THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY BAROMETER IN ROMANIA, 2014-2015

Research Summary Report

- The most important results and their significance-

This publication has been produced by Pro Democrația Association (Bucharest, Romania) in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation (Bucharest office)

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Foreword

How much ground has Romania covered when it comes to its democratic consolidation? Detailed answers concerning this topic are provided by the empirical survey at hand, conducted by Pro Democratia Association (APD) in 2015-2016.

Undoubtedly, Romania has put in place the necessary and sufficient institutions of the modern democratic state. But what is the true situation with active democracy, and how much does democratic culture weight in the social and political life? How popular has the participative side of democracy become, and how much is it currently seen as a value *per ser* and a pillar of democracy the ultimate goal of which is to promote individual expression, and a genuine interest for politics and social integration?Have sound social rights and plugging-in the economic and social inequalities been strengthened as inherent democratic goals?

A political education linked to the current requirements and oriented towards target groups, as that delivered by Hanns Seidel Foundation in accordance to its mission to "serve democracy, peace and democracy" is, needs constant adjustment taking into account the dramatic political and social shifts that the society has seen over the past decades, for this democratic and civic education to be able to meet the new conditions.

This means monitoring the material developments of democracy under a specific base research, as well as a review thereof and an investigation of the impact on the population's attitude towards democracy.

For this reason, Hanns Seidel Foundation has been constantly advancing, in both Germany and its research activities abroad, performance of social empirical base social and scientific researches covering topics such as change and satisfaction driven from democracy and political participation, with the aim of feeding the results thereof in the education activity carried out by the Foundation.

A modern education, that is strongly anchored in reality, needs to master thorough knowledge of the new social trends and have such analyzed applying the methods of empirical social research for the purpose of learning the effects of these trends on democracy and considering them appropriately in the training delivered by the Foundation.

Particularly in times of prevailing political apathy and populist or fundamentalist movements, political education is indispensable for democracy and freedom. The foundation of a functional society is always a lightened individual. Therefore, Hanns Seidel Foundation has perfectly understood that its mission-driven offer should target empowering people to make more use of their own judgment and awakening people's desire to get involved in the social and political arena.

An important aspect in this respect is represented by reliable empirical data that captures the current trends and the problematic attitudes and situations. And this survey brings up a valuable contribution to this effort.



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The Local Democracy Barometer

(2014-2015)

Introduction

Reaching its second revised edition, the ***Local Democracy Barometer*** builds on the assumption that Romanian democracy is rather inconsistent, and varies from one locality to another. Some of these differences find explanations in the economic and social structuring that causes variations in the quality of democracy within the boundaries of a state, from one region to another, and from one locality to another.

A well-established democracy comes along with correlative fundamental rights and obligations, that both the citizens and the State feel obliged to abide by, and safeguard. But where the State's institutions are rather fragile, or have been built in the aftermath of collapsed authoritarian regimes, the critical stage of the State safeguarding the rights and freedoms becomes a challenge. The key elements of any democracy, such as elections, access to information of public interest, and efficiency of local public administration given the needs of citizens, should all be monitored, as democracy shortcomings come into shape at local level. Overlooking the local level is a mistake for democracy development. As a rule, comparative studies rely on reviews of large cities, or tend to take closer looks into democracy as appearing in the capital city, whereas the local level is captured only in case studies or overall surveys that aim to measure public participation.

The utility of the *Local Democracy Barometer*can be defined firstly by reference to citizens. Citizens are currently missing a tool they could use to assess and audit the community they belong to, and compare it against the performances of other counties. Under such circumstances, the Barometer provides contextualized information for each individual locality.

Who is the Local Democracy Barometer for?

- Citizens – they can compare the quality of local democracy with that in other localities and cast informed votes.

- Local authorities – they can take up good local governance and participative democracy advancement practices, where the Barometer indicates shortcomings.

- Journalists – they can identify documentation and investigation subjects.

- Academic environment – they can conduct comparative studies based on the raw data made available.

- Civil society – they can run sustained advocacy campaigns before the local authorities, relying on a set of indicators of documented evidence. Based on the empirical evidence produced, civil society organizations can initiate projects and civic actions to deal with the problems directly identified.

- Investors – they can obtain one more method to determine the risk of investing, and receive in-depth analyses for the relevant composite indicators.

Sampling

As many as 10 county capital cities, one from every historical region of Romania, were selected for this 2015-2016 edition. The diversity of the selected cases helps us understand phenomena which are not necessarily manifest in the statistical data. The Barometer makes use of primary data that is collected and statistically processed following an unique evaluation-based methodology, based on a theoretical model that assesses to what extent measurable ratios influence the overall quality of democracy by influencing the operationalized dimension. The five dimensions arranged and operationalized in the composite indicators measured through the locally collected data are: Political Participation, Administrative Efficiency and Usable Bureaucracy, Civic Culture, Freedom of Press, and Civil Society.

Research stages

1. The first stage consisted in reviewing the methodology followed in 2013 based on the limitations of the previous research and considering the social and political realities of 2014 and 2015. For instance, the *Political Participation* dimension was only evaluated for two election processes. Romania held European elections to nominate its elected representatives to the European Parliament in May 2014, and presidential elections in November, the same year. The two rounds of elections were included in the sample and evaluated following the methodology.

2. The second staged consisted in drawing up and submitting requests for information of public interest, pursuant to Law no. 544/2001, with the aim of collecting data from the public institutions included in the project. This stage extended over approximately 70 days, starting with October 2015. Comprehensibility of the primary information centralized in this stage was fundamentally conditional upon the speed at which the public institutions replied to such requests under Law no. 544/2001. As compared to 2013, when the project team was forced to resubmit the requests twice, on average, and call the institutions of the local public administration by phone, we could see better enforcement of the law. On the other hand, 6 of the responses received were incomplete and caused resubmissions of the requests. Thus, the data collection time doubled, from 20 days to 40 days, on average. One particular case concerned the Prefect's Office in Bucharest that, despite asking for clarifications in connection with the subject matter of the request submitted by APD, eventually replied neither to the initial request, nor to another subsequent request submitted by APD in late December 2015.

Thus, the data collection stage under the Law no. 544/2001 entailed some traceability of the requests, resubmission thereof, where applicable, following the deadlines and, eventually, centralizing the data thus collected in a spreadsheet.

A distinct data collection stage consisted in conducting a sociological survey to evaluate the Civic Culture dimension. This is how the questionnaire for authorities and the questionnaire for Civic Culture dimension were developed with the support of the expert statistician. The data obtained was subsequently interpreted following the methodology, to be adequately scored.

3. Data processing and scoring the cities, following the methodology employed by the Local Democracy Barometer.

4. Drawing up of the research report and interpretation of the scores following the Local Democracy Barometer methodology.

Sample of the Local Democracy Barometer, 2014-2015

Region	**Locality**
NE Region	Piatra Neamț

SE Region	Brăila
SW Region	Craiova
S Region	Giurgiu
W Region	Timișoara
NW Region	Cluj-Napoca
Center Region	Brașov
Bucharest-Ilfov Region	Bucharest overall Bucharest, districts 1-6
SE Region	Constanța
E Region	Iași

According to GDP per capita, the top 5 cities of the sample are: Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Constanța, and Brașov. The last two are Brăila and Giurgiu.

Results of the Local Democracy Barometer per dimensions

I. Political Participation

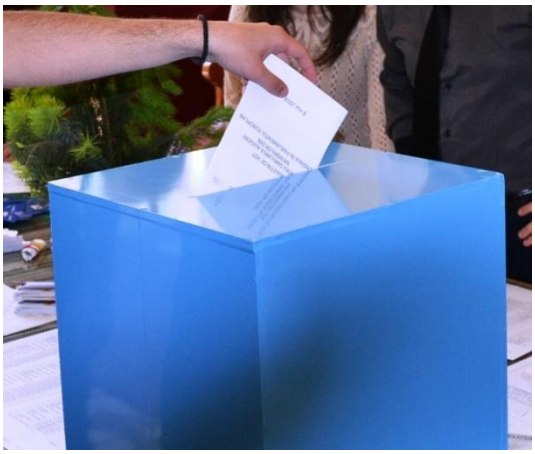
1.1. Overall scores and meaning of composite indicators

Political participation is fundamental for the quality of local democracy. The suggested indicators emphasize the specifics of political participation at local level. The best ranked localities, as per the overall score, are Districts 1 and 2 of Bucharest, Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca and Iași. Bucharest's overall score is 52, followed by Timișoara (51), Cluj-Napoca (49), and Iași (45 points). Mid ranking we find Brașov (44) and Craiova (42), whereas the cities of Brăila (36), Constanța (29), Giurgiu (27) and Neamț (25) scored the poorest. We included below a description of how this particular dimension was operationalized:

Variables	Indicator	Meaning
Free and fair elections	Political Participation	The authority of elected representatives is dependent on voters' choice The structural organization of the election process does not favor any of the candidates, either individuals, political parties or independent candidates.
Participation in ballots held in 2014	Political Participation	Different ballot participation rates point to the different impact communities are expected to have in the formation of the future elected representatives' agenda, the future public policy making process and, generally, public decision-making. Communities that tip the scale in election's results are more likely to define the priorities for decision-makers. Not

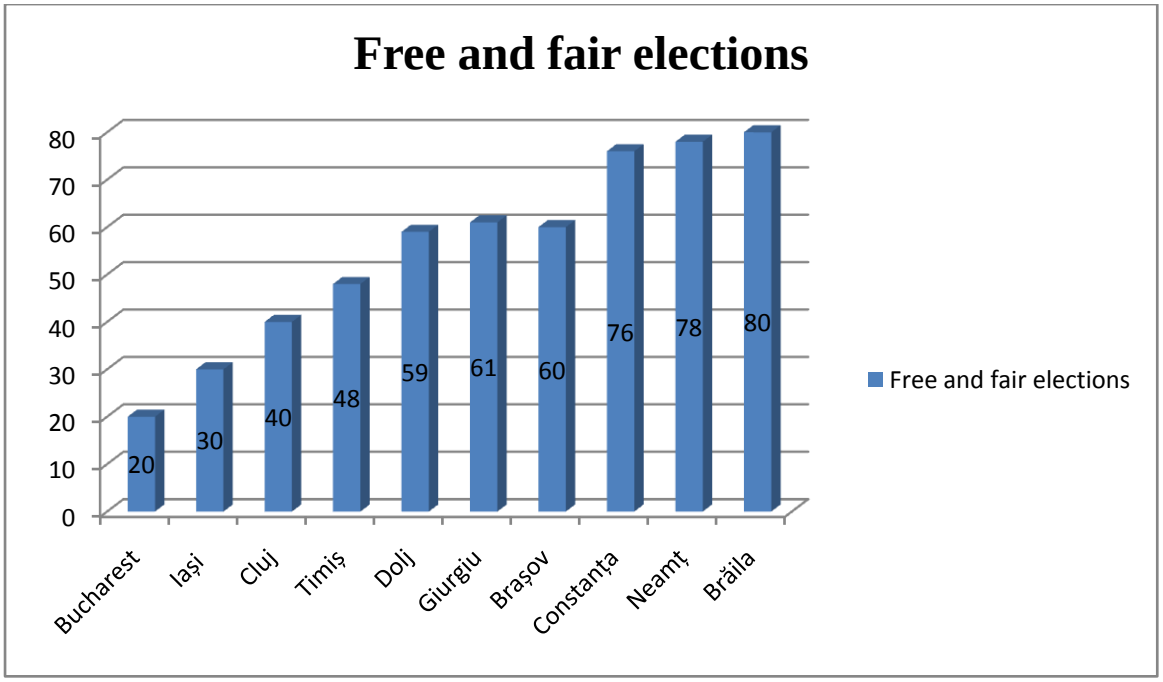
		only that non-voters are not individually considered, but communities cannot claim any significant influence whatsoever on the election processes' outcomes. An example of that is the material impact, both symbolically and in terms of numbers, the Romanian voters abroad had on the outcome of the presidential elections of 2014. As a result, after elections, the political actors proceeded to regulating mail voting further to the requests received from the representatives of the Romanians living abroad.
Involvement in political parties	Political Participation	Participation of citizens in local politics. Political commitment defines an independent variable of how a democracy performs at local level. Political participation surfaces a form of participative political culture, as a pillar of democratic stability.
Number of petitions and local initiatives of citizens	Political Participation	The involvement of citizens in decision-making and policies based on citizens' initiatives. It shows the level of participative politics.
Gender equality	Political Participation	Women in leading positions in local public administration and local organizations of political parties. To what extent a traditionalist anti-feminism can be traced down to the local political and administrative practice in the guise of excluding women from decision-making at the top of local public administration or local organizations of political parties.

