the interview was around the voice and agency of women being suppressed in more patriarchal societies. This impacts women's ability to take part in Wikimedia related activities, because care-taker and family nurturing roles are predominantly assigned to them and can be used as an excuse for denying equitable access to opportunities within the movement.

Various context influences are at play in different countries. It is important to consider and navigate these specifics, while offering needed support, for which CEE Hub is well positioned.

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Recommendations

- Consider introducing scenario work[12] as part of the affiliate/community strategic planning process. It should consider the main contextual drivers that can shift the situation towards different plausible adaptation possibilities and tactical action steps to navigate this.
- In case of restricted regimes, risks to affiliate/community members should be considered and mitigation safety strategies and protocols devised. A useful practice for CEE Hub would be to keep track of the democratic space fluctuations based on Civicus democracy monitor,[13] in combination with feedback from the affiliates/communities directly, and focus intentional support for those spaces which are becoming more obstructed.
- Considering the current CEE context, it is important to develop safeguarding mechanisms to avoid use of Wikipedia and other relevant movement outputs for biassing the amount and type of articles created, towards a certain direction only.[14]
- Amplify the efforts for diversity and inclusion mainstreaming in user/community groups member base, internal regulations and decision-making processes, group culture with a special attention to women and other underrepresented groups.
- Cover costs for volunteers related to event participation (in-country/regional/international) including transportation, meals etc.

8. Role of CEE HUB and motivations for work

Findings

Role of CEE HUB

9 out 11 interviewed affiliates commented on the positive role CEE Hub has played for them:

- Being very helpful and supportive in accessing grants.
- Offering budget for promotional items.
- Being very receptive to guide and orient the affiliate/community member depending on the question they have (sharing relevant links, tools, resources, contacts, guiding in unclear conflict situations).
- For one affiliate/community CEE hub served as a turning point for their development.
- Hub is viewed as a place for cooperation and addressing questions based on the way how the CEE Hub team listens and helps members. In this regard CEE Hub is seen as a bridge and a connecting point for groups with similar questions/problems but also helping the groups directly with their own issues and questions.
- Viewed as having a role of presenting wider movement related information and selecting strategically, in a balanced way, key relevant points and opportunities.
- Understanding deeply the stage of development that the affiliate/community is at and providing encouragement. One interviewee shared that CEE Hub was instrumental in making their attendance of the CEE Meeting possible. Because that was a valuable space for connecting to other members' examples, it generated a much-needed portion of inspiration, ideas and desire to continue their work.

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[12] Useful resource: https://www.liberatingstructures.com/30-critical-uncertainties/. An example of scenario work applied to civil society development:
https://civicus.org/documents/CIVICUS-Scenarios-Final-March2021.pdf.
[13] https://monitor.civicus.org/about/
[14] Additional considerations would be needed to decide in terms of level and scale of work connected to this recommendation (who and what).

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- Hub team plays a role of a sounding board, where members can discuss about new ideas and potential opportunities

This demonstrates that the CEE Hub is accomplishing its tasks aligned with its 3 Pillars 1. **Administrative**, 2. **Communication enhancement**, 3. **Programmatic assistance,** playing an important role for smaller affiliates/communities, as reflected in the high quality of connection, understanding of their specific needs and offering of tailored support.

What motivates interviewed individuals to do this work?

All interviewed individuals keep contributing because they are motivated from a deeper values-driven space of making knowledge accessible to all human beings. Among factors that keep the interviewed members motivated to do their work were mentioned:

- Being a part of something bigger than themselves and giving back to the society by making the knowledge accessible and available for people without restrictions.
- Bringing a sense of agency and responsibility for everyone to contribute towards democracy and sharing of knowledge.
- A profound belief that Wikipedia as a grassroot community, is very important for the world, being a cultural bridge among countries and best example of democratic sharing of knowledge.
- Passion about gender issues and drawing attention to gender inequalities on Wikipedia, as well as using it as an avenue to bridge the gender gaps.
- Personal duty not only to teach in the university as a lecturer, but also to share free of charge knowledge with society, give something back, so working on Wikipedia falls in this frame of thinking.
- Working with other people, being part of the network, learning and developing something together.

It is important to revisit these motivating factors during planning meetings and reflect these important messages in communication with the public as well as new and potential contributors, including demonstrating relevant results and impact.

Conclusions

Connected to affiliate/community structures, governance and management, the interviewed affiliates/communities revealed a spectrum of organisational structures and challenges, emphasising the need for tailored approaches. From small, fragmented entities to better established affiliates, the importance of paid staff for administrative tasks and the ongoing challenge of conflict management emerged. Recommendations stress the incorporation of equity and inclusion considerations at all stages and providing a roadmap for affiliate/communities further development based on their size and structure.

