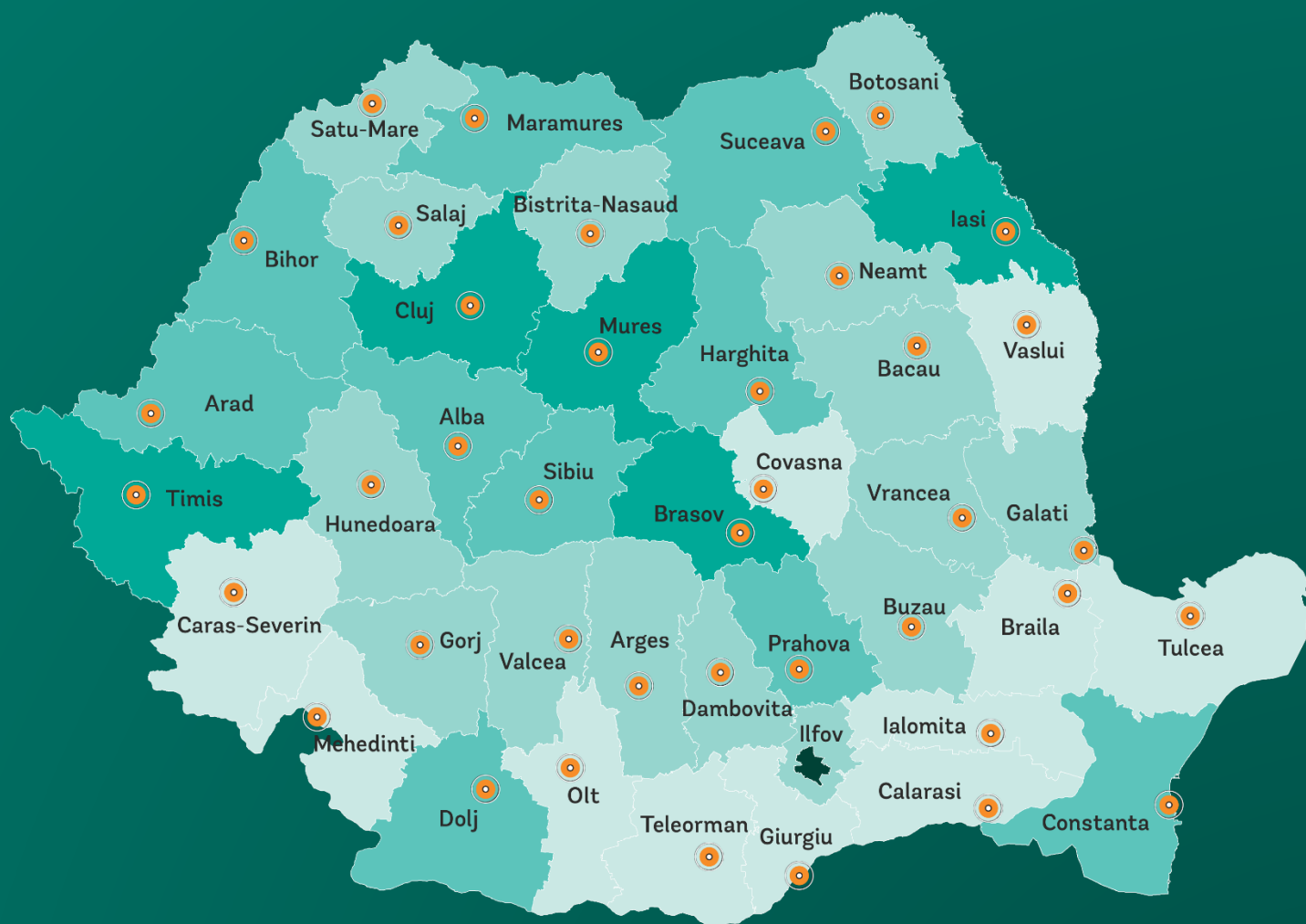


Rapid Assessment of Romanian CSO in the Context of COVID-19



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Purpose and Scope of Analysis

The assessment looks at the capacity of the CSO in Romanian municipalities. Due to the large-scale involvement of the Romanian CSO in the response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is set in the context of CSO crisis response and analyses their contribution to mitigating the consequences of the healthcare and social crisis caused by the pandemic in Romania. The main themes that emerge from this analysis are the collaboration between CSO and other actors, its results, and lessons learned for the future of CSO in the context of their contribution to the sustainable development of the country.

The assessment is based on the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data characterizing CSO performance over the past few years, including existing studies, descriptive statistics from official databases as well as the 2020 World Bank CSO survey and a series of in-depth interviews with representatives of the public sector — both central and local government, donors and CSO representatives.

This rapid assessment will inform the on-going program of the World Bank Group in Romania, and the preparation of the next Performance and Learning Review of the Country Partnership Framework FY2019-2023.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANAF	National Agency for Fiscal Administration
ARC	Association for Community Relations
BI	Bucharest-Ilfov
Cat DDO	Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option
CEE	Central and East Europe
CES	Social and Economic Council
CESE	European Social and Economic Council
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
CSO	Civil society organizations
DSU	Department for Emergency Situations
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
FDSC	Civil Society Development Foundation
GMF	German Marshall Fund
GSG	General Secretariat of the Government
ICU	Intensive care unit
INSSE	National Institute of Statistics
LAG	Local action group
LG	Local Government
MFE	Ministry of European Funds
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MNC	Multinational corporation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NE	Nord Est
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Open Government Partnership
POCA	Administrative Capacity Operational Program
POCU	Human Capital Operational Program
PPE	Personal protective equipment
RSB	Roma Sounding Board
RUF	Romanian United Fund
SE	Sud Est
SMURD	Mobile Emergency Service for Resuscitation and Extrication
SM	Sud Muntenia
SVO	Sud Vest Oltenia
TA	Technical Assistance
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Civil engagement is a form of social capital that is widely considered to be one of the key drivers of democracy and good governance. In times of crisis, social cohesion is what keeps people from leaving disaster-struck region, allows for easy mobilization of groups, and can provide informal insurance where normal resource providers are not available. COVID-19 response has shown the capacity of Romanian civil society organizations (CSO) to rapidly grow their capacity and compensate for the failing public health and social protection mechanism, while at the same time revealing the vulnerabilities of the sector in the face of unplanned for long-term threats.

In the past 30 years, the CSO ecosystem consisted mainly of transnational or internationally funded organizations and programs. A series of societal crises, starting with the 2008-2009 financial crisis, and including the protests in 2013, 2015 and 2017-2018, began to shape the landscape of CSO with emerging local agendas. These bursts of societal energy allowed for the appearance and development of new organizations and informal interest groups of activists that enriched Romanian civil society. This seems to be the case again: in the past months, groups of people and organizations spontaneously formed alliances and started to work together in the face of the common threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may be the dawn of a new generation of robust, agile and effective organizations, that will continue to impact Romanian society for years to come.

Historically, CSO activity has been concentrated in the major Romanian cities. Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca are home to the majority of CSO and headquarters of private donors. Bucharest also hosts most CSO funded via the Operational Program for Human Capital (POCU). Additionally, cities such as Iași, Timișoara and Oradea score highly in terms of civic engagement and public participation. This continues to be the case during the pandemic, with Bucharest or Cluj-Napoca based CSO, fundraising and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) for the entire country, including small, distant communities.

According to the data analyzed and the 2020 World Bank CSO survey, there has been an increase of funding in the last three years, especially from private sources. Companies, which can deduct their donations from the profit tax, as well as individuals, have become the primary source of funding for many organizations. European funding and local governments' (LG) funding has been stable in the period analyzed of the past five years, whereas there was a gap in funding from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway grants for CSO between 2016 and 2020. Highly reliant on company donations, CSO have already been affected by the worsening financial situation of private companies during the pandemic and will need to look for other funding sources. Conversely, the number of donations by the general population via SMS has doubled in March-May 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. Another funding opportunity for CSO in the years to come is the EEA funding through Active Citizens' Fund.

By nature of their activity, CSO are also highly reliant on volunteers. While there is a wide divergence among CSO in terms of personnel capacity, the majority are small sized organizations, with 1-10 employees and/or permanent collaborators. Over the past years, there has been an increase in the appetite for volunteering on the part of professionals, which brought not only additional resources to CSO in the form of personnel, but also important know-how and expertise.

The capacity of a CSO is highly influenced by its geography – more funds, whether private, local or European – can be attracted in the bigger cities, than in smaller ones. For example, close to half of the EU funds allocated for different regions go, in fact, to CSO located in Bucharest. While this positively impacts regions as beneficiaries, it only allows for CSO located in Bucharest to develop expertise, gain experience and attract more funding.

The capacity and focus of a CSO is also affected by its age. While older CSO are more rigid, they are also experienced in collaborating with the state sector and implementing programs in partnership. Newer CSO are more flexible, technology oriented, and more likely to take a watchdog role towards public authorities; they also have proven more efficient at raising local funding.

The collaboration between local governments and CSO ranges from consultations required by law as part of the open government standards, to applying for EU funding in partnership and developing participatory budgeting processes. A leading group of municipalities in Romania, including Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Oradea, Iași and Bucharest, have achieved a high level of mutual engagement based on the mutual trust built over the years.

As the pandemic struck and the pressing need for funding was perceived, CSO swiftly turned to the most flexible source – private donors. Companies and individuals together raised close to 17 million EUR in order to help hospitals with personal protection supplies and equipment, as well as to cover the basic needs for very vulnerable communities. In some communities, CSO cooperated with LGs by sharing information and resources and coordinating efforts, whereas in others, they acted independently, which in some cases led to waste and lack of support where it was most needed.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, many partnerships were formed and existing alliances were strengthened; their impact may last well beyond the immediate needs of the crisis at hand, but only if CSO, public authorities and the Romanian society more generally capitalize on the positive developments of this crisis and protect the CSO from the potentially devastating effects of its aftermath. In the next section we present the lessons emerging from the analysis of the CSO crisis response and recommendations for future strengthening of the civil society in Romania.

The following lessons that have emerged from the analysis of COVID-19 crisis collaboration may be a starting point for planning future partnerships and enhancing emergency preparedness:

1. When directly affected by a crisis, many people and organizations driven by fear of the magnitude of the pandemic, but also the sense of personal and organizational responsibility took action. Civil society response proved to be for Romania an important resource in an emergency.
2. Clear, centralized, and up to date information from authorities is a must. Communities that prioritized the sharing of information among all entities proved to be the most effective in tackling the crisis, by avoiding duplicate spending, delays and wasting resources.
3. An existing level of trust and track record of successful cooperation between entities were pre-conditions of success between the public and non-profit sectors during the crisis.

Therefore, cultivating collaboration will not only improve local government, but also positively impact possible future emergency responses.

4. The public procurement system and legislation designed to prevent fraud and cover risks made purchasing emergency supplies harder for the state than for private entities, and likely need to be complemented by special emergency provisions.
5. Informal networks work where systems fail. These networks have channeled communication and cooperation where formal channels failed or did not exist. This closed some critical gaps but could not substitute for the missing big picture.
6. The experience of COVID-19 crisis serves as a good preparation for the next disaster. Many of the lessons learnt in the two months of intense activity can be incorporated into an action/preparedness plan for the next disaster to hit Romanian communities.
7. CSO collaboration during the pandemic has given many Romanian CSO an experience of peer collaboration and may have whetted their appetite for more and deeper cooperation after the crisis.
8. In order to be effective, CSO need to be properly funded and staffed. As they navigate through the next year, each organization will need to consider better plans for sustainability.
9. COVID-19 has had a particularly strong impact on already vulnerable communities. The negative impact on the labor market added to the state's pre-COVID-19 systemic shortfalls in offering protection and poverty alleviation to all the vulnerable communities. We can, therefore, anticipate a growing demand on the social services provided by CSO

Recommendations

Despite the uncertainties of the pandemic, the present analysis advocates for the need to further development of the non-governmental sector in Romania and makes the following recommendations (discussed in more detail in the Conclusions chapter).

1. **Identifying civil society at the local level.** A comprehensive and regularly updated register of existing CSO will support meaningful and constructive relationships amongst CSO as well as between CSO and public or private actors. Romanian NGO Registry is currently not up to date or reliable. The Ministry of Justice would need to strengthen its capacity to be able to provide accurate and integrated data in an accessible format. Such a CSO mapping tool can become an essential instrument in the development of partnerships with CSO, as well as in the design of evidence-based policies (e.g. social dialogue, public support of CSO, EU funding, social service provision). Identifying CSO counterparts is especially relevant at the local level, where partnerships between LGs and CSO can have the highest impact on the quality of public services (e.g. better identification of community needs, participatory governance, collaborative projects, co-production of public services). Therefore, LGs should map CSO based in or active in their community using the accurate information provided by an updated national NGO Registry.

***Who can take it forward?** Local Governments, Ministry of Justice, CSO*

2. **Inclusion of consultative bodies of CSO in the Regional Development Agencies.** The collaboration between the state and civil society representatives at all levels depends on the goodwill of both parties to engage in a meaningful dialogue. However, the issue is even more stringent at the local level, where the capacity of both parties to engage with a broader community of stakeholders is sometimes smaller. Other countries, such as Poland, have adopted a clearer regulatory framework on the collaboration between LGs and CSO, and the process through which the local civil society can elect its representatives. Such a formalized consultative process with CSO is essential to the legitimacy of the decision-making process in LGs. Given the significant role Regional Developmental Agencies will play in Romania in the context of the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the fact that EU funding is one of the major sources of funding for CSO in Romania, consultative bodies of CSO could be created in the Regional Development Agencies, with elected representatives of CSO based or active in the region.

***Who can take it forward?** Local Governments, Regional Development Agencies, CSO*

3. **Building trust and social capital.** CSO are essential vectors in the relationship between citizens and the state. They represent a growing demand for transparent and accountable governance. By articulating and representing citizens' concerns, CSO can further participatory governance, enhance the quality of democracy and increase the legitimacy of public actors. This is especially important given that in Romania, as across Europe there has been a growing disenchantment on the part of citizens with the quality of governance and the extent to which their interests are represented. As such, CSO can contribute to the formulation of a new social contract between citizens and the state, (re)build trust amongst parties, and encourage further engagement of both parties towards solving societal problems in a collaborative

manner. The public sector can contribute by developing more collaborative projects with CSO and creating a framework for the decision-making process that involves the civil society more.

Who can take it forward? Local Governments, Central Government and CSO

4. **Role of the CSO in disasters.** It has become clear that CSO can play an essential role in the response to future disasters, be they the next wave of the pandemic, or a major earthquake. Communities have proved their role as efficient first line of defense against threats. Donors can immediately and effectively get involved through CSO that have the flexibility, public trust, and proven expertise to support local and central governments in mitigating the impact of a crisis. However, for CSO to be effective, the government needs to share data and information, to avoid fragmentation and duplication through coordination and dialogue. CSO also need to practice cooperation with the local and central government, working together on projects and having a continuous dialogue in non-crisis times. Ongoing cooperation helps all parties to understand each other's assets and limitations and has clear benefits in a crisis.

Who can take it forward? Local Governments, Central Government and CSO

5. **Data** The highly fragmented nature (information related to CSO in Romania is divided between different institutional bodies - e.g. NGO Registry under the Ministry of Justice, Financial Records of CSO under the Fiscal Authority) and poor availability of data on CSO in Romania makes for a poor evidence base for decision-makers and a poor overview of the ecosystem for interested stakeholders (e.g. private companies, transnational CSO, international donors). Similarly, the information on the activities of LGs, and their engagement with CSO is limited. There is, therefore, a great need for more transparent and accessible information on the activities of both CSO and public sector, and the administrative and technical capacity of public institutions in charge of collecting this data and making it accessible, needs to be strengthened.

Who can take it forward? Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Finance, Local Governments, CSO

6. **Addressing capacity gaps at local level.** In order to be effective, CSO need to be properly funded and staffed. As they navigate through the next year, each organization will need to consider better plans for sustainability, including transparently communicating the needs for an administrative budget and the currently non-existent reserve funding. The state can support the development of reserve and endowment funds, as seen in other European countries, such as the UK or the Czech Republic. Judging by the poor representation of local actors in various forms of collaborative projects, capacity gaps are wider at the local level. With EU funding being a major source of revenue for CSO in Romania, the capacity gaps at the local level could be addressed through ESF funds in the next MFF, by encouraging partnerships between larger national or regional CSO and local CSO in order to facilitate the transfer of expertise, but also to better represent local communities. Furthermore, various TA programmes could address local capacity gaps of the city halls be through dedicated training with LG staff. Such training programs could be designed to include simultaneously public sector employees and CSO representatives, to further trust in each other, foster interpersonal contacts thus assisting better mutual access and collaboration in the future.

Who can take it forward? CSO, Ministry of EU Funds, Local Governments

7. **Cities thrive where there is strong civic engagement.** The positive impact of a strong civil society on cities is dual: inward consolidation and outward development. A strong and involved civil society at the local level, can make cities better governed by promoting public ethics and accountability on the part of public actors. An engaged civil society can also help cities prioritize investments better and design innovative policies through public consultations, dialogue, and knowledge sharing. The input of various stakeholders in the community can help deliver a better quality of life and sense of belonging. Mutual engagement between the public sector and the civil society is essential to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth in a local community (e.g. proposing innovative bottom-up solutions for collective problems, ensuring a better diagnostic of needs amongst vulnerable groups, contributing to the effective delivery of public services and goods, providing alternative services and goods to the public sector in case of emergency/crisis).

Who can take it forward? Local Governments and CSO

1. INTRODUCTION

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) have an important role to play in setting development agenda and facilitating interaction between citizens and decision-making bodies.¹ This interaction is increasingly taking place at the local level, reflecting the rise to prominence of local governments (LGs) and their growing accountability to their constituencies². Although there are some high-profile cases of local activism and CSO mobilization in Romania, too little is known about the CSO capacity across the country and the environment in which they operate, including levels of civic engagement and their relations with LGs. This rapid assessment tried to identify more data on these issues.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

Civic engagement, which is an important prerequisite for viable CSO, has grown considerably in Romania over the past years. It has been driven by: international context and exposure; developments in local government; and mobilizing events.

Key Concepts

Civic engagement or participation – contributions individuals and groups make to addressing issues of public concern

Networking capital of CSO – range and intensity of contacts in the public sector, private sector and within the civil society, both nationally and internationally.

Mutual engagement of LG and CSO – the extent to which both CSO and LGs are willing to interact with each other, in meaningful ways.

CSO capacity – factors that inform and affect the activity of an organization (e.g. human resources, financial resources, know-how, networking capital).

Globalization, regional integration and migration have all facilitated the formation and consolidation of Romanian CSO. Many of the newer CSO focused on civil rights and liberties and/or new technologies (i.e. civic tech) build upon various layers of transnational networks that have consolidated over time.³ Organizations such as Code for Romania have many members from the diaspora⁴ which was especially visible during recent protests in Romania.⁵

International experience has also enriched CSO — local government collaboration. Public officials from Cluj-Napoca municipality link some of the more innovative suggestions received during public consultations with the international experience of some of their civil society counterparts.

¹ Steffek and Nanz 2008, Kotzian and Steffek 2013.

² Goetz and Clarke 1993, Stoker 2004, Stoker 2011, Katz and Nowak 2018, Hambleton 2019.

³ see general mapping of Romanian CSO connections in the diaspora in Martinescu et al 2018.

⁴ Ioan 2019.

⁵ Buzaşu 2019.

The rise of the new localism is an important factor in understanding the role and potential of local CSO. In Romania, despite concern over clientelism (vote-buying, politicization of public function, party patronage, discretionary allocation of public resources),⁶ studies register a much higher public trust in local authorities, than in central government, even when benefits are distributed from the central government.⁷ Similarly, the World Bank 2020 CSO survey has shown that CSO afford local governments slightly higher levels of trust than the central government or the Parliament.

Mutual engagement of CSO and LGs is essential for implementing any meaningful participatory governance mechanisms. In cross-national studies, the effect of bottom-up pressure of CSO⁸ on good governance is often compared to the top-down factors such as political competition.⁹ However, it is not as well known how these factors interact at the subnational level. Evidence from Romanian municipalities suggests that technical assistance programs and peer examples from other LGs are far more important factors of change than political competitiveness. Given the higher impact civic engagement can have at the level of a municipal LG, CSO are an important local factor of bottom-up pressure that can drive reforms.¹⁰

Mutual engagement of CSO and LGs not only raises trust and effectiveness, but also helps sustain higher levels of civic participation and improve its quality. Studies show that given proper incentives, and mutual engagement architecture, complaining citizens can be turned into volunteers for the public administration.¹¹ In this sense, it is crucial to manage expectations¹² and to develop channels of participatory governance in good faith, not just as formal checklists, because citizens can become quickly disenchanted with underdeveloped institutional participatory framework or poorly designed participatory mechanisms.¹³

The new generation of Romanian CSO are increasingly issue-driven and focused on local problems. There is a clear shift from interest-driven civic engagement (trade unions, professional organizations) to issue-driven (civic rights and liberties, environment, etc.) CSO.¹⁴ Starting with the Rosia Montana protests in 2013, a new kind of civic engagement emerged in Romania: focused on local problems and involving many people that were not previously interested in politics, but willing to invest their time and resources to solve community problems. This activist citizenship profile consolidated in the aftermath of COLECTIV club night fire in October 2015, with protests and anti-corruption movements starting to take a more institutionalized form.

The new generation CSO are more likely to pursue a reformist, contentious agenda. While older CSO may have a higher networking capital, especially with regards to state actors, and as such can perform advocacy functions and co-provide public services, newer CSO tend to possess a higher networking capital with regards to the private sector and international actors. They too can

⁶ for an overview of the literature and specific case evidence on Romania see Volintiru 2016.

⁷ Pop-Eleches and Pop-Eleches 2009.

⁸ Blondal 2003, Shah and Shah 2007, Rensio and Masud 2011.

⁹ Wehner and De Renzio 2013.

¹⁰ Volintiru and Olivas Osuna 2018.

¹¹ John et al 2020.

¹² Hickey and Mohan 2004, Geissel 2009.

¹³ Font and Navarro 2013.

¹⁴ Volintiru and Buzaşu 2020.

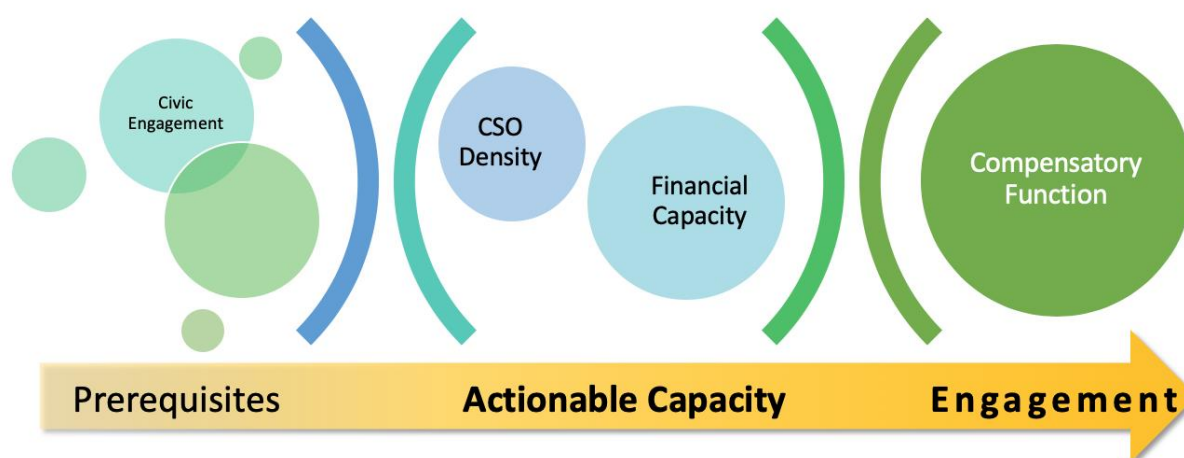
perform advocacy functions and co-produce public services, however, with a more contentious stand towards public authorities.

As in many other countries, COVID-19 pandemic was the latest mobilizing event for CSO in Romania¹⁵. According to the social theory of Daniel Aldrich¹⁶, it is social cohesion that allows for easy mobilization of individuals and groups and is able to provide informal insurance where normal resource providers are not available. Romanian CSO were absolutely crucial in supporting, directing and channeling this mobilization.

1.2. Logic of the Analysis

In mapping the capacity of CSO in Romania, a broad framework accounting for environmental factors was employed. The level of local civic engagement was conceptualized as a metric for prerequisites of CSO activity.

The actionable capacity of CSO in Romania was evaluated across three levels: national, local and individual. Data on the number of registered and active CSO in Romania, but also aggregated data on sources of funding and activity was analyzed. In order to disaggregate the data, European funding for CSO was used as a proxy for financial capacity of CSO at the municipal level. This allowed for a comparison of the actionable capacity of the CSO communities in county-capital municipalities. For further disaggregation of the assessment, one of the most comprehensive surveys to date was undertaken, in order to capture individual traits of CSO in Romania.



The level of engagement between CSO and the public sector was analyzed as a proxy for CSO impact. For example, the existence of collaborative projects with different levels of government was considered an indicator of impact. The analysis used existing public data on European and European Economic Area (EEA) funding for projects in which LGs from main municipalities¹⁷

¹⁵ Brechenmacher et al 2020.

¹⁶ Aldrich and Meyer (2015).

¹⁷ In this report we consider main municipalities to be the 41 ones that are county capitals. These are: Alba Iulia, Alexandria, Arad, Bacău, Baia Mare, Bistrița, Botoșani, Brăila, Brașov, Bucharesti, Buzău, Călărași, Cluj, Constanța, Craiova, Deva, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Focșani, Galați, Giurgiu, Iași, Miercurea Ciuc, Oradea, Piatra Neamț, Pitești, Ploiești, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Reșița, Satu Mare, Sf. Gheorghe, Sibiu, Slatina, Slobozia, Suceava, Târgoviște, Tg Jiu, Tg Mureș, Timișoara, Tulcea, Vaslui, Zalău

partnered up with CSO. Through partnerships with LGs, many CSO performed compensatory functions in relation to the state – in a collaborative manner – and co-provided public services. However, the CSO survey revealed numerous examples of CSO performing compensatory functions by filling in the gaps left by public institutions without collaborating with local governments, but rather challenging them. In such cases, CSO were typically involved in partnerships with other CSO and the private sector.

In response to COVID-19 Romanian CSO have fully demonstrated their compensatory function and mobilization potential. In-depth analysis of the COVID-19 case study shows a significant mobilization on the part of the CSO and the private sector to support vulnerable groups including Roma and the healthcare system.

2. FINDINGS

2.1. Overview of the Civil Society in Romania and Current Context

The CSO ecosystem in Romania has been highly concentrated for most of the post-communist period. In the early 1990, several transnational CSO working to implement and sustain democracy and civil society were founded in Romania and, for almost two decades, they dominated the CSO landscape. Things started to change in 2009-2010 when, following the economic crisis, a number of former corporate people reconsidered their careers and started founding a new type of organizations. Many local CSO emerged from this trend. Additionally, in 2013, massive protests broke out against Gabriel Resources Corporation's gold-mining project in Roșia Montană, in the Apuseni Mountains. It is still considered the largest and most important social movement in post-communist Romania based on the number of people attending, the length of the protests and the impact it had.

The Roșia Montană protests marked the birth of a new type of civil society organization: bottom-up, embodying local aspirations and focusing on non-political issues. People from all walks of life and professions came together in many Romanian cities and towns to protest against the mining development: journalists, architects, legal experts, graphic designers, peasants, former miners, NGO workers, writers, students, unemployed people, etc.

The same plurality of voices and large-scale national mobilization towards a common goal was seen again in October 2015, after a fire in COLECTIV nightclub killed 64 people, and then in the winter and spring of 2017, when massive protests against the suppression of the justice system erupted. Mobilization around these crises and spontaneous movements spurred the emergence and development of new organizations and informal interest groups of activists that diversified the Romanian civil society.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, once again, a crisis is shaping the Romanian CSO landscape. During this period, driven by shortages/inadequate distribution of vital medical supplies, the civil society joined the battle against COVID-19, engaging in massive fundraising and procurement of medical supplies. This effort started among a limited number of specialized medical NGOs, but soon spread towards all areas of the civil society, from community development to grassroots organizations, from companies to informal citizens groups and individuals. Subsequently, the involvement of the civil society moved, from medical supplies procurement towards supporting vulnerable groups and communities.

A significant number of Romanian CSO proved to be flexible and able to cooperate on a large scale in the COVID-19 context, quick to learn and adapt to new circumstances, sometimes outside their immediate expertise and areas of intervention. We saw organizations focused on capacity building and networking, pivot to medical procurement, and NGOs supporting the education sector, learn new ways of helping children and their families during lockdown.