1.2. Free and fair elections



In what the score obtained for the indicator *Free and fair elections* is concerned, APD put together a ranking based on the statistical data supplied by the Romanian Police. To note that the data supplied by authorities regarded only criminal offences concerning the presidential and European Parliament elections held in 2014. Romanian Police does not hold data broken-down on cities, but only on counties. Of the most frequent criminal offences of relevance for the indicator *Free and fair elections*, we list the ones laid down under Art. 385 para. 1 of the Criminal Code - Preventing the exercise of electoral rights (most cases were reported in Bucharest, that is 4, followed by Brăila with 2); according to the number of criminal casefiles prosecuted under art. 387 para. 1 of the Criminal Code, against persons who voted without being entitled to this right, cast multiple votes or entered more ballot papers than one voter would be entitled to in the ballot boxes, the ranking looks as follows: Iași - first position with 116 criminal casefiles; Bucharest - 37; Brașov – 36; Cluj – 29; Giurgiu – 26; Constanța – 13; Neamț – 7. The figures lack significance for the remaining cities. Regarding Art. 387 para. 2 regarding the use of an invalid or false voter card or ID, or false ballot paper, the ranking looks as below: Dolj – 4 and Bucharest - 1. Reportedly, no criminal casefiles were registered for the remaining localities in the sample under these legal provisions. Overall, summing up the three categories of criminal offences in connection with the European Parliament and presidential elections, the ranking compiled following the research methodology looks as follows:

	County	**Total number of criminal cases registered for offences in connection with European Parliament and presidential elections in 2014**
1.	**Bucharest**	153
2.	**Iași**	129
3.	**Cluj**	57
4.	**Timiș**	50
5.	**Dolj**	40
6.	**Giurgiu**	39
7.	**Brașov**	34
8.	**Constanța**	29
9.	**Neamț**	25
10.	**Brăila**	15

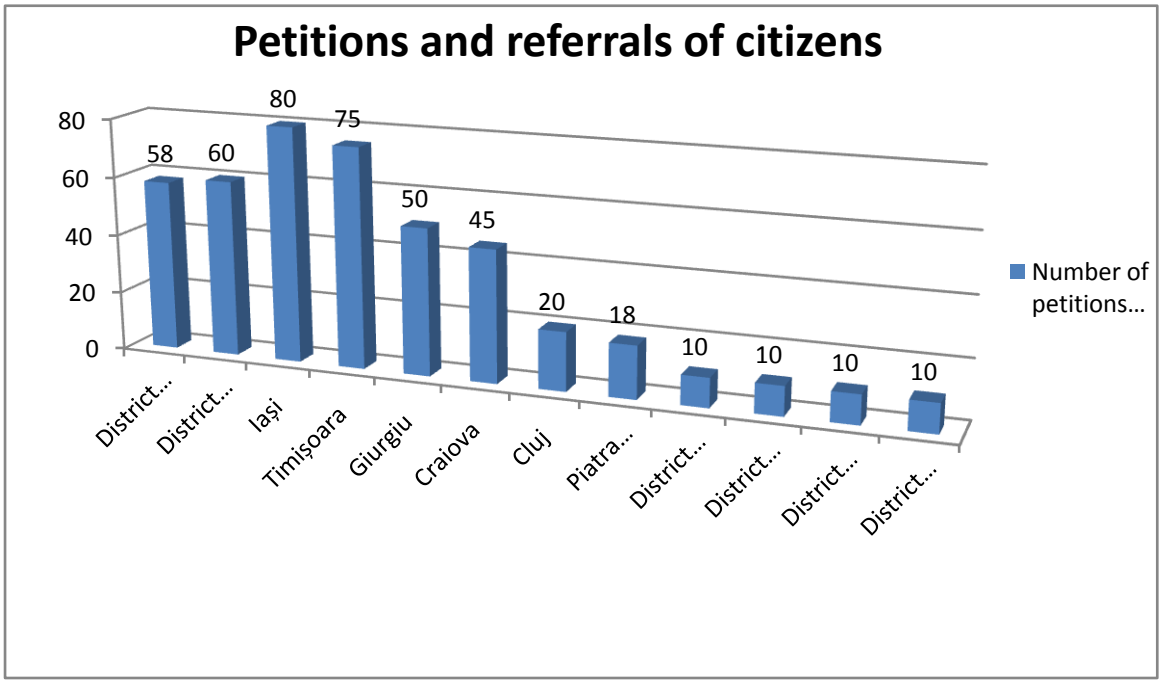


1.3. Petitions and local initiatives of citizens

The right to petition was first regulated under a normative document with power of law, that is Magna Cartha Libertatum (1215). This is one of the very first legal documents ever issued in the United Kingdom, during the reign of John Lackland. It aimed to limit the power of the monarch and, consequently, quell abuses and secure a set of fundamental rights for all citizens, also including the right to petition. Some Constitutions, such as the US one, secure the fundamental right to petition. Comparatively, the right to petition in Romania, despite being rooted in the Constitution, was regulated only in 2002 under the Government Ordinance no. 27 on the regulation of petition settlement.

The limited practice, in respect of both lodging of petitions, as well as petition settlement, is relevant for the period 2014-2015, as assessed by the Barometer: a moderate number of petitions lodged in the 10 localities under review (with major gaps between the districts of Bucharest and from one locality to another); poor drawing up of these documents, as well as a high rate of petitions lodged with institutions having no jurisdiction on the subject matter thereof. Having looked into a set of 32 random qualitative interviews in which we included lodgers of petitions with the authorities of the local public administration, we noticed that citizens were eager to interact with decision-makers, as well as the risk of not being able to distinguish between problems which could be addressed in the community and problems which were correctly referred to the competent institutions.

According to the number of reported referrals and petitions, the highest scores were computed for Iași (114,570), Timișoara (10,506), Bucharest (with most reported in District 3 - 49,168 petitions, and District 4 - 41,555), whereas the localities with the lowest scores were Cluj-Napoca (307), Piatra Neamț (68), Constanța (nil), Districts 1 and 2 of Bucharest (nil).

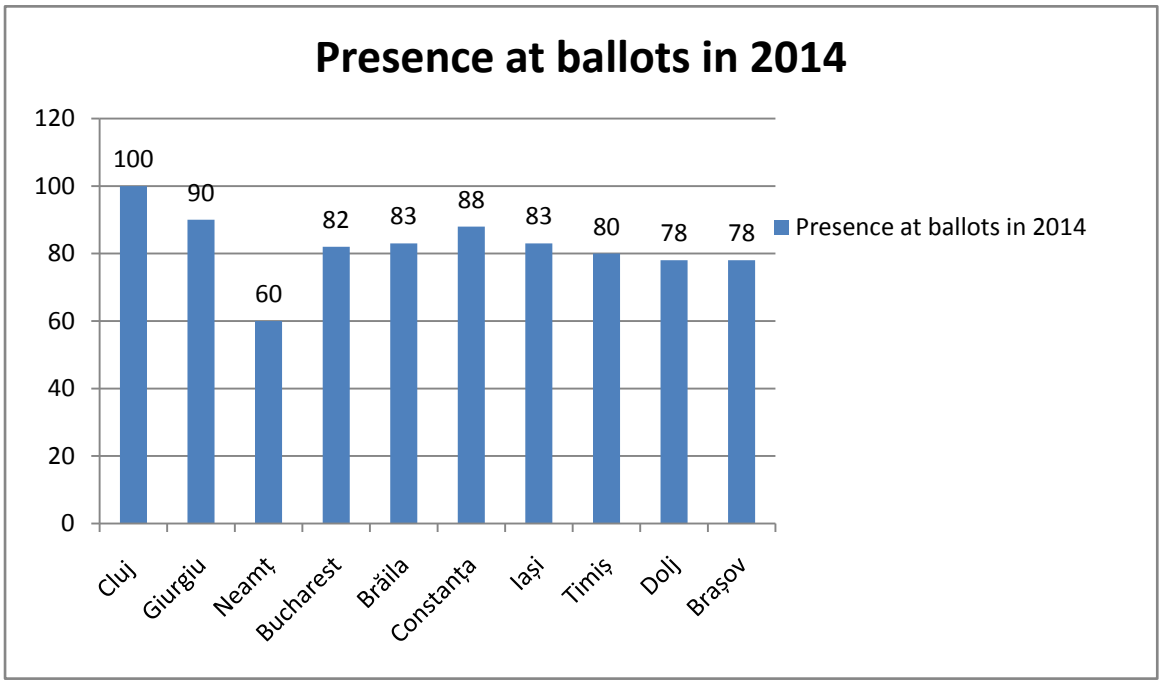


1.4. Participation in ballots held in 2014

In 2014, participation in ballots increased significantly, from 32.44% in the European Parliament elections, to an average of 62% in presidential elections. Ballot participation in the presidential elections was as follows: Cluj-Napoca (69.56%); Giurgiu (67.16%); Bucharest (**65.53%**); Dolj (64.96%); Brașov (64.56); Constanța (64.60%); Timiș (63.11); Brăila (58.92); Iași (58.01); Neamț (55.37 %).

The most important form of political participation within the citizen's reach is the vote. Despite being fundamental, a vote is not an indicator for the subtlety of political participation. That is to say, citizens' presence before ballot boxes is essential, but not at all sufficient seen in the light of a demanding advanced democratic political culture. Vote can be equally seen as a political participation tool, and a means of expressing political opinion. The decision to cast a vote is an intentional act and has an intentional grounding. Of importance for the election system is that the voters find voting of importance to them or see it as a civic duty. Vote can be either an approval or a sanction for a particular candidate or party. Generally, the voting act is not defined as a long-term objective. The non-option which has, so far, become apparent as ballot absenteeism is increasingly reshaping by participation in street social movements to the detriment of other forms of political participation, for instance engagement in political parties. In 2014, participation in ballots increased significantly, for both the European Parliament elections, and the presidential ones. To an equal extent, we see also increasing participation in protests and frequency of social happenings, such "Save Rosia Montana" or "Colectiv". The last two ballots held in Romania enjoyed a higher participation than the previous election events. This shows that the ballot participation rates has stabilized at a certain level - considering the participation rate in an election round

of little importance for the general public[1] - elections for the European Parliament: 33.44% in 2014, going up as compared to 2009, when it was at 27.67%. Thus, in addition to ballot participation, which is not the only act of political participation (Dalton 2002, Putnam 2000, Verba 1995, Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995), the protests and social happenings have been mainstreamed into the political process and, consequently, institutionalized to become a key indicator for a well-established democracy. This has been known in the published literature as the movement society argument (Tarrow 1998, Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Under the same explanatory framework, participation in protest is, *per se*, a political process and not an irrational act, contrary to the classical explanations found in social sciences (Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde).



II. *Administrative Efficiency and usable bureaucracy* dimension

2.1. Local government and efficient public administration

The local public administration operates under the local government principle from which stems both the right and actual capacity of the authorities of local public administration to address and manage the public affairs, in the name and to the benefit of the local communities they represent, under the law[2]. Local government is effectively exercised by local councils and mayors, as well as county councils, as authorities of local public administration elected by direct universal suffrage in a free and secret ballot. Operation through local authorities is not exclusive of the possibility that a resort will be made to citizen

[1] Some degree of explanation can also stem from the less important stake for political parties, that discontinue the "go to vote" campaigns able to enhance information and raise awareness of citizens.
[2] Pursuant to Art. 3 of Law no. 215 of 2011 of the local public administration.

consultation in a referendum or another form of direct participation of citizens in public affairs, pursuant to Law no. 215/2001 of the local public administration.

Through the avenue of state bureaucracy, local administration earmarks limited public resources for communities and citizens with ranging needs and preferences. While citizens are entitled to claim that decision-makers in the local public administration raise up to public management efficiency standards, the efficiency of administrative processes should not be understood in the mere logic of profit. Public institutions make no profit, but allocate public resources as efficiently as possible, according to an agreed redistribution scheme (for instance, the amounts in the public budget for the different public institutions do get allocated, but the reasoning behind their approval does not rely on their expected contribution to increasing institutional profit, and rather on payment accruals and liabilities). Resources are allocated to serve the interests of citizens. This is the major function of an institutional system. Still, administration efficiency refers to a particular approach to public policies and decisions. According to Frank Knight, "generally, though within some limitations, people want to act economically, and their actions to be rather efficient than spendthrift" (Knight 1941, 252), and the most important consequence is on the policies and actions of public administration. We assume these are efficiently implemented to improve the life of citizens, by providing benefits or at least cutting down costs. The utility scheme for a bureaucracy review has been borrowed from macroeconomics and, linked to the model of the rational actor, supplies an explanatory model for bureaucracy. The fact that local public administration is subject to frequent criticism leading to the conclusion that is has but poor efficiency shows that citizens evaluate the administration by applying an economic scheme. In this context, a legitimate question refers to the utility of bureaucracy by reference to the interests of citizens. In other words, public administration remains efficient as longs as it serves the interests of citizens, and bureaucracy remains useful as long as it is underpinned by administrative streamlining and cooperation with tax-paying citizens. A well-established democracy needs a procedural framework for regulation and enforcement of legislation and the Constitution. Public administration manages the interests of local communities, and bureaucracy is supposed to facilitate, not render more difficult the realization of citizens' interests. In consideration for taxes and dues, taxpayers get to have their rights represented.

The problem stems from the fact that public institutions are structures designed to represent aggregate individual interests and to allocate limited public resources: material and financial resources to support bureaucratic activities through payment of taxes and dues, cognitive efforts and enforcement of legislation and bureaucratic rules, etc. While the resources managed by institutions are limited, individual preferences are different and fluid, and follow the changes the individual representations of public or private interest. Under these circumstances, the external environment of the public administration can change, and become increasingly diverse and dynamic, so that its institutional processes no longer adequately mirror either the social realities, or the citizens' preferences, as ultimate beneficiaries thereof. On the one hand, institutions are empowered and protected under the institutional contract or the law, and, on the other hand, the other party to the contract, that is the citizen, does not have many options

when rating the bureaucratic performance as unsatisfactory. Meanwhile, citizens still contribute to the allocation of resources for institutions even if they don't/no longer fancy the operation of public administration. Utility, in a general sense, is the capacity of an asset (product, service, piece of information) to meet a need. It is underpinned by the properties, features, characteristics each good or category of goods has. Economic utility is the satisfaction a consumer expects to achieve under certain conditions by using a given quantity (unit, dose) from a certain economic asset - in our case, the services offered by the local public administration to citizens.