Connected to fundraising and resource mobilisation, the Wikimedia grant system's flexibility, accommodating diverse organisational structures, surpasses traditional institutional donors. Interviewees largely engage with rapid grants and general support funds, aligning with their development levels. Registered nonprofits benefit from income tax donations, exemplifying funding source diversification. Recommendations include encouraging non-profits to seek external opportunities, exploring flexible funding for administrative/staffing costs, prioritising learning and reflection in proposals, balancing programmatic and capacity development, and leveraging CEE Hub's role for regional support.

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Maintaining and expanding the community of contributors involve balancing the needs of existing members and attracting new ones. Regular meetings, community-building activities, and dedicated part-time roles contribute to community health. Acknowledging the dual nature of contributors, some more social and others more introverted, emphasises the importance of tailored engagement strategies. Conflict management systems and inclusive community building are pivotal for sustainability. Attracting new members is a shared priority, with social media visibility, diverse engagement approaches, and caring systems highlighted. Recommendations emphasise the delicate balance between engagement and motivation, implementing robust conflict management systems, leveraging social media, learning from other volunteer movements, and focusing on quality over quantity. CEE Hub's role in providing support, skills development, and peer learning is crucial for community sustainability and expansion.

The interviewed affiliates/communities exhibit varying experiences and capacities in cultivating external partnerships. Lessons learned include the impact of shifting partner priorities on project success and team motivation. Challenges include slow responses from larger institutions and the need for constant communication. Existing resources on Meta provide practical advice for building successful partnerships, emphasising clarity of expectations. For smaller affiliates/communities, the emphasis should be on quality over quantity, matching partners in capacity and size. Recommendations include developing regional guidance, creating a partnership development fund, and fostering peer learning opportunities through CEE Hub to enhance the sustainability and impact of external partnerships.

The contributors within smaller affiliates/communities face challenges engaging significantly with the wider Wikimedia movement due to information overload, language barriers, and time constraints. Maintaining fairness, relevance, and respect for contributors' time is crucial. While acknowledging the existing barriers, affiliate/community representatives recognize the importance of connections. Attending events, having internal communication channels, and considering paid roles for external relations facilitate engagement. Recommendations emphasise strategic information management, acknowledging costs of participation, and highlight the vital role of CEE Hub in fostering a sense of belonging through tailored information dissemination and facilitating connections.

Capacity development, defined by the OECD as a multifaceted process, operates at individual, organisational, and community/system levels. The affiliates/communities in the CEE region exhibit a range of capacity development needs, with a focus on skills like growth paths for volunteers, communication skills and confidence building, learning from their work and tech tools. While there is a tendency to strengthen activities implementation capacities, essential backbone areas like governance, strategic planning, program design, and conflict management require attention. A tailored, affiliate/community-led approach is essential, considering their unique goals, capabilities, and environments. Recommendations emphasise self-assessment, strategic planning, and a holistic approach to capacity development, combining training workshops with peer-to-peer learning and mentoring. The CEE Hub's role in facilitating connections, offering support, and coordinating peer learning is crucial for a vibrant and resilient affiliate/community ecosystem. The asynchronous, synchronous, and on-demand principles proposed for peer learning provide a framework for addressing the diverse needs of affiliates/communities in the CEE region.

The dynamics of political and regional contexts influence the landscape for affiliates/communities in Central and Eastern Europe. In EU nations, varying challenges emerge. Anticipation of political shifts affecting citizen freedoms is noted in one case, while another navigates inclusivity amid community dynamics. Challenges stemming from geopolitical events, such as the war in Ukraine, impact affiliates/communities, with concerns about disinformation and limited capacities to counter it. Increasing political restrictions pose risks to democratic expression in another country, raising questions about media ownership and information sources. Non-EU nations face unique challenges,

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with factors like migration affecting affiliate/community dynamics. Disparities in economic conditions and free time availability impact volunteering capacity. Affiliates/communities in closed democratic spaces reveal funding restrictions and issues of women's agency suppression. Recommendations emphasise scenario planning, safety protocols, diversity efforts, and financial support for volunteers. The findings underscore the critical role of CEE Hub in addressing these nuanced challenges across diverse contexts.

CEE Hub plays a pivotal role for affiliate/communities, providing essential support in grants, guidance, and networking. Affiliates commend its impact on development, seeing it as a connecting point for collaboration and addressing group-specific needs. The Hub, aligned with its three pillars, significantly aids smaller communities. The interviewed individuals are driven by values, contributing to Wikipedia for its role as a democratic knowledge bridge. Motivations include a sense of responsibility, passion for gender equality, and a shared mission for accessible knowledge. Recognizing these motivations is crucial for planning, communication, and showcasing the impact to engage existing and potential contributors.

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