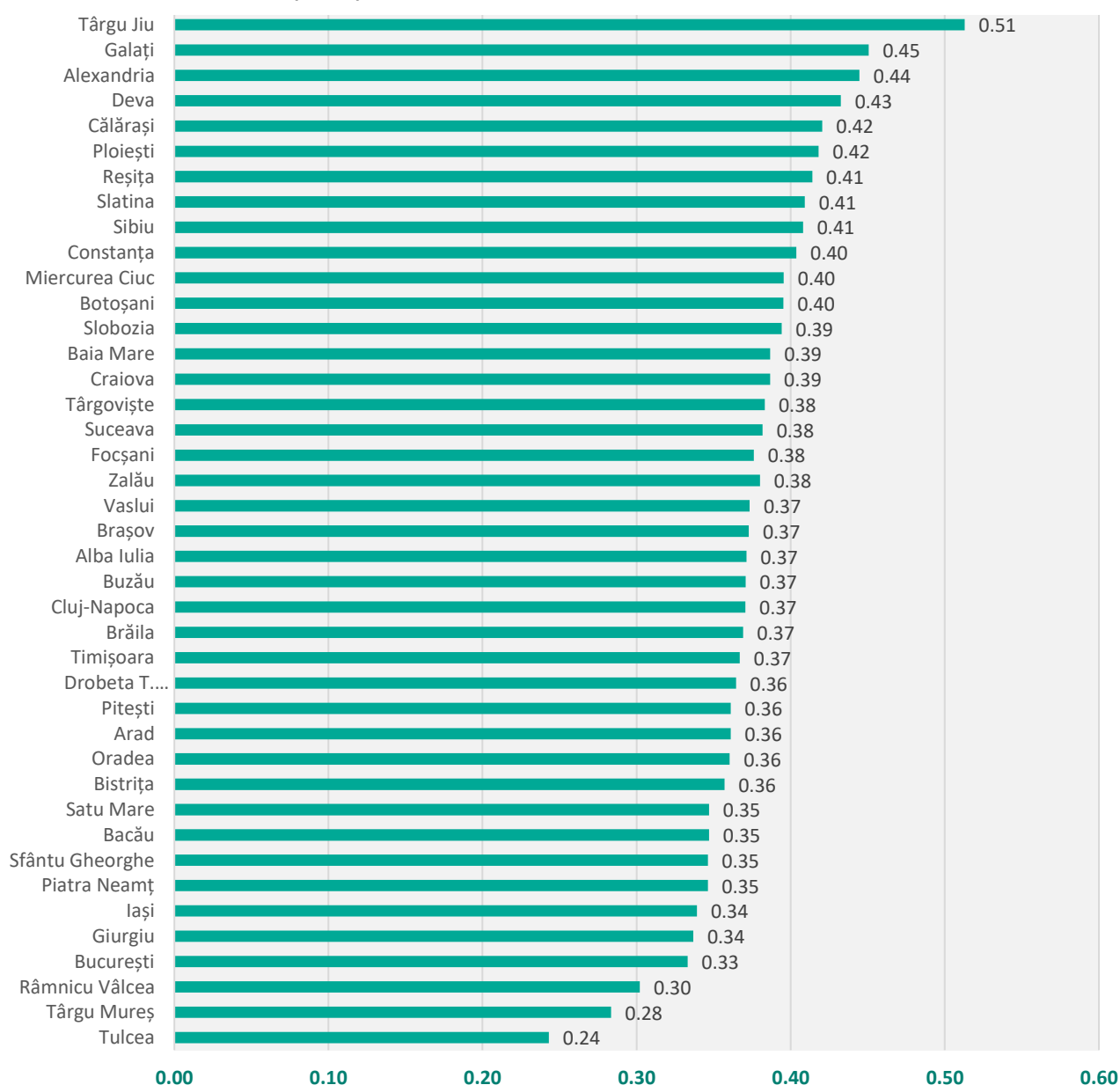
Undeniably, lockdown and the pandemic, will have negative as well as positive outcomes for CSO: we are likely to see CSO drained of financial or human resources, but some newly formed, grassroots initiatives will continue to exist and grow into valuable members of the Romanian civil society.

2.2. Prerequisites for Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a form of social capital that is widely considered to be one of the key drivers of democracy and good governance. It is a key prerequisite in the development of a well-functioning relationship between CSO and the state, at both central and local level. To measure civic engagement at subnational level such metrics as electoral turnout, support for petitions, and monitoring of LGs through information requests. In accordance with Law 544 were used.

Electoral turnout in local elections is indicative of political participation. Citizens who participate in selecting their local representatives can be expected to engage with the local government after elections. In the most recent local elections in 2016, the average turnout was 48.44%, while for

FIGURE 1. ELECTORAL TURNOUT (SHARE) - LOCAL ELECTIONS 2016

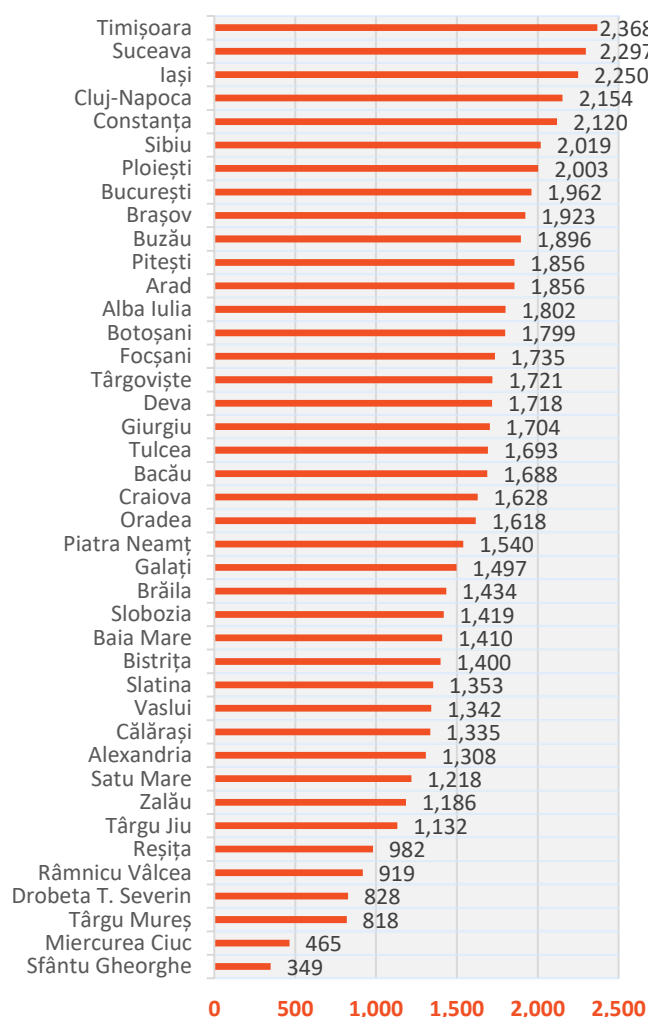


Source: Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP), 2016 local elections

the parliamentary elections in the same year, the average turnout was 39.49%. This suggests a slightly higher average interest in local than in national politics, that is driven by smaller cities and rural municipalities – as only 3 out of the 41 county residences, recorded an electoral turnout equal to or higher than the national average.¹⁸

Petitions are one of the main ways in which citizens can introduce issues they care about to the public authorities. It is an engaging process that requires not only mobilization on the part of supporters who sign a petition, but also technical knowledge on the part of petition initiator(s) who follow the institutional procedures in registering a petition.

FIGURE 2. PETITION SIGNATURES (POPULATION WEIGHTED)



Source: Petitiononline.com - top 20 most popular petitions of all time with over 30,000 supporters.

This technical know-how of institutional procedures is increasingly facilitated in Romania by platform CSO, such as Cluj-Napoca based DeClic. Such facilitators promote their own issues in civil society, but also help others with the process of mobilizing support and engaging public authorities. Thanks to such facilitators, the petitioning process is more accessible to less technically competent users and more effective.

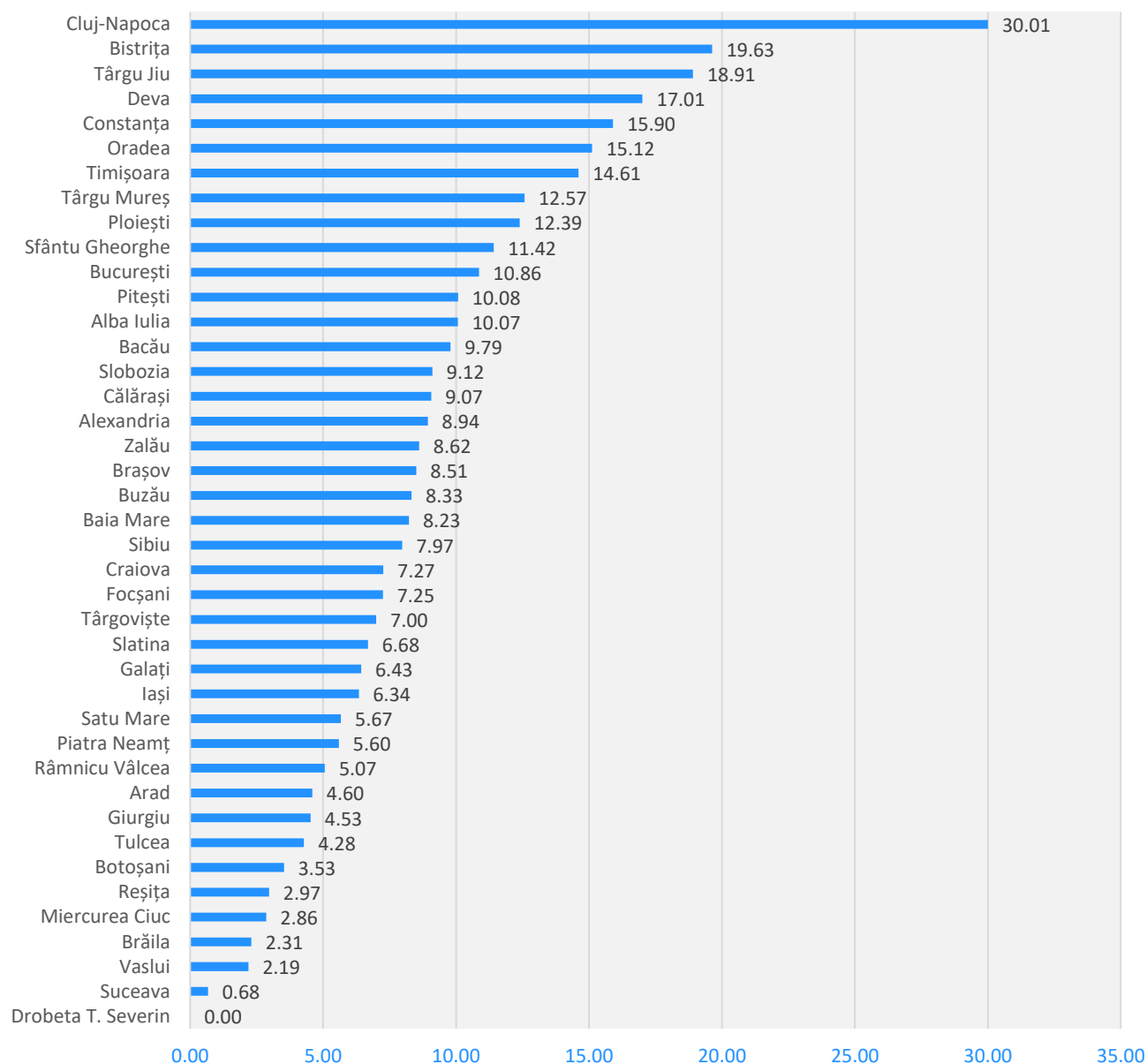
However, beyond organized efforts, any citizen can start a petition online via various available platforms such as petitiononline.com. We used the signature data of the most popular petitions on this platform as a proxy for citizens' appetite for signing petitions. After we weighted the total number of signatures by the population of each main municipality, we found that the most active municipalities in Romania in this regard are: Timișoara, Suceava, Iași and Cluj-Napoca (figure 2). More progressive causes (e.g. animal rights, environmental protection) have significantly more support in university cities such as Cluj-Napoca, Iași or Timișoara, while conservative causes (e.g. death penalty, no sex education, no vaccination) tend to have more support in

such municipalities as Brăila, Galați, Bistrița that have a weaker representation in the younger demographic segments.

¹⁸ Tg. Jiu was the municipality with the highest electoral turnout in the latest local elections, with 51%, followed by Galați with 45% and Alexandria with 44%.

Public information requests are another indicator of the level of engagement between citizens or civil society and public authorities. Asking for information is an instrument of bottom-up monitoring of the activity of public administrations. We use the number of public information requests registered with local authorities to evaluate the level of civic engagement at the local level. After we weighted the official figures by the population of each municipality, we found that Cluj-Napoca has the highest civic engagement in this regard, with an outlier score of 30.01 followed by Bistrița (figure 3¹⁹).

FIGURE 3. PUBLIC INFO REQUESTS (POPULATION WEIGHTED)



Source: Public evaluation reports on the implementation of Law 554/2001 from 2017 -2019

¹⁹ For Drobeta T. Severin, the reports related to the implementation of Law 554/2001 were not found at the moment of publication of this report.

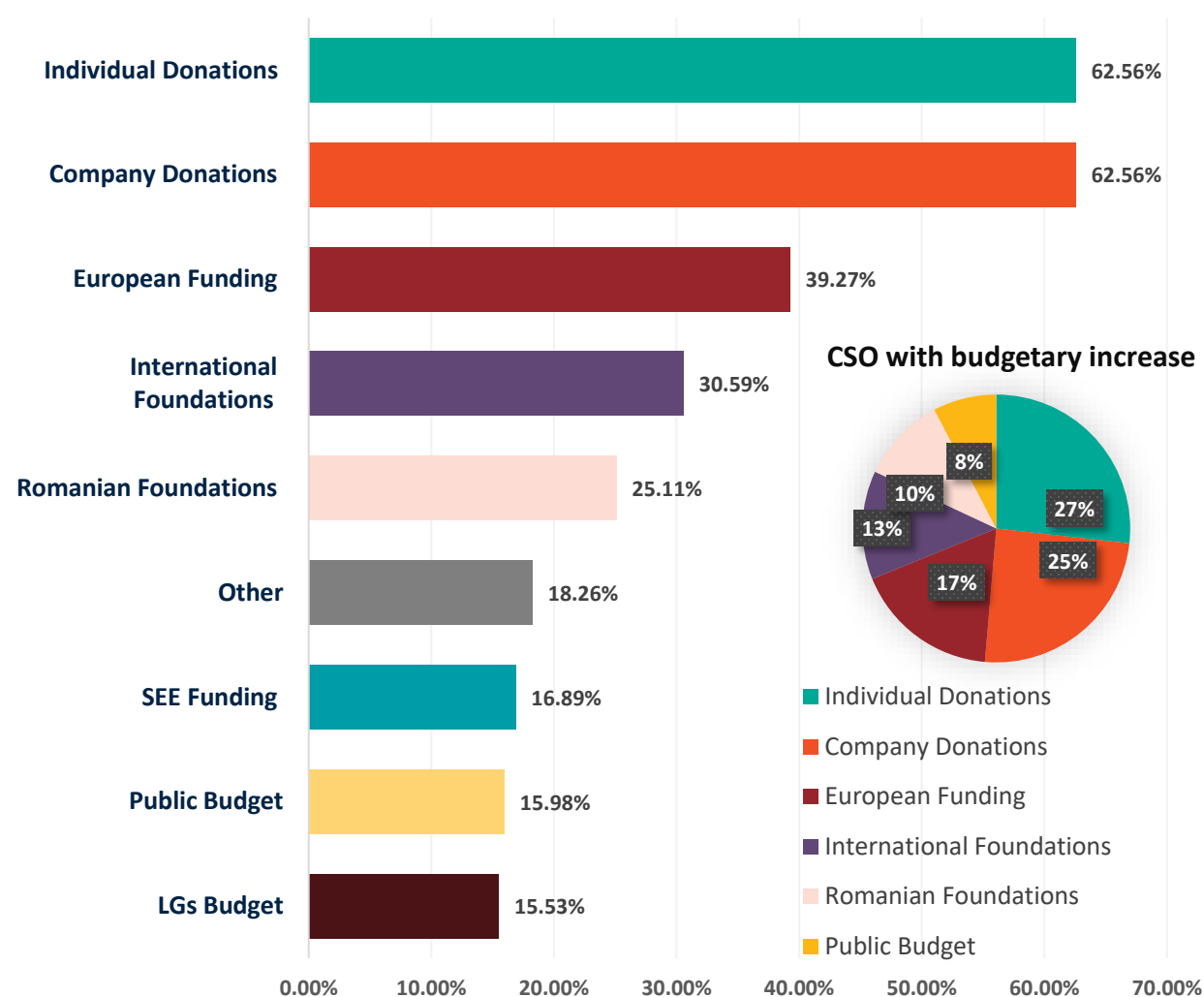
2.3. Mapping CSO Capacity and Typologies

2.3.1. Financial Resources: Private vs. Public Funding

There is a visible trend of CSO consolidation in terms of financial capacity, as the WB Survey data showed that two in three CSO recorded increases in their annual budgets in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the previous year. Furthermore, a third of those increased their annual budget by more than 75%. This suggests that successful CSO have been in fact thriving, not just getting by. These CSO have been mostly established in the last decade.

The majority of CSO that increased their revenues over the course of the past three years are active in the education sector. However, measured against the sectorial density of respondents, better financial performances were recorded in the water and environment sector, where three quarters of the organizations reported budgetary increases, and in the human rights, and culture and civic activities sector, in which half of CSO reported a budgetary increase. In education, urban development, and digital sectors a third of the CSO reported a budgetary increase over the course of the last three years.

FIGURE 4. CSO MAIN SOURCES OF FUNDING



Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

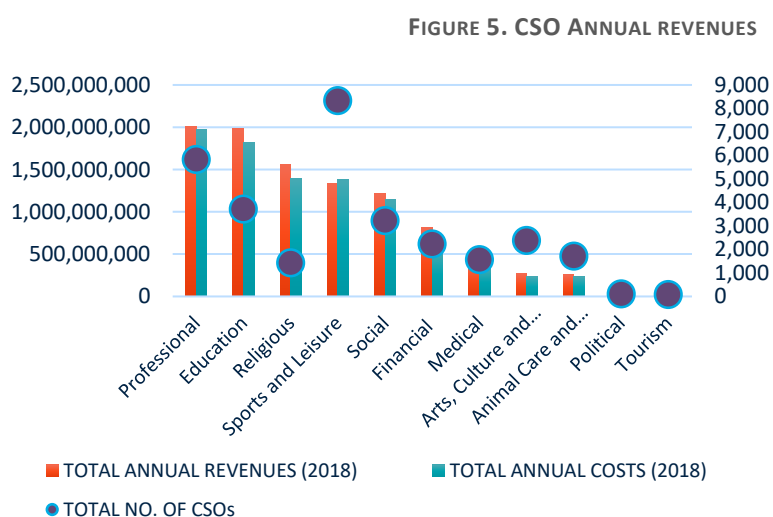
In the recent years, CSO private funding has become an increasingly important source of revenue for many CSO. The Civil Society Development Foundation (FDSC) 2016 CSO Survey revealed an increase in all forms of funding from private companies (i.e. cash and in-kind sponsorships). On the donor side, according to the 2017 Association for Community Relations (ARC) survey of large companies (turnover over 1 million EUR), 85% of companies transferred part of the income tax to CSO, the preferred sectors being education (68% of respondents), health (64%), social services (55%) and culture (41%).

At present, Romanian CSO heavily rely on corporate funding. According to WB Survey data, two thirds of surveyed CSO named company donations as their primary source of funding (figure 4). While many companies donate directly to CSO via sponsorship contracts, some have set up corporate foundations, such as Vodafone Foundation, Orange Foundation, eMAG Foundation and others. Some have opted for joint grant-making funds, such as the Lidl fund with ARC or IKEA and Porsche funds with Bucharest Community Foundation.

A close second source of CSO funding remain individual donations, which are increasingly convenient to make, via SMS and online platforms, as well as by share of transferable fiscal income. European funding is the primary source of revenue for almost 40% of CSO, followed by grants and other funding from international (30.5% of CSO) and national foundations (25% of CSO). There is no differentiation by the sources of funding if we look only at those CSO that registered budgetary growth over the course of the past three years. The share of public budgets or European Economic Area (EEA) funding is relatively small.

In terms of relevant European funding, the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU) funds were attracted by projects with CSO beneficiaries. In Centru, Nord Est (NE) and Sud Muntenia (SM) over 70% of the available POCU funding has benefited CSO. CSO led more than half of the POCU projects in which they were involved. From all the projects implemented by CSO, half are targeting municipalities. In total value, the largest share of the total CSO projects funded by POCU benefited the capital city, but once the values are population weighted, secondary cities were more effective in attracting CSO projects (Alba Iulia, Miercurea Ciuc, Sf. Gheorghe, Zalău, or Baia Mare).

Sectors with higher than average revenue and annual turnover include professional associations, religious associations and CSO active in the educational field. CSO in the sports and leisure sector are also concentrating a significant revenue, but they are also very numerous, so the individual revenue shares are likely relatively small. Social and health CSO had a smaller, but more equally distributed revenue stream in 2018 (figure 5).



Source: ANAF Registry, latest available data for 2018.

Financial resources directed to COVID -19 response

In the COVID-19 context, many CSO addressed medical and social issues brought to the top of the national agenda by the pandemic by fundraising or repurposing their resources. CSO n supported health care institutions that have been affected by chronic underfunding, fragmentation, lack of focus on developing the quality of care, overutilization of acute services and reversal of many critical reforms. CSO also supported the country's most vulnerable populations during the pandemic. Romania's severe material deprivation rate is 3 times higher than the EU average,²⁰ and although poverty has gradually been declining, it is significantly above regional peers and expected to increase during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

Medical institutions were the main focus of CSO' COVID-19 response. According to ARC data, in the first six weeks of the COVID pandemic, 82 Romanian CSO raised almost EUR 14 million through corporate and individual donations, of which EUR 13,95 million were directed towards the acquisition of medical equipment and PPE for over 180 medical institutions.²¹ (A complete list of the CSO included in ARC report can be found in [Annex 10](#)). At the same time, Biz and Forbes business magazines have been aggregating data on donations made by Romanian companies since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Romania. While a significant number of the donors considered in Biz's report had also been included in ARC data, their total was approximately EUR 17 million, most of which was also directed towards medical needs. A complete list of the donor-companies aggregated by BIZ magazine can be found in [Annex 11](#).

Snapshot: Romanian Red Cross

Romanian Red Cross initiated its own campaign in the COVID-19 context: "Romania saves Romania," through which EUR 6,686,365 had been raised through donations from both companies and individuals, of which EUR 86,364 through SMS donations. The reported acquisitions from the collected funds, on May 5, were of EUR 1,132,097 covering exclusively medical needs. They are included in ARC's reporting above.

At the time of this assessment, with the remaining funds the Romanian Red Cross was planning the purchase of 2,221,200 pieces of PPE and more than 30,000 liters of disinfectant.

As part of its effort against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Romanian Red Cross distributed medical equipment and PPE to 180 health facilities, delivered protective equipment to 180 local public administration institutions and offered packages with basic foodstuff and hygienic products to 12,175 quarantined persons and vulnerable families and 55 CSO. Moreover, more than 8,000 self-isolated persons were monitored daily at home by phone, by Red Cross volunteers.

Primary health care (PHC) doctors were also in the first line of the fight against the virus during the state of emergency. They were charged with the surveillance of asymptomatic COVID patients with risk factors and contacts of COVID patients, as well as monitoring the patients' health during the isolation at home. The National Federation of Employers of Family Physicians in Romania released a survey of 1,174 general practitioners (GPs) from all counties, on their experience of the pandemics in the months of March and April. According to it, only 5% of GPs never experienced

²⁰ EU-SILC data.

²¹ <https://arcromania.ro/arc/sectorul-nonguvernamental-a-dotat-spitalele-cu-echipamente-si-aparatura-in-valoare-de-14-milioane-de-euro-si-a-sprrijinit-mii-de-persoane-vulnerabile-in-toate-judetetele/> accessed on

difficulties purchasing PPE during this period, while 56% mentioned difficulties in purchasing during the entire period. Despite the difficulties, only 1% of doctors reported suspending their work during this period. Overall, 40% of all GPs didn't receive any materials from the authorities, while 51% didn't receive anything from the civil society. Certain communities stand out – Suceava, the county with most cases, seems to have been better covered with only 30% and 35% reporting not having received PPE from authorities and from the civil society respectively. In Cluj, where CSO ran a special campaign in support of local GPs, 74% of GPs reported assistance from the civil society.

It was not only private companies that respond fast to the needs of the healthcare system, but also individual donors, people who responded to various appeals from NGOs or informal groups. In the last years, SMS donations gained popularity in Romania, becoming a commonly used means of fundraising for CSO. Donatie.ro, the platform that centralizes SMS donations managed by ARC, reported a total number of 1,182,852 SMSs received between March 15 and May 14 of this year, almost double of the same period last year²². Considering that most SMSs have a fixed donation value of EUR 2, more than EUR 2,365,704 were collected in total. About EUR 2.5 million were collected through the eMAG online donations platform.

Snapshot: eMAG's Donations Platform

eMAG is the largest e-commerce platform in Romania with EUR 660 million in profit in 2018 and millions of customers annually. At the beginning of April 2020, the company started the campaign “Donate for the first line”, through which companies and individuals could donate money for purchasing PPE and medical equipment. Individual donors could donate money through eMAG’s website and via SMS. Buyers were also encouraged to donate to the campaign at the check-out page.

The founders themselves donated and raised EUR 1.2 million from the company and three other large Romanian corporations, to start the campaign.

On June 3, 2020, the website reported 69,731 individual and 5,226 corporate donors and about EUR 2.5 million in donations. Most donations ranged from EUR 2 to EUR 20. Collected funds bought, among others, two advanced mechanical ventilators, 5 million surgical masks, 350,000 KN95 masks and 20,000 coveralls.

Facebook was another significant fundraising channel for individual donations. Since it is currently not possible for Romanian CSO to fundraise through Facebook, the majority of Romanian fundraisers on this platform were done through the Romanian United Fund (RUF), a philanthropic organization in the United States. As of May 20, a total of EUR 406,914 had been collected through Facebook, and it was mainly directed to the procurement of medical equipment and PPE. The main Romanian CSO that collected individual donations through this platform was Asociatia Magic, which organized various Facebook fundraisers for procuring medical PPE and equipment for most municipal hospitals in the country. Other CSO who fundraised through Facebook and RUF were VeDem Just, Funky Citizens and the Social Center Maria Ward, who raised money to produce visors for medical staff, the prototyping of a disinfecting robot and supporting vulnerable communities. RoHelp²³ is another platform through which Romanians were able to donate to NGOs involved in

²² The State of Emergency was declared on March 14.

²³ The platform was developed by Code for Romania NGO in partnership with the Federation of Community Foundations from Romania and the Romanian Government through the Department for Emergency Situations and the Authority for Digitalization of Romania

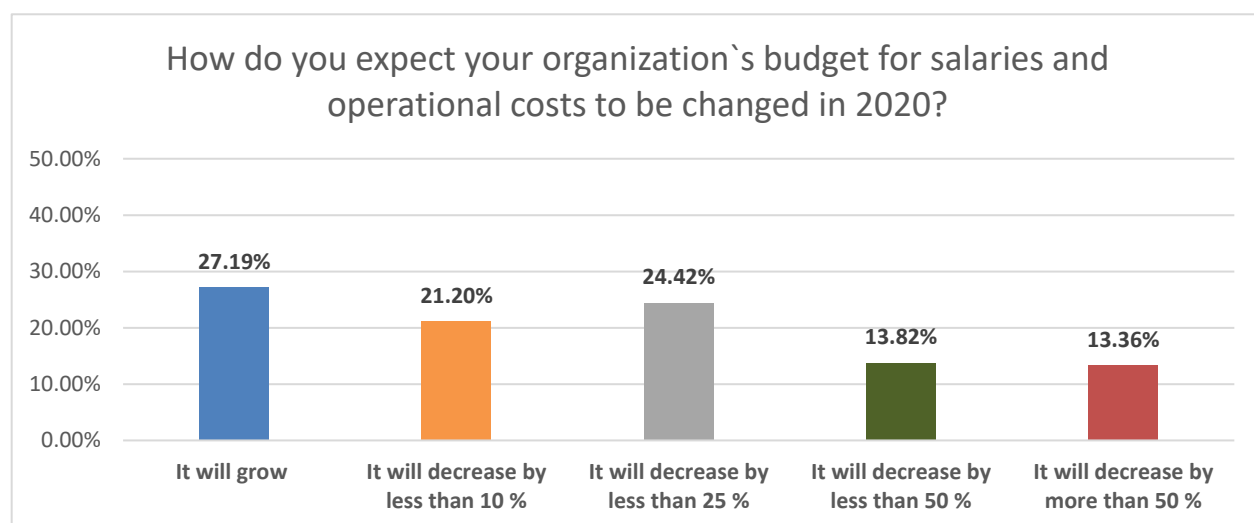
the COVID-19 crisis response. Between the launch of the platform in mid-April and mid-June, approximately 7,200 EUR were raised for 35 projects (out of 82 registered on the platform).²⁴

While CSO diverted their efforts to the emergency pandemic response, planned projects were scaled down or put on hold. 77% of the participants of the WB CSO Survey stated that they had diverted resources to COVID-19 related activities. 24% of respondents reported reduced staff during the pandemic, while 20% reported having used technical unemployment government support during the lockdown. In the same survey, CSO expressed a wide range of expectations regarding their resources during the rest of 2020: almost 50% believe their income will increase or decrease by less than 10%, whereas 24% believe it will decrease by less than 25% and only 13% believe it will decrease by more than 50% (figure 6).