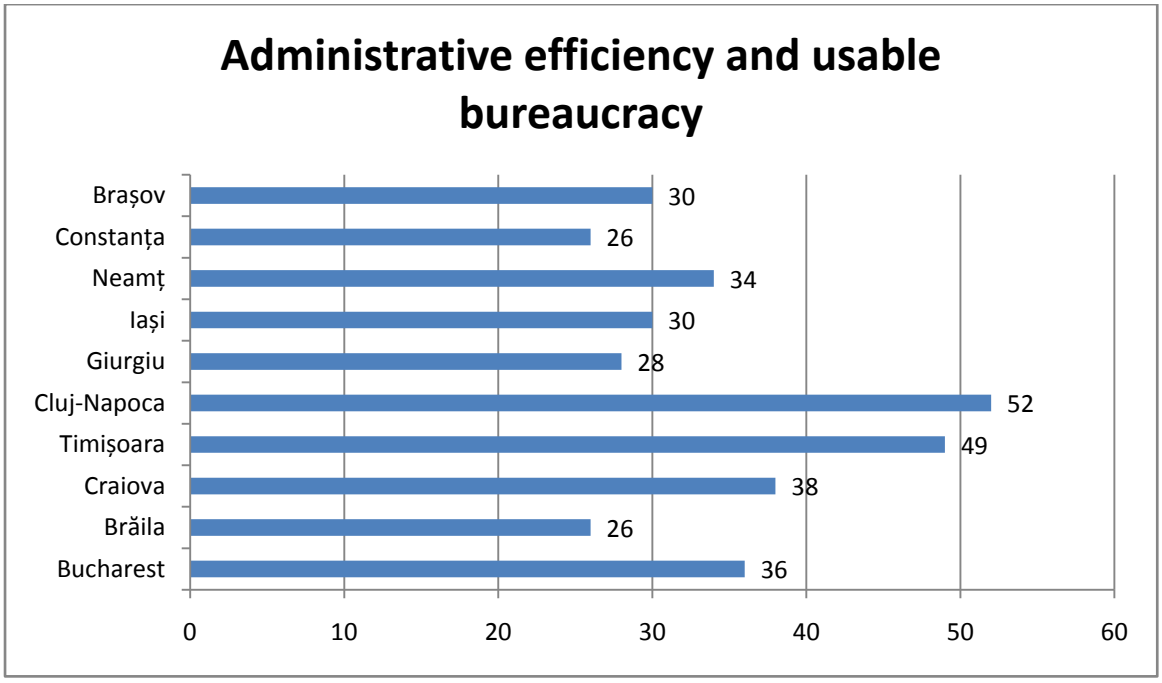
2.2. Operationalization of composite indicators and meaning thereof

The indicators employed to assess *Administrative Efficiency and usable bureaucracy* dimension are summarized in the table below:

Administrative efficiency and usable bureaucracy		
Variable	**Indicator**	**Meaning**
Transparency and mainstreaming the publication of information of public interest	Usable bureaucracy	Whether the municipalities' websites contain relevant information for citizens.
Administrative disputes at local level	Usable bureaucracy	Settlement by the administrative courts having jurisdiction, under the organic law, of disputes in which at least one of the parties is the municipality or the local/county council.

Parliamentary representation	Administrative streamlining	The extent to which Members of Parliament carry out their representation mandate in their constituencies, under the administrative jurisdiction of the cities under review.
Online tax payment facilities	Administrative streamlining	Facilities for online payment of liabilities to the State, and fostering the use thereof for higher collection rates of such taxes.
Local taxes and dues collection rate	Administrative streamlining	Collection of local taxes and dues by reference to their amount and the administrative streamlining
Replies to APD requests under the Law no. 544/2001	Usable bureaucracy	Transparency of institutional processes

2.3. Overall scores



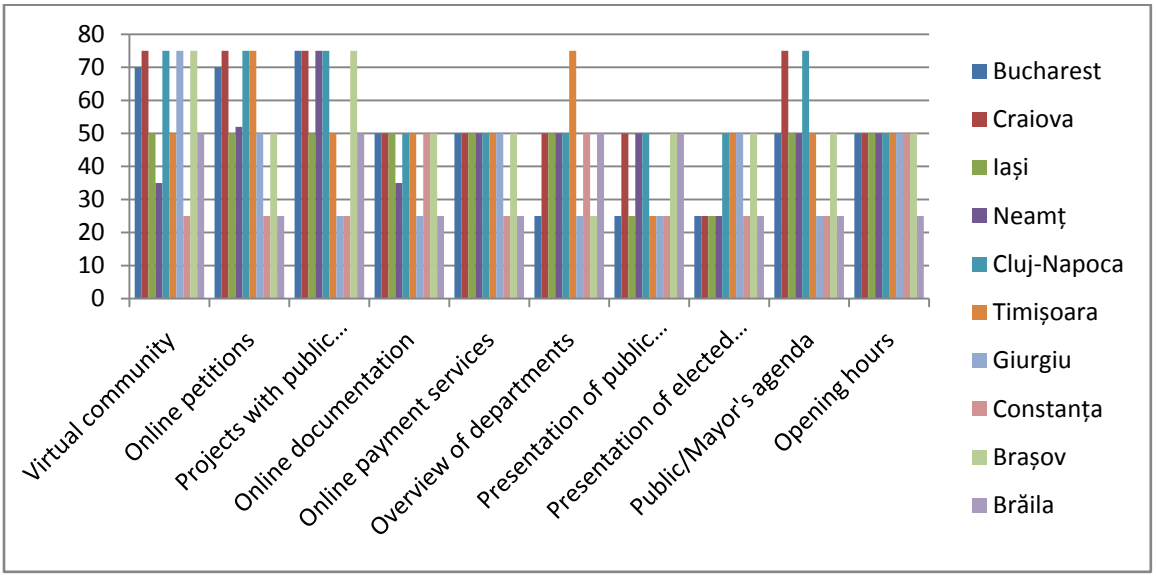
2.4. Transparency and mainstreaming publication of information of public interest about the activity of local public administration

For this composite indicator, the research team reviewed the websites of municipalities in respect of the following key variables:

1. Information about the opening hours and an audiences schedule
2. Full list of persons holding management positions, with name and first name.
3. Overview of municipality's departments and organization chart
4. Easily accessible online services for payment of taxes and dues
5. Information of public interest: completed projects, pending projects, list of public procurement actions, budgetary execution.
6. Interaction with citizens: online petitions, complaints, referrals, public consultations, and availability of a virtual community
7. APD requests under the Law no. 544/2001.

2.5. Transparency and mainstreaming the publication of information of public interest

Websites of municipalities represent an interface that supports transparency and communication with citizens. It is important that municipalities publish on their websites information that is as comprehensive and updated as possible about the services available to citizens. Proper citizen information can reduce the flow of incomplete applications lodged by citizens (submission of incomplete files, timing of citizen service provision as a result administrative processes), and relive public servants of additional tasks (completing files and applications from citizens). The time thus saved can be used to render quality services to citizens.



Transparency and mainstreaming the publication of information of public interest

The key finding of the review undertaken under the Barometer is that the information published on the websites of institutions of local public administration is not structured on categories or sections that are easily accessible to public. For instance, the website of Craiova municipality contains information about the possibility of making payments by Internet banking, but fails to indicated also the IBAN account, and makes a linkless reference to another section of the same website reserved for public information. Another problem stems from the failure to update the information on the website, or the publication of incomplete information about the persons holding senior management positions (elected or executive positions in the public administration), such as missing resumes or missing list of executives in senior management positions.

Inhabitants of Bucharest are not offered any other relevant information about the members sitting the General Council of City of Bucharest (resumes, photos), except for their professions. In most of the cases, the agendas of the Mayor and the Local Council are missing too (except for Brasov and Cluj-Napoca). There is no 2015 annual report of the General Mayor of Bucharest to be found. Examples of good practice in communication and transparency are municipalities of Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara.

Online payment facilities for taxes and dues are provided in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Iași, Giurgiu (such facility was not available in 2012), and Brașov. While making available some online facilities regarding information about the payable local taxes and dues, the municipality of Piatra Neamț fails to also offer the online payment service. Brăila and Craiova offer no online facilities for payment of taxes and dues. The municipality of Cluj-Napoca offers a highly useful online service that supports online tracking of the status of the application/petition/complaint lodged with the registration office of the municipality.

As compared to 2012, when Romania joined the *Open Government Partnership* (an year reviewed under the previous Barometer) and committed, under a national plan of specific measures, to implement the policies needed for a more open, responsible and efficient government for citizens, we see that open government has been defined and implemented mainly by reference to the central public administration, and to a lesser extent to the local administration. The concept of "open government" should be understood in a wider context that would also cover the local public administration. Basically, the open government refers to a different approach to citizens, underpinned by transparency and communication. The practices adopted by public administration in this respect are the publication of open data about local communities; a transparent and participative financial management; the cooperation with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (deemed insufficient for the time being); the initiation of cooperation initiatives for local or regional plans, strategies and projects (examples in this respect are found in the municipality of Craiova, that published the city's development strategy and a programme of public investments on its website, the municipality of Piatra Neamț, that makes available a local government programme, and the municipality of Iași, the website of which contains a section dedicated to public consultations).

In what the application of Law no. 544/2001 is concerned, the Barometer tested how fast the local institutions replied to requests. As compared to 2012, we see a substantial improvement in the enforcement of this law. The municipality of District 5 and the Prefect's Office of Bucharest remain the only two negative exceptions.

While the application of the transparency legislation (Law no. 544/2001 and Law no. 52/2003) is just the first milestone of what we call "usable bureaucracy", it does not suffice. The application of transparency principles needs optimization, and the national action plan under the Open Government Partnership has to be extended so as to open the agenda to all principles of an open local government: from the publication of open data to the consultation of citizens on budgetary execution. The Barometer has surfaced that local public administration lacks the practice of publishing open data, with the exceptions above. Additionally, we also see that the civil society makes very little use of the open data to substantiate their projects and initiatives. The use of data of public interest to substantiate projects and benchmarking studies on various matters of concern for local communities is a progress indicator.

2.6. Administrative disputes at local level

This indicator is relevant as long as the institution of administrative litigation is the specific means, under the rule of law, whereby violations on the part of the administrative authority against natural or legal persons are repaired. In Romania, the law of administrative disputes no. 544/2004 defines administrative litigation as "settlement by the administrative courts having jurisdiction, under the organic law, of disputes in which at least one of the parties is a public authority". This legal form aims to limit the arbitrary across the administrative power and prevent abuses. Justice reinstates the rights of the parties that are prejudiced by the authorities of local public administration.

Thus, the research team counted the number of administrative disputes involving citizens and the municipality or the local council settled following the administrative litigation proceedings, as well as the number of cases in which the Prefect appealed against an alleged illegal instrument of the County Council, the Local Council or the Mayor, following the same administrative litigation proceedings. This power granted to the Prefect has been rooted in the Constitution in the form of the State's legal supervision of compliance by the authorities of local public administration with the law. Under the rule of law, an illegal instrument of a local authority may be appealed against before court by the Prefect, as representative of the Government, considering the Government's role of ensuring the enforcement of the laws.

We scored this indicator according to the number of disputes, fines or actions under the administrative litigation proceedings of the Prefect's Office in relation with the Municipality. The lowest score was determined for the City of Constanța, above the national average (40); Cluj-Napoca (6) and Brăila (3), Brașov (3 investigations conducted by the Prime Minister's Control Body and unknown number of instruments of the local councils canceled because they were considered illegal by the

Prefect's Office); Iași (1 investigation conducted by the Prime Minister's Control Body). No such cases (nil) were reported for the remaining cities under review.

2.7. Parliamentary representation

The review aimed to find out to what extent Members of Parliament carry out their duties throughout the term of their office, in their constituencies under administrative jurisdiction of the cities under the Barometer's review. Thus, we run a random check on the agenda of MPs in the constituencies from the cities under review, on Friday and Saturday, when they are supposed to meet the citizens in the particular constituency. In most of the cases, no audience hours were available (9). APD reviewers found cases (6) of premises shared by MPs and the territorial organizations of political parties. This raises a question in connection with their entitlement to collect the entire amount allocated for office maintenance and even staff payment. Similarly, we also found that audiences were actually held by staff members in the MP's office, and not by the elected MPs.

2.8. Recommendations for improving communication with citizens

- **Simplified and updated websites of municipalities**, as an interface for transparency and communication with citizens. Grouping the sections on websites, and posting of relevant information for citizens, as well as the possibility of filling out forms and prepare files before actually submitting such on site, so as to reduce the flow of incomplete applications received from citizens and relieve public servants from additional tasks. Implementing tools to support the online status tracking for the lodged files/applications could reduce the average number of visits paid by citizens to the premises of local public administration. Additionally, a large proportion of citizens are willing to use online services.

- **Simplified online payment facilities for taxes and dues.** This particular facility helps the overall increase in administrative efficiency, insofar as it is streamlined and usable. Online payment of taxes and dues serves the citizens willing to use online services, and relieves public servants from part of their burden.

