



Grassroots Radio FACTSHEET #05

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A view from Grassroots Radio pilot sites

THE COMMUNITIES OF GRASSROOTS RADIO

Grassroots Radio (GR) is piloting its actions in three rural communities: the islands of Western Ireland, the Danube Delta in Romania, and the island of Madeira in Portugal. While these communities are typically not considered epicenters of new technology development, GR is working to design community radio stations in rural areas first. This factsheet offers an insight into the project communities

IRELAND

In Ireland, the Grassroots Radio project works in **three communities** that are piloting radio platforms. These are **Bere, Sherkin and Cape Clear Islands**. They are all located in an area called West Cork. The communities share an “island” identity, but each have unique and diverse populations. Cape Clear is an Irish speaking island located 8 km from the mainland shore, while Sherkin and Bere are both English speaking islands located closer to their respective mainland ports. The majority of people living on each island identify as white Irish, however there is some diversity on each island. Cape Clear also represents a minority of Irish speakers living in Ireland. The last census results showed the following population figures:

LOCATION	POPULATION
Bere Island	167
Cape Clear Island	125
Sherkin Island	111

PORTUGAL

In Portugal, the communities involved are located in **Madeira island**: these are Curral das Freiras and Machico. **Curral das Freiras** is situated in a deep volcanic crater valley, isolated from other communities by the surrounding cliffs and peaks. **Machico** is a coastal town on the east side of the island with 1741 km². It is a very proactive community, relatively autonomous from the cultural and political influence of the island’s capital Funchal. Both the communities share high rates of people at risk of poverty and low level of education. There is a growing number of Venezuelan population in Madeira, and particularly in Curral das Freiras. It has been projected that, by the end of 2019, 7% of the people of Curral would be from Venezuela. “Retornados” are second to third-generation Portuguese returnees from Venezuela and have some connections with locals and families to stay with. There is also a significant proportion of the Madeiran population living outside the island.

LOCATION	POPULATION
Curral das Freiras	2.000
Machico	12.000

ROMANIA

In Romania, communities involved are **Vârvoru de Jos** and **Sfântu Gheorghe**.

Vârvoru de Jos is a commune in Dolj county in Oltenia,



consisting of 7 villages whose individual population does not exceed 700 inhabitants. It is located in the southwestern part of Dolj County, 18 km from Craiova city, on the lower course of the River Terpezita, at the confluence with the Desnățui River.

According to the data published by the local town hall, the current population of the locality is of **2,813 inhabitants**, decreasing compared to the official census in 2011 when there were 2,955 inhabitants. Most of the inhabitants declared themselves Romanians (95.87%). For 3.93% of the population, ethnicity is unknown. From the confessional point of view, most of the inhabitants are Orthodox (95.74%). For 3.93% of the population, confessional membership is unknown.

Sfântu Gheorghe is a village located on the Danube Delta, in the Black Sea. It is part of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and of the Unesco World Heritage List. The access to the site is possible only by boat. Tulcea city is 120 km away, and the shortest access is via the Sf. Gheorghe arm of the Danube. The city of Sulina can be accessed via a path parallel with the Black Sea shore.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), in December 2018 the population of Sfântu Gheorghe commune was 808 inhabitants. At the 2011 census, the population of Sfântu Gheorghe commune was 797 inhabitants. Most of the inhabitants declared themselves Romanian (91.84%) at the 2011 census, with a minority of Ukrainians (3.76%). For 4.02% of the population, ethnicity is unknown. Also, according to data collected at the 2011 census, most of the inhabitants declared themselves as Orthodox (96.11%). For 3.76% of the population, confessional membership is unknown. Density: 1.32 inhabitants/kmp. 358 households.

LOCATION	POPULATION
Sfântu Gheorghe	808
Vârvoru de Jos	2.813

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN IRELAND

One of the main needs of the West Cork Islands is to sustain their populations threatened by urbanisation and decline in rural ways of life. As a result, University College Cork and the West Cork Island Community Council organised a community engagement and design workshop that brought the islands together with academics, public servants and community members to explore how the radio platform might support the future of the islands. Over 50 people participated in this event in October 2019. Training the community on how to use mobile phones to record content has also taken place, as well as training on audacity, and how to use the RootIO platform.



Sherkin island BAVA course students design workshop on uses of the radio platform

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PORTUGAL

Community engagement activities in Portugal have been arranged considering data regarding the composition of the local population, focusing on gathering community interest and volunteers for the radio. Community meetings, demos of the RootIO technology and participatory workshops have been organised to demonstrate the capabilities and functionalities of the RootIO software and equipment, and to discuss ideas about the content of the community radio. In Curral, this was translated through the engagement of the President of the Parish (“freguesia”) and chief of the fire department; representatives of Casa do Povo, a local cultural association also working to support the integration of the returnees; the local librarian and a local teacher with past experience in communication and journalism. In Machico, different organisations expressed their interest for the project: schools, social associations that support the elderly, a community development entity, cultural associations (mostly music associations), and sports associations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ROMANIA

In Romania, community engagement has been particularly active and involves training community members on how to use the RootIO platform as well as building community ownership and interest in running radio stations. The work involves modelling how to produce and make content with a gradual handover to the community of these functions from Romanian partners Medalert and ActiveWatch, who build capacity and skills as they generate radio content. Community members have been trained on how to produce, edit and generate content, and there are key community volunteers who provide interviews via WhatsApp and produce programmes. Mobilisation of the community involves phone calls, leaflets, and regular meetings to discuss with them about the radio process, to generate interest and to leave skills.