Large CSO relying on private funding estimate that the income received in the first months of the year has reduced by two thirds in comparison to the same period in 2019 (e.g. such as Asociația Magic). Asociația Dăruiește Viața, another very large organization, expects their donations for current projects to reduce for the rest of the year, as a result of the COVID-19 mobilization earlier in the year.

There seems to be a trade-off for Romanian CSO between doing the right thing and ensuring their organizations' resources in the short run. Interviewed respondents mostly believed that by getting involved in the COVID-19 crisis, CSO have financially depleted their regular projects. Most respondents agree that this was the only correct course of action, but acknowledge that this will affect other critical projects, nonetheless. All data collected (macro-economic, reports on donations and interviews) suggests that the next year will be challenging for CSO in Romania, because they mainly rely on the constant inflow of donations, with only a few having reserve budgets, investment or any other forms of economic independence. This may force some organizations to reduce their programs and even end their activity in the year to come.

FIGURE 6. COVID-19 EXPECTED IMPACT ON CSO BUDGETS



Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

²⁴ The platform was developed by Code for Romania NGO in partnership with the Federation of Community Foundations from Romania and the Romanian Government through the Department for Emergency Situations and the Authority for Digitalization of Romania.

Financial health of private companies is increasingly affecting the financial health of CSO. Since companies can deduct sponsorships from their profit tax, more than one in two is inclined to make a donation, and in 2017 more than EUR 280 million were donated to CSO thanks to this tax benefit.²⁵ Between March and May 2020, companies donated just 6.5% of the value of company donations towards CSO in 2017.²⁶ This may mean that funding may still be available for donations for the rest of the year provided donor companies' profits are not hit by the imminent financial recession. If this happens, companies will not be able to give towards causes they traditionally supported, and some of the CSO that were not involved in COVID-19 activities may not survive this period.

The number of donations made by the general population, via SMS, has doubled in March – May 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019, according to ARC Romania, the organization that centralizes SMS donations countrywide. This may mean a sharply increased inclination of individual donors to support good causes; but it may also mean that the population has already exhausted their donation budget during the pandemic and will be more reserved for the rest of the year, unless another emergency arises.

The EEA funding through the Active Citizens Fund,²⁷ will remain a stable source of funding for Romanian CSO next year. The objective of the Active Citizens Fund is strengthening the civil society and active citizenship and building the capacity of vulnerable groups. For some of the calls opened after March 2020, the grant administrator made some concessions in recognition of the difficulties currently experienced by many CSO – such as eliminating the obligatory co-financing requirement. It is expected that, with private funding dwindling, the competition for this fund will be very fierce.

The largest Romanian private funders, such as the Romanian American Foundation, have also adapted the ongoing programs in order to make sure grantees are supported during the following period of uncertainty.

The uncertainty notwithstanding, the COVID-19 crisis holds within it the seeds of a new, more resilient, civil society. Just as the previous crises have given rise to and spurred the development of many present CSO, COVID-19 has the potential to transform Romanian CSO, especially in terms of operations, fundraising, communications, and emergency response capacity. However, if the majority of CSO don't survive the imminent recession, the potential gains of this crisis will not be realized, and there will be no networks of strong coordinated CSO to shore up the struggling Romanian society in case of a new crisis.

Based on the COVID-19 involvement experience, CSO should be more confident of their potential and value to society. Cases of agile, trusting cooperation, both among CSO and with donors and local administration, may also trigger a positive response in the cooperation culture. In the long run, this may increase the impact of the civil society, even as it now faces unprecedented challenges.

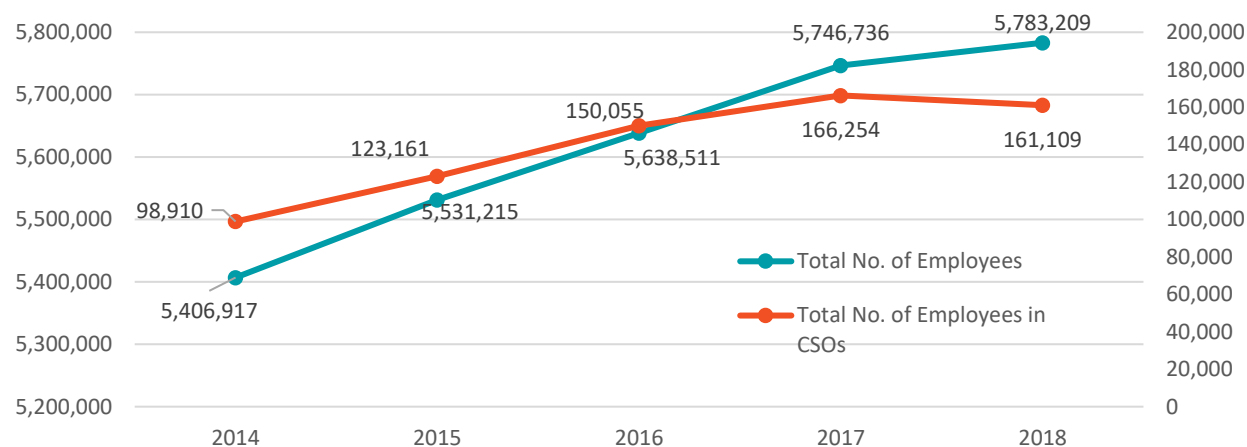
²⁵ ARC& Hospice Romania survey 2018

²⁶ According to a preliminary report made by Biz on sponsorships

²⁷ Active Citizens Fund Romania is a 2019-2024 financing program for non-governmental organizations

2.3.2. Human Resources — Employees vs. Volunteers

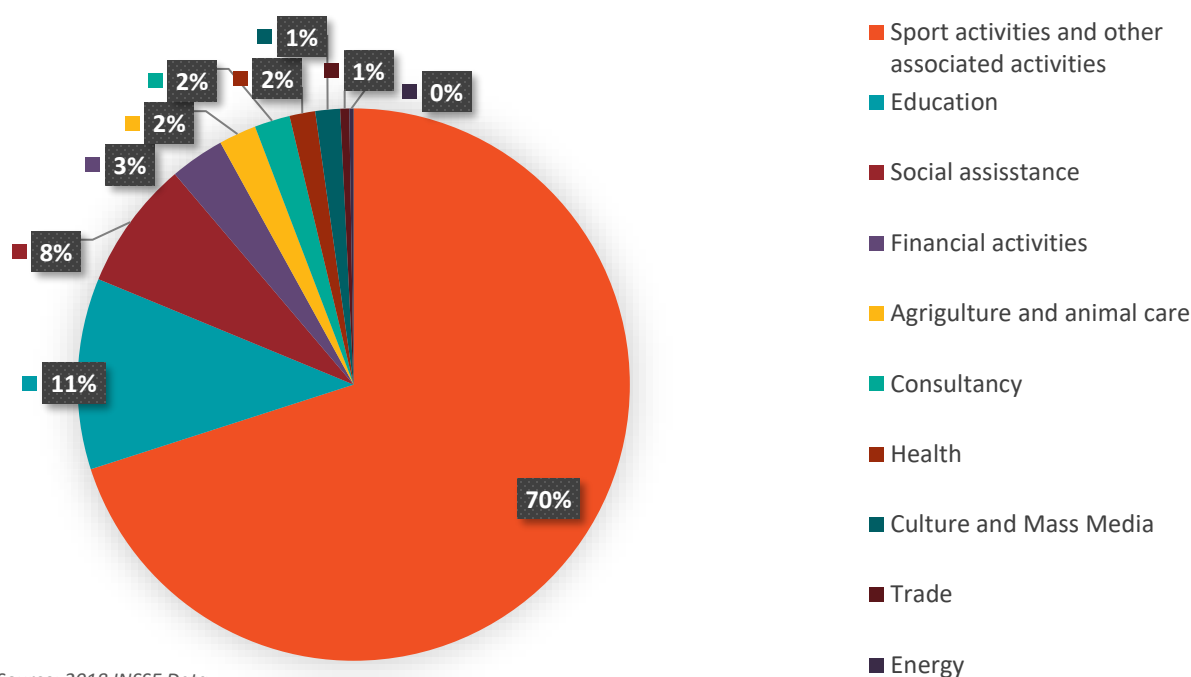
FIGURE 7. CSO EMPLOYMENT IN ROMANIA (2018)



Source: 2018 INSSE Data

There is a slight divergence between the overall growth of employment in the Romanian economy and the dynamics of employment in the CSO sector, suggesting the existence of special factors that affect the slight decrease in employment recorded in the CSO sector in the past years (figure 7). Possible factors can include regulatory changes that exert higher bureaucratic burden on NGOs or difficulties in accessing finances. Largest CSO employers in Romania are sports and leisure associations, followed by NGOs in the educational sector, and social sector (figure 8).

FIGURE 8. SHARE OF CSO EMPLOYMENT PER SECTOR OF ACTIVITY



Source: 2018 INSSE Data

Almost half of the respondents of the 2020 WB CSO survey represented CSO active in the social and charitable sectors, which is consistent with the overall distribution of active CSO in Romania, according to INSSE data. More than half of the respondent CSO identified themselves as being service providers in such areas as education, health or emergencies. The second largest group of respondents stated that they were involved in advocacy, attempting to influence public policies and measures. About a third of respondents considered themselves to be either an expertise provider, or a promoter of civic activities (figure 9). The majority of CSO that considered themselves to be providers of expertise belonged to the education sector, followed by human rights, civic action and technology and urban development.

FIGURE 9. SURVEY Q4: WHAT ROLE DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION PLAY IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

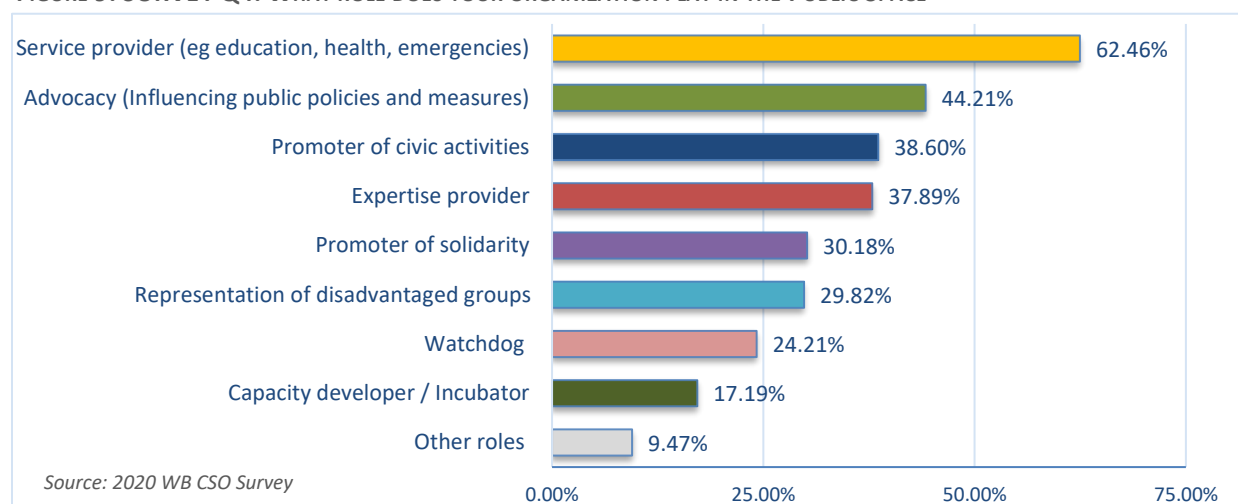
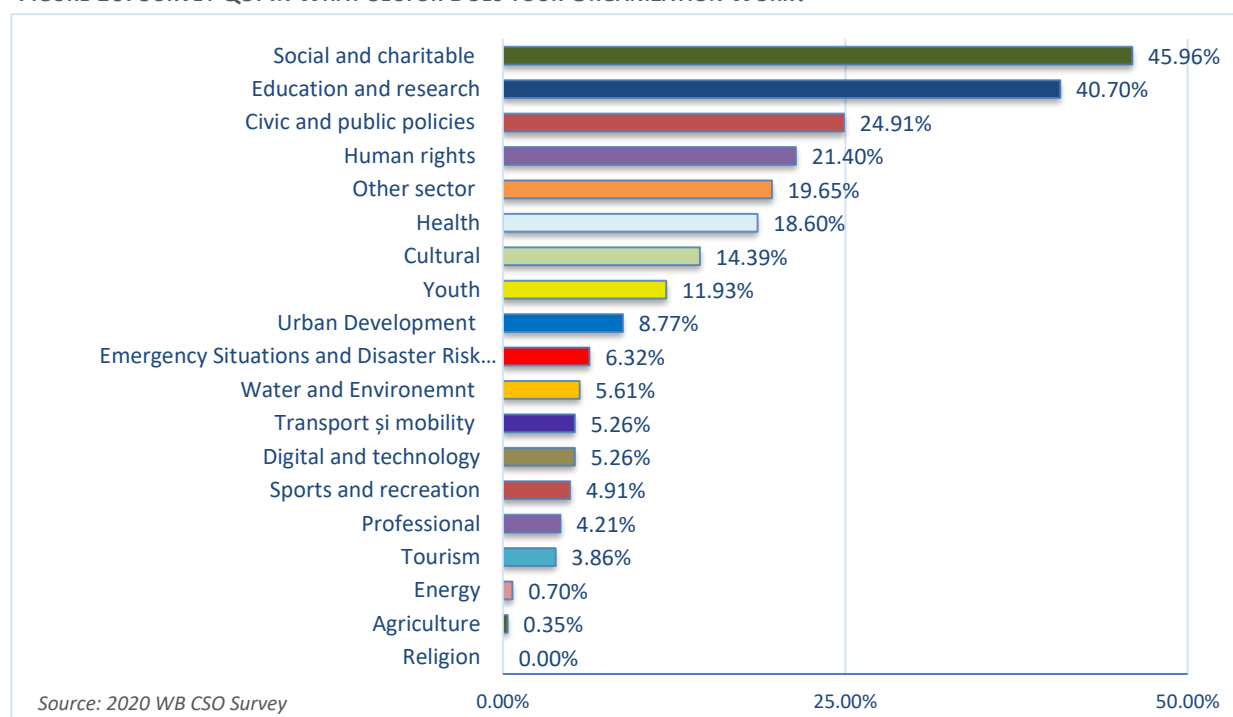
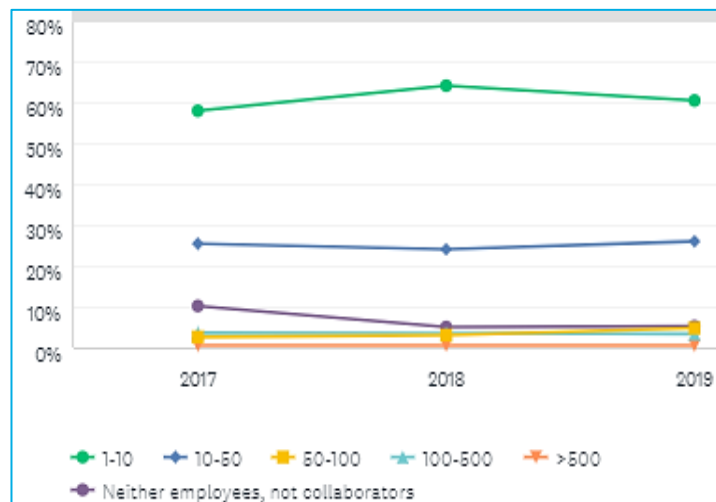


FIGURE 10. SURVEY Q3: IN WHAT SECTOR DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION WORK?



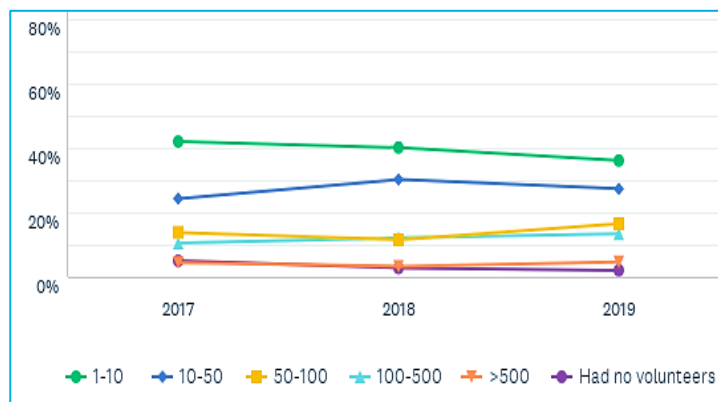
Romanian CSO report a large disparity in terms of personnel capacity, with a high concentration in the category of small sized organizations comprised of 1-10 employees and/or permanent collaborators. Over the course of the last three years, approximately 60% of CSO placed themselves in this lower human resource interval. A quarter of CSO reported having a medium-sized organization comprising of 10 to 50 employees and/or permanent representatives. Relatively few CSO can claim a large organization in terms of personnel with more than 100 employees or permanent collaborators (figure 11).

FIGURE 11. CSO NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES/ PERMANENT COLLABORATORS – ESTIMATIONS OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS



Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

FIGURE 12. CSO NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS/ORGANIZATION – ESTIMATES OVER THE PAST 3 YEARS



By the nature of their activity, CSO are highly reliant on volunteers. Generally, Romania has recorded a relatively poor track-record in this regard. According to the Charities Aid Foundation's 2018 World Giving Index, Romania reported one of the lowest regional values of volunteering, with only 6% of respondents saying they participated in voluntary activities. The CSO Sustainability Report also refers to the data from the European Youth Survey

(2018) that confirmed the low rates of volunteerism in Romania: only 8% of respondents participated in the activities of a cultural organization in the last twelve months, 7% in the activities of a local organization aimed at improving the local community, 5% in the activities of an organization promoting human rights or global development, and 4% in the activities of an organization active in the area of climate change and environmental issues. Representatives from Cluj-Napoca municipality, one of the benchmarks of participatory governance in Romania, mentioned the challenge of getting younger people involved in their consultative efforts, and it was not until they included informal groups and larger international projects (i.e. Cluj-Napoca candidacy as the European Youth Capital) that young people gave their input.

World Bank CSO survey shows a relatively high share of middle-sized CSO in terms of volunteering, with approximately 30% having between 10 and 50 volunteers annually over the course of the past three years. There also seems to be a declining share of volunteering for smaller organizations, and an increase in volunteering for larger organizations—with more CSO declaring 50 to 100 volunteers last year than in previous years (figure 12).

Over the past years, there was an increase in the appetite for volunteering on the part of professionals, as highlighted by in-depth interviews with CSO leaders—especially those from recently established organizations or wider collaborative platform structures (e.g. Funky Citizens, Code4Romania, Geeks4Democracy, Declic). This brings not only additional resources to CSO in the form of personnel, but also important know-how and expertise. For example, in the case of Funky Citizens, employees of multinational companies from the tech or advertising sectors have willingly donated one day a week to work on some of CSO's projects or public awareness campaigns. Code4Romania gathers amongst its ranks many established professionals from the ITC sector in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara and Iași that claim to be looking for meaning in their everyday activities and feel the need to contribute to society.

There is no aggregated data available yet as to how many volunteers were involved in fighting COVID-19. However, research shows two categories of volunteers that mobilized: (1) those already registered with CSO providing relief and humanitarian aid; and (2) people who spontaneously offered help/ responded to calls for help or organized themselves in small (3-4 people) or large (up to 200 people) informal initiative groups to respond to various needs.

Snapshot: Volunteer Involvement during COVID-19

1,953 Red Cross volunteers were actively involved in daily interventions, while Cumpărături la Ușa Ta (Door-step Delivery), a start-up initiative, had 900 registered and 250 actively involved volunteers, mainly in Bucharest. Students from Bucharest Construction Students Association spontaneously organized a network of 220 volunteers, to help the elderly and other people with their shopping during the state of emergency.

Code4Romania worked with 450 volunteers to develop a suite of six applications targeting the pandemic context, in a program in partnership with the Romanian Government.

Viziere.ro (an informal group producing and donating visor masks for medical workers) grew a national network of 2,500 volunteers, who produced and delivered alternative PPE.

The Social Solidarity Humanitarian Action, initiated by Chef Adi Hădean, delivered more than 35,000 hot meals to hospital staff and vulnerable people, with the support of more than 50 volunteer cooks. Kane – New Romanian Cuisine, a gourmet restaurant that pivoted towards preparing hot meals for medical staff and vulnerable categories, also worked with 46 volunteers and donated more than 12,000 meals by mid-May.

A network of large organizations working with volunteers and humanitarian organizations continued to work during the state of emergency, but safety and protection measures were so drastic, that CSO preferred to work mostly with their own trained and regular volunteers' staff, and not take in new volunteers. There was a slight increase in the intention to volunteer from the general population, but it is unclear how many actually acted upon this intention.

Many people helped not only by donating money, but also by using their connections, expertise, time and knowledge. Networks were formed spontaneously, with people interested in doing good. The majority supported to the medical system, but some also attended to food and medicine distribution, cooking meals for hospitals, manufacturing visors and protective suits for medical staff, generating digital solutions and communication platforms, shopping for the elderly and other vulnerable categories, assisting the state or other NGOs in medical procurement.

2.3.3. Density and Geographical Patterns

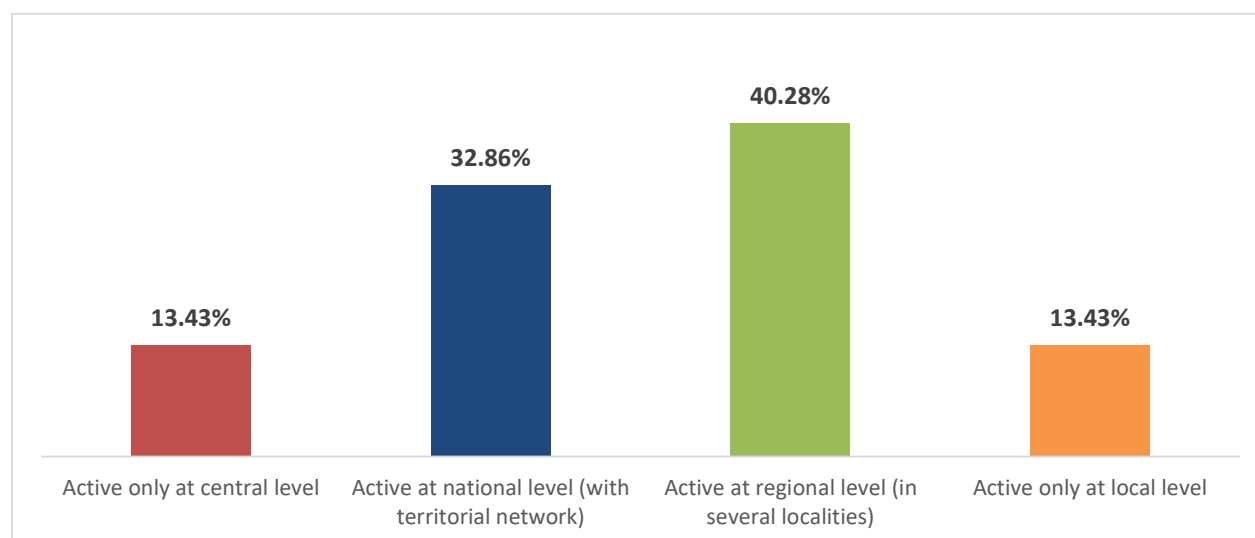
CSO are concentrated in main cities – Bucharest, Iași, Cluj-Napoca, Târgu-Mureș, Brașov and Timiș.²⁸ The northern part of the country has a much denser CSO population than the south, while București dominates its region with 95% of all CSO (figure 14).

The density of CSO often correlates with the POCU funding per county in major cities – the more CSO, the more successful a county is in attracting funding. However, there are exceptions in particularly touristic regions, such as Brașov and Tulcea, and low-income counties, such as Covasna, that have been more successful in attracting EU funding than in developing civic engagement (figure 15).

The correlation between the prevalence of vulnerable populations and POCU funding is limited, considering that sometimes a beneficiary vulnerable population is served by a CSO located in a richer community. For instance, Bucharest accounts for almost half of the POCU funding, when analyzing the headquarters of funded CSO, while beneficiaries are in the vulnerable communities. There is, therefore, a clear need in supporting local CSO closer to vulnerable communities.

The majority of respondents (40%) in the WB CSO survey is active at the regional level (i.e. in several localities) and 33% have a national network of offices or local teams. In contrast, only few CSO specialize in either local (13.5%) or national issues (13.5%) (figure 13). These responses suggest a high interest in covering issues at the local level, through a systematic approach. However, local CSO seem more likely to encounter organizational challenges, given smaller resources and weaker bureaucratic experience.

FIGURE 13. TERRITORIAL COVERAGE OF CSO



Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

²⁸ Data as per National Registry of NGOs

FIGURE 14. NUMBER OF REGISTERED ASSOCIATIONS PER COUNTY AND REGIONAL CITY

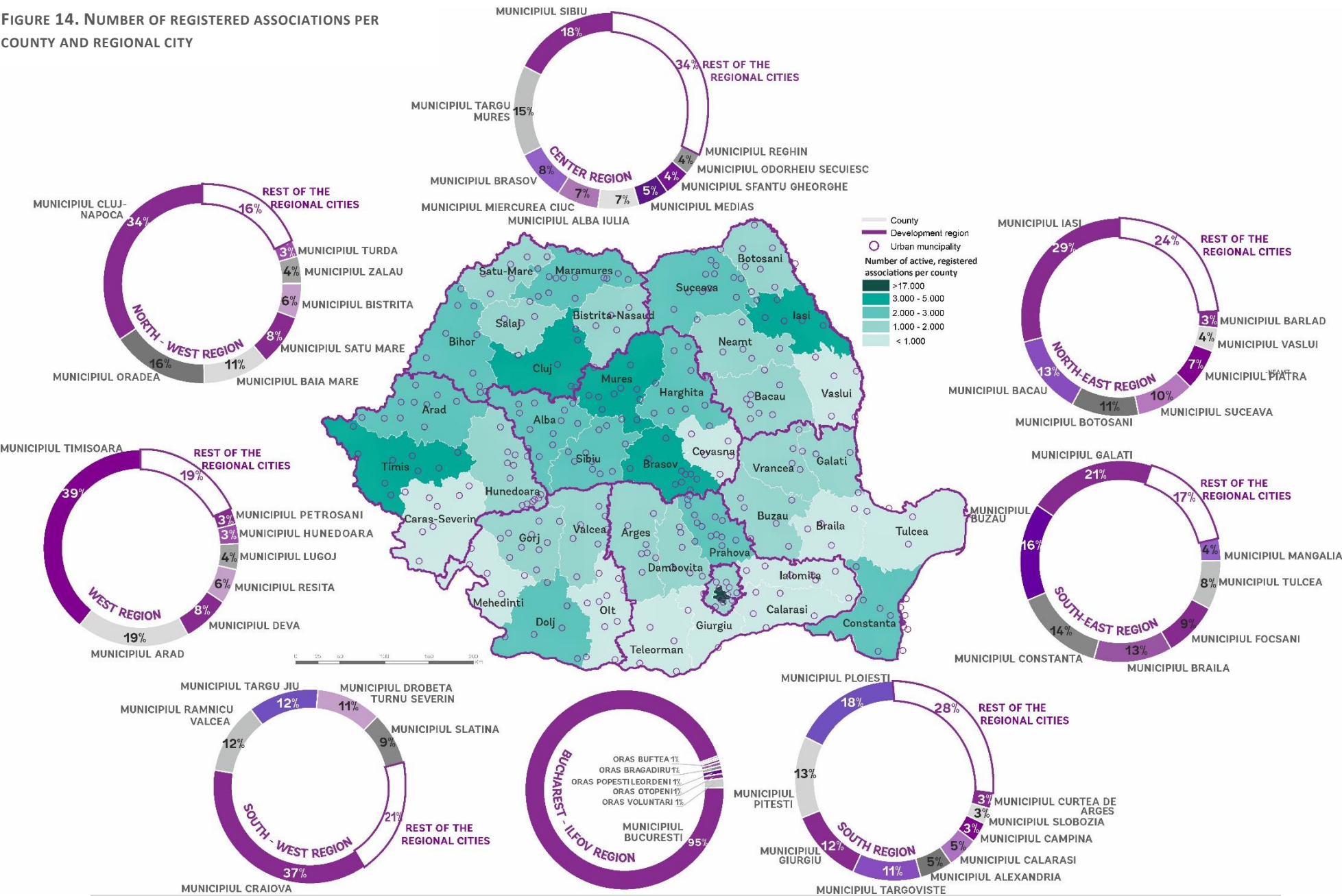
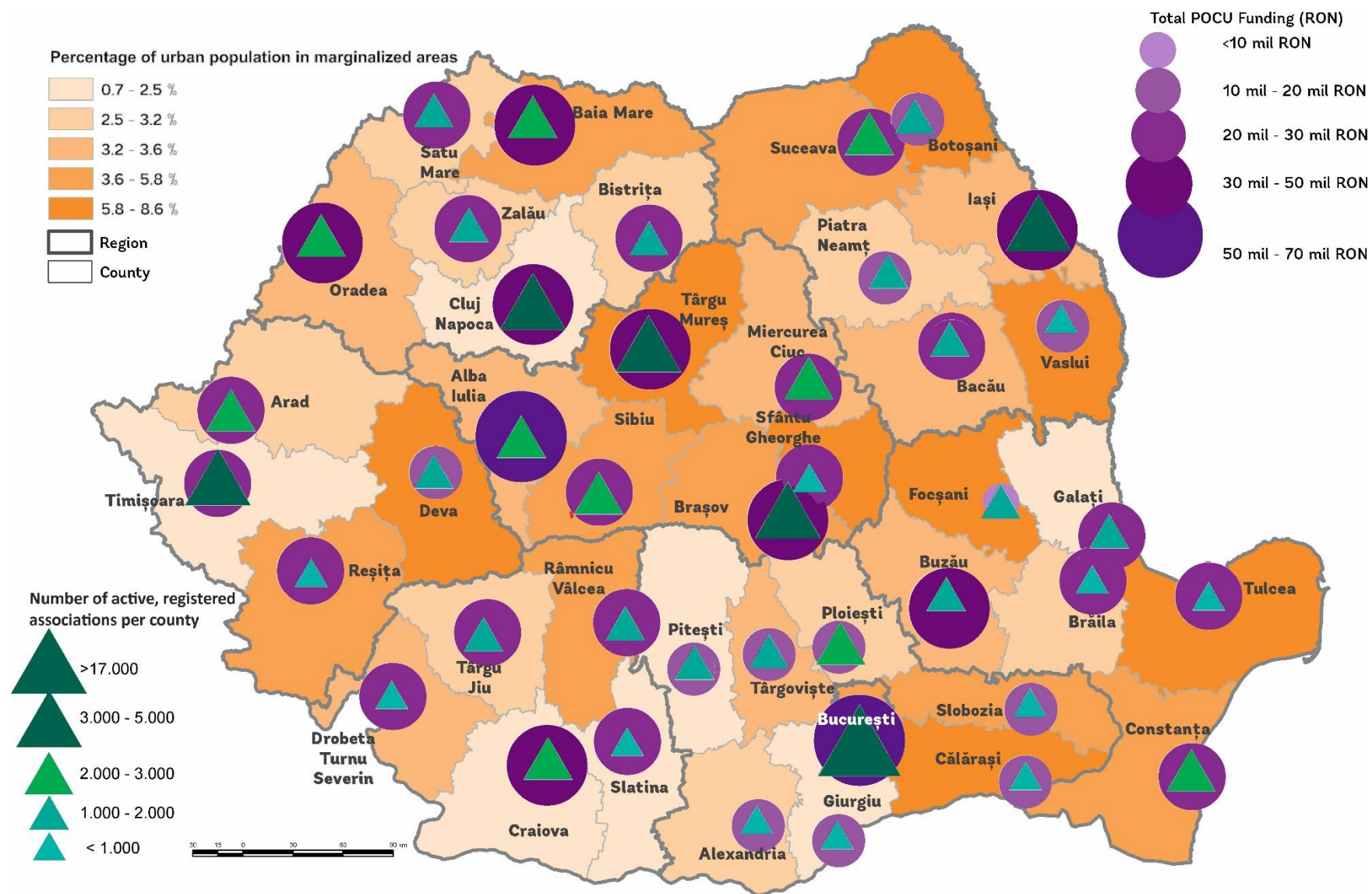


