



NGO LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

October 23-26, 2018 ❖ Warsaw, Poland

Overview. In October 2018, 25 NGO leaders attended an intensive 4-day management training workshop designed to strengthen civil society in young democracies. This was the fourth annual workshop spearheaded by two University of Michigan units focused on strengthening emerging democracies: the Weiser Center for Europe & Eurasia and the William Davidson Institute. This year the program moved from Slovakia to Poland, in cooperation with a third partner: the Warsaw-based Education for Democracy Foundation, which supports democratization and the development of civil society.

The program targeted leaders of organizations in countries that have experienced great change over the past three decades as their societies have undergone democratic transitions. The 25 participants were selected through an open application process from a pool of 245 applicants. Participants attended the workshop at no charge. They came from 12 countries: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. They represented NGOs that focus on democracy, economic development, environment, human rights, youth and civil society.

Content. Day-long sessions focused on:

- 1.) *Planning and Sustainability of NGOs*
- 2.) *Essentials of NGO Management*
- 3.) *Advocacy and Public Policy Building*
- 4.) *Marketing Strategy for the NGO*

These sessions were taught, respectively, by:

- *Dr. John Beauclerk* is Associate at International NGO Training and Research Center (INTRAC), where he concentrates on consultancy in program design, evaluation work and training.
- *Dr. Linda Gasser* is Lecturer in the Department of Human Resource Studies at Cornell University, New York and Faculty Affiliate with WDI. She helped found and served as Executive Director of the Central Europe Human Resource Education Initiative.
- *Katarzyna Batko-Tołuć* is a Program Director of the Citizens Network Watchdog Poland. The organisation builds a grass-root social movement aiming at transparency of governments and accountability of decision-makers. She focuses on preparing tools to get people engaged and to educate themselves in civic oversight and influence on governance.
- *Peter Šebo* is a Slovak-based branding and digital marketing expert with experience supporting the marketing efforts of NGOs. He is the founder of PS:Digital, a digital marketing agency in Bratislava.



Professor Linda Gasser leads participants through a change management exercise.

Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who served as President of Poland from 1995-2005, delivered the workshop’s opening keynote address on the topic of leadership. He was introduced by Dr. Geneviève Zubrzycki, the Director of the Weiser Center for Europe & Eurasia. A lively Q&A session with the participants followed Kwaśniewski’s talk. The



Program organizers from the University of Michigan Weiser Center & William Davidson Institute with former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski

opening morning session also featured words from Former US Ambassador to Poland Dan Fried, who shared his insights into authoritarianism and democracy. “The current reactionary cycle we are witnessing around the globe will prove to be temporary,” he told the group.

In addition to the academic instruction they received, participants had ample time to network over the course of the week. This began with an opening cocktail reception on the eve of the program and continued through an interactive walking tour of Warsaw and a toast-filled closing dinner at a restaurant in Old Town Warsaw.

Results. The goals of the workshop were to empower NGO leaders to strengthen their internal expertise, managerial and income-generating capacities, abilities to engage with both general public and government stakeholders, and international network. Particular focus was on advancing democratic accountability and rule of law in their countries. The ExtendEd Portal was utilized to solidify learning before, during, and after the workshop. A Facebook Group page was created during the workshop. Participants have continued to use the page after the workshop to share photos and ideas for future funding sources.

Evaluations were extremely positive, with measured outcomes of the overall program receiving high approval: relevance of content to organization; applicability to work; and match with expectations. *In addition, 24 of 25 participants agreed with the statement, “I would recommend this workshop to others in my field.”* In summary, the program reached its goal of equipping NGO leaders with skills and tools needed to run more sustainable and effective organizations. This training will help organizations counter authoritarian currents and enable democratic values to further develop in their societies.

Testimonials:

“The workshop is a great opportunity for NGO practitioners to come together and discuss the most pressing challenges concerning the management and leadership at their organization. It is a venue that opens up new possibilities to think differently about crisis and change.”

“The workshop is an excellent opportunity to deepen your managerial skills and network with people from many other countries.”

“You get a lot of new ideas that you can process after the workshop and that can help your NGO a lot.”

Next steps. WCEE and WDI plan to build on previous successes and offer another workshop in 2019 in Warsaw.

Further Information. Please see the [Weiser Center’s](#) or [WDI’s](#) workshop pages and the [Michigan Daily’s](#) and [University Record’s](#) coverage (2015 workshop).