- **Enhanced transparency for administrative processes and consultation of citizens**, by proactive publication of open data. The agenda of mayors and local/county councils, status information about contracts in progress, a list of planned and completed public procurement initiatives, public consultations on annual budget projections, regular consultation of citizens' agenda, based on sociological inquiries would make a manifest difference in government transparency.

- **Communication adapted to specific target groups, with the following benefits:**

- Communication targeted on those segments of active population that lack the time to get involved in the community life

- Communication adapted to young audiences by building a virtual community

- Increasing collection of taxes and dues by introducing online payment facilities

- Encouraging civic participation by putting in place a routine of public consultations and opening sections reserved for petitions

- Enhanced legitimacy of public decisions and policies, further to public consultation

- Reducing the time spent by citizens following bureaucratic procedures by offering online services

- Relieving public servants by transferring some of their tasks to the IT system

- Enhancing public information by transparency, publication of open data and public consultation

III. *Freedom of press* dimension

An independent, free and truly pluralist local press is important for the quality of local democracy, in particular those in early stages of development. Freedom of press helps the consolidation of transparency, compliance with rules and the rule of law, and fosters trust building. The press can be a catalyst of civil participation and an advocate for causes of public interest. Democracy tends to consolidate in a context of freedom and pluralism of media vehicles. In our research framework, journalists play an important part in enhancing public information and setting new standards for public debates, in particular political ones, exposed to the risk of manipulating citizens. It is critical that the press operates based on ethical and professional standards subject to the control of industry's professional associations.

3.1. Overall scores and composite indicators

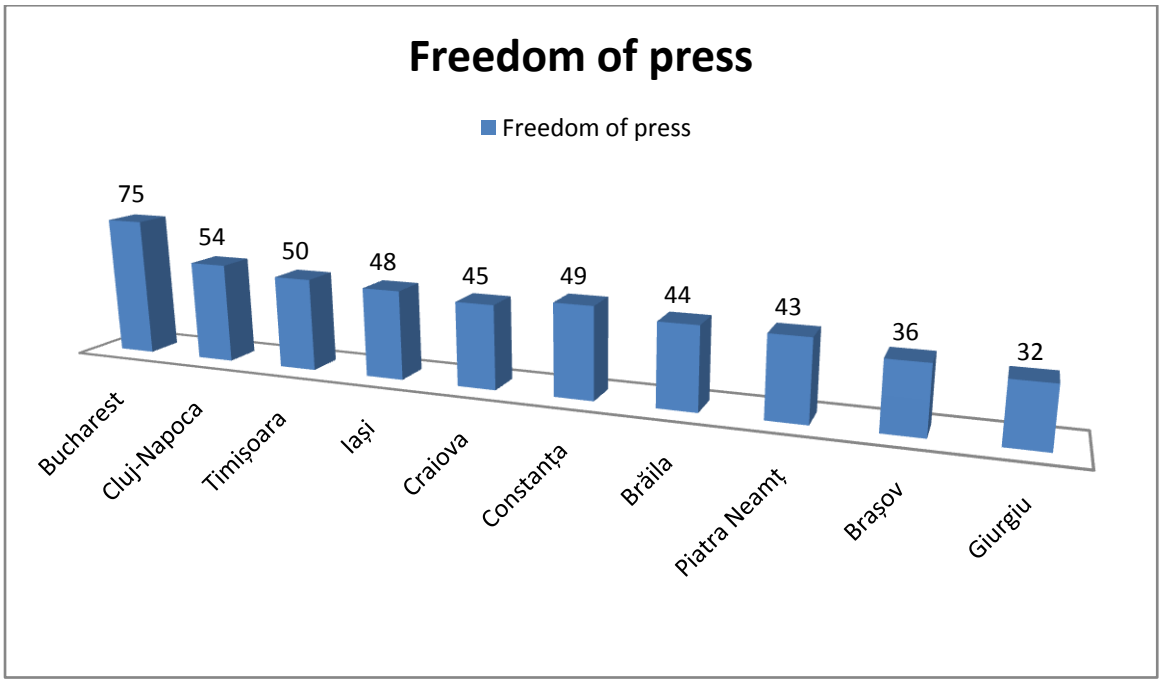
We looked into the freedom of local press based on the following indicators:

Dimension		
Pluralism of local media vehicles	Freedom of press	Multiplicity of online/printed media vehicles or high concentration of press by a small number of private owners
Editorial balance	Freedom of press	The media openly and freely debates on issues of public interest, presenting several points of view and giving the right of reply
Independence from politics	Freedom of press	How transparent is the shareholding? Are there publications/TV stations owned by local politicians?
Editorial balance	Freedom of press	Share of information/editorial productions out of the overall news space.

For all the 10 cities under review, we can speak of mass-media pluralism. Just as in 2012-2013, for the previous Barometer, opinion journalism prevails even if it is sometimes called specialized news journalism. News channels feature mainly talk shows that favor opinions rather than provision of information. Local newspapers preserve their dominant information purpose, contrary to the trend seen in national news channels that present news filtered by the editorial policies, with sections commented in the news journals. We strongly recommend that the key information product preserves its informative nature, to allow viewers to form opinions based on the primary data presented, and then to have such

information debated in political or opinion journalism debates. Generally, television channels have a biased editorial policy when it comes to certain political actors or parties.

The final media ranking in 2014 and 2015 looks as follows: Bucharest (75 points), Cluj-Napoca (54), Timișoara (50), Iași (48), Craiova (45), Constanța (49), Brăila (44), Piatra Neamț (42), Brașov (36), Giurgiu (32).



To sum up, freedom and pluralism of press are critical in any democracy as long as the press gives expression to the public opinion, and the government listens to what public opinion has to say. Mass-media is so much the more important as it helps public opinion to control the political power. Public opinion crystallizes individual opinions of the citizens, whether consensual or conflicting, in either the society at large or in different groups. On the other hand, public opinion is subject to influences from various factors of the social life - press, school, advertising, movies, cognitive and social experiences of people. Mass-media fosters reaching of an agreement on topics of public relevance. Building an opinion entails turning the interest for public participation into a public action.

3.2. Recommendations for mass-media pluralism and independence:

- Reactivation of journalists' professional associations for the purpose of laying down professional recognition standards demands for journalism practice and control over professional ethics.

- News journalism should feature, at least in prime time, provision of information and not voicing of opinions on breaking news. News programmes, supported by the professionals of the civil society, are required to educate the public on media consumption.

IV. *Civil culture* dimension

4.1. Unfolding of composite indicators

This dimension of the Barometer relied on a distinct theoretical model, focused on the specifics of civic engagement. Thus, the sociological inquiry aimed to test three major composite indicators:

1. **Cognitive indicators,** with the aid of which we aimed to test knowledge, explanations, interpretations, expectations of internal and external political events.

2. **Affective or emotional indicators**, whereby we tested certain feelings, affects, affective availabilities, feelings, passions that are decisive for the attitudes and political believes displayed.

3. **Evaluation indicators,** whereby we aimed to express value judgments about political events and processes, according to the scale of values the citizens adhered to.

The three types of indicators depict three different measures of democratic civil culture. Knowledge, attitudes, approach to political processes, when combined in different doses, articulate a certain model of civic culture. The democratic model relies on involvement, as a state of spirit based on strong knowledge of society and politics. To know, to get informed, and to be able to make accurate and unbiased judgments. A participative civic culture stems from well-established democratic systems, and is the outcome of advanced education processes, including the political and social experiences specific to democratic countries: election experiences, participative experiences, whether as politics observers or actors, in particular by reference to a specific set of values. Citizens hold a set of subjective means and skills, abilities and capabilities of using such in a rational manner for the purpose of influencing decision-making, unfolding of political events or representation, or to put an end to those administrative decisions liable to have an adverse impact on their interests.

Attitudes rooted into a participative civic culture go beyond approval, apathy and alienation just to choose involvement. These types of political cultures cohabitate in contemporary societies, to different degrees, influence each other, merge or mingle among community members. For instance, the citizen of a society with a prevailing civic culture does not focus only on active participation in politics, and, at the same time, he can be a conformist before law and authorities, as well as a member in a group characterized by a parochial culture. The political and civil profile of the citizen is a mixture of different amounts of parochial, compliance and participative culture. Equally, the democratic societies capture the same three elements combined in different quantities, but with the participative culture always prevailing.

4.2. Overall scores

Data collection and preparation of the research report took 60 working days. For certain localities, due to some delays in receiving answers from local authorities, this period was longer. Interviews were conducted by phone based on a structured questionnaire (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview - CATI). Data was collected during the period 02-20.12.2015, with validation calls being made between 10-28 March 2016. The survey was conducted on a random sample, representative for each locality covered by the Barometer (600 cases), for a population aged 18+ deemed representative for the population of the cities under review. Sampling relied on random generation of phone numbers, on gender and age bands. The error margin is $\pm$ 4.1%, at a confidence level of 95%.

4.3. Results and sociological meanings, on localities

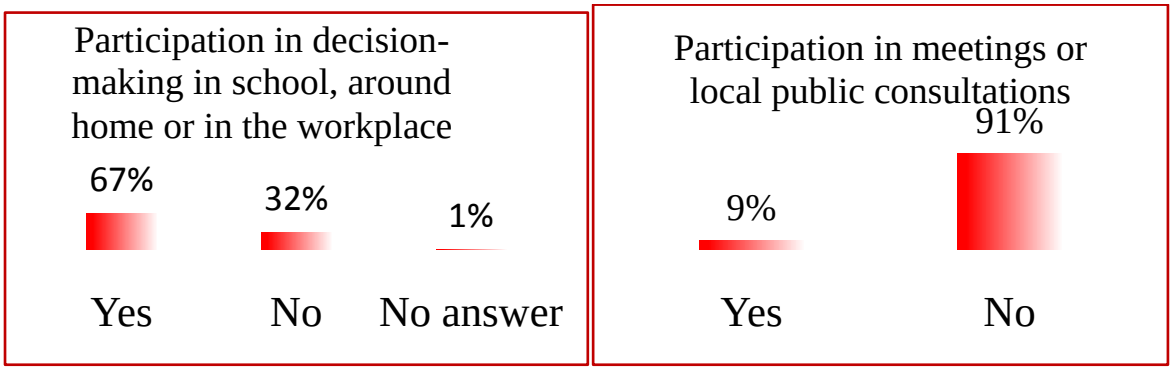
Bucharest

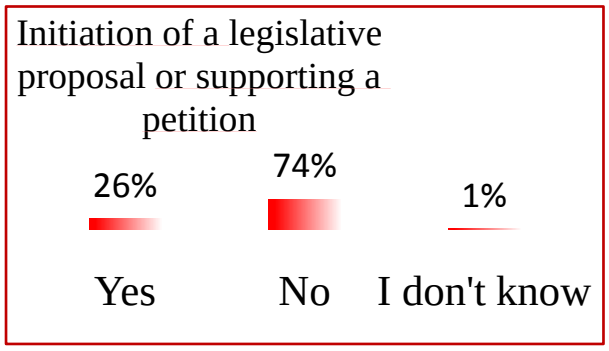
- Attitude towards Romanian citizens of Roma origin shows strong differentiation therefrom, and points to an excluding behavior. 50% of respondents rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 32% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 45% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, while 39% would not give them any support whatsoever. On the other hand, 29% declared they would help a refugee.
- Volunteering appears less on the citizens' agenda, with 69% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 23% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- 67% of respondents in Bucharest declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, and less in matters connected with legislation or administration. This rather shows a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 9% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities, while 26% signed a petition aimed at addressing a local problem.
- Interest for politics is relatively low, with only 25% reporting a very high or high interest in politics. 35% got involved in political debates.
- The limited knowledge of citizens about the political environment is supported by the fact that only 5% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 15% declared they knew who their MPs were, with more than half of them being able to nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.

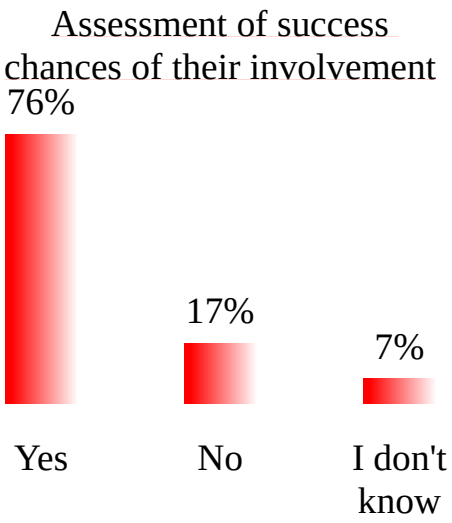
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 3.0 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 62% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The survey revealed a very low degree of confidence in the Parliament, with a very low average score of 1.9, that is 69% had little or very little confidence in the Parliament.
- In what usefulness of political institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3 and more than 40% assessing them as useful or very useful), it is worth noting that an important proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 32%.