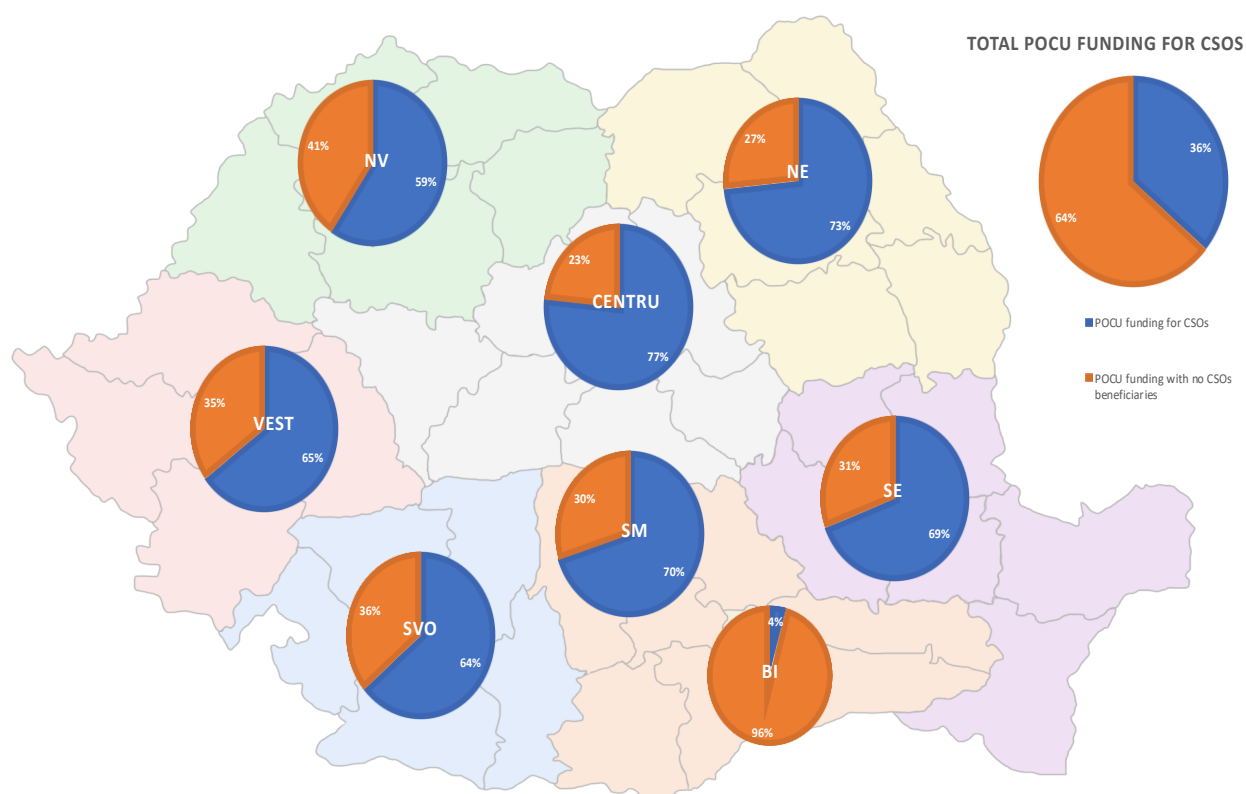
FIGURE 15. TOTAL POCU FUNDING BY COUNTY RESIDENCE COMPARED WITH MARGINALIZED URBAN AREAS AND NUMBER OF REGISTERED ASSOCIATIONS



It is often the case that CSO from Bucharest engage with various local governments and public institutions across the country in collaborative projects funded through European funds (e.g. POCU, POCA) or EEA. This prevalence of national or regional coverage instead of local action can be linked to weaker organizational capacity of local CSO. For example, local CSO are not particularly versed in accountability and the relationship with the citizens, they are not engaged in systematic public communication or developing their public image. Local CSO often find it difficult to find or pay for supporting services such as accounting or legal services. Only 3 of the local CSO in the survey declared they have a dedicated person for fundraising, in contrast to 50% of the CSO that have a regional or national coverage, and almost three quarters of the CSO that declared themselves active only at central level.

POCU funding has gone predominantly to projects that included CSO amongst the beneficiaries in the majority of Romanian development regions (figure 16).²⁹ In Centru, Nord Est (NE) and Sud Muntenia (SM) over 70% of the available POCU funding has benefited CSO, while Vest, Sud Vest Oltenia (SVO) and Sud Est (SE) regions allocated more than 60% of their POCU funding for the entire programming period to projects that included CSO. However, the national average is skewed to only a third of total funded projects including CSO due to the low prevalence of CSO beneficiaries in the Bucharest-Ilfov (BI) region.

FIGURE 16. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CSO FINANCES FROM EUROPEAN FUNDING SOURCES



Source: Ministry of EU funds data on Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU), last updated May 2020

²⁹ Management Authority publishes all POCU contracted projects, updated in May 2020, accessible here: <http://mfe.gov.ro/lista-proiectelor-pocu-contractate-pana-la-31-mai-2020/>.

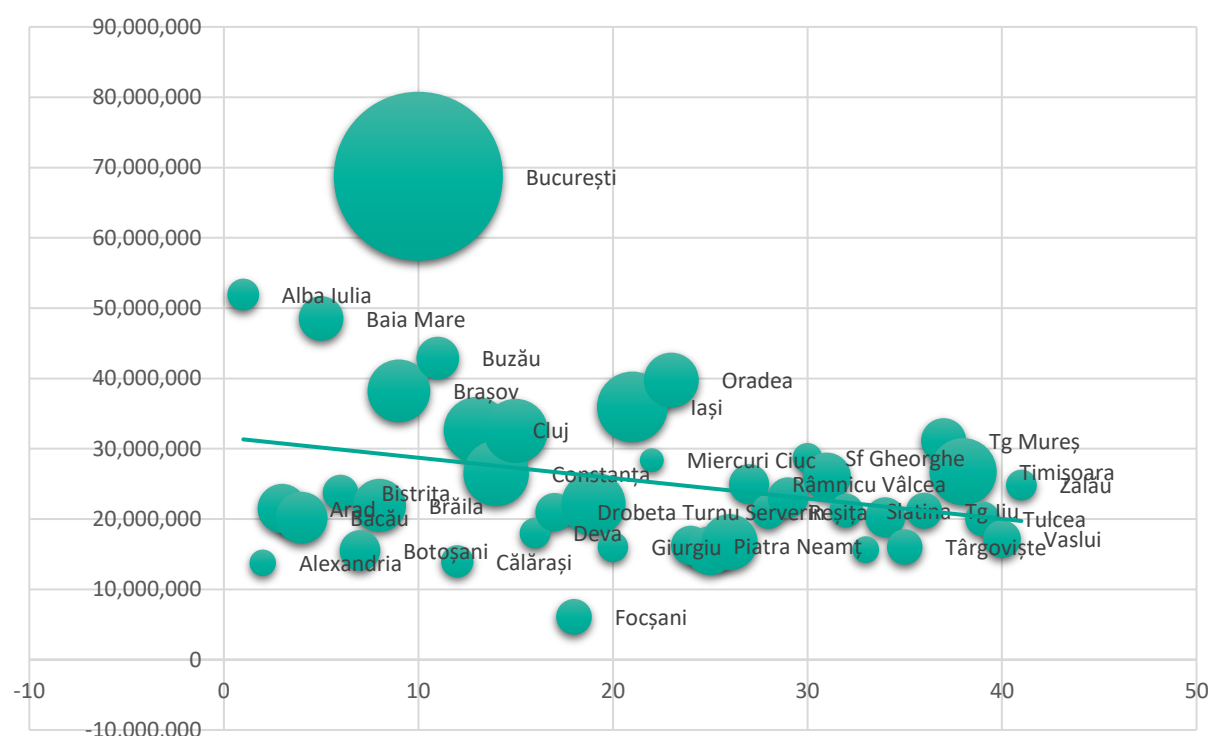
More than half of the POCU projects for which CSO were eligible for funding were led by CSO.

In Vest, Sud Vest Oltenia (SVO) and Sud Est (SE) regions, CSO led projects represented more than two thirds of total funding covering CSO. This is significant in terms of the organizational capacity of CSO to lead a consortium of partners, or to implement projects on their own.

Half of the projects implemented by CSO target municipalities. In Centru projects targeting municipalities constitute 60% of the total projects implemented by CSO. In Nord Est (NE), and Vest development regions, it is more than half the CSO led projects that cover issues in the main municipalities. The vast majority of these projects developed interventions in multiple municipalities.

In total value, the largest share of CSO projects funded by the Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) benefited the capital city, with a total amount of approximately 68 mil. RON covering interventions in Bucharest (figure 17). The other main municipalities covered by European funded CSO projects were: Alba Iulia with CSO interventions worth approximately 52 mil. RON, Baia Mare—approximately 48 mil. RON, Buzău—42 mil. RON, Oradea—39 mil. RON, Braşov—38 mil. RON, Iaşi—35 mil. RON, Cluj-Napoca—32 mil. RON, Craiova—32 mil. RON and Tg. Mureş—31 mil. RON. Together, these 10 municipalities account for about half of the value of POCU funded CSO municipal projects. However, once we make a population weighted assessment, we find a complete reversal of the value ranking, as the capital city of Bucharest falls on the last place amongst Romanian main municipalities. Cities that attracted more CSO funding per capita are: Alba Iulia, Miercurea Ciuc, Sf. Gheorghe, Zalău, and Baia Mare, in the Centru and Nord-Vest regions.

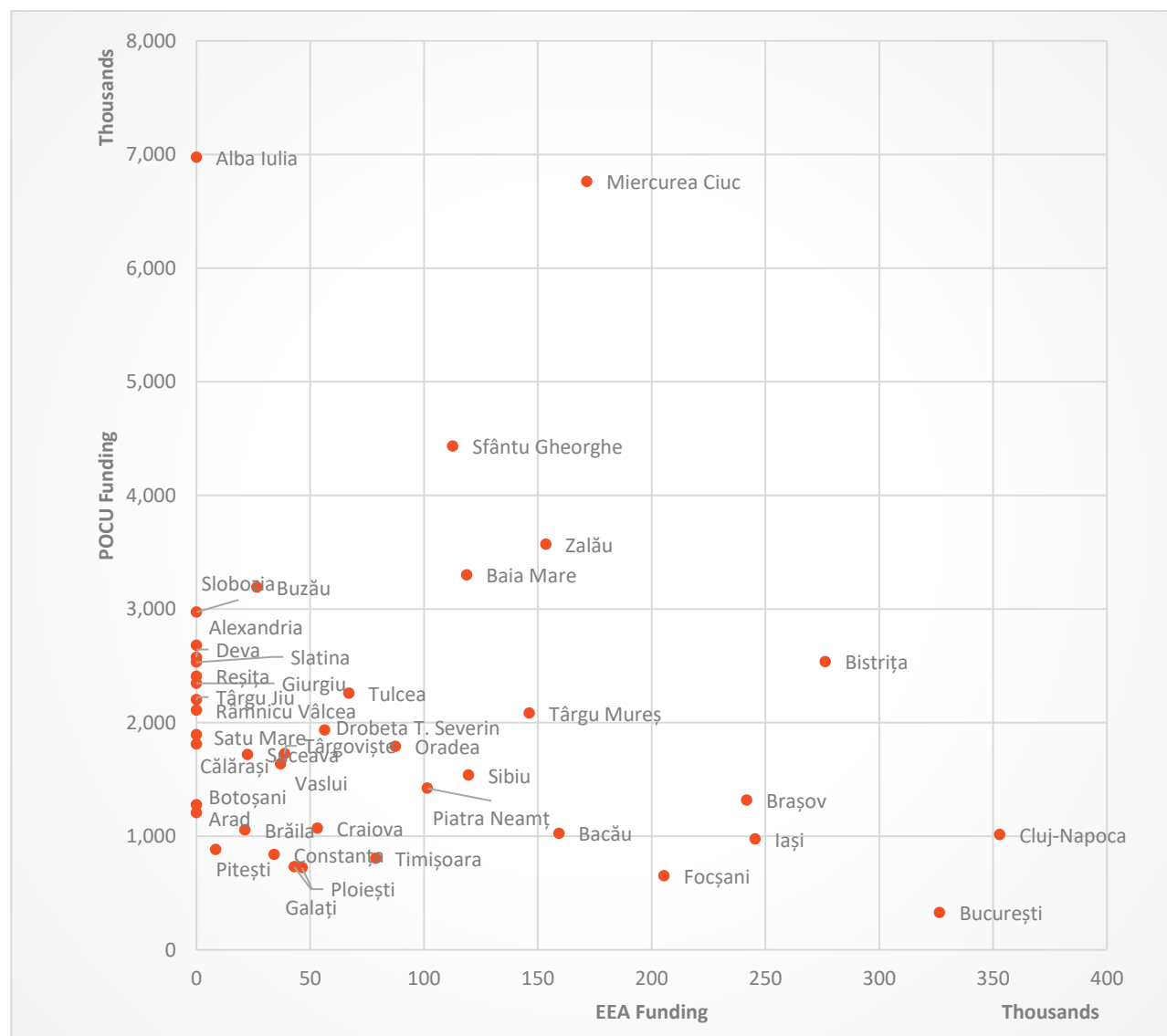
FIGURE 17. CSO PROJECTS VALUE PER MUNICIPALITY



Source: Ministry of EU funds data on Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU), last updated May 2020

Comparing the distribution of POCU and EEA funding (i.e. NGO Fund) at the local level, we find that there are different absorption patterns. Bucharest is the clear outlier in terms of total value, with a much larger share of total EEA funding than from POCU; with approximately the same value of funds absorbed by CSO in Bucharest (i.e. approx. 60 mil. RON), it represents over half of the EEA funding, but only 7% of the POCU funding. If we look at total values, CSO in large municipalities like Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Brasov have done very well in attracting both POCU and EEA funding. However, if we weight the data by population, we find that smaller municipalities such as Miercurea Ciuc and Sf. Gheorghe have done better in accessing both funding sources (figure 18). Many municipalities have no EEA grants at all (e.g. Alba Iulia, Alexandria, Deva, Reșița, Slobozia) despite doing very well in attracting POCU funding.

FIGURE 18. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CSO FINANCES FROM EUROPEAN FUNDING (WEIGHTED)



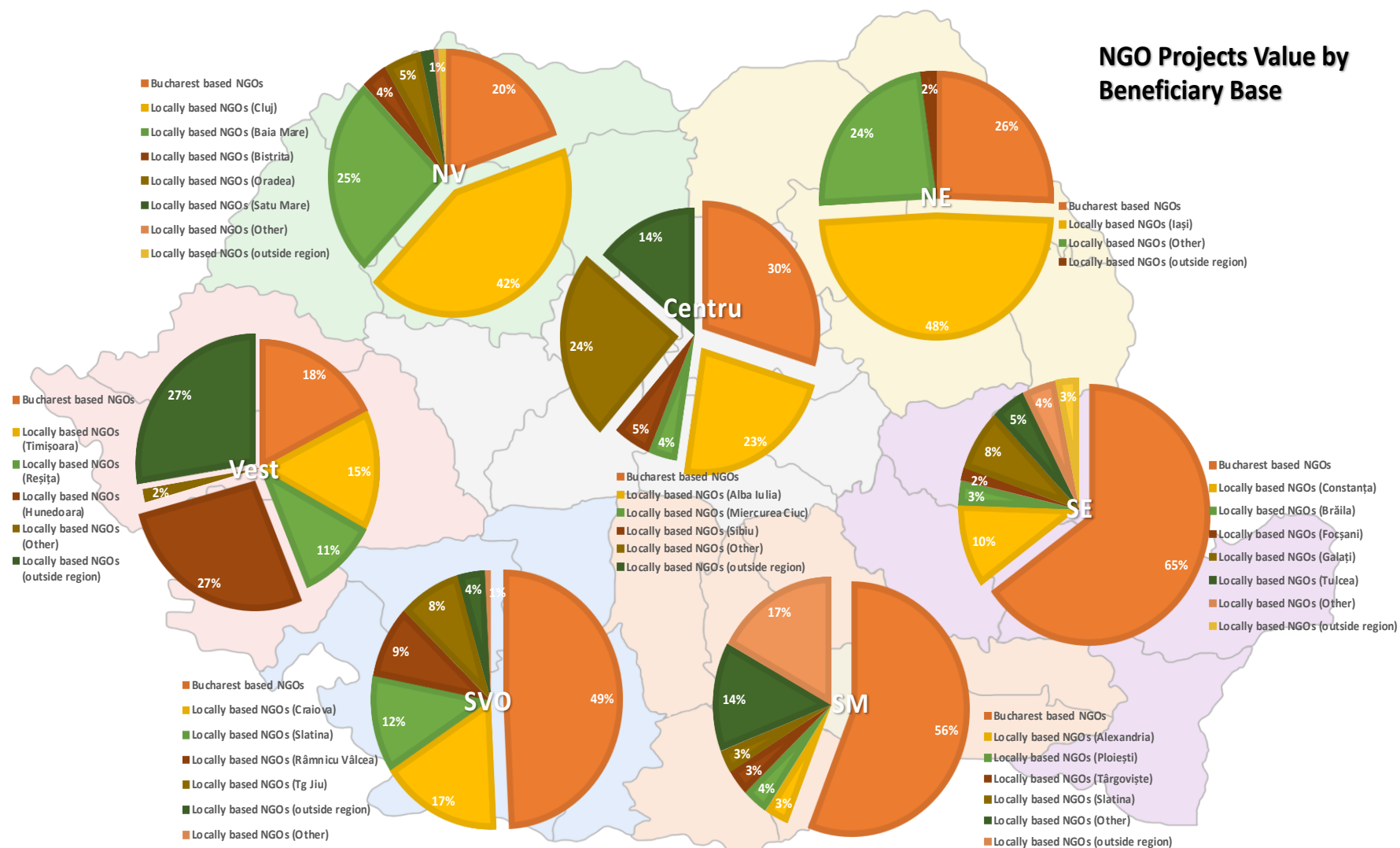
Source: MFE data on Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU), last updated May 2020, and FDSC data on the EEA funding they manage (Fond ONG)

In many regions, the majority of EU funds go to CSO that are based in Bucharest. As shown in figure 19, this is especially the case of Sud-Vest Oltenia (SVO) region where 49% of the total POCU funding went to CSO based in Bucharest, Sud Muntenia (SM) with 56%, and Sud Est (SE) region with 65%. The situation is paradoxical, given that the BI region has a very low share of projects funded through POCU that included CSO. Furthermore, the beneficiary CSO based in Bucharest do not seem to have a relevant territorial network, but the main factor of their successful applications seems to be relevant project experience. As such, there is a certain specialization effect in European funding amongst certain CSO in Romania. More than half (56%) of the total POCU funding from the past programming period went to CSO that had the lead in implementing at least two projects simultaneously, in the same region or different regions

CSO from Cluj-Napoca and Iași were the only ones that were able to capture significant share of the funding in their regions with 42% of all Nord Vest (NV) funding for CSO projects going to Cluj-Napoca, and 48% of Nord Est (NE) funding going to CSO from Iași (figure 19). In the case of Vest and Centru regions, neither large regional municipalities, nor Bucharest concentrate the funding. Instead, we can see a much higher share of funding going to CSO from smaller cities or communes, the latter being generally local action groups (LAGs).

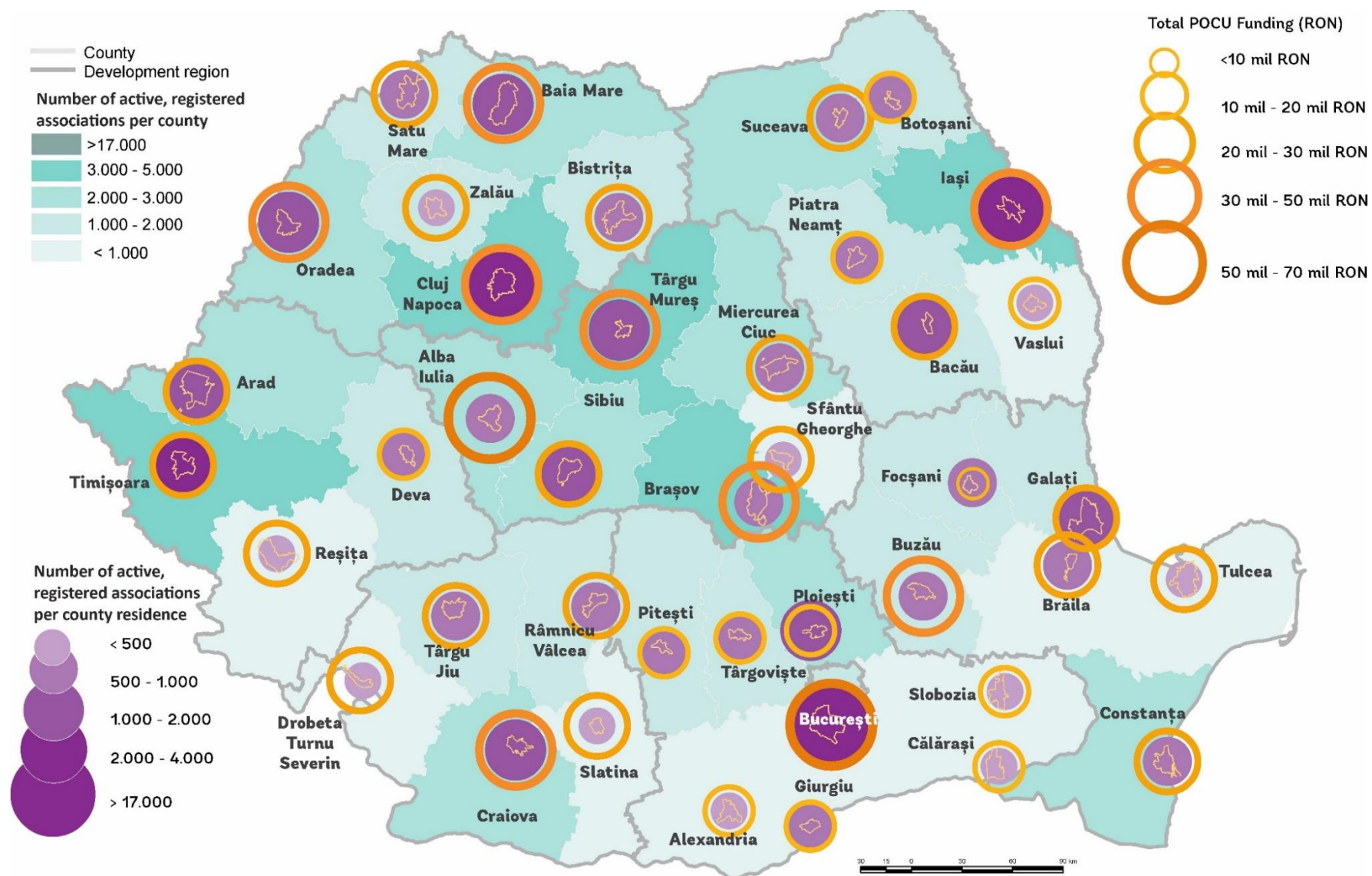
Large municipalities like Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, or Iași have a correlation between their population and the relative density of CSO compared to other cities (figure 20). Furthermore, in these municipalities, the absorption rate of POCU funding is higher, suggesting a possible correlation between the number of beneficiaries and the number of EU funded CSO projects. However, despite lower figures in terms of population and number of active CSO, municipalities like Alba-Iulia, Brașov, Sf. Gheorghe or Buzău receive a substantial share of POCU funding for CSO suggesting a relatively high performance of organizations that are active in these cities.

FIGURE 19. NGOS PROJECTS VALUE BY BENEFICIARY BASE



Source: MFE data on Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU), last updated May 2020

FIGURE 20. TOTAL POCU FUNDING PER COUNTY RESIDENCE COMPARED WITH NGO DENSITY



2.3.4. Generational Patterns

There is a strong generational effect in certain sectors of activity: three quarters of respondents involved in digital and tech, youth, urban development, and transport and mobility CSO belong to the “new wave” organizations founded in the past decade (table 1). Such sectors as social, health, education, human rights, and civic action are represented among all three generations.

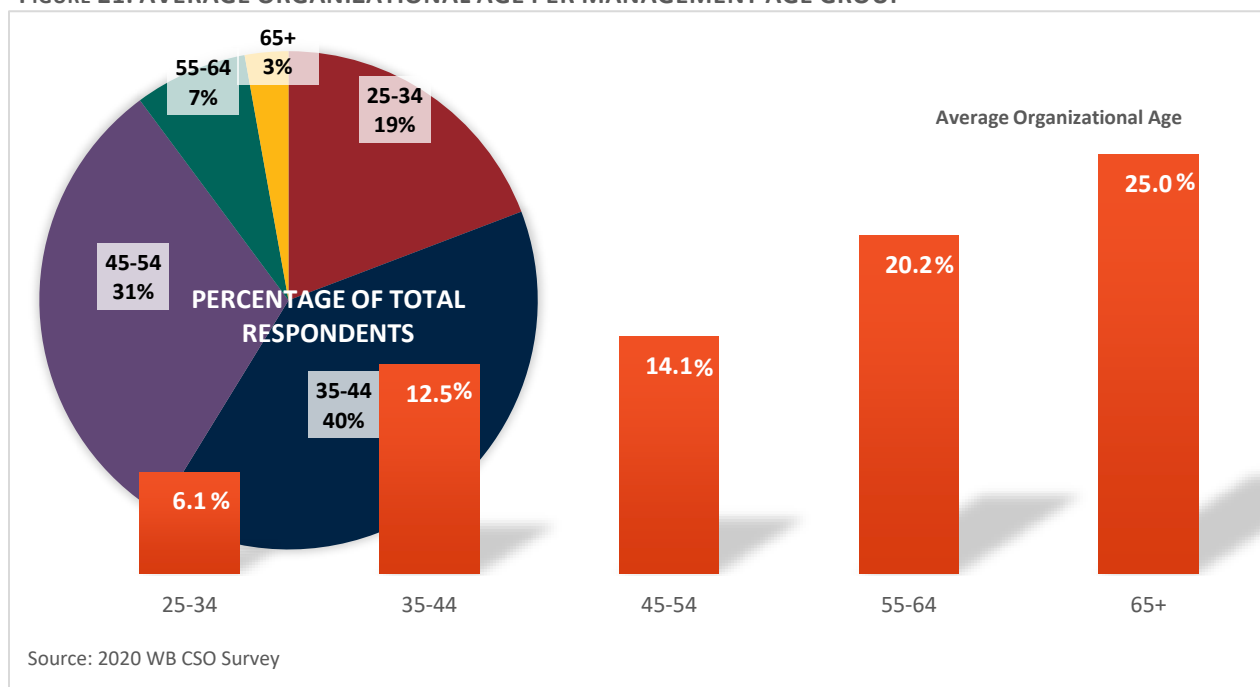
TABLE 1. CSO TYPES IN ROMANIA

	Established CSO	EMERGING CSO	„NEW WAVE” CSO
Profile	Trade unions, professional associations, social dialogue groups	Environment, health, social services, civic and good governance	Civic-tech, emergency services, urban development, social innovators
State engagement	High	Moderate	Weak
Collaborative potential	High – consolidated platforms, networks, common point of view	Weak – fragmented, no inter-institutional engagement, autonomous activity, no platform organizations, diverging point of view	High – platform organizations, capacity enhancers, networking with peers nationally and internationally,
Financing	Own sources/members, public budget	European Funding, public budget, private and individual donations	Private sector, international foundations
Coverage	National	Local/regional	Local/regional
Trigger factors	Interest representation	Service provision	Issue-driven (e.g. post-COLECTIV, COVID-19)

Source: Interviews and sector assessment

Established CSO in Romania face the challenge of becoming too rigid, and less able to bring about change in society and to use resources efficiently. Interview data points to the fact that it is often smaller, newer organizations that are able to make the most of their available resources. Overall, the management of major CSO in Romania is relatively experienced in administration and day-to-day running of the organizations, but their ability to attract and keep new personnel is weak. Based on the survey data (see figure 21) there is a very high correlation between the age of the CSO manager and the organization’s age. Managers in their late 30s, 40s and early 50s cumulatively lead two thirds of all CSO, with only 19% of CSO being led by persons younger than 35.

FIGURE 21. AVERAGE ORGANIZATIONAL AGE PER MANAGEMENT AGE GROUP



There was a notable increase in the number of civic-tech organizations after COLECTIV disaster, and this “new wave” is characterized by better integration across platforms, participation of people who have not been involved in CSO before and who bring “fresh blood” and fresh thoughts into the civil society sector in Romania.

COVID-19 seems to have had a similar trigger effect on activism in Romania as new “new wave” type organizations joined in the fight against the virus. CSO raising to the task in this period have been better organized, more knowledgeable, supported by greater numbers of volunteers, and better at cooperating with public institutions. Above all, the networking capital of these organizations is substantial, both amongst peers, and international organizations, and with public sector representatives and political decision-makers. Such CSO sometimes have access to public sector counterparts on the basis of their personal relationships with political decision-makers. Personal relationships were key to swift and effective communication during the crisis, but in an institutional environment that is often laden with corruption, political connections of CSO can also be viewed as suspect, contributing to preferential access to funding and other privileges that are not merit-based and don’t serve broader societal interests.

Overall, in the civil society sector in Romania, peer collaboration is still weak, with a high level of fragmentation. There are two major impediments to fruitful collaborations: no leadership action towards consolidation and cooperation, and an inward-looking organizational culture. The latter element makes NGOs consider collaboration rather a burden than a factor of efficiency or scaling up potential. Consequently, there are few examples of CSO consolidation through peer-to-peer collaboration.

Given the weak collaborative culture amongst CSO in Romania, the legitimacy of the process of CSO representation can sometimes be affected by narrow consultations and selection base of representatives. Currently, there are a number of consultative and monitoring institutional bodies

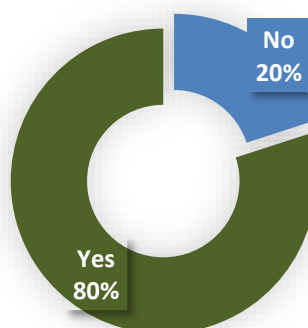
in Romania that include representatives from CSO (see Annex 9). The participation of representative delegates from the civil society in Romania in such bodies is important as the advocacy and/or monitoring power is relatively high. In order to make the process more inclusive, Code for Romania has proposed an online voting platform for the civil society representatives in such relevant tri-lateral consultative forums as the Social and Economic Council (CES), the European Social and Economic Council (CESE), the Superior Council of Magistracy, the National Integrity Council, and various other social dialogue and public monitoring committees (e.g. EU funds absorption and implementation of operational programs).

Some CSO that aim to serve as platforms for peers have developed their own CSO listings either on the basis of community consultations (e.g. Ashoka Romania), or project implementation track record (e.g. FDSC, Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program Photo Album). An effective mapping of CSO leaders has to build on all these disparate efforts at identifying and promoting good practices.

Good governance and democracy watchdog CSO have a strong transnational network capacity. Many have benefitted from funding from international donors early on, gaining not only financial capacity but also regional and international connectivity. Those that have achieved transnational connectivity prefer to apply in international consortiums for grants from the European Commission (e.g. DG HOME or DG JUSTICE project calls) and other international bodies (e.g. GMF, Open Society Foundation). Consequently, many such CSO become engaged in original research activities, nurture their international contacts, and participate in international conferences for the purpose of networking with peer organizations (e.g. Open Government Summit, International Anticorruption Conference, Personal Democracy Forum CEE, Point Sarajevo). These developments suggest an evolution from pure activism to a more sophisticated think tank approach.

The vast majority of CSO that participated in the WB CSO Capacity Mapping survey declared they belong to a broader network (see figure 22). This means that they have access to peer-to-peer learning, know-how transfer and best practice and other information exchanges. It also means they have some sort of support in terms of networking capital and possibly even access to funds. Almost all of the respondents had implemented projects with other CSO in the past, and more than two thirds have also implemented collaborative projects with the state or private companies. While this data suggests there is a high level of collaboration with peers, in-depth interviews suggest that these collaborations tend to be within established international networks, and not necessarily with domestic peer. Previous studies on CSO in Romania have shown that network participation is one of the strongest correlators of CSO capacity, but there isn't a high concentration of CSO that possess both the capacity and the interest to get involved and efficiently engage with third-parties (e.g, state, peers).³⁰

FIGURE 22. SURVEY Q8: IS YOUR ORGANIZATION PART OF A BROADER NETWORK?

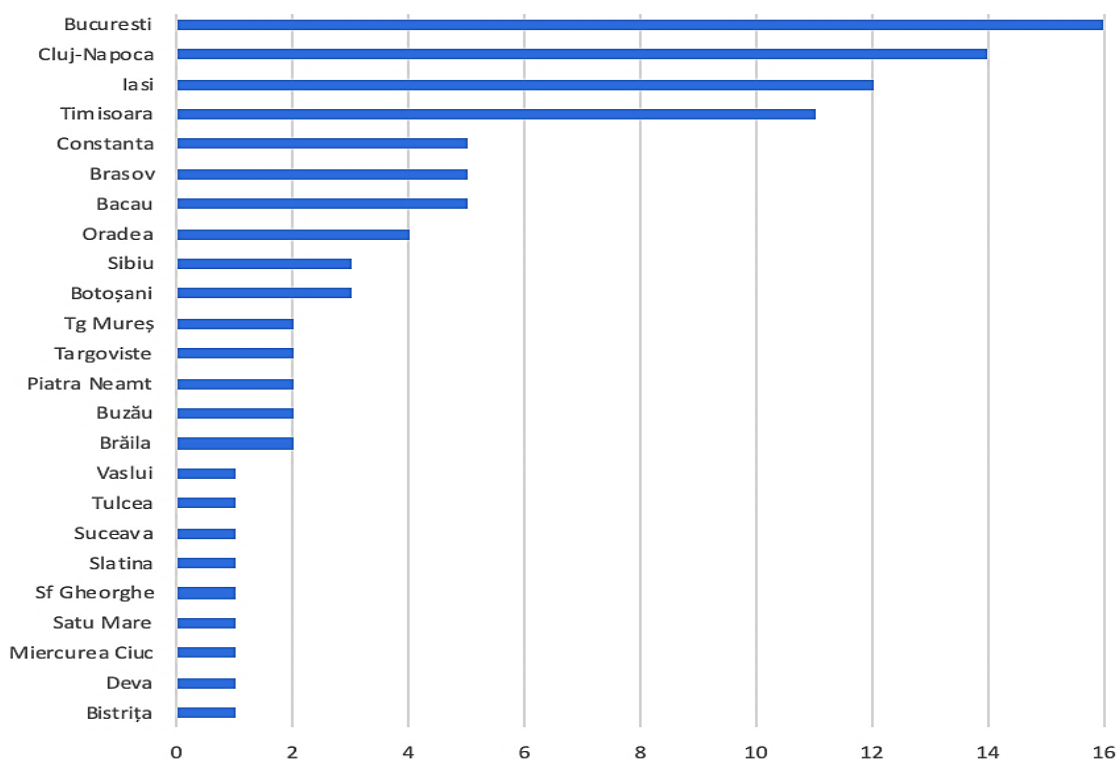


Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

³⁰ Todor 2017.

A total of 37 CSO in the WB survey self-identified themselves as being specialized in capacity development for other CSO, incubators or platforms,³¹ ten of which are community foundations. They cover 24 of the leading municipalities in Romania and some of their surrounding areas. The majority of these capacity enhancing organizations have been established within the past decade, and rely primarily on private donations from companies, individual donors or international foundations. Apart from the community foundations, such peer-to-peer capacity enhancing CSO are mainly based in Bucharest, with a few based in other large secondary cities such as Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Brașov or Constanța (figure 23). In contrast, local CSO from smaller municipalities (e.g. Braila) or rural areas cite capacity limitations to engage in larger projects (i.e. human and financial resources, know-how) despite their better knowledge of local issues. Therefore, extending the territorial coverage of capacity development CSO and creating mentoring partnerships between platform and local CSO could boost the latter's own capacity and ability to engage in larger or more sophisticated projects in the future. This would be an investment into the development of local CSO and an alternative to Bucharest-based NGOs implementing an increasing number of projects in other municipalities.

FIGURE 23. PEER TO PEER CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

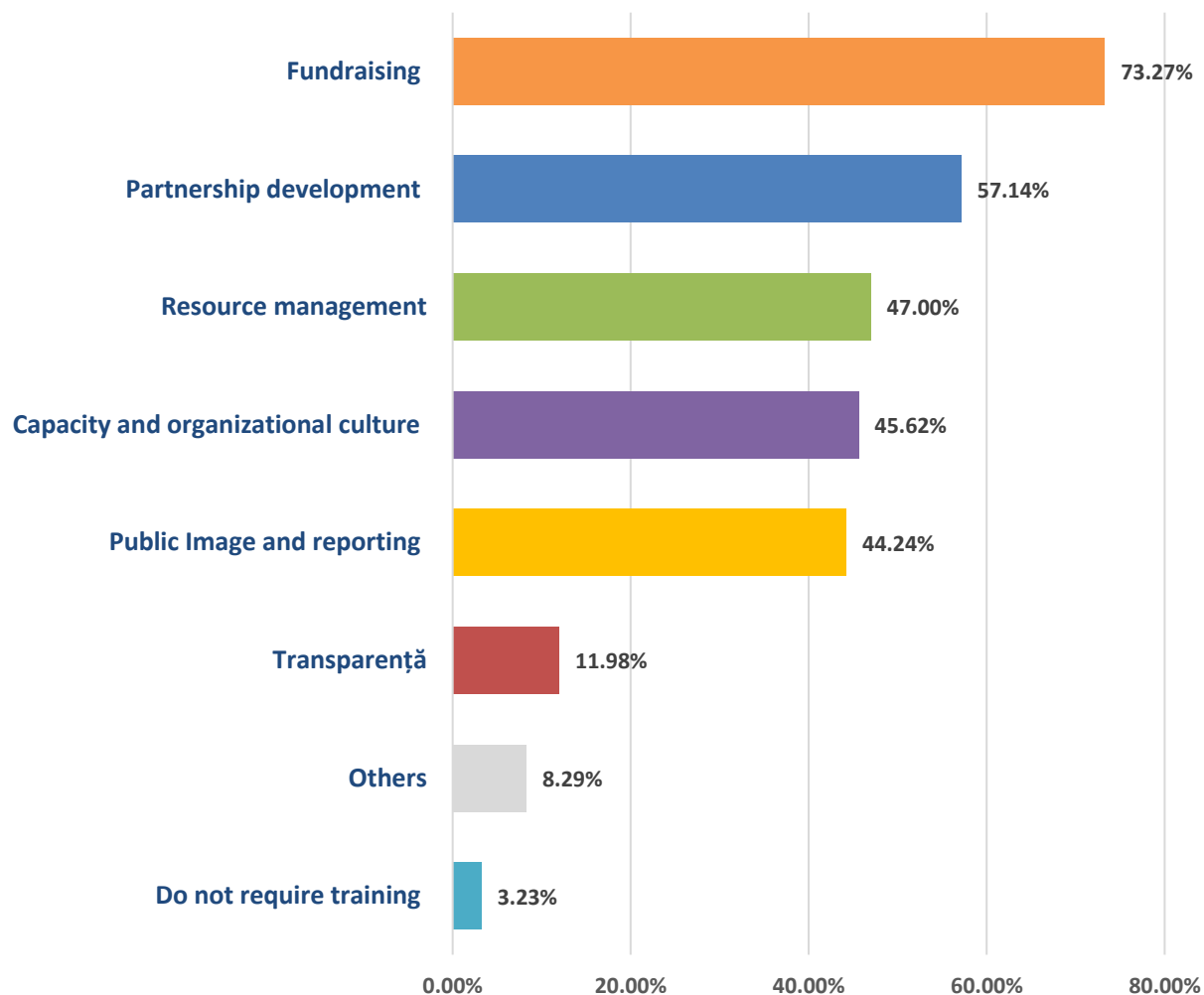


Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

³¹ Ashoka Romania, Asociatia Accept, Asociatia Astrico Nord-Est, Asociatia Centrul Step By Step Pentru Educatie Si Dezvoltare Profesionala, Asociatia Envision, Asociatia Freedom Smile, Asociatia GEYC, Asociatia Inima Copiilor, Asociatia Internationala pentru Drept, Cultura si Societate Internationala – LEGALITC, Asociatia MozaiQ LGBT, Asociatia OvidiuRo, Asociatia Pro Vobis - Centrul National de Resurse pentru Voluntariat, Asociatia Romana de Balneologie, Asociatia Unu Si Unu, Brigada de Comunicare Nonprofit, Centrul Român pentru Inovație în Dezvoltare Locală, Code for Romania. Digital Innovation Smart eHub, Federația Organizațiilor Neguvernamentale De Tineret din Iași – FONTIS, Federația Organizațiilor Neguvernamentale pentru Copil – FONPC, Fundatia Agentia de Dezvoltare Comunitara „Impreuna”, Fundatia Centrul de Resurse pentru Educatie si Formare Profesionala – CREFOP, Fundatia Comunitara Bacau, Fundatia Comunitara Brasov, Fundatia Comunitara Dambovita, Fundatia Comunitara Iași, Fundatia Comunitara Mures. Fundatia Comunitara Sibiu, Fundatia Comunitara Tara Fagarasului, Fundatia Noi Orizonturi, Fundatia PACT - Parteneriat pentru Actiune Comunitara si Transformare, Fundatia Romanian Angel Appeal, Fundatia SERA Romania, Fundatia WorldSkills Romania, Roma Economic Development Initiative (REDI), Smart City, Social Innovation Solutions

One of the biggest challenges for small and middle-sized CSO is to develop administrative know-how. This is especially important for newer generation CSO that started off as activist movements or informal groups and not as registered organizations. People involved in these groups tend to be more focused on the cause or issue at hand, rather than the every-day logistics of management. While 64 percent of CSO in the WB Survey believe they have a good capacity to monitor and report on their on-going projects, many do admit that additional training with regard to certain organizational skills would be welcomed. The vast majority of CSO would like to have dedicated training on how to fundraise (73%), and the second most sought after skill is developing national or international partnerships (57%). Other relevant capacity development programs would target the management of resources in the organization (47%), managing the organizational culture (45%) or the CSO public image (44%). Very few CSO believe they require training for improving their transparency (12%), and only a small part declared that they require no training at all (figure 24).

FIGURE 24. CSO TRAINING NEEDS



Source: 2020 WB CSO Survey

2.4. CSO Compensatory Function and Mutual Engagement

At the central level, the state tends to work with large, national CSO, as it looks for organizations with large capacity. Public officials explain what types of CSO resources are relevant in establishing a formal collaboration: physical infrastructure (e.g. beds, tents, drones for emergency situations), human resources (i.e. specialized volunteers) or know-how (e.g. tech solutions – Code for Romania, CivicNet/ CivicTech, Bucharest Robots). Tech know-how is not necessarily derived from the CSO sector in the case of disaster management, as the vast majority of solutions is developed through European funding by public institutions (without partnering with CSO). However, national NGOs with local branches (e.g. Habitat for Humanity) are highly relevant for their local action capacity. In general, the state is constrained by the lack of legal procedures (which can be translated into human and material resources dedicated to the relationship between the state and CSO), while the CSO are constrained by the lack of financial support or limited own resources.

More than three quarters of the CSO in our survey said they engaged in some sort of service delivery to beneficiaries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests a high agility on the part of the Romanian CSO, that were able to spontaneously step in and provide missing public services, even though for a quarter of them the number of employees or permanent collaborators decreased after the pandemic started in Romania. 60% of CSO did not lose any human resources, and 7% even registered increases of personnel.

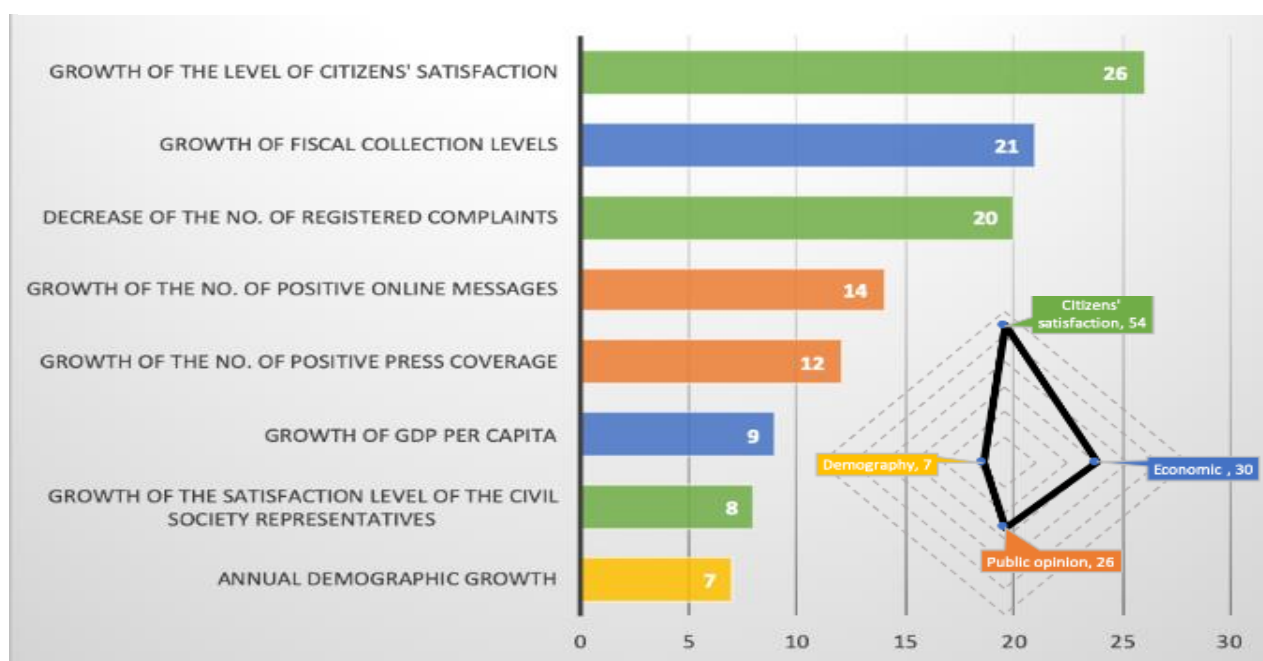
The Central Government has limited oversight capacity in promoting open government standards and goals at the local level. According to Law 52/2003 regarding transparency in the decision-making process of public administration LGs have various obligations with regards to public engagement (e.g. public consultations, publication of official information, appointment of a dedicated employee for the relationship with CSO, annual reports). However, there is no legal obligation at the moment to report such activities to the responsible central government body (i.e. General Secretary of the Government (GSG), impeding a proper monitoring of compliance and oversight. Consequently, the government has a poor understanding of the capacity of Romanian CSO and does not know what counterparts it has in many sectors and policy fields.

There is wide divergence between practices at the local level in terms of participatory governance. While some LGs act upon the input of citizens and CSO, and others take the views and ideas of citizens and CSO into consideration, there are those who still keep consultations to a minimum with merely formal compliance with national goals of transparency and citizen participation. For the more publicly engaged LGs, there are even internal key performance indicators (KPIs) that account for citizens' satisfaction and wellbeing (figure 25). Participatory governance is a key concept in the process of reshaping the relationship between local governments and citizens.

Some LGs in Romania are significantly more advanced than others in the way they interact with their constituents. For many LGs participatory budgeting was a result of CSO initiatives (e.g. Cluj-Napoca, Iași), and for others it came as a result of the political vision of the mayor (e.g. Alba Iulia, Oradea). However, for many LGs there is a question of organizational capacity in implementing

participatory budgeting, and in such cases, there is the option of technical assistance (e.g. POCA funding), or even private sector or CSO project management.

FIGURE 25. LOCAL GOVERNMENT KPIs

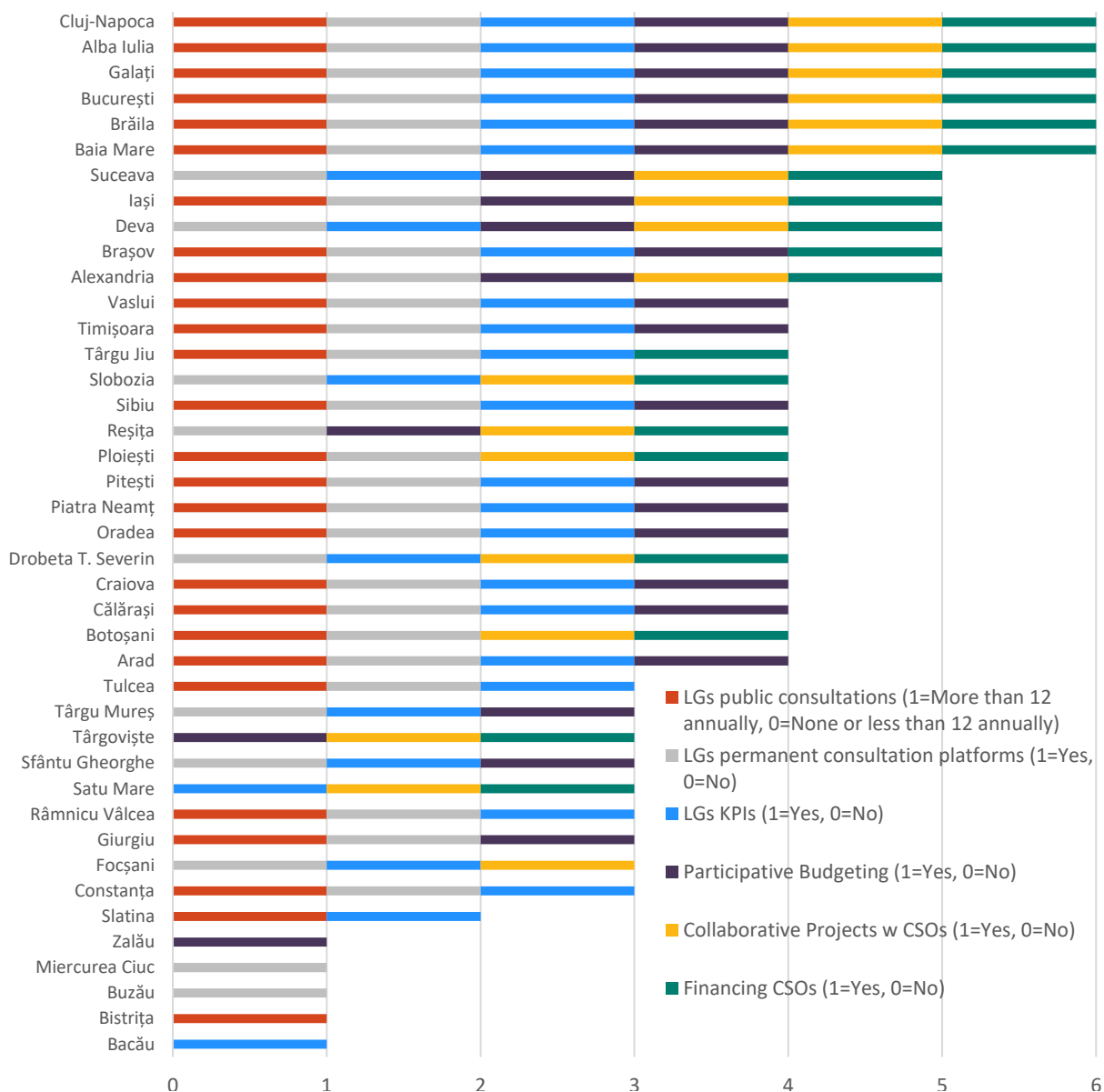


Source: WB Survey Data (Urban Policy)

There a wide variation of quality of the participatory governance process across LGs. Implementing citizens' suggestions is not only linked to the responsiveness of a LG, but also to formal constraints that an LG establishes for itself with respect to participatory governance. Local CSO highlighted in interviews the issue of superficial application of the participatory budgeting framework in many LGs that present such initiatives on their institutional websites. In other words, the majority of LGs limit themselves to merely informing citizens of the decided budgetary allocations, and they do not leave any actual decision-making power to the constituency. However, in contrast, there are notable examples of Local Council decisions on the obligation of the LG to pursue, fund and implement projects proposed by citizens themselves during the participatory budgeting process (i.e. Cluj-Napoca, Alba-Iulia, Sibiu, Braşov, see figure 26).

Successful engagement with civil society starts with changes in the organizational culture of LGs. The foundation of a meaningful collaboration with the civil society and the citizens is an institutional culture that values transparency, collaborations, willingness to find the best solution and to serve the public interest. Institutional capacity to engage is facilitated by such human resources elements as developing peer collaborations within national and transnational networks, peer-formation and know-how transfers, highly skilled civil servants, and enabled by political vision. Equally important is the level of social cohesion, activism and willingness to engage on the part of the civil society at the local level. The latter is, however, based on trust in the LG's good intentions and openness, and as such is built gradually and sustained through collaboration.

FIGURE 26. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

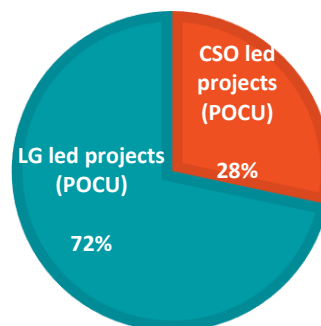


Sources: Implementation reports of Law 52/2003, Institutional Webpages, WB Survey (Urban Policy), WB Survey (CSO Capacity), POCU 2014-2020 data, TA OP 2014-2020 data

Collaborative projects between LGs and CSO managed to absorb a third of the total POCU funding for CSO.

It was however only 14% of total POCU allocations in Romanian regions. Partnerships between LGs and CSO were involved in 187 projects funded through POCU 2014 - 2020 at the regional level. Out of these, 53 were led by CSO and the remaining 134 by LGs (figure 27). Only 21 projects funded through POCU 2014 - 2020 involved a partnership between large municipal LGs and CSO. Out of these, only 3 were led

FIGURE 267. LEADERSHIP OF POCU FUNDED PROJECTS



Source: Ministry of EU funds (MFE) data on Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU), last updated May 2020

by CSO. Within POCU framework there seems to be an asymmetrical relationship between CSO and municipal LGs ([see Annex 8](#) for more details).

Technical Assistance becomes ever more important as European Funds absorption process becomes more complex in the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF). Within the Technical Assistance Operational Programme (TA) 2014-2020, 24 projects included a partnership between LGs and CSO. This is approximately 10% of the total number of projects implemented at LG level. Only 5 of these were implemented by municipalities (i.e. Brăila, Botoșani, Deva, Drobeta Turnu-Severin, and Ploiești). ([See Annex 8](#) for more details.)

Collaborative projects between LGs and CSO were also financed through EEA funding. Cluj-Napoca Municipality implemented four such projects, with a total value of almost half a million euro over the course of the past few years. The projects supported from the NGO Fund in Romania targeted amongst other things activities related to the candidacy of Cluj-Napoca as European Youth Capital and aimed at increasing citizens' participation (e.g. participatory budgeting for youth, volunteering academy).