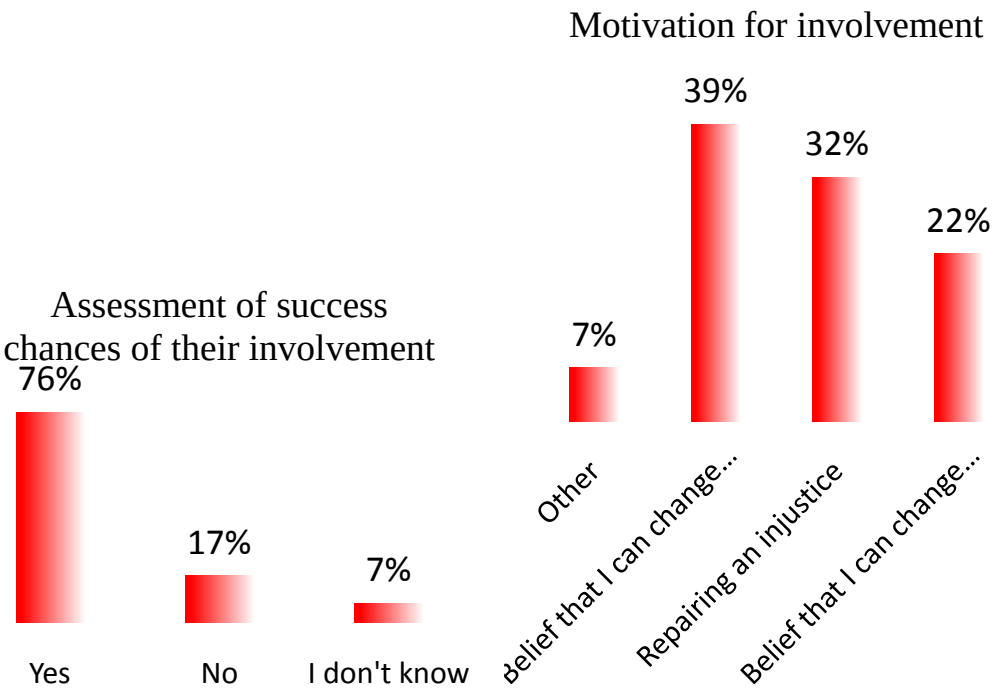
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.2, that is 76% found it useful or very useful.
- Among the criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 41%, results of programmes implemented - 53%, and membership of a political party - 2% of Bucharest inhabitants.
- Civil society organizations were not reported to enjoy either high confidence, or overwhelming usefulness, with 39% of respondents having no confidence in them, and 27% rating them as of little or very little use.
- Church is not trusted by 47% of respondents, and 33% of Bucharest inhabitants rated its usefulness as low or very low.

Civic involvement over the last year in Bucharest







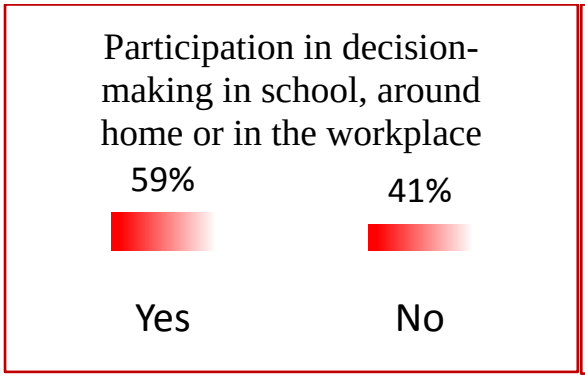


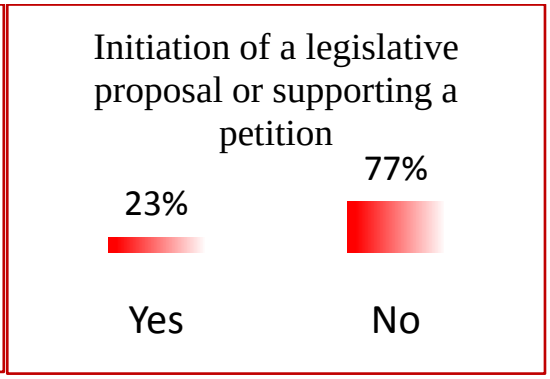
Iași

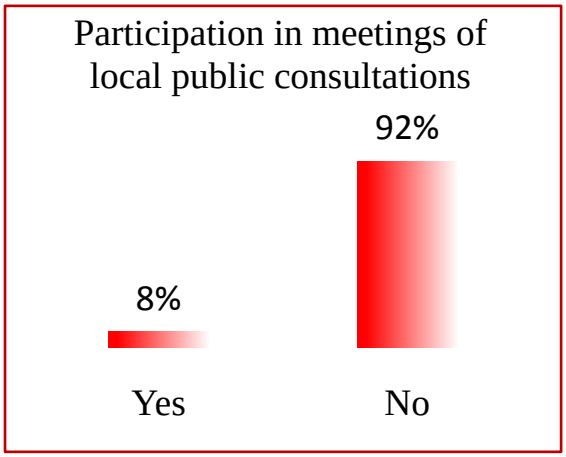
- Attitude towards Romanian citizens of Roma origin indicates strong differentiation therefrom, and an exclusion tendency. 53% rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 42% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 46% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, while 45% would not give them any support whatsoever. On the other hand, 29% declared they would help a refugee.

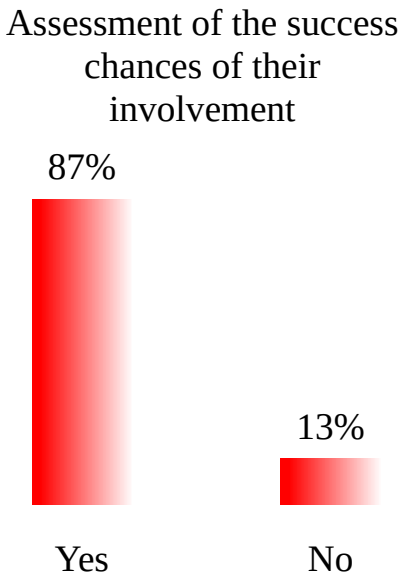
- Volunteering appears less on the citizens' agenda, with 72% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 23% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- 59% declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 8% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. Nevertheless, 23% of respondents declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Interest for politics is relatively low, with only 18% reporting a very high or high interest in politics. 23% got involved in political debates.
- Alienation of citizens from the political environment is supported by the fact that only 12% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 20% declared they knew who their MPs were, with more than half of them being able to nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 4 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 62% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The survey revealed a very low degree of confidence in the Parliament, the supreme legislative institution collected but very few points - an average of 2, on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 63% declared they had little or very little confidence in the Parliament.
- In what usefulness of political institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3 and more than 40% assessing them as useful or very useful), it is worth noting that a significant proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 24%.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.2, that is 75% found it useful or very useful.
- Among the criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 43%, results of programmes implemented - 46%, and membership of a political party - 2% of Iași inhabitants.
- Civil society organizations were not reported to enjoy either high confidence, or overwhelming usefulness, with 34% of respondents having no confidence in them, and 26% rating them as of little or very little use.
- Church is not trusted by 35% of respondents, and 51% of respondents rated its usefulness as high or very high.

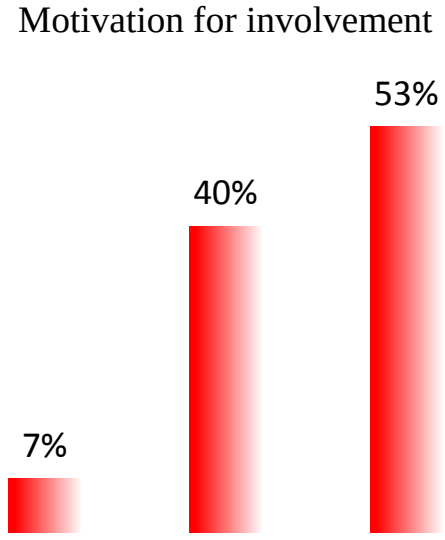
Civic involvement over the last year in Iași











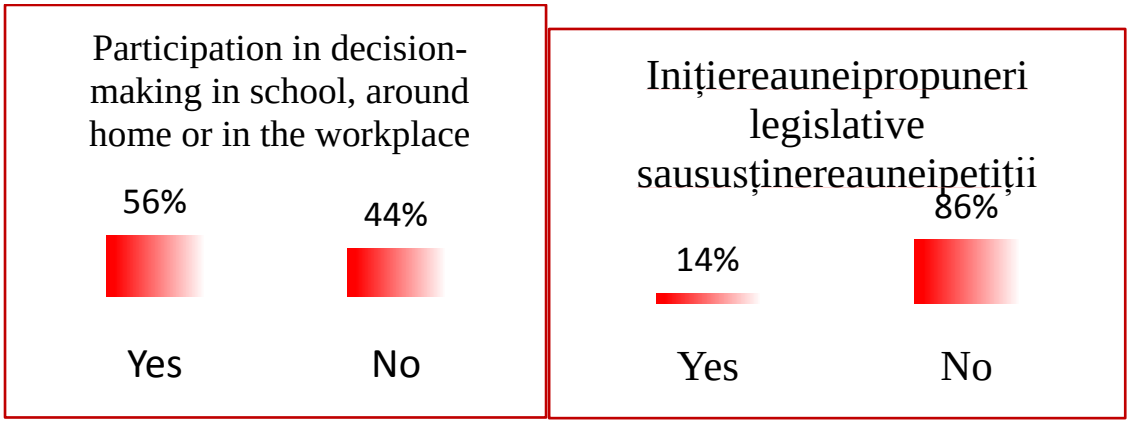
Brăila

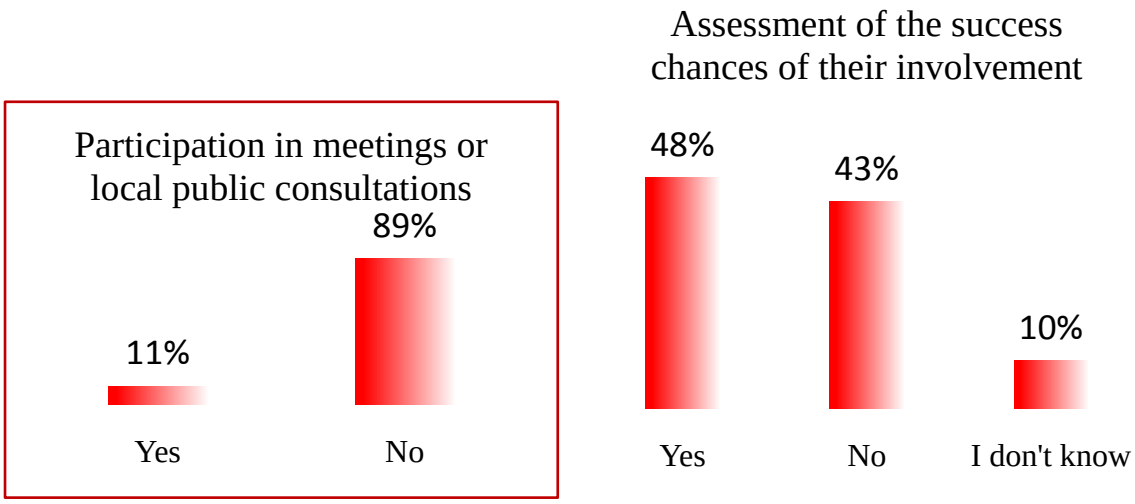
- Attitude of Brăila inhabitants towards Roma ethnics indicated a strong differentiation therefrom, and points to an excluding behavior. 53% rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 27% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 51% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 50% would not be willing to give them any support whatsoever. To note that 27% declared they would help a refugee.
- A significant percentage (56%) declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 11% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities, and only 14% signed a petition to address a local problem. More. 43% of those that participated in such actions did not even believe in the success of their endeavor.
- Despite the general perception that Romanians are interested in politics, only 15% of Brăila inhabitants declared they were interested to a very high or high extent in politics, and 28% declared being interested in political debates. On the other hand, 35% of respondents considered the activity of administrative and political institutions had no impact on their life.
- The low interest displayed by citizens in the political environment is supported by the fact that only 7% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 16% declared they knew who their MPs were. More than half of those who declared they knew their MPs could nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 4 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 65% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- Church came next in the line of confidence, with 45% declaring they had high or very high confidence in it, and an average score of 3.3.
- The survey reveals very little confidence in the political institutions of the State, with both the Parliament and the Government being poorly scored - an average of 2.1 on a scale of 1 to 5, that is 59% had little or very little confidence in the Parliament, and 51% in the Government.
- Presidency also scored pretty low in terms of confidence: an average of 2.7, with 45% declaring low or very low confidence.
- Of the political institutions, Presidency still scored highest in terms of confidence, with 36% declaring to have high or very high confidence, as compared to the Government with only 10%, and the Parliament with 5%.
- In what usefulness of institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3 in a scale from 1 to 5, and more than 50% assessing

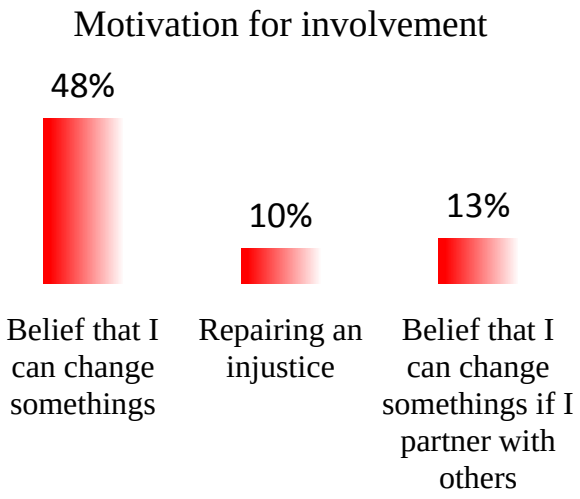
them as useful or very useful), it is worth noting that an important proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 28%, while the Government and the Parliament were assessed similarly by 28%.

- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.4, that is 81% found it useful or very useful.
- Among the criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 58%, results of programmes implemented - 36%, and membership of a political party - 2% of Brăila inhabitants.

Civic involvement over the last year in Brăila







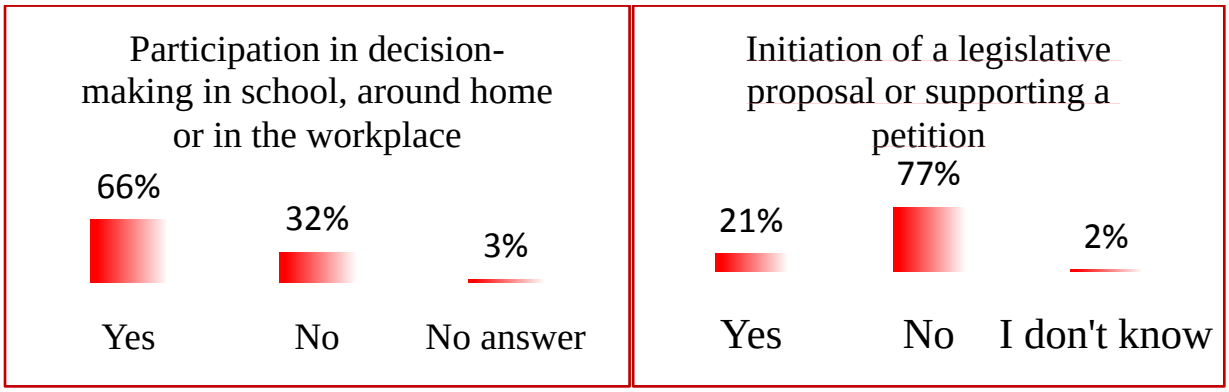
Brașov

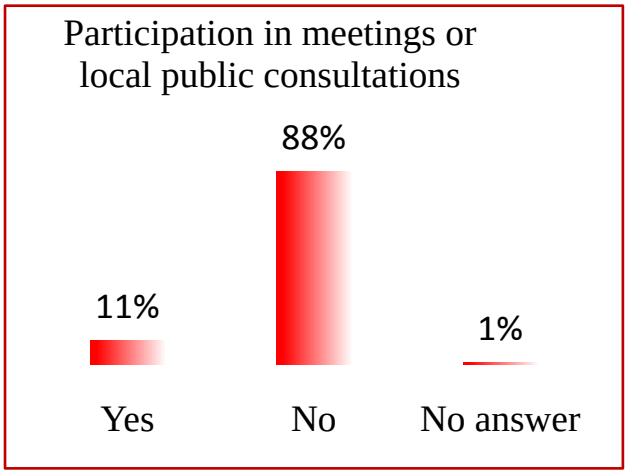
- Attitude of Brașov inhabitants towards Roma is highly differentiating and excluding, with 46% rejecting the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 36% not agreeing with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 48% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 35% would not be willing to give them any support whatsoever. To note that 34% declared they would help a refugee.
- Volunteering appears less on the citizens' agenda, with 67% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 25% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- A significant share (66%) declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 11% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. 22% they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Despite the general perception that Romanians are interested in politics, only 16% declared they were interested to a very high or high extent in politics, and 36% declared they involved in political debates.
- The limited information held by citizens about the political environment is supported by the fact that only 11% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 22% declared they knew who their MPs were, with more than half of them being able to nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.

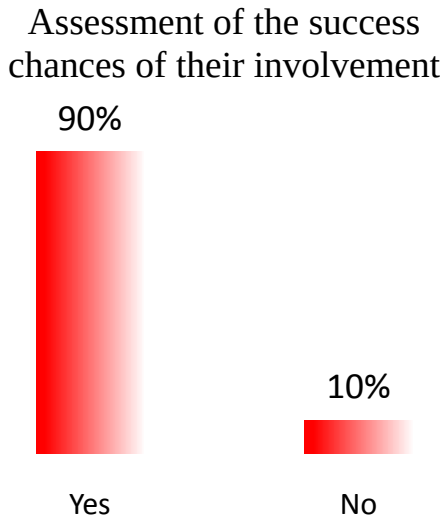
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 3.8 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 61% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.

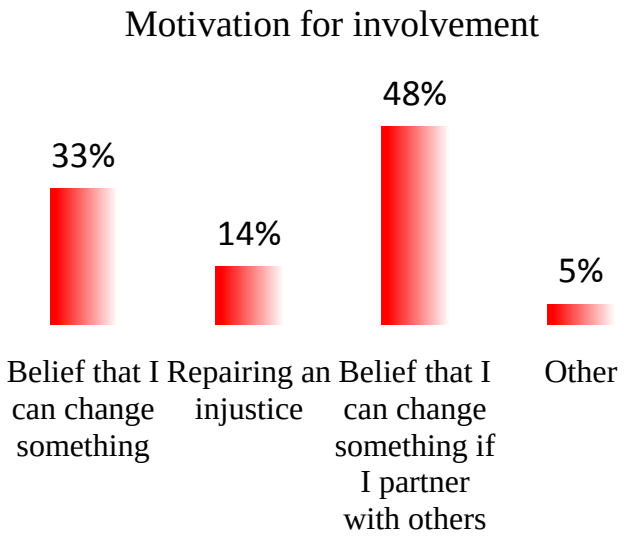
- Presidency came next in the line of confidence, with 41% declaring they had high or very high confidence in it, and an average score of 3.1 on a scale from 1 to 5.
- The survey reveals very little confidence in the political institutions, with the Parliament being poorly scored - 59% vesting little or very little confidence in the Parliament, with an average confidence score of 2 on a scale from 1 to 5; 65% had little or very little confidence in the Government.
- In what usefulness of institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3, and more than 40% assessing them as useful or very useful), it is worth noting that an important proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 33%, while the Government and the Parliament were assessed similarly by 24% and, respectively, 23%.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.2 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 71% found it useful or very useful.
- Among the criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 41%, results of programmes implemented - 52%, and membership of a political party - 4% of Brașov inhabitants.

Civic involvement over the last year in Brașov







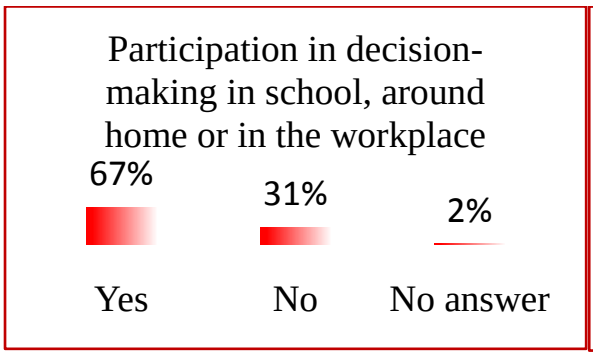


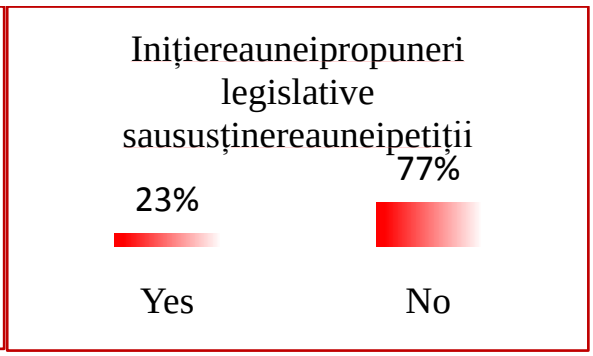
Cluj-Napoca

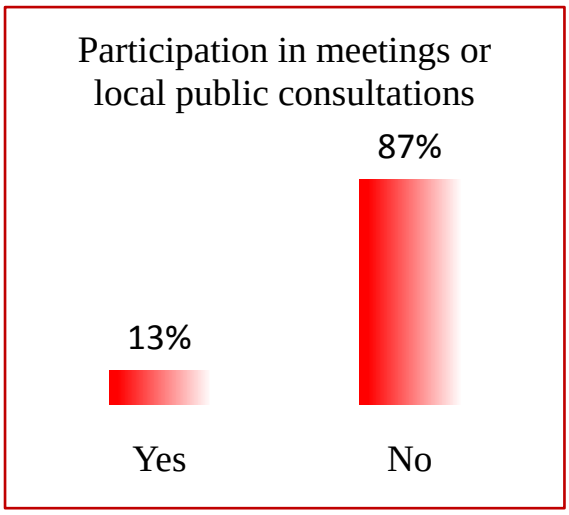
- Attitude of Cluj-Napoca inhabitants towards Roma ethnics indicated a strong differentiation therefrom, and points to an excluding behavior. 53% rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, while 33% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 46% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 39% would not be willing to give them any support whatsoever. To note that 34% declared they would help a refugee.

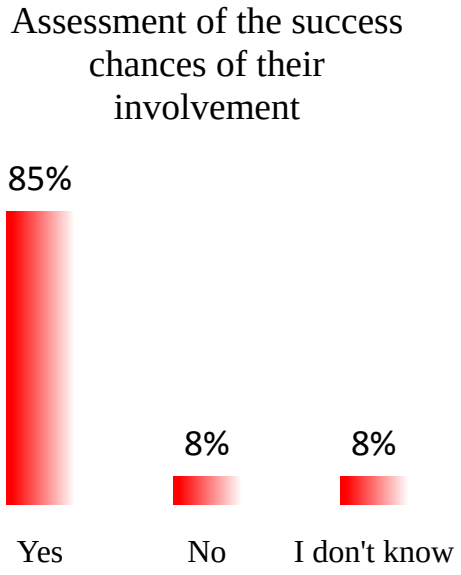
- Volunteering appears less on the citizens' agenda, with 60% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 22% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- A significant share (67%) declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 13% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. 23% declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Despite the general perception that Romanians are interested in politics, only 23% declared they were interested to a very high or high extent in politics, and 37% declared they involved in political debates.
- Alienation of citizens from the political environment is supported by the fact that only 10% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 28% declared they knew who their MPs were, with more than half of them being able to nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 3.5 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 51% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- Presidency came next in the line of confidence, with 34% declaring they had high or very high confidence in it, and an average score of 3 on a scale from 1 to 5.
- The survey reveals very little confidence in the fundamental institution of democracy, with the Parliament being poorly scored at 1.8 on a scale from 1 to 5. 68% vested little or very little confidence in the Parliament, and 52% had little or very little confidence in the Government, that collected 2.2 points on a scale from 1 to 5.
- In what usefulness of institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3, and more than 40% assessing them as useful or very useful - except for the Parliament with 39%), it is worth noting that an important proportion of them rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 32%, while the Government and was similarly by 22%.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.1 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 66% found it useful or very useful.
- Among the criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 38%, results of programmes implemented - 47%, professionalism - 4%, and membership of a political party - 2% of Cluj-Napoca inhabitants.

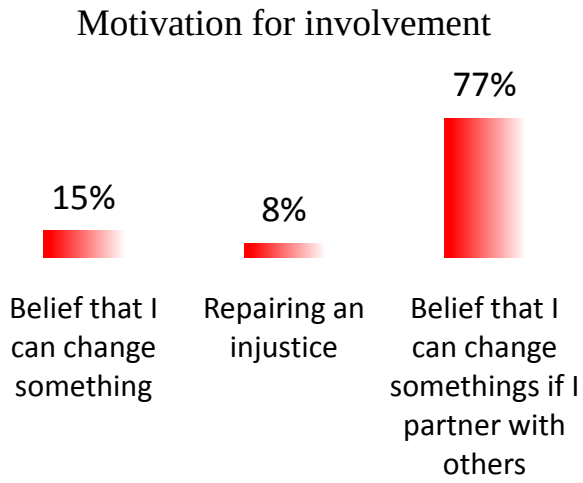
Civic involvement over the last year in Cluj-Napoca