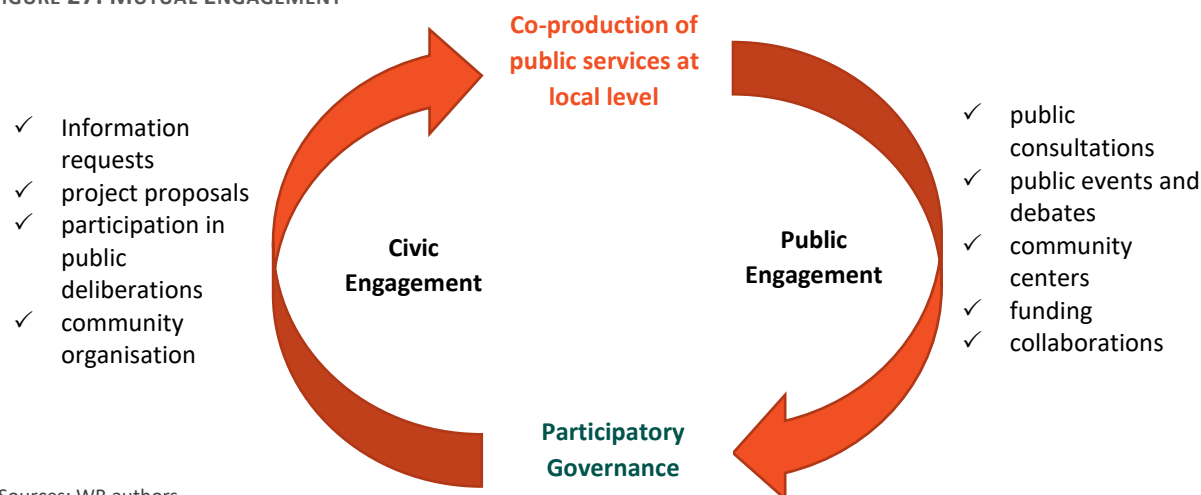
Useful as the existence of any form of public consultation might be, there is a wide variation in the quality of such interactions. The first step towards an open and accountable governance at the local level is transparency (e.g. public council meetings, public council decisions and deliberations, publication of various projects under consideration). However, in order to build a meaningful collaboration with civil society and citizens, LGs must take into consideration and implement citizens' suggestions and points of view. Taking into consideration the citizens' point of view is reflected in the extent to which LGs (1) include citizens' suggestions into their projects and regulations (e.g. participatory budgeting), and (2) build their performance review upon citizens' opinions, level of satisfaction etc.

LGs' engagement with society starts with changes in their organizational culture. The foundation of a meaningful collaboration with the civil society and the citizens is an institutional culture that values transparency, collaborations, willingness to find the best solution and to serve the public interest. Institutional capacity to engage is facilitated by such human resources elements as developing peer collaborations within national and transnational networks, peer-formation and know-how transfers, highly skilled civil servants, and, finally, political vision. Equally important is the level of social cohesion, activism and willingness to engage on the part of the civil society at the local level. The latter is, however, based on trust in the LG's good intentions and openness, and as such is achieved through iterative interactions.

There is a virtuous circle of public policies at the local level in support of the civil society and the level of engagement on the part of local communities. Public engagement can manifest itself through such actions as funding CSO or community-led projects, engaging in collaborative projects with CSO or informal groups, organizing public consultations, events and debates, building or financing community centers, etc. Civic engagement towards the public sector can manifest through project proposals, participation in public deliberations, community organization, etc. The more active CSO and the citizens are, the more likely the LG will benefit from inputs of ideas and knowledge that will help it develop its activities and implement new projects. And the more supportive an LG is towards its constituency, the more likely it is that the community will develop higher trust in the public sector and the more likely it is to collaborate with the LG. This trust can

nurture the dedication and involvement of citizens in solving local issues and meeting local needs, making the co-production of public services possible (figure 28).

FIGURE 27. MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT



Sources: WB authors

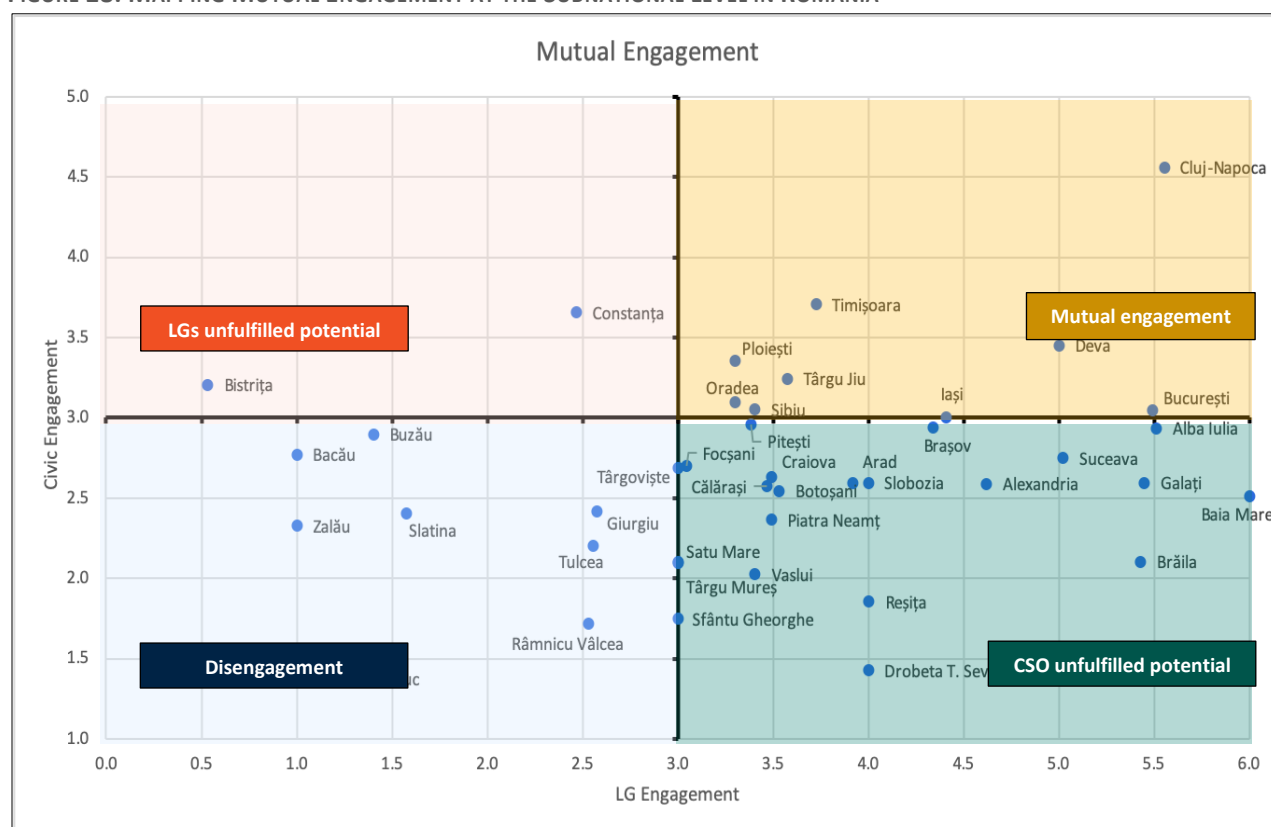
The political environment has sometimes constrained the collaborative relationship between the state and civil society at the national level. Central government officials claim there has been a reticence amongst CSO to collaborate with the state in recent years, especially in the field of good governances, where many CSO have campaigned against governmental measures. There is, for example, a limited engagement of the civil society within the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Also, government officials point to the fact that the OGP has no monetary incentive for collaboration, and many CSO in Romania tend to focus on projects and collaborations that have a funding option.

Nevertheless, a group of municipalities in Romania achieved high levels of civic and public engagement (i.e. Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Oradea, Iași and Bucharest). Shown in Figure 29 and Figure 31, these cities enjoy both the engagement of the LGs with citizens and civil society, and the engagement of the local community with public affairs. This type of mutual engagement leads to a fruitful collaboration between public representatives at the local level and the beneficiary community. Such an active interaction is usually achieved through multiple iterations and built on mutual trust.

Most main municipalities in Romania belong to the category of unfulfilled potential on the part of the civil society (i.e. LGs public engagement is higher than that of the civil society). In such cases as Alba-Iulia, Baia Mare, or Reșița, LGs have achieved good scores in terms of public engagement, but metrics of societal engagement lag. It is unclear yet whether lower levels of engagement on the part of the CSO active at local level in these municipalities is due to lack of trust, lack of expertise or both. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the citizens' relatively weaker engagement is translated into a weaker engagement on the part of local CSO. In contrast, Constanta and Bistrița are two municipalities where there is unfulfilled potential on the part of LGs public engagement (i.e. citizens' engagement scores higher than that of the LGs). In the fourth quadrant, there is a set of municipalities in which neither the LG, nor the

citizens have earned high scores of engagement. For the municipalities with lower scores it is advisable to engage in more public consultations and more collaborative projects with CSO.

FIGURE 28. MAPPING MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL IN ROMANIA



Sources Implementation reports of Law 52/2003, Institutional Webpages, WB Survey (Urban Policy), WB Survey (CSO Capacity), POCU 2014-2020 data, TA OP 2014-2020 data

A mutual engagement relationship is built and consolidated over time, and citizens and LG representatives need time to find their own ways to collaborate. LGs sometimes learn from each

Snapshot: Benchmarking Good Practices for LGs

Participatory budgeting was developed in Cluj-Napoca at the initiative of the local civil society and perfected through technical assistance programme with the World Bank and collaborative projects with CSO financed through EEA funding. Cluj-Napoca set the national benchmark for participatory budgeting, as it has an institutionalized consultation system and active platforms such as the Centre for Innovation and Civic Imagination.

Ștefan Teișanu who is director of the local organization Centrul Cultural Clujean, that acts as a local CSO platform, has initiated the idea of a knowledge-sharing event with representatives from other municipalities in Romania. With the World Bank Romania as a knowledge partner, the event that took place in Cluj in June 2013, benefited from the participation of various local and international experts.

Representatives from Cluj LG presented their participatory budgeting initiative, representatives from Oradea LG presented their façade rehabilitation programme and representatives from Sibiu LG presented their Street Art festival. Subsequently, Sibiu LG and Oradea LG implemented participatory budgeting in their municipalities, Cluj, Constanta and Brasov LGs introduced façade rehabilitation programs, and Cluj and Bacau LGs developed their own street art projects.

other new ways to engage and empower their citizens. A notable example is that of participatory budgeting that was scaled from the benchmark example of Cluj-Napoca to other municipalities through a process of experience sharing (see Snapshot: Benchmarking Good Practices for LGs). For some LGs the public engagement is driven by the vision of the mayor (e.g. Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Suceava, Reșița). For others it is driven by the Local Council (e.g. Sibiu). Others still, have developed a public engagement through the involvement in various European funded projects that required the input of local communities (e.g. Craiova).

LGs are required by law to appoint a person in charge of the relationship with civil society, according to Law 52/2003 regarding transparency in the decision-making process of public administration. While the law states that this person will be “in charge of receiving all proposals, suggestions and opinions of interested parties regarding a proposed normative act” (Art. 7(7)), it is, however, unclear how this information has to be managed and taken into account within the decision-making body. Similarly, LGs are required through the Open Governance Partnership (OGP) to publish information regarding their public consultations, but they are not required to send this information to the oversight body (i.e. General Secretariat of the Government GSG). Consequently, it is seldom the case that CSO have an active relationship with their designated counterpart at LG level.

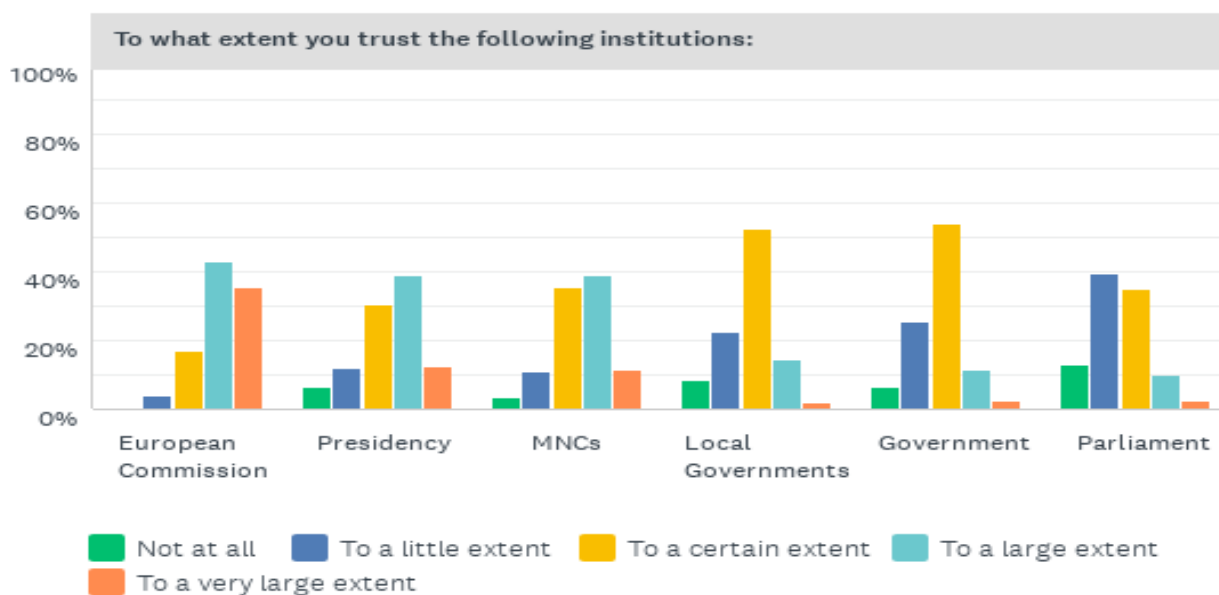
LGs do not have a clear image of the local civil society ecosystem. Older CSO usually have a personal relationship with local politicians and can have a more constructive dialogue with them. Newer activist groups, however, rarely engage with LGs due to either a low level of trust in the institution, or poor knowledge of how to formally pursue an advocacy agenda (for petitions platform organizations such as Civic Labs assist local groups with this procedural know-how, but there are other skill gaps). A better mapping of both formal and informal organizations active at the local level can help further the cooperation between LGs and civil society. In the case of Cluj-Napoca, collaborative projects around the European Youth Capital candidacy of the city (two of which were funded with EEA grants) helped LG representatives understand better the morphology of local stakeholders (e.g. informal groups can have a valuable input on specific issues, young people prefer ad-hoc consultations rather than formalized process, consultative events are more successful when conducted within the community).

Citizens, on their part, sometimes fail to grasp how LGs function, and this also undermines constructive dialogue with local authorities. In fact, the World Bank Survey of LGs revealed that in many cases citizens’ initiatives and proposals lack a legislative support for implementation, or do not have a clear argumentation. LGs also signal citizens’ disinterest and lack of trust as impediments for constructive collaborations with CSO.

The level of trust accorded by surveyed Romanian CSO to local governments in the 2020 survey indicates that the engagement at the local level is key to a better engagement between the citizens and the state. Local governments receive a higher confidence score from CSO than the central government, with 70% of CSO respondents in the World Bank survey having some confidence in LGs, as opposed to only 60% having any confidence in the central government (figure 30). At the same time a comprehensive 2015 survey on NGOs that were active at the local level in Romania, found that a third of NGOs had no collaboration with LGs at all; out of those that did have a collaboration with LGs, 27% considered it a good collaboration, 32.5% satisfactory and only

10% considered it to be effective. Furthermore, those CSO that mention EU, EEA-Norwegian and Swiss-funded projects as one of their top income sources tended to negatively evaluate the quality

FIGURE 29. CSO TRUST TOWARDS INSTITUTIONS

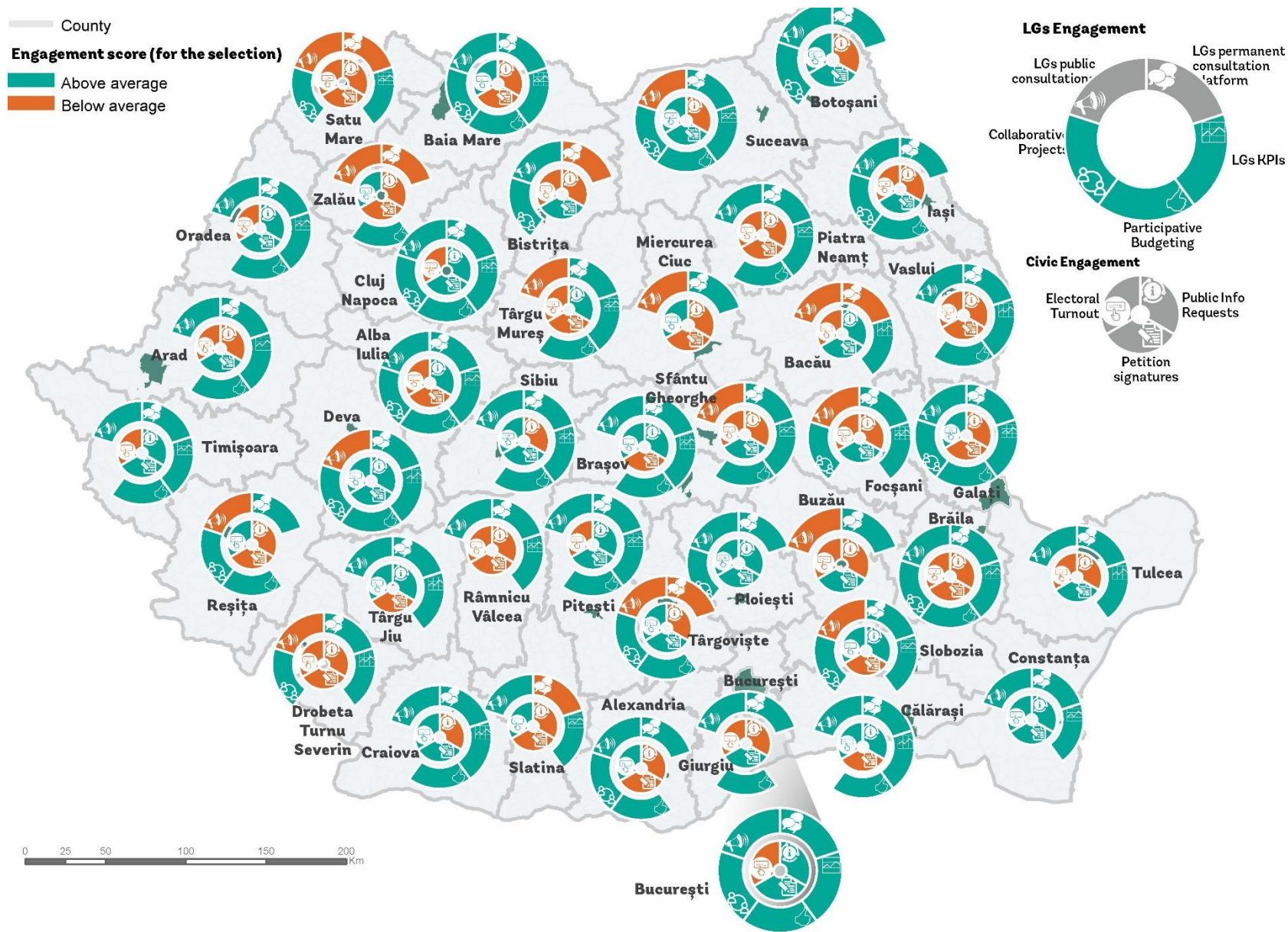


Sources: 2020 WB CSO Survey

of their cooperation with the public administration. Whether such attitudes will hold in the aftermath of the increased collaboration between CSO and LGs in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, remains to be seen.

Surveyed during the pandemic, LGs' representatives point to these potential avenues of improving mutual engagement: better digital communication (e.g. online platforms that show in a transparent, accessible and systematic manner the activities of LGs), the development of formal mechanisms of collaboration with CSO representatives on the monitoring and evaluation of public projects, online platform for registration of local CSO interested in cooperating in certain fields with the LG, nominating representatives from the community of local CSO so that there is greater unity of proposals and vision, open dialogue on issues of interest to find common solutions, increasing the funding provided by LGs to CSO, clearer legal provisions on how CSO can be contracted to provide certain public services (especially in the case of social services).

FIGURE 30. MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT



2.5. CSO Involvement and Cooperation in the COVID-19 Response

The course of COVID-19 pandemic in Romania was shaped by the following local factors: a poorly funded healthcare system, a massive wave of returning migrants, high poverty levels and subnational disparities and risks associated with the labour mobility of seasonal workers (see [Annex 2](#)).

1. Healthcare System

- According to figures published by the EU and summarized recently by The Economist, Romania has the poorest healthcare system in the EU, plagued by corruption, a massive exodus of medical staff, lack of proper infrastructure and medical supplies. During COVID-19 pandemic, first line healthcare workers were severely lacking personal protective equipment (PPE): masks, gloves, gowns, and hospitals had a low testing capacity, as well as insufficient beds in intensive care units (ICU).

2. Return of the diaspora

- Since the outbreak of the pandemic in Romania, at least 250,000 Romanians working in Italy, Spain and other pandemic red-zone countries have returned to the country. Lockdown in Western countries has left many of the returning citizens without jobs and in need to return home. According to the numbers published daily during March by the Romanian Border Police, a total of 1,117,200 individuals, both nationals and foreigners, entered the country. However, it is difficult to obtain an exact number of how many of them were returning Romanians, since lack of proper disaggregated data makes it difficult to analyze these numbers.

3. Poverty Rate

- The severe material deprivation rate, is three times higher in Romania than the EU average. Although poverty has gradually declined, it is significantly above regional peers and expected to increase during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

4. Seasonal Workers

- The rate of daily or undocumented workers is high, and so is the proportion of people who cannot leave for seasonal agriculture or construction work in other European countries. These people, usually supporting extensive families, are not included in any governmental support initiatives, since the most dominant form of support offered by the Government since the outbreak of the pandemic has been technical unemployment. The World Bank Household Pulse phone survey reveals that those with working family members are more likely to receive support, and so are better-off and urban households, compared to rural ones (a reason behind this finding is that in rural areas, people are more involved in self-employed work and, therefore, do not qualify for receiving technical/normal unemployment benefits; similarly, in better-off families, there is a higher propensity to having registered working members). Only 14% of the households participating in the survey reported receiving COVID-19 related support.

5. Economic Development

- According to Eurostat, in the first quarter of 2020, the Romanian economy registered an increase of 2,7 percent as compared to the same period of the previous year and 0,3 percent to the previous quarter. However, COVID-19 has triggered the deepest global recession since World War II, and Romania's economy is expected to contract in 2020 by 5.7% in the baseline scenario and 8.6% in the downward scenario, as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis (WB Global Economic Prospects report, June 2020).

Existing and new CSO coalitions, included informal ones, mounted a response to COVID-19 crisis. Typically, before COVID-19, several “umbrella” organizations (Associations/ Federations) formed in order to support NGOs working in a particular field or sharing common interests and practices, such as *Federația Volum* (the network of NGOs working with volunteers), *FONSS* (the

network of organizations working in social services) or *Federația Fundațiilor Comunitare din Romania* (the network of community foundations – local grassroots private grant-givers). These are the established formal coalitions. During COVID-19 response, CSO formed new coalitions that allowed them to cover more ground, avoid overlaps, gather more funds and quickly share information and resources. Other relevant civil society actors in the COVID-19 crisis include: informal initiative groups of professionals/ volunteers/ businesses (in any given combination), spontaneously yet purposefully formed to collaborate and address various needs, and various individuals who were not formerly affiliated with an NGO/informal group and who responded to calls for help or acted on their own.

Before COVID-19, most of CSO that got involved did not share common interests or beneficiaries. The magnitude of the anticipated crisis and depletion of resources within the medical system and, more generally, the state's insufficient protective and intervention mechanisms, united them. Some coalitions (or working groups) included NGOs and corporate donors only, others included NGOs and medical staff working in COVID-19 designated hospitals, or NGOs and local authorities (county councils, municipalities, hospital managers). Together they formed a complex web of support networks.

The partnership between the Government and the Red Cross predated the pandemic. By law, the Red Cross can solicit and receive support from public authorities during a major crisis. During the pandemic, the Red Cross, the Government and the Department for Emergency Situations signed a formal partnership by which: (1) the Government empowered the Red Cross to coordinate and receive donations nationally and (2) the Red Cross ran a publicly funded national information and awareness COVID-19 campaign.³²

The majority of other partnerships formed during the COVID-19 crisis in Romania were rarely formalized and were based on unplanned cooperation among a range of stakeholders - from representatives of CSO, large private donors, coalitions, informal groups, to local administration and hospital representatives. Crisis response partnerships included cooperation between unlikely partners such as competing music festivals organizers and the local administration in Cluj-Napoca and, and such unprecedented guerrilla interventions as CSO directly supporting medical staff responding to local needs on the ground).

COVID-19 had a particularly strong impact on vulnerable communities in Romania. Although in 2019 Romania saw a 4.1 percent GDP growth, in March 2020 the situation abruptly changed:

“In light of the COVID-19 crisis, poverty is projected to rise in 2020. While the incomes of the poorest will continue to be supported by existing social assistance programs, 15 percent of working adults are at risk of poverty and would be financially vulnerable from stepping away from economic activity. Regional disparities are among the highest in the EU and deepening. Poverty rates in rural areas remain 4 times higher than those in the cities in 2017 and over twice as high as those seen in towns and suburbs. Vulnerable groups, including the Roma, continue to be exposed to both monetary poverty and social exclusion. Romania ranks in the top five of the EU in terms of disposable income inequality. While fiscal policy aims to reduce inequality, the results are less positive when it comes to poverty. Responsive social protection would be needed to

³² <https://crucearosie.ro/stiri-si-comunicate/covid19-campanie-nationala-de-informare-si-constientizare-a-populatiei/>

support these, and the broader segment of workers not covered by protective leave policies or affected by labour market slowdowns".³³

The negative impact on the labour market added to the state's pre-COVID-19 systemic shortfalls in offering protection and poverty alleviation to all the vulnerable communities (see Snapshot box). As such, the situation put an additional strain on organizations and volunteers working with: children at risk of poverty and social exclusion (4 in 10 children in Romania are poor, the highest EU rate); at-risk and severely materially-deprived old people (their numbers are almost double of the EU average); over 900,000 Romanians living in extreme poverty in marginalized areas.³⁴

Snapshot: Labour Market Impact

As Romania entered lockdown in mid-March, immediate effects on the employment market were:

1. Moving people to work from home and away from shopping centers, restaurants and other public places resulting in more than 1 million people in unemployment (400 000 unemployed and 600 000 in technical unemployment), meaning roughly 20 - 25 percent of the documented workforce being out of work, according to official statistics released by the Ministry of Labour in April 2020.
2. Many more undocumented workers lost their daily or sporadic incomes (either the so-called black market - day workers in construction, cleaning, etc. - or people subsisting on petty cash from occasional small jobs, stealing or prostitution).
3. Almost 250,000 Romanians working in Italy (50,000), Spain and other pandemic red-zone countries returned to the country during March (according to the official declaration of Bogdan Despesu, Secretary of State, Ministry of Internal Affairs on May 1, 2020). There is yet no official number released by the Romanian authorities for March – May, but unofficial estimates go as high as 800,000 people, as the constant significant increase in the activity at Western borders shows.
4. Thousands of undocumented Romanian workers doing seasonal agricultural jobs abroad, living overwhelmingly in Romania's poorest areas, were prevented from leaving the country – although by beginning of April 2020, the Romanian Government allowed several foreign companies and businesses to fly out people to work the fields.

CSO and informal groups intervened to support these vulnerable communities – which in many cases were past and present beneficiaries of CSO programs. These people were initially not infected but were at high risk of infection, complications or spreading the virus in their communities, because they were living in improper conditions (housing, sanitation, nutrition) or had lost their income or were old. Their experience of the pandemic was aggravated by other social risks occurring when vulnerable people enter an extreme vulnerability stage (e.g. risks of vandalism or extreme violence). Identified categories of vulnerable people receiving humanitarian aid during the lockdown:

- mothers living with their children and extended families in extreme poverty
- people without shelter, some with pre-existing life-threatening medical conditions or dependencies
- Roma, especially those in marginalized communities

³³ Poverty & Equity Brief Europe and Central Asia, World Bank, April 2020

³⁴ sources: EUROSTAT, WB – Country Partnership Framework for Romania May 2018

- people who entered lockdown with small incomes or in debt
- unregistered workers who had lost their income, and would soon run out of savings, and at risk of resorting to vandalism in order to provide for the basic needs of their families
- elderly people in nursing homes or living alone or in remote areas
- victims of domestic violence living in shelters
- children from poor families who used to receive a hot meal, educational support and occasional donations from NGOs managing day centers

Snapshot: Corporate Initiatives for Vulnerable Communities

In March 2020, the retailer Kaufland directed close to EUR 500,000 towards NGOs supporting vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 crisis. 14 projects are currently being financed.

In April 2020, ING Bank initiated the Emergency Fund for Vulnerable Communities. More than EUR 175,000 were offered in the community, partly from the corporate budget and partly from small donations made by its clients in the online banking application. 46 organizations were supported to develop activities in 27 counties for almost 10,000 people.

During the crisis, Lidl donated 4 tons of products to the Food Bank national network, plus 2,500 food packages for Easter (an additional 19 tons of food). Food Bank representatives declared donations increased, as “restaurants, hotels, factories and warehouses had to reduce their activity or even close down, so they donated their stocks of food for April”. The Food Bank supports 33,000 vulnerable people monthly.