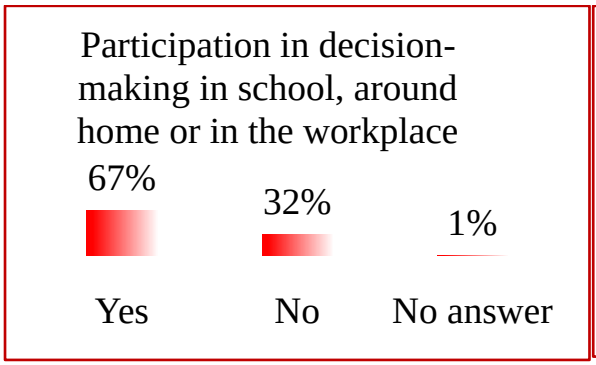


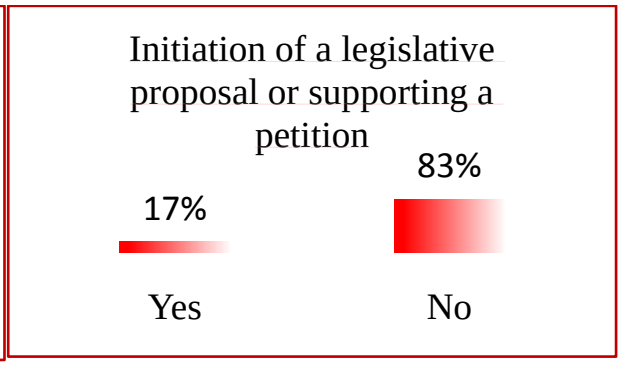
Constanța

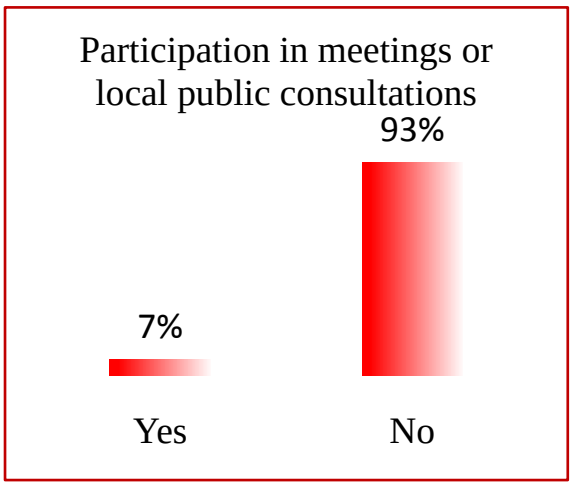
- Attitude of Constanța inhabitants towards Romanian citizens of Roma origin shows strong differentiation therefrom. An excluding attitude comes into shape: 49% rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 47% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 50% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 45% would not be willing to give them any support whatsoever. To note that 24% declared they would help a refugee.
- Volunteering appears less on the Constanța inhabitants' agenda, with 71% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 23% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- A significant share (67%) declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 7% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. 17% declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Despite the general perception that Romanians are interested in politics, only 17% declared they were interested to a very high or high extent in politics, and 36% declared they involved in political debates.
- The apparent apathy towards the political environment is supported by the fact that only 11% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament elected in the constituency in their locality. Although 15% declared at a previous question that they knew their MPs, more than half of them could nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 4 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 67% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The sociological inquiry reveals very little confidence in the Parliament, this institution being poorly scored at an average of 1.7, that is 68% had little or very little confidence in the Parliament, and 58% had little or very little confidence in the Government, that collected 2.2 points on a scale from 1 to 5.
- In what usefulness of institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above), it is worth noting that an important proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 34%. Church was considered of little or very little usefulness by 35% of respondents in Constanța.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.2, that is 74% found it useful or very useful.

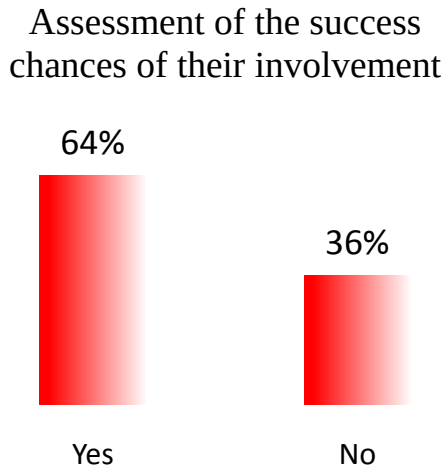
- Among the key criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 40%, results of programmes implemented - 55%.

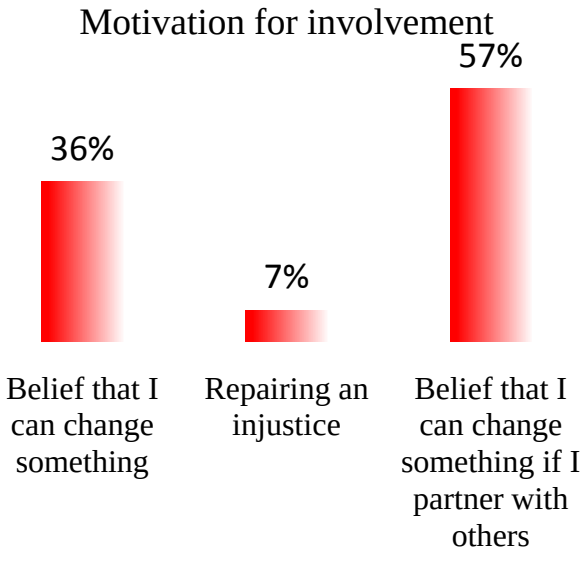
Civic involvement over the last year in Constanța







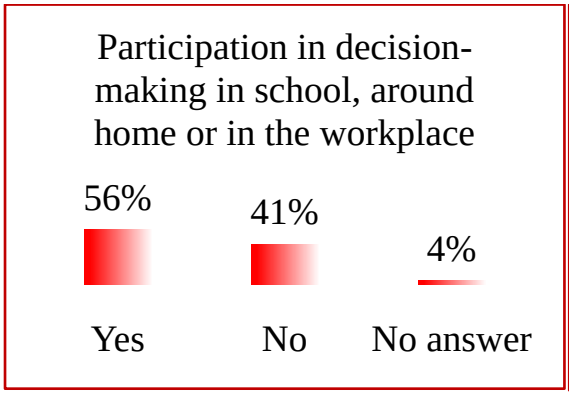


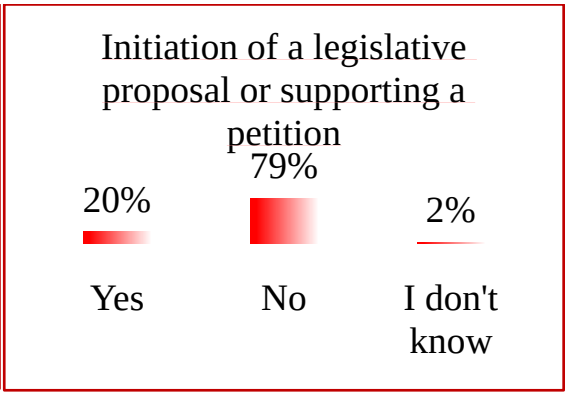


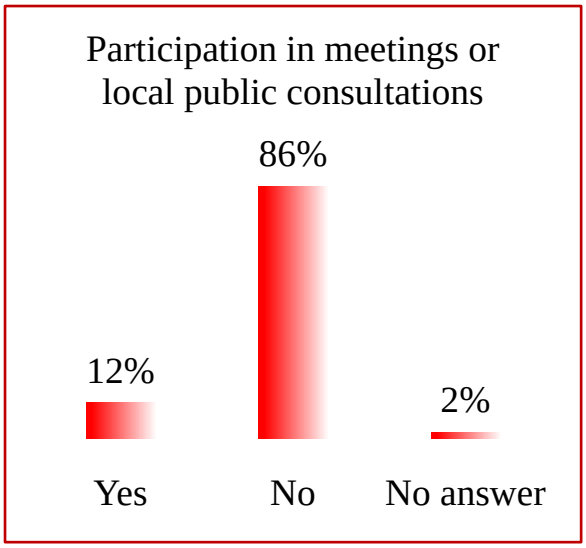
Timișoara

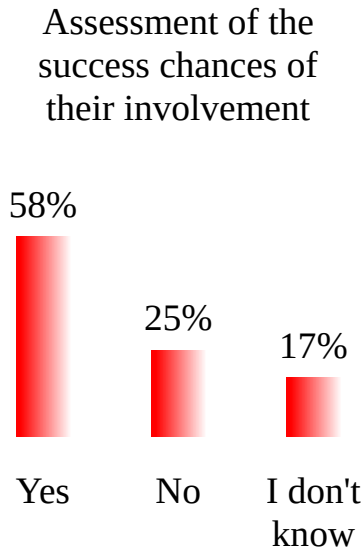
- Attitude of Cluj-Napoca inhabitants towards Roma ethnics indicated a strong differentiation therefrom, and points to an excluding behavior. 53% rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 35% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- Regarding refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 52% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 46% would not be willing to give them any support whatsoever. To note that 27% declared they would help a refugee.
- Volunteering appears less on the citizens' agenda, with 71% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 20% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- 56% declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 12% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. 20% declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Despite the general perception that Romanians are interested in politics, only 23% declared they were interested to a very high or high extent in politics, and 33% declared they involved in political debates.
- Alienation of citizens in Constanța from the political environment is supported by the fact that only 7% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 15% declared they knew who their MPs were. Additionally, more than half of them could nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 4 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 65% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The survey revealed indiscriminate lack of confidence in the key political institutions. The Parliament scored very poorly - average score of 2.1, with 59% having little or very little confidence in the Parliament. 31% of respondents had little or very little confidence in the Government, that collected 2.5 points on a scale from 1 to 5.
- In what usefulness of institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above), it is worth noting that a significant proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 25%.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.3, that is 76% found it useful or very useful.
- Among the key criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 47%, results of programmes implemented - 46%, and membership of a political party - 1% of respondents.

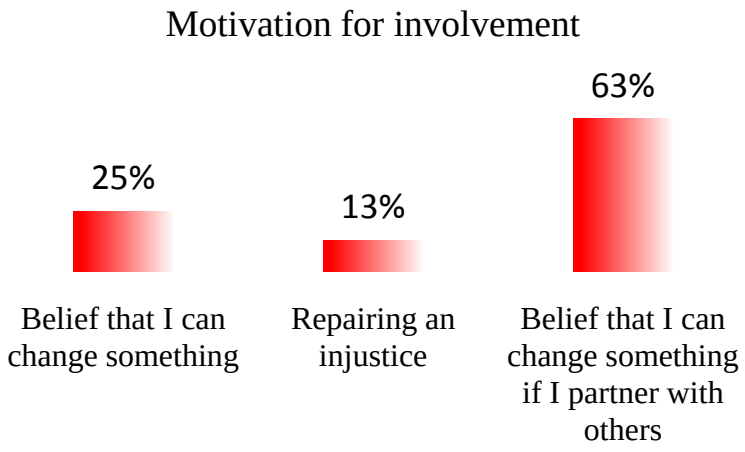
Civic involvement over the last year in Timișoara