One of the most vulnerable groups impacted by COVID-19 is the marginalized Roma who are already at risk of poverty.³⁵ Severe material deprivation is widespread and about a third of Roma live in households that experience hunger. In the wake of the pandemic and during the lockdown, poverty, loss of jobs or permission to perform the job, lack of access to information and services (including health), returning home from working abroad and racism, were additional threats to the Roma communities.

Media reported several cases of Roma citizens being beaten up by police during the lockdown, such as in Bolitin. Also, the entire city of Țândărei was placed in lockdown due to a spike in the number of infected people especially among the Roma minority, as 800 people returning from abroad did not respect the isolation and quarantine measures. This piece of news spread a wave of racism through mainstream media and social media, including from influential politicians, fueling accusations that Roma are the main source of infections and threat in Romania. In Țândărei, local authorities were soon unable to provide for the residents’ basic needs and, following the Mayor’s desperate call for help, in mid-April, NGOs arrived with an emergency transport of food and other basic supplies.

³⁵ World Bank - Country Partnership Framework for Romania May 2018.

In March 2020, a meeting of the World Bank with the Roma Sounding Board (RSB)³⁶ and several other local CSO identified the following main needs and challenges:

- **access to information** about COVID-19, lockdown measures and how to stay safe - either lack of information, wrong information or information that people who cannot read would not understand;
- **need to address communities' immediate needs** such as access to food, water and hygiene products – the lockdown would severely affect both the income and quality of life in large marginalized communities where it was already difficult to provide for families before the pandemic. Moreover, lack of access to sanitation would make all protective measures (like hand washing) impossible to follow, creating a fertile ground for an outbreak. One such example is Mureș, the county with the largest Roma communities in the country, where access to water is scarce. People have to carry water for 2–3 km with the wagon and, in some cases, the Mayor closed the water supply, so up to 2,000 people remained without water.
- **need to address the immediate economic hardships** due to loss of jobs and income and in absence of social safety nets.
- strong plea to find **ways to address perceived increasing levels of racism** and to reduce the risk of inter-ethnic conflicts.
- **education:** in absence of needed infrastructure for online classes, Roma children will be left behind in the most vulnerable communities. The closing of schools also leaves them without food in some cases.

In parallel to this report, the World Bank has developed an extensive analysis on early signs of the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable communities, with a special focus on the Roma population. The report looks at the adaption strategies, access to services and support, as well as the mood and social cohesion of the population. The findings of the first draft of the report support the idea that, while a symmetric crisis in its origin, the pandemic is having asymmetric effects across the country, affecting vulnerable populations more. More specifically, these communities were disproportionately affected by lack of access to basic health and hygiene services, drinking water, access to medical services, mainly for those with chronic diseases. Vulnerable communities more often fell victims of institutional abuses – such as fines and police violence – and experienced loss of trust in institutions. Moreover, individual mood deteriorated, and social cohesion declined, as communities associated the lockdown period with “sadness”, “confusion”, “fury” and “pessimism”.

The analysis of the CSO involvement in the COVID-19 crisis response in Romania can be summarized in the following key points:

³⁶ RSB is a representative group of civil society organizations with specific expertise in the area of social and economic inclusion of the Roma formed in 2017 at the initiative of the World Bank

Key Point 1: When directly affected by a crisis, many people and organizations took action. Civil society response is, therefore, Romania's important resource in an emergency.

With the exception of organizations specialized in disaster management, such as the Red Cross, the involvement of most CSO was prompted by fear of the uncontrolled consequences of the pandemic and a personal or organizational sense of responsibility. As Romania was about two weeks behind countries like Italy and Spain in the outbreak, the entire population, including CSO and companies, could contemplate a possible impact on Romania. With the medical system ranked among the weakest in terms of quality in Europe, Romania had a large vulnerability in fighting a crisis for which stronger systems had turned out to be unprepared. Massive CSO involvement came as an attempt to mitigate the effect of the outbreak on beneficiaries, stakeholders and local communities.

For CSO that had worked in the health sector before the pandemic, the involvement came naturally. That was the case for Dăruiește Viață Association³⁷ who set up the Elias 1 Modular Hospital to ensure treatment conditions for patients with COVID -19 , as well as for Dăruiește Aripă Association or the Vodafone Foundation, which had contributed to the renovation and modernization of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the County Hospital of Constanța. Participation of other CSO actors was driven by the fear of the impact of the outbreak and by the sense of their normal work losing relevance in the face of the rapid spread of the virus threatening lives and communities. Thus, many CSO representatives who had no prior experience in the health sector also described their decision to get involved in the pandemic response as “natural”, in the sense that it was the most meaningful way for them to use their resources and capacity.

Key Point 2: Centralized collection and sharing of information with CSO is a must for optimal use of resources in a fast-changing situation.

Communities that prioritized the sharing of information among all entities proved to be the most effective in tackling the crisis: they avoided duplicate spending, delays and resource waste. However, much good work has been also done through personal connections without having the bigger picture, by responding to local needs on the ground.

Interviews show how many Romanian CSO sought to support the health system without clearly understanding its needs. Wherever local authorities were more willing to collaborate with CSO, for instance, in Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu county, Alba-Iulia and Oradea, results were better. The Counsellor to the President of the Sibiu County Council mentions that information on purchases was shared between the County Hospital, the Sibiu Community Foundation and the informal coalition “One Community, One Hospital”, to avoid duplicating the efforts. Conversely, the Ministry of Health reported hospital needs without taking into consideration purchases done locally or by civic initiatives, which caused resources to flow in directions that had already been covered.

Key point 3: An existing level of trust and track record of successful cooperation between entities were pre-conditions of success between the public and non-profit sectors during the

³⁷ Dăruiește Viață Association is a CSO that is building the first pediatric oncology hospital in Bucharest at Marie Curie Hospital - the initiative called #NoiFacemUnSpital

crisis. Therefore, cultivating collaboration will not only improve local government, but also positively impact possible future emergency responses.

Beyond money raised and medical supplies purchased, successful cooperation of the public and non-profit sectors required high levels of trust and mutual understanding. Previous experiences of cooperation paved the way for quick, open communication.

The Communications and CSR Director of Lidl Romania, one of the largest private donors in the COVID-19 crisis, A single Cluj, an informal coalition that helped local administration undertake medical procurement, and the Romanian Red Cross, all mentioned in interviews how previously established relations made crisis cooperation faster. Where good relations existed, many decisions were taken quickly manner, without following usual procedures. Donors directly approached the beneficiaries they had previously worked with and trusted and obtained a fair idea of the medical needs. Local hospitals shared their shortages more willingly when approached by informal coalitions with well-known local members were backed by public administration, while the Red Cross benefitted from a good cooperation with the Romanian government, based on previous collaborations and protocols.

Key point 4: The public procurement system and legislation designed to prevent fraud and cover risks made purchasing emergency supplies harder for the state than for private entities, and likely need to be complemented by special emergency provisions.

During the first weeks of the crisis, most of the COVID-19-related medical supplies were purchased by NGOs. This system for procurement designed to prevent fraud could not support quick purchases in emergency.

Insights on this came from the founder of a “A single Cluj-Napoca” coalition, who described how the coalition was able to purchase medical equipment at better conditions than a hospital in Romania. The current procurement limitations imposed on public Romanian medical institutions usually compelled them to use costly brokers to cover all risks, while procurement departments proved unable to work under emergency conditions, sometimes competing against each other in the free market.

Key point 5: Informal networks work where systems fail. These networks have channeled communication and cooperation where formal channels failed or did not exist.

When failing to connect to the official authorities, CSO found shortcuts to connect to the grassroots needs of the medical system. This didn’t give them the big picture of the needs in the system but helped to close critical gaps. When central authorities were not available, local ones were pursued; where this failed, hospital management was reached; and where this too didn’t work, individual doctors and nurses provided information on the support needed and served as liaisons in the distribution channel.

Some CSO like Dăruiește Viața tried early on to contact the Government, the Ministry of Health, embassies, sending memos and proposing courses for action. When few replies came back, they immediately started searching for medical supplies which were mostly needed. Other CSO, like ARC, stayed mostly in touch with doctors, as many situations arose in which hospital managers were keeping the equipment locked and only distributed limited supplies. Often times, supplies

were delivered directly to doctors who, in turn, would gather their colleagues and redistribute them, bypassing the registration in the hospital stocks system.

Key point 6: CSO involved medical experts to ensure procurement of relevant supplies and prevent waste

CSO recognized their lack of medical expertise and involved doctors and medical experts in the purchasing process. This happened both when the CSO was endorsed by an authority, and when it worked to supply grassroots needs. As a result, very little was wasted on unsuitable products, unlike some cases of centralized governmental purchases in other countries.

Representatives of ARC Romania recount that they had a network of doctors of different specializations, with whom they validated, first, the products to be purchased, and then the willingness of hospitals to use them.

Key point 7: The experience of COVID-19 crisis can and should be used to better prepare for the next emergency

With no planning, little or no medical expertise and little time to build a strategy, CSO played their part in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. Many of the lessons learnt in the two months of intense activity can be incorporated into a preparedness plan for the next disaster to hit Romanian communities, be it the second wave of the pandemic or a major earthquake. As this experience shows, good planning is only possible if all parties that could be involved meet, share information and start working together.

Representatives of Alba Iulia Town Hall, Sibiu County Council and The Romanian Federation of Community Foundations recognize the importance of sitting together and making plans on how to face future crises, so as to include a more structured collaboration between the public entities and the civil society. A framework of public policy for emergency situations can be prepared based on this experience, with a common understanding of the limitations each entity has but also of how best to compensate them by working together.

Key point 8: CSO collaboration during the pandemic has given many Romanian CSO an experience of peer collaboration and may have whetted their appetite for more and deeper cooperation after the crisis.

CSO work associatively by definition. However, the history of real, long-time cooperation is limited in Romania – competition for resources, a lack of cooperation culture and a lack of investment have made organizations to adopt rather individualistic approaches. During the COVID-19 crisis, CSO worked together by necessity – when coordinating resources, determining priorities, scouting for suppliers or responding to community needs. They also united in one voice to respond to claims that the civil society impact was limited and feeble. As a result, partnerships came out of the crisis stronger and more experienced, and organizations began to understand the very practical need for a deeper cooperation.

While it is understandable that each organisation is aiming to maximize their impact, when crises arise, in order to have a rapid impact and be taken into consideration, they need to have a strong and common voice. And this can only be accomplished by maximizing alliances.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Given the evolution of CSO in Romania across different sectors, and over time, there is an obvious need for a differentiated approach to CSO depending on their nature and mission:

CSO with compensatory functions (social services, education, sports, etc.) and trust-based relationship with public authorities should be encouraged to collaborate with LGs through dedicated funding for service provision, collaborative platforms and events for the exchange of knowledge and expertise. The networking capital – good communication and easy mutual access between CSO and LG representatives - is essential for the development of compensatory CSO.

CSO that perform contentious monitoring of the public sector (i.e. watchdog functions in the overlapping fields of good governance, environmental protection, civic tech, public awareness and information etc.) should be supported to grow through peer-based collaborative platforms both nationally and transnationally. Their networking capital is mostly derived from the ecosystem of other CSO, private sector and international donors (e.g. the European Commission).

Given that European funding is one of the major sources of revenue for CSO in Romania, the new MFF and the national operational programs should allow for an increased support for civil society organizations. This is especially important in terms of facilitating the collaborative relationship between local or central authorities and CSO. Funding incentives, can help develop longer-term relationships, facilitating mutual trust, networking capital and ultimately a higher potential impact for both CSO and public authorities.

The administrative burden should be reduced for both national and European funding. The most effective CSO in terms of community outreach tend to be organizations that are issue-driven rather than interest-driven.³⁸ With large numbers of volunteers, but few dedicated personnel, partnerships between LGs and CSO should take into account the differences in the organizational culture of the entities, and should allow for targeted, agile action on the part of CSO. Furthermore, dedicated funding for the consolidation of administrative and logistical functions of local CSO should be provided in a platform-based format that would encourage peer-to-peer transfers of knowledge and ideas, as well as interaction with public sector representatives (e.g. shared training programs).

LGs should engage in a local mapping of CSO in their community and draw up a special statute of interaction with CSO in collaborative projects. European funding should also aim to increase local ties and mutual engagement at the local level.

One of the foundations of CSO capacity is the engagement of civil society with public administration issues, and the engagement of the state with citizens and CSO. However, Romanian actors experience limitations on both sides: CSO are constrained in the scope and quality of their engagement by the lack of financial support or limited own resources, and the state is constrained by the lack of legal provisions for participatory engagement at the local level. Any actions towards strengthening the dialogue between CSO and local officials will help increase the capacity of local CSO and their relevance to the local community.

³⁸ Volintiru and Buzasu 2020

It has become clear that CSO can play an essential role in emergency preparation and response, be they the next wave of the pandemic, or a major earthquake. Communities have proved their effectiveness as the first line of defense against threats. Donors can immediately and effectively get involved through CSO that have the flexibility, the public trust, and now also the proven expertise, to support local and central governments in mitigating the impact of a crisis.

However, in order to be effective in a crisis, they need the experience of routine cooperation with the local and central government. Government should engage CSO in understanding of risk, risk reduction, preparedness and risk communication. This means working together on projects and having a continuous dialogue. Cooperation will help all parties to develop trust and understand each other's assets and limitations.

Clear, transparent communication of the needs in the community is a must for cooperation. Only the government can create the bigger picture, and without it, resources of time and money may be wasted, and lives may be put at risk.

Transparency may also imply changes of public policy, such as including civil society in disaster preparedness plans, and changes in the procurement procedures in case of emergency – such as centralized procurement, ability to import directly from other countries, leaner and faster emergency procedures.

In order to be effective, CSO need to be properly funded and staffed. As they navigate the next year, each organization will need to consider better plans for sustainability, including transparently communicating the need for administrative budget and the critical need for currently non-existent reserve funding. The state can play a role in making CSO more sustainable by supporting the development of reserve and endowment funds, as seen in other European countries, such as the UK or the Czech Republic.

At the same time, CSO need to practice cooperation and partnership during good times – including working together for deeper impact and advocating for public policy changes or state transparency and support. Be it in the form of formal or informal coalitions, CSO need to invest in developing peer cooperation.

4. METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

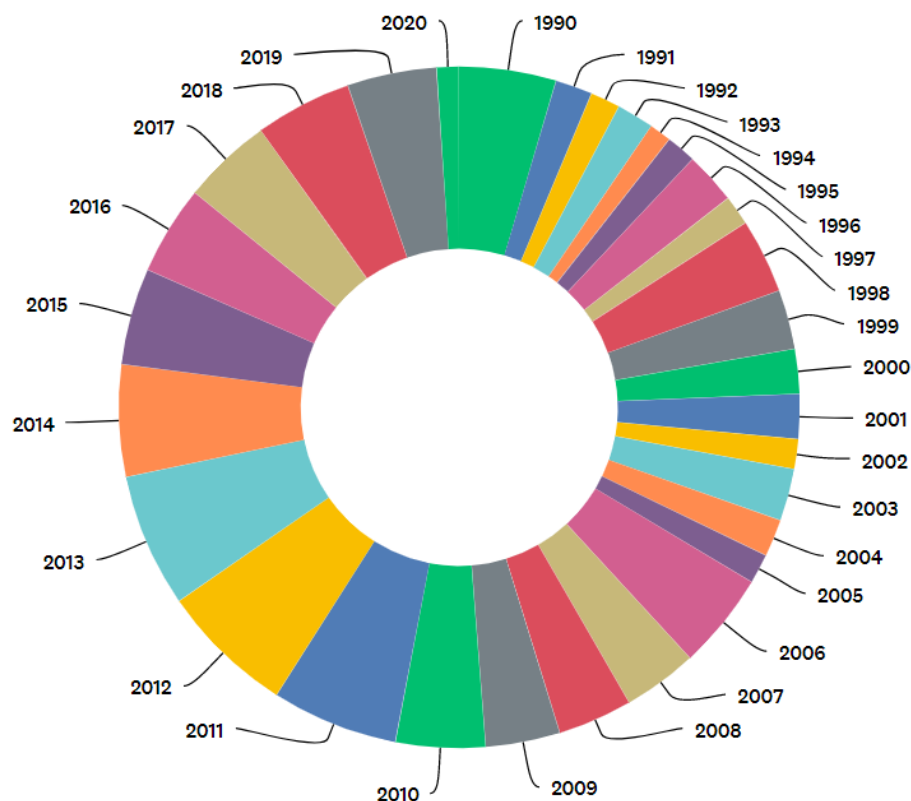
Data Analysis Methodology

This report used both quantitative and qualitative data inputs. A desk research consisted of an extensive overview of existing studies, descriptive statistics from official databases that were available to public when this assessment took place (e.g. European funding database for Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) contracted funding and Technical Assistance Operational Programme (POCA), Ministry of European Funds, Registry of CSO, EEA grants, INSSE employment statistics). Then, in-depth interviews with representatives of the public sector (central and local government), donors and CSO – both larger platform or umbrella organizations, and smaller, local CSO – were conducted.

Original metrics were developed based on primary data, in the form of a composite index to measure mutual engagement between civil society organizations and local governments. This composite metric is based on two separate measurements: one for the local level of civic engagement, and the other for the level of public engagement on the part of local governments. To evaluate civic engagement at subnational level the following elements were measured: (1) local electoral turnouts, (2) local support for petitions—measured as number of signatures gathered at municipal level for the most popular online petitions, and (3) the extent of civic monitoring of LGs—measured as number of L544 public information requests. To measure LG engagement the following elements were evaluated: (1) open government represented by the number of public consultations, (2) LGs' usage of permanent consultation platforms, (3) whether self-evaluation of LGs included parameters of citizens' satisfaction, and (4) LGs' usage of participatory budgeting mechanisms. Additionally, the number and value of collaborative projects between local governments and CSO was used as another indicator of public engagement, based on data on European and EEA funding for projects in which LGs from main municipalities partnered up with CSO.

A CSO capacity assessment survey was conducted in May 2020 and June 2020 through multiple channels (e.g. mail, social media) and with recourse to snowballing technique, respondents being asked to forward the survey to relevant organizations and individuals they know. A particular attention in the distribution process was given to the way we reach different categories or networks of CSO in Romania, and as such, we contacted as many representative „nodes” as possible. The response rate was of 46%, with a total of 286 responses. We believe the sample to be representative in terms of organizational age (figure 31), sector of activity, geographical coverage, size etc. The survey of LGs (both city halls and local councils) was carried out via email. Having contacted all 83 LGs, we received 32 responses, of which 18 were from county level institutions, and 10 were from municipal level institutions.

FIGURE 31. THE YEAR THE CSO WAS FOUNDED



CSO involvement in the COVID-19 response in Romania was assessed through in-depth interviews with representatives of CSO, corporate donors, local authorities, public institutions and informal initiatives actively involved in the COVID-19 response; 20 interviews were conducted during April-May 2020.³⁹ A process-tracing analysis was conducted to illustrate the interplay between these sectors and the way CSO impacted society. For the purpose of this assessment, the term CSO is used to describe non-governmental organizations (NGOs - foundations, associations), individual citizens and or informal coalitions.

Additional data sources included centralized published reports on donors, donations and processes of collaboration, by: Asociația pentru Relații Comunitare (ARC), Asociația Magic, The Romanian Red Cross, eMAG, donații.ro, RUF, RoHelp, Un Singur Cluj-Napoca, BIZ Magazine, Bucharest Community Foundation, as well as corporate donors press releases or public statements. Data related to the amount of funds raised, number and type of procurement, quantity and value of in-kind donations, number of donors (companies and individuals), number of hospitals, units and medical staff, and vulnerable people supported has been collected from February 26, 2020 up until May 31, 2020.⁴⁰

³⁹ Interviewees are listed in Annex 1

⁴⁰ 26 February 2020 is the date of the first officially confirmed COVID-19 case in Romania

Limitations of the analysis

Limitations of the CSO mapping are related to the quality and availability of public data. The NGO Registry has ambiguous, erroneous and outdated entries. Additionally, its information is incomplete by design, as the relevant financial information on CSO is only available in a separate database of the National Fiscal Agency (ANAF), that is not publicly available. Furthermore, other sources of funding for CSO in Romania (e.g. European funds, EEA funds, Private Donations) are not centrally registered or made available publicly. The difficulties of data collecting, the overall lack of transparency, and the poor availability of data limit the depth and precision of any mapping exercise.

Limitations of the Data Collected Related to COVID 19 Context

1. The centralized reports released by the NGOs might be subject to future corrections.
2. There is no centralized report of all the funds raised and all the equipment donated.
3. Some figures overlap, for example: a company which donated money might be included in two or more reports. Wherever possible and where the figures were clear and could be compared, we eliminated such overlaps.
4. In-kind donations were difficult to quantify; some donors reported their monetary value, others the number of meals/ products/ ventilators/ masks donated. Unless the data showed similar in-kind donations from several different companies that could be added up (e.g.: number of masks, number of tests, number of meals), the assessment simply lists different forms of in-kind help.
5. Public authorities have not released any lists of the overall needs of the medical system, nor of the total number and value of medical procurement over the researched period.
6. There is no centralized data regarding the needs and public finances spent for the needs of the people placed in quarantine or used to help vulnerable communities during the lockdown.
7. The assumption is that there are still unreported/ undocumented donations, initiatives or volunteering and that it may take several months to compute them.

The results of this rapid assessment were limited by the data collected and the timing of the research. This rapid assessment was conducted between May and June 2020, when Romania transitioned from the lockdown during the State of Emergency to the relaxation of emergency measures under the State of Alert that led to an increase of the number of COVID 19 cases, and continuation of CSO engagement in the pandemic response. As a result, data presented and analyzed are not final and may not be accurately aggregated. The value of the present analysis is, therefore, less in the data set it has created and analyzed than in showcasing the scale and structure of CSO interventions.

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6. ANNEXES

Annex 1. List of Interviewees

1. **Andreea Moldovan** – Medical Director, Infectious Diseases Hospital, Braşov
 2. **Angela Galeta** - Executive Director, Vodafone Foundation
 3. **Bogdan Ivănel** - Co-Founder and CEO, Code for Romania
 4. **Camelia Proca** – Counsellor of the County President, Sibiu County Council
 5. **Ciprian Necula** – Coordinator Aresel Platform, Bucharest
 6. **Ciprian Păiuş** - President, Federation of Community Foundations from Romania
 7. **Codruţa Nedelcu** - President, Arin Association, Brăila
 8. **Cristian Hordilă** - Director Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF), Founder of Un singur Cluj
 9. **Cristina Hanganu** – Communication and CSR Director, Lidl Romania
 10. **Dana Pîrţoc** - CEO, Association for Community Relations (ARC)
 11. **Daniel Modoacă** - Emergency Interventions Director, Red Cross Romania
 12. **Diana Chiriacescu** – Executive Director, Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services (FONSS)
 13. **Elena Calistru** – President, Funky Citizens, Bucharest
 14. **George Manea** – Adviser to the Secretary of State, Department of Emergency Situations
 15. **Ionuţ Sibian** – Executive Director, Foundation for the Development of Civil Society (FDSC)
 16. **Laszlo Hadnagy** – Doctor, Member in the Administrative Board, Odorheiu-Secuiesc Town Hospital
 17. **Madalina Mitroi** – Director, General Secretariat of the Government
 18. **Marian Rădună** - Founder Cumpărături la uşa ta, Vice-President Geeks for Democracy Community
 19. **Mihaela Nabar** – President of the Board, VOLUM Federation
 20. **Mihai Jurca** – Executive Director, APTOR Oradea
 21. **Oana Gheorghiu** – CO-Founder, Asociaţia Dăruieşte viaţă
 22. **Ovidiu Cîmpean** – Director, Cluj-Napoca City Hall
 23. **Robert Roman** – Representative of the Alba Iulia Town Hall
 24. **Roxana Pencea Brădăţan** – Campaigns Coordinator, Declic Community
 25. **Roxana Vitan** - CEO, Romanian - American Foundation
 26. **Ştefania Andersen** – Operations Director, Foundation for the Development of Civil Society (FDSC)
 27. **Vlad Voiculescu** – Founder, Asociaţia Magic
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Annex 2. COVID -19 Global and Romanian Context

Global context

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most significant crises faced by humankind since World War II. As of May 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported a total number of 5,819,962 confirmed infections with COVID-19, alongside 362,786 confirmed deaths in 216 countries and territories around the globe.

The first mentions of the symptoms specific to the COVID-19 infection appeared on December 31, 2019 in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China. In a matter of weeks, the new virus spread rapidly around the world, reaching Europe at the end of January, when the first three cases of infection with COVID-19 virus were reported in France, in individuals who had recently been to Wuhan. By March 17, all European countries had reported at least one COVID-19 confirmed case and Europe started being considered by the WHO the epicentre for the COVID-19 pandemic, overpassing China in the number of confirmed cases of infection.

As the virus spread across Europe, most EU countries adopted a tactic of limiting the propagation of the virus and keeping their medical systems from crashing, while attempting to mitigate the economic crisis it entailed. This translated as: coordinated temporary restriction on non-essential travel, closure of educational institutions, closure of shops, restaurants, hotels and non-essential businesses, lockdown measures for the entire population and complete quarantine in cities deemed to be a hotspot for the COVID-19 virus.

Among the hardest-hit countries in Europe by the COVID-19 virus, Italy soon led the numbers in terms of casualties and confirmed cases of infection with the virus, offering a glimpse at the gravity of the disease and lessons to other European countries. As of May 28, 2020, approximately 33,000 deaths caused by the COVID-19 were reported by the Italian authorities, with almost half of them in Lombardy, a region that is home to only one-sixth of Italy's population.

Many of the lost jobs were in sectors such as the service industry (hotels, restaurants, shops), construction work, agriculture and heavy industry, leaving many Romanians, who were engaged in these activities, without means for survival. Cases of undocumented workers were also reported to the Romanian Embassy in Italy, showing the added vulnerability of many Romanians in face of the virus. In these conditions, the western borders of Romania saw an increased number of returned Romanians from March onward, adding to the specific context of COVID-19 in Romania.

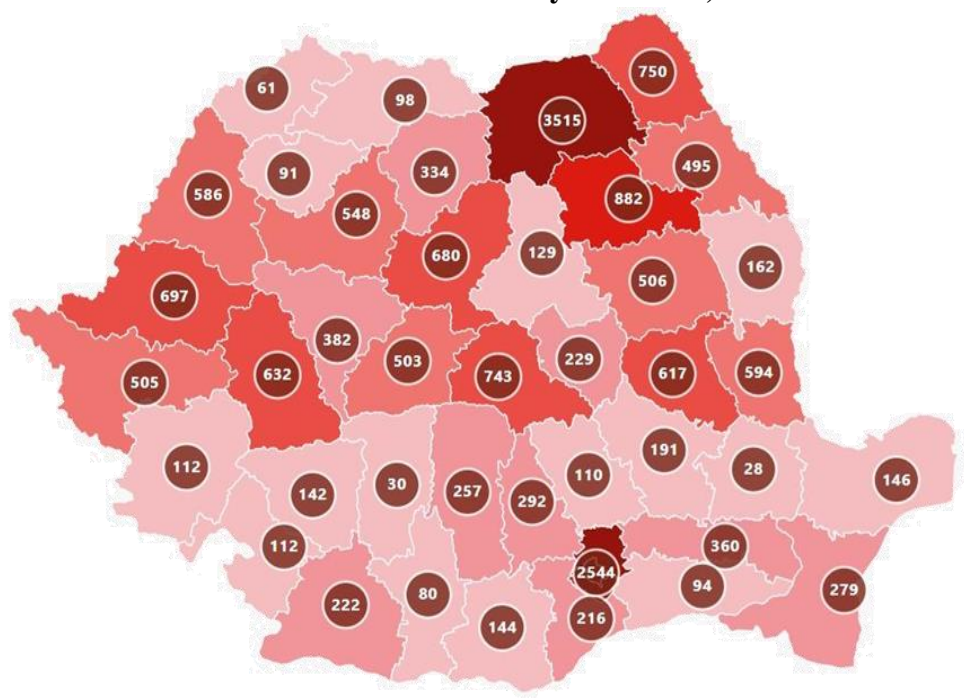
Romanian context

As of May 31, 2020, Romania has officially confirmed 19,257 COVID-19 cases and 1,266 deaths. Alarmed by the situation in Italy and Spain, two countries with which Romania has a strong connection through its significant diaspora (OECD numbers indicate more than 1,6 million Romanians in these two countries in 2016), the Government implemented swift lockdown measures with which the general population complied. Together, these insured a relatively moderate spread of the virus, according to the numbers officially released. However, there is an open public debate about Romania's testing capacity and strategy, with a large part of the population still not having been tested for the COVID-19 virus. By April 29, only 421,451 tests had been carried out in Romania, a country of 19 million people, with some tests being performed more than once to the same individual.

The first case of COVID-19 on the territory of Romania was reported on February 26, 2020, a 25-year-old man from Gorj county. The official reports indicated a slow spread of the virus in the first week, so that by March 6, in Romania were officially registered 7 cases of COVID-19 and no fatalities. However, numbers raised faster and measures taken by authorities followed swiftly: flights to and from Italy were canceled on March 9, educational institutions (kindergartens, schools and high schools) were closed starting March 10 and on March 16 the state of emergency and lockdown measures were instituted for 30 days, being later prolonged with an extra 30 days.

The epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in Romania was in the north part of the country, in Suceava. On March 25, at least 70 doctors and nurses from Suceava County Hospital were tested positive for COVID-19, forcing the hospital to shut down; as a result of this, almost one third of all reported cases in Romania are registered in Suceava. In second place comes Bucharest, the capital city, both in numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases and fatalities. A snapshot of the situation on June 1, 2020 can be seen in the maps below.

Number of confirmed COVID-19 cases/ county on June 1, 2020



Source: <https://coronavirus.casajurnalistului.ro/>

Number of fatalities/ county on June 1, 2020



Source: <https://coronavirus.casajurnalistului.ro/>

Annex 3. Case Studies on CSO Involvement in the COVID-19 Crisis in Romania



THE EMERGENCY FUND OF ARC

Since 2001, ARC supports and develops philanthropy in the Romanian society, offering an infrastructure and platform allowing people, informal leaders, companies and NGOs to meet, work together and produce a positive change in the society, in the long run.

During the pandemic, ARC coagulated an informal network of non-profit organisations, corporate and individual donors, volunteers, hospitals, doctors and nurses, and public authorities and institutions, aiming to provide swift relief to the state-owned medical system. It managed to mobilise massive resources and acted promptly, delivering the medical and protection equipment much needed, before the state mobilised its much heavier mechanisms of fighting the crisis.

In the beginning, ARC tapped into their network of donors, organisations and local authorities to identify urgent needs and ways to help. Apart from donors, the organization also on-boarded other CSOs to work together, so that needs, and donations would not overlap: the national network of 19 community foundations, Asociația Dăruiește Viață, Asociația Magic, Asociația Zi de Bine, Asociația Dăruiește Aripă, all reputable organisations with solid expertise in the healthcare sector.

Early into the process, an attempt was made to collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the Department of Emergency Situations. The organization found suppliers selling at a good price but only accepting large orders (for instance 200 ventilators at the time), an order that the NGOs could not support; hence, they passed the information to the Government. However, the envisaged partnership did not work, and they soon stopped referring offers to the Government.

Challenges faced included deciding where to donate the large and expensive medical equipment to ensure that it is used, with urgent requests coming from all over the country. Since unofficial reports from customs indicated 30,000 Romanian citizens returning daily via the Western borders, an intervention was supported in the customs of Nădlac and Timișoara, two major entry points. At the time, the regional Direction for Public Health had no testing capacity, which posed a massive health threat to the entire country. As of May 2020, the only testing capacity at the borders is the one donated by ARC, through the Emergency Fund.

ARC staff quickly learned new concepts, such as understanding technical medical specifications, medical acquisitions, due diligence for suppliers, international shipments and distribution. Companies helped with more than money – a large group of multinational companies decided to do pro-bono due diligence for suppliers with their own procurement teams, other companies donated cars for transport or free courier services for national distributions.

Towards the end of the crisis response, ARC also centralized information from more than 80 most active NGOs and made sure the impact of all efforts is transparently communicated towards the public opinion. This supported CSOs to increase their credibility within the general population – who could see a very direct impact of nonprofits in their own lives.

THE ROMANIAN RED CROSS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Since the beginning of the crisis, the Red Cross has been working in close cooperation with the Romanian national and local public authorities. Interventions included vulnerable categories such as children, the elderly, people in shelters, and support with PPE and medical equipment for the healthcare system. This collaboration is sanctioned by existing national and local collaboration protocols. Moreover, when a disaster strikes, by law, the Red Cross is empowered to take on the coordination of the national response and relief efforts. This was the basis of two actions taken by the Romanian Government, in partnership with the Department for Emergency Situations: designate the Red Cross as the national entity to coordinate and receive donations and finance the Red Cross to develop and implement a COVID-19 related information and awareness campaign.

As for the medical equipment and PPE materials, while the Red Cross was directly involved in looking for offers, prices and negotiations, the Ministry of Health offered support in checking and approving the technical specifications. During the pandemic, the Red Cross worked together with the Ministry of Health and DSU (The Department for Emergency Situations) receiving updated centralised information about where help was needed.

This cooperation was also mentioned by George Manea, Personal Adviser to the Secretary of State, Department for Emergency Situations, Ministry of Internal Affairs, who has been coordinating DSU's initiative to strengthen collaboration with the CSOs. Besides the Red Cross, DSU collaborated with Code4Romania for developing several digital solutions and platforms, CivicTech for the constant update of their disaster information and preparedness platform www.fiipregatit.ro¹, and Bucharest Robots. A psychological and social support Green Line was launched in partnership with the Pro Acta EDU Association. He states that the CSOs had a big impact during the pandemic and they mobilised in areas where their expertise and donations did make a difference, while for the needs and acquisitions for PPE and medical equipment, they could have benefited from more support and expertise from the public authorities.

Daniel Modoacă, Director of the Red Cross Emergency Department, explains the relationship between the Red Cross central departments and the local ones, reflecting on the fact that intervention have both a national dimension (by coordinating with the public authorities) and a local one (by learning the needs of the communities where Red Cross branches exist). While central headquarters disseminate information and coordinate at a national level, local branches can also act autonomously and develop their own campaigns and interventions, based on eye on the ground knowledge and collaboration with local authorities.

Such a case was the fundraising campaign in Suceava, the worst hit town in Romania, developed by Ștefan Mandachi, a local entrepreneur, to the benefit of the Suceava Red Cross local branch. He managed to raise EUR 1,000,000 million in 17 days, money donated directly to the Red Cross Suceava, for medical and protective equipment for medical units in the Suceava county¹.

DĂRUIEȘTE VIAȚĂ – BUILDING HOSPITALS OUT OF PRIVATE DONATIONS

The NGO was founded in 2012, with the mission “to reform the Romanian medical system, convince the authorities to respect the right to life and treatment, implement large-scale projects so that cancer patients receive proper treatment and support in Romania, and give support to patients to find the best possible treatments, in Romania or abroad”.

Oana Gheorghiu, one of the founders, recounts that the decision to get involved in fighting COVID-19 came in February, and it was taken based on what was happening in Italy and in-depth knowledge of the shortcomings of the Romanian medical system. The first step was to contact the Government, the Ministry of Health and embassies with proposed solutions for preparing for the anticipated crisis. After receiving only a few responses, the NGO quickly moved to acquisitions for essential equipment such as ventilators for ICUs. When the market was blocked as a result of high demand, they started buying PPE equipment for the medical staff.

The organization set up a fundraising campaign addressing both corporate and individual donors and coordinated with the Emergency Fund set up by ARC.

Based on their good relationships and trust with the medical community, Dăruiește viață managed to donate 17 tons of equipment to 180 hospitals nationally, collecting needs directly from medical staff (via an online platform) and distributing aid directly to them, most of the times by-passing the hospitals’ management.

Another area of intervention was to set up a mobile unit for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. If the number of infections would soar, as models predicted, without rigorous circuits, medical protocols and lack of protective and medical equipment, the system might get overcrowded and collapse. In the long run, after the pandemic, the mobile unit will be transformed into a permanent unit for treating patients with severe burns, a facility still lacking almost five years after the fire in Colectiv nightclub that killed 64 people. In this case, the NGO had a good collaboration with the manager of Elias Hospital in Bucharest, who agreed to have the mobile unit installed on the public hospital’s grounds.

The founder of Dăruiește Viața believes that there is a lot to be achieved in terms of collaboration between the private and the public sector. However, the profound mistrust between the two sectors, and the complete lack of transparency from the government, made impossible any real collaboration during the crisis. She believes that the COVID-19 crisis demonstrated that NGOs can become an impactful, trusted partner in the Romanian society.

INFORMAL GROUPS

There was massive civil mobilisation to help during the pandemic. Some people acted individually, some came together in informal groups, focusing on supporting the medical system or on helping the vulnerable communities.

Informal groups supported the medical system by producing locally protective equipment. One of the most visible initiatives was manufacturing and donating visor masks, face shields and protective suits for the medical system. **PlanB Project**, a team of 50 designer and maker volunteers, produced and donated +800 pieces of equipment to hospitals and health workers nationwide. The community of **Sibiu makers**, including engineers, IT specialists and 3D printing specialists, patented a respirator device eight times less expensive than the existing ones. **Viziere.ro** reports more than 250,000 visor masks donated to medical staff in more than 1,500 hospitals and institutions, with the help of 2,500 volunteers in 24, including one in the Republic of Moldova.

In addition to many products donated directly by retail companies to hospitals, several restaurants and **Romanian Chefs** whose businesses were shut down during the state of emergency, self-organised and started cooking and delivering free meals and coffees to hospitals. **Activ Social**, founded by Chef Adi Hădean, delivered 35,000 meals for the medical staff and vulnerable people just in the first month of activity. **Kane-New Romanian Cuisine**, delivered 36,300 meals, computing 60 tons of food products, in 50 days of volunteer activity.

Among the most vulnerable categories to the pandemic were the elders and people with chronic diseases. In order to contain the spread of the virus and keep them safe from the hospitals, they were strongly advised to stay at home or limit as much as possible their trips outside. Many of them had little or no help with purchasing basic necessities, so informal groups of volunteers swiftly appeared to assist them. It started with young people posting their phone number around the block, in case elderly or alone neighbours needed groceries and medicine. It grew into coordinated and well-managed networks of hundreds of volunteers, first in major cities such as Bucharest and Cluj and then rapidly spreading. Below there are two such initiatives that have in common the fact that they raised money from donations and helped other CSOs and humanitarian initiatives with their extended network of volunteers.

Cumpărături la Ușa Ta grew from taking shopping orders on their Facebook page, to a professional call centre and 900 volunteers. In 86 days, more than 2,000 beneficiaries were served, and more than EUR 20,000 were raised.

Another host of initiatives sought to bring relief especially during the lock-down included mental health volunteering. Some were addressed to the general population, some to the elderly, some to categories with pre-existing conditions and in need of constant monitoring and therapy, many to the medical staff and forefront fighters against the pandemic: **Dare2Care**, **Vă Vedem din Sibiu**, **Autism Voce Line**.

Annex 4. Overview of Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) by Development Region

NUTS II Region	Total POCU funding	Total POCU projects	POCU funding for CSO	POCU funding for CSO (percentage of Total POCU funding)	POCU projects with CSO beneficiaries	POCU projects with CSO lead beneficiaries	Total Funding for CSO as lead beneficiaries	Projects with NGOs lead beneficiaries percentage of Total Funding for CSO	Own contribution for projects with CSO lead beneficiaries	Funding with Impact at Municipal Level	Municipal impact projects as percentage of Total Funding with CSO as lead beneficiaries
SE	1,136,588,753	119	786,219,190	69.17%	81	55	580,814,963	73.87%	2,790,575	236,387,714	40.70%
SVO	1,076,611,328	111	687,049,017	63.82%	71	50	471,087,308	68.57%	3,276,987	187,358,613	39.77%
NV	1,115,289,296	122	662,177,638	59.37%	69	48	423,311,308	63.93%	2,140,087	224,753,384	53.09%
NE	871,138,238	114	639,841,160	73.45%	71	39	264,018,177	41.26%	1,385,418	133,960,387	50.74%
CENTRU	1,309,367,338	134	1,003,086,556	76.61%	95	54	549,963,015	54.83%	3,544,819	335,408,148	60.99%
SM	1,073,600,628	117	752,123,049	70.06%	77	46	438,155,701	58.26%	4,042,911	193,940,662	44.26%
Vest	665,534,240	95	430,530,902	64.69%	56	39	289,038,367	67.14%	1,898,007	154,864,873	53.58%
BI	7,348,590,860	83	308,852,812	4.20%	33	5	13,086,323	4.24%	0	13,086,323	100.00%
TOTAL	14,596,720,681	895	5,269,880,323	36.10%	553	336	3,029,475,161	57.49%	19,078,804	1,479,760,103	48.85%

*Funding=EF+NB

**all POCU funds excl. AP6

Source: own analysis based on Ministry of European Funds data

Annex 5. Overview of Collaborative Projects between LGs and CSO Funded from the Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) 2014 – 2019, by Development Region

Region	Total funding for LG - CSO projects	No of LG - CSO projects	Total funding for CSO projects	LG-CSO projects (% total CSO beneficiary projects)	Total POCU funding	LG-CSO projects (% of total POCU)
SM	146,542,966	11	752,123,049	19.48%	1,073,600,628	13.65%
Vest	149,084,165	17	430,530,902	34.63%	665,534,240	22.40%
BI	183,176,166	22	308,852,812	59.31%	7,348,590,860	2.49%
SE	176,092,596	14	786,219,190	22.40%	1,136,588,753	15.49%
SVO	91,144,796	9	687,049,017	13.27%	1,076,611,328	8.47%
NV	263,778,176	22	662,177,638	39.83%	1,115,289,296	23.65%
NE	231,554,487	18	639,841,160	36.19%	871,138,238	26.58%
Centru	461,369,129	34	1,003,086,556	45.99%	1,309,367,338	35.24%
Total	2,044,495,497	147	5,269,880,323	38.80%	14,596,720,681	14.01%

*Funding=EF+NB

**all POCU funds excl. AP6

Source: own analysis based on Ministry of European Funds data

Annex 6. Civic Engagement Metrics

MUNICIPALITY	Electoral Turnout (share)	Public Info Requests (weighted)	Petition Signatures (weighted)
Alba Iulia	0.37	10.07	1,802
Alexandria	0.44	8.94	1,308
Arad	0.36	4.60	1,856
Bacău	0.35	9.79	1,688
Baia Mare	0.39	8.23	1,410
Bistrița	0.36	19.63	1,400
Botoșani	0.40	3.53	1,799
Brăila	0.37	2.31	1,434
Brașov	0.37	8.51	1,923
București	0.33	10.86	1,962
Buzău	0.37	8.33	1,896
Călărași	0.42	9.07	1,335
Cluj-Napoca	0.37	30.01	2,154
Constanța	0.40	15.90	2,120
Craiova	0.39	7.27	1,628
Deva	0.43	17.01	1,718
Drobeta T. Severin	0.36	0.00	828
Focșani	0.38	7.25	1,735
Galați	0.45	6.43	1,497
Giurgiu	0.34	4.53	1,704
Iași	0.34	6.34	2,250
Miercurea Ciuc	0.40	2.86	465
Oradea	0.36	15.12	1,618
Piatra Neamț	0.35	5.60	1,540

Pitești	0.36	10.08	1,856
Ploiești	0.42	12.39	2,003
Râmnicu Vâlcea	0.30	5.07	919
Reșița	0.41	2.97	982
Satu Mare	0.35	5.67	1,218
Sfântu Gheorghe	0.35	11.42	349
Sibiu	0.41	7.97	2,019
Slatina	0.41	6.68	1,353
Slobozia	0.39	9.12	1,419
Suceava	0.38	0.68	2,297
Târgoviște	0.38	7.00	1,721
Târgu Jiu	0.51	18.91	1,132
Târgu Mureș	0.28	12.57	818
Timișoara	0.37	14.61	2,368
Tulcea	0.24	4.28	1,693
Vaslui	0.37	2.19	1,342
Zalău	0.38	8.62	1,186

Sources: AEP – latest local elections (2016), Law 544 institutional reports (latest available data), petitieonline – top 20 most popular petitions of all time with over 30,000 supporters.

Annex 7. Employment Distribution by Major Sector of Activity of CSO in Romania (2018)

Sport and leisure	112,076	69.57%
Education	17,905	11.11%
Social service	12,093	7.51%
Financial activities	5,120	3.18%
Agriculture	3,513	2.18%
Consultancy	3,330	2.07%
Health	2,409	1.50%
Culture and mass-media	2,313	1.44%

Source: INSSE data

Annex 8. LG – CSO Collaborative Projects with EU Funding (POCU and POCA)

Table 1. POCU Funded LG – CSO Partnerships at the Municipal Level

<i>Municipality</i>	Description	Value
<i>Alba Iulia</i>	3 projects involving several partners, regarding preventing school abandoning, improving access to education for vulnerable groups and increasing civic engagement at local level	45,935,378 RON
<i>Baia Mare</i>	3 projects involving several partners, including CSO. The projects targeted vulnerable groups or supporting entrepreneurship.	24,732,262 RON 22,796,652 RON 16,330,538 RON
<i>Botoșani</i>	A project involving several partners aimed at promoting social inclusion and forming an Action Group Local Development (LAG) and the elaboration of a Local Development Strategy.	221,426 RON
<i>Bucharest</i>	3 projects involving several partners, related to the implementation of the Local Development Mechanism Placed under Community Responsibility (DLRC), and assisting vulnerable groups.	222,182 RON 227,234 RON 221,988 RON
<i>Drobeta Turnu Severin</i>	A project involving several partners intended to develop a local development strategy in the Municipality of Dobeta Turnu Severin, through an integrative approach to the issue of poor communities in the area. whose intervention measures will fight poverty and social exclusion in marginalized communities (Roma and non-Roma).	221,062 RON
<i>Galați</i>	A project involving several partners to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in marginalized communities (Roma and non-Roma) from Galati.	222,548 RON

Reșița	A project involving several partners, related to the implementation of the Local Development Mechanism under Community Responsibility in marginalized urban areas of Resita Municipality.	224,158 RON
Satu Mare	A project involving several partners, related to the development of a set of innovative measures and tools related to the DLRC approach, which will optimize the involvement of community members in actions of public interest at the local level, in order to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 4 marginalized urban areas in Satu Mare Municipality.	226,042 RON
Slobozia	A project involving several partners to promote social inclusion, combat poverty and any form of discrimination in Slobozia by animating the community, creating a Local Action Group (LAG) and developing a Local Development Strategy.	221,773 RON
Suceava	A project involving several partners, related to the establishment of the Suceava LAG, the animation of the local actors and the elaboration of the Local Development Strategy that will create the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of measures (soft and hard) that would contribute to reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Suceava	221,367 RON

Source: MFE data on Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU), last updated May 2020

Table 2. TA Funded LG – CSO Partnerships at the Municipal Level

<i>Municipality</i>	Description	Value
<i>Brăila</i>	In partnership with the Bucharest based Partnet Association implemented a project aiming to develop quality management systems in the city hall of Brăila	423,926 RON
<i>Botoșani</i>	In partnership with the Bucharest based Asociația Română pentru Transparență implemented an anti-corruption project	414,468 RON
<i>Ploiești</i>	In partnership with the Bucharest based Partnet Association implemented a project aiming to develop quality management systems, and with the Bucharest based Terra Mileniului III association a project on ethics, transparency and integrity	424,723 RON 287,885 RON
<i>Deva</i>	In partnership with Craiova based Asociația Centrul pentru Dezvoltare Durabilă Columna implemented a project aiming to optimize the implementation of the National Strategy for the Consolidation of Public Administration	3,783,836 RON
<i>Drobeta Turnu Severin</i>	In partnership with the Craiova based Asociația Transparență pentru Integritate implemented a corruption prevention project	288,720 RON

Source: MFE data on Technical Assistance Operational Programme (POCA), last updated May 2020

Annex 9. Representative Bodies for CSO in Romania

Name of the Consultative Body	Description of Activity	No. of Civil Society Representatives	Appointment Procedure
Economic and Social Council (CES)	The Economic and Social Council (ESC) is an advisory body to Parliament and the Government of Romania, a public institution of national interest established for the purpose achieving the dialogue at national level between employers' organizations, trade unions and representatives of civil society in the associative sector. Economic and Social Council is consulted on the draft normative acts initiated by the Government or a legislative proposal of deputies or senators. The result of this consultation is materializing in opinions on draft normative acts.	15/45	Formally appointed by the Prime Minister, but frequently elected through consultative votes by CSO. The mandate is for 4 years.
Economic and Social European Committee (CESE)	The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is the European institutional forum for consultation, representation and information of civil society and where it can express points of view. The European Economic and Social Committee serves as an advisory body to the Council of the European Union, the Commission and European Parliament. This consultation is mandatory based on the provisions of the Treaties, but it is also used in the case of important political decisions.	5/15	Government appointment considering CSO proposals and gender balance. The mandate is for 5 years.
Superior Council of Magistracy	The Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) is a specialized institution, with the role of guarantor of independence of the judiciary, which proposes to the President of Romania the appointment of a judges and prosecutors and has a supervisory role over the smooth running of their professional activity.	2/19	Voted by the Senate based on candidacy according to the Law 317/2004 regarding the Superior Council of Magistracy. The mandate is for 6 years.
National Integrity Council	The National Integrity Council (CNI) is a representative body, under parliamentary control exercised by the Romanian Senate, with non-permanent activity. The main task of the Council is to ensure the proper functioning and integrity of the National Integrity Agency (ANI), coming up with proposals for the appointment and removal of the President and Vice-President of ANI, approving ANI regulations and internal acts and other management-related functions institution.	1	Voted by the Senate. The mandate is for 4 years.

National Council of Elderly Persons (CNPV)	Established under Law 16/2000, the National Council of the Elderly (CNPV) is a specialized advisory body of the Romanian state with the role of facilitating the social dialogue of the elderly with the state administration. In the plenary The Council is represented by the majority of non-governmental organizations for elderly people in Romania.	7/62	Each CSO that is part of the CNPV can nominate a member. The mandate is for 2 years.
Committee for the Partnership with Civil Society (CPPSC)	Established in 2020, the Civil Society Partnership Committee (CPPSC) is an advisory body under the coordination of the Ministry of European Funds with a consultative role in the elaboration and implementation of the operational programs related to the framework multiannual financial (MFF) 2021-2027. In addition to CPPSC, there should be consultative committees with CSO' representatives for each Operational Programme (i.e. Monitorization Committes).	48/53	CSO have been nominally designated and these will nominate their representatives.
National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN)	The Administration of the National Cultural Fund (AFCN) is an autonomous public institution, subordinated to the Ministry of Culture. The mission of the Cultural Fund Administration National (AFCN) is to finance projects that support contemporary Romanian creation and heritage enhancement, which contributes to a good understanding of artistic phenomena as well as the widest possible access to culture for the public.	7/11	Appointed by the Ministry of Culture, based on proposals forwarded by CSO in the culture sector. The mandate is for 2 years.
Environment Fund Administration (AFN)	The Administration of the Environmental Fund (AFM) is the main institution that provides financial support for the implementation of projects and programs for environmental protection. The administration of the Environmental Fund functions as a specialized body of central public administration, with legal personality, under the coordination of the Ministry Environment.	1	-
National Committee for the Coordination of the Implementation of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)	The General Secretariat of the Government (SGG) has among its structures the Governing Directorate for the Open Government and Relationship with Civil Society. Its role is not just to facilitate relationships with civil society but also to manage the activity of the National Coordination Committee of the implementation of the Partnership for Open Government in Romania (OGP).	7/14	-

Source: Civic Labs mapping

Annex 10: List of NGOs Included in the Report Published by the Association for Community Relations (ARC)

1. Asociația Act for tomorrow
 2. Asociația 13 Cu Atitudine
 3. Asociația Adventure Life
 4. Asociația Casa Share
 5. Asociația CERT-Transilvania
 6. Asociația Change for Change
 7. Asociația Copii pentru Viitor
 8. Asociația Dăruiește Aripă
 9. Asociația Divers
 10. Asociația E-civis
 11. Asociația Educalise
 12. Asociația Happy Minds prin depreHUB
 13. Asociația Hercules
 14. Asociația Inima Copiilor
 15. Asociația Maini Intinse
 16. Asociația Manute Pricepute
 17. Asociația Nord
 18. Asociația One Source Timișoara
 19. Asociația Platforma Reset
 20. Asociația Rotary Club Castrum Deva
 21. Asociația Transilvania pentru promovarea bolnavilor psihici
 22. Asociația TRIADA
 23. Asociația Umanitara "Dreptul la viața" Huedin
 24. Asociația Umanitara Sabina
 25. Asociația VERDE URBAN
 26. Asociația Zi de BINE
 27. Asociația "Maria Holtzhauser"
 28. Asociația "Salvează o inimă"
 29. Asociația Aradul Civic
 30. Asociația Declic
 31. Asociația Farmecul Vietii
 32. Asociația Județeană Babywearing Botoșani - Împreună pentru personalul medical din Botoșani
 33. Asociația Nike de dezvoltare și ajutorare
 34. Asociația pentru Relații Comunitare
 35. ASOCIAȚIA ROMÂNĂ A TINERILOR CU INIȚIATIVĂ
 36. Asociația SOLIDARIS
 37. Asociația Unda Verde
 38. Asociația Voci pentru Democrație și Justiție - VeDem Just
 39. Beard Brothers
 40. Cetatea Voluntarilor
-

41. Crucea Roșie
 42. Dăruiește Viață
 43. Fundația Comunitară Bacau
 44. Fundația Comunitară Banatul Montan
 45. Fundația Comunitară Brasov
 46. Fundația Comunitară București
 47. Fundația Comunitară Buzau
 48. Fundația Comunitară Cluj
 49. Fundația Comunitară Galati
 50. Fundația Comunitară Mures
 51. Fundația Comunitară Oradea
 52. Fundația Comunitară Prahova
 53. Fundația Comunitară Sibiu
 54. Fundația Comunitară Valcea
 55. Fundația Conservation Carpathia
 56. Fundația Light into Europe
 57. Fundația pentru Copii Ronald McDonald
 58. Fundația pentru Parteneria
 59. Fundația Terre des hommes
 60. Fundația UBB
 61. Fundația Comunitară Dâmbovița
 62. Fundația Comunitară din Odorheiu Secuiesc
 63. Fundația Comunitară Iași
 64. Fundația Comunitară Timișoara
 65. Fundația Comunitară Țara Făgărașului
 66. Funky Citizens
 67. Împreună Ajutăm Vatra Dornei
 68. JCI Târgu-Mureș
 69. MagiCAMP
 70. Mixideashub SRL
 71. Părinte Implicat-Grup de inițiativă
 72. Politehnica Timișoara
 73. Prețuiește Viața
 74. Salvați Copiii Romania
 75. Un Singur Cluj
 76. ViitorPlus - asociatia pentru dezvoltare durabila
 77. Vivid Neamț
- *4 NGOs chose to remain anonymous

Annex 11. List of Donor Companies Aggregated by BIZ Magazine.

Some of the sums donated in Romanian lei (RON) were converted to euro (EUR) for consistency (rate used was 1EUR = 4.8 RON)

COMPANY NAME	SUM DONATED (EUR)
HIDROELECTRICA	2,090,208
Romgaz	1,406,250
OMV Petrom	1,000,000
Philip Morris	1,000,000
Transilvania Bank	995,666
Holcim	541,666
Romanian Commercial Bank (BCR)	520,833
Novartin Group Romania	446,000
Raiffeisen Bank	437,500
BRD – Groupe Société Générale	416,666
Procter & Gamble Romania	312,500
Biofarm	250,000
Profi Romania	218,333
ING Bank Romania	330,00
Timișoreana	208,333
Transavia	208,333
Superbet	208,333.33
Mega Image	241,666
Metropolitan Life	208,333
Orange Romania and Orange Foundation	400,000.00
Johnson & Johnson Romania	135,416.67
Timiș Family	300,000
E.ON companies	20,833
Lactalis Group Romania	125,000
ENGIE Romania	250,000
Electrica Group	240,000
Globalworth Foundation	200,000
Carrefour Romania and Carrefour Foundation	200,000
Mastercard	204,166
CEZ Romania Group	158,156
NEPI Rockcastle	150,000
Iulius	150,000
Vodafone Foundation	150,000
UniCredit Bank	120,000

Global Records	125,000
Enel Romania	200,000
HeidelbergCement Romania	140,000
OTP Bank Romania	104,166
Provident	104,166
Baupartner Group	104,166
Meda și Vincon (Beciul Domnesc)	104,166
Deloitte Foundation	126,000
One United Properties	100,000
Sphera Franchise Group (KFC, PizzaHut)	100,000
Societe Generale European Business Services	100,000
Help Net Pharmacies	100,000
E-INFRA Group	104,166
Purcari Group	130,208
Coca-Cola Romania and Coca-Cola HBC Romania	100,000
Fortech	50,000
Băneasa Shopping City	50,000
certSIGN	50,000
Restart Energy	50,000
OMNIASIG Vienna Insurance Group	50,000
Cordia Romania	50,000
Continental Romania	40,000
TBI Bank	52,083
JYSK Romania	31,250
Xella Romania	41,666
Patria Bank	20,833
The Romanian Association of International Medicine Producers (ARPIM)	20,833
Hard Rock Cafe Bucharest	20,833
TeraPlast Group	17,708
Cotnari	10,416
Garanti BBVA Group	26,500
SmartBill	35,000
TopGel	15,000
Catena	100,000
BETANO.com	100,000
Alro	92,291
Electrica Furnizare	90,208
Tinmar Energy	100,000
Compania Atos	83,333
Iași Antibiotics	125,000

Castrol Romania	71,877
Heineken Romania	52,083
MetaMinds	41,666
DB Global Technology	88,000
Philips Foundation and Philips Romania	80,000.00
Smithfield Romania	58,333
EY Romania	70,000
Cognizant Softvision Romania	67,829
Genesis Property	31,250
Ronald McDonald Children's Foundation Romania	60,000
Declic Community	54,000
Amir Krenzia (Alka)	15,000
United Romanian Breweries Bereprod	10,000
Farmec	10,000
Social Innovation Solutions and Coca-Cola Romania	10,000
Avon	10,000
Libris.ro	5,562.50
Tempo Advertising	20,000
MetaMinds	41,666.67
Altex	162,000
Monsoon Trading	140,000
Danone Romania	50,000
Unilever	320,000.00