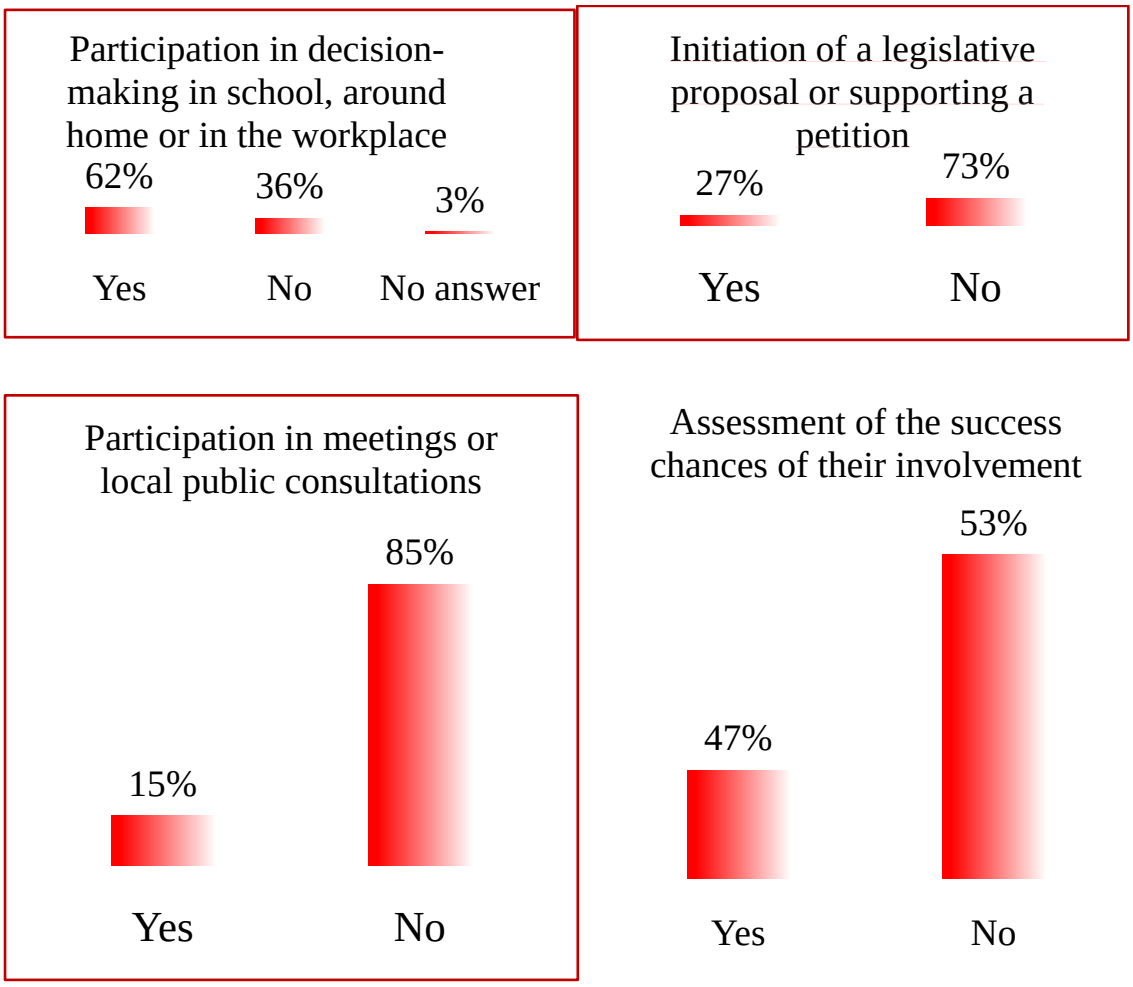


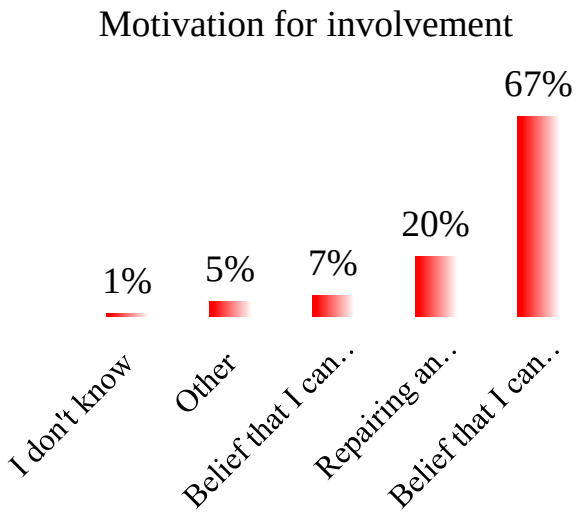
Craiova

- Attitude of Craiova inhabitants towards Roma is strongly focused on a We/You differentiation. 55% rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma, and 40% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 54% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 42% would not give them any support whatsoever. On the other hand, 22% declared they would help a refugee.
- Volunteering appears less on the citizens' agenda, with 82% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 12% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- 62% declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, and involvement in matters connected with legislation or administration reveals an relatively active behavior: 15% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities, whereas 27% of respondents declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Interest for politics is relatively low, with only 25% reporting a very high or high interest in politics. 36% got involved in political debates.
- Alienation of citizens from the political environment is supported by the fact that only 15% of respondents could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, while 21% declared they knew who their MPs were, with more than half of them being able to nominate elected representatives of other localities or of their own.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 3.9 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 61% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The survey reveals very little confidence in the Parliament, that scored very poorly - average score of 2, with 63% having little or very little confidence in the Parliament.
- In what usefulness of political institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3 and around 60% assessing them as useful or very useful), around 20% thought that the Parliament, the Government and the Presidency were of little or very little use.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.3, that is 76% found it useful or very useful.
- Civil society organizations were not reported to enjoy either high confidence, or overwhelming usefulness. 36% of respondents had no confidence in them, while 16% cannot voice an opinion on their usefulness.
- Church is not trusted by 44% of respondents, and 43% rated its usefulness as high or very high.

- Among the key criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 49%, results of programmes implemented - 32%, and membership of a political party - 9% of respondents.

Civic involvement over the last year in Craiova



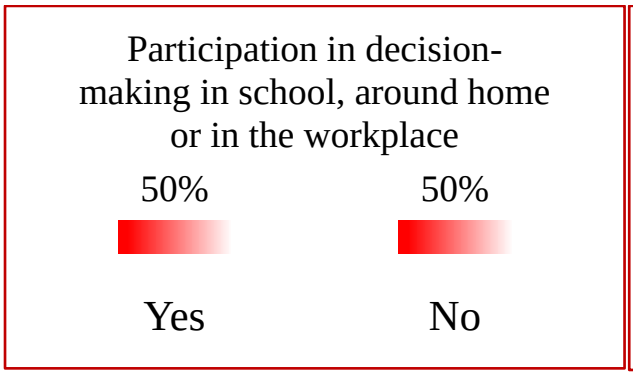


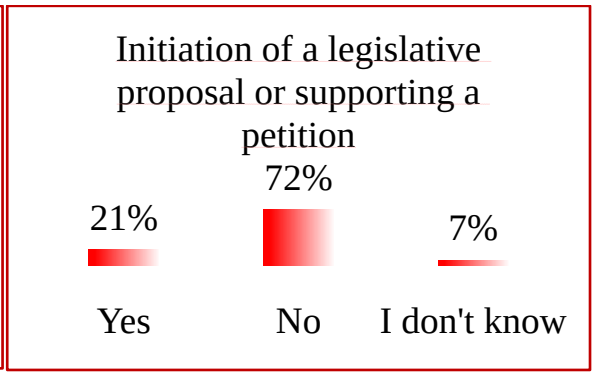
Giurgiu

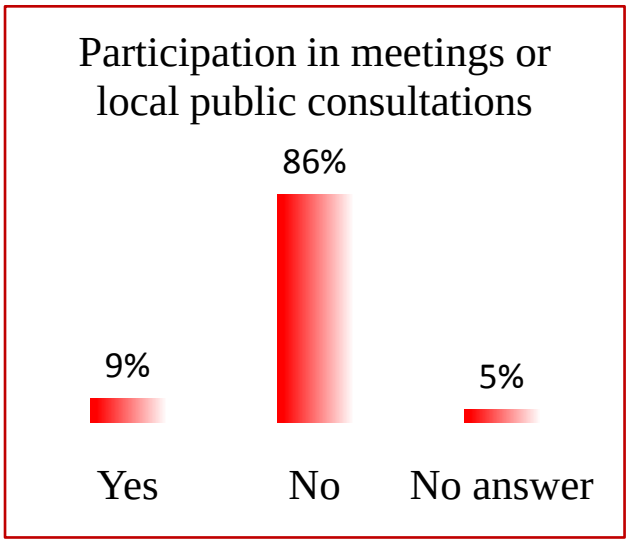
- Giurgiu inhabitants' attitude towards Roma follows the national average and shows strong differentiation therefrom, with 46% of them rejecting the idea of any family relationship with a Roma. The fact that 40% did not agreed to a high or very high extent with the scenario included in the questionnaire, that is having a Roma neighbor, shows that, while a differentiation behavior of the We-You type is identifiable, this does not necessarily implies also an excluding one.
- Positioning towards may be assessed as rather negative, with 61% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 44% would not give them any support whatsoever. Nevertheless, 29% declared they would help a refugee.
- In what volunteering is concerned, 62% declared that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 18% stated that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- 50% of respondents declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 9% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. Nevertheless, 21% of respondents declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Interest for politics is relative high, with only 37% reporting a very high or high interest in politics, and 39% involving in political debates.
- 17% of respondents declared they knew who their MPs were, but only 8% could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, which points to an alienation of the citizens from the political environment.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 4.4 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 69% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The survey reveals very little confidence in the Parliament, that scored very poorly - average score of 1.8 on a scale from 1 to 5. 67% had little or very little confidence in the Parliament.
- In what usefulness of political institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting their importance for most respondents (average scores above 3 and more than 40% assessing them as useful or very useful - except for the Parliament), it is worth noting that an important proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 25%.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.5 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 75% found it useful or very useful.
- Civil society organizations were not reported to enjoy either high confidence, or significant usefulness. Additionally, 29% of respondents had no confidence in them, while 27% had no opinion on their usefulness.
- Church is trusted by 57% of respondents, and 62% of respondents rated its usefulness as high or very low.

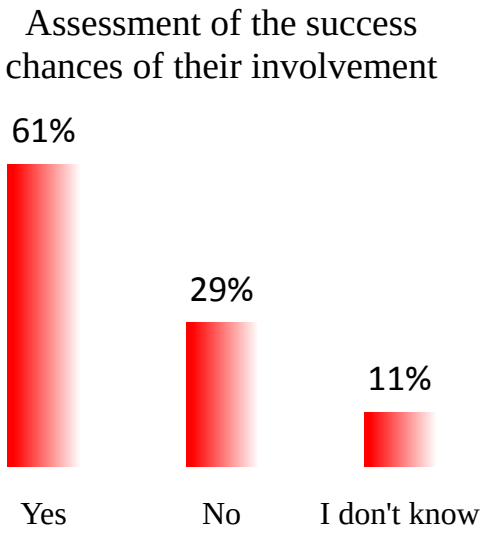
- The key criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayorwere keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 42%, results of programmes implemented - 44%, and membership of a political party - 2% of Giurgiu inhabitants.

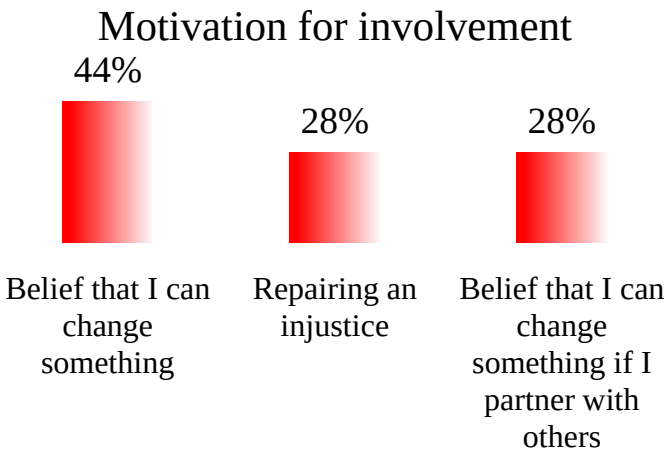
Civic involvement over the last year in Giurgiu









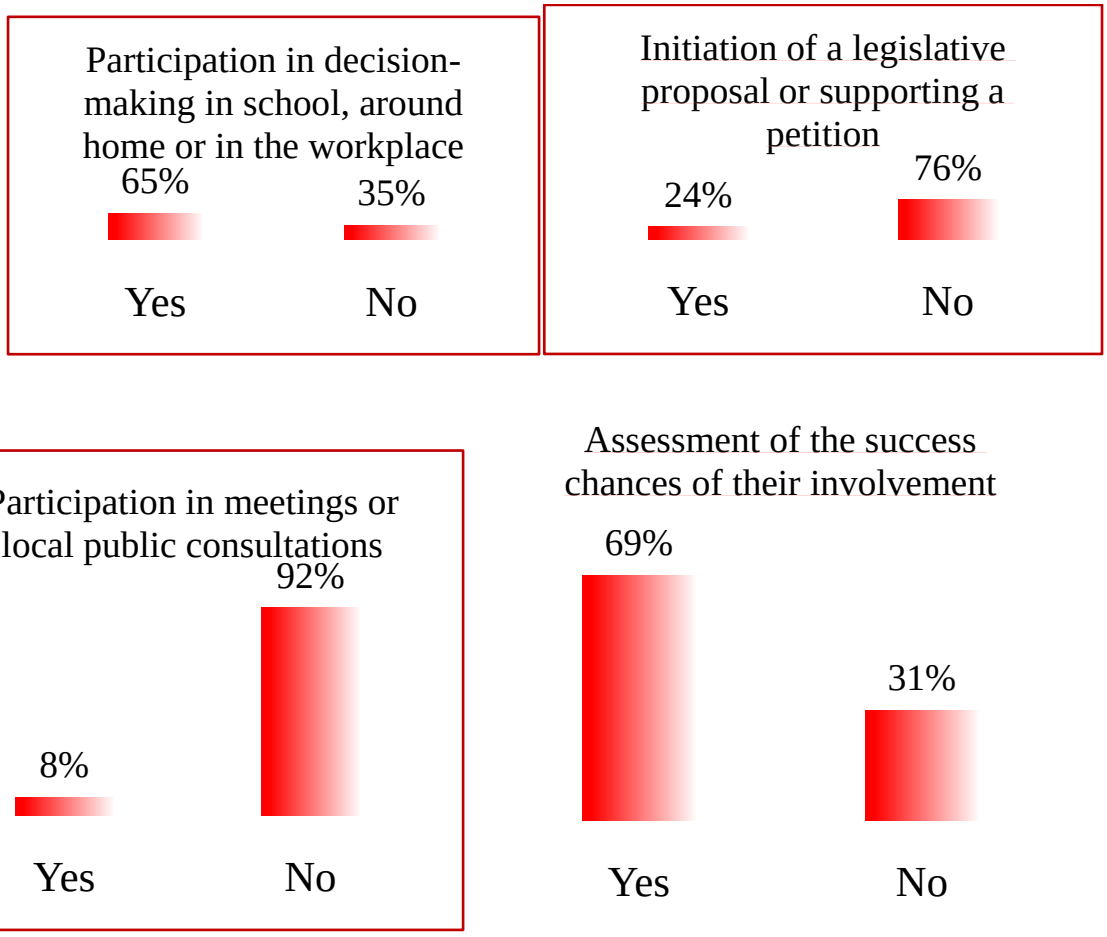


Piatra Neamț

- Regarding how Romanian citizens of Roma origin are perceived, the inquiry surfaced a strong differentiation and exclusion. 55% of respondents rejected the idea of any family relationship with a Roma in the community, while 30% did not agree with having a Roma neighbor.
- When it comes to refugees, the attitude is rather negative, with 57% of respondents disagreeing with having a refugee neighbor, and 48% would not give them any support whatsoever. Nevertheless, 25% declared they would help a refugee.
- Interest in volunteering was very low, with 75% stating that they were not involved in any volunteering over the past year, and 16% stating that they were part in no more than 5 volunteering activities.
- 65% of respondents declared they got involved in decision-making at work, around home and in school, but involvement in matters in connected with legislation or administration rather showed a withdrawal of citizens from community life: only 8% declared they participated in public consultations of local authorities. Nevertheless, 24% of respondents declared they still signed a petition to address a local problem.
- Interest for politics is relatively low, with only 22% reporting a very high or high interest in politics. 46% got involved in political debates.
- 27% of respondents declared they knew who their MPs were, but only 18% could name at least one Member of Parliament that represented their locality, which situation is significantly different from most of the cities under review, when not more than 8% could name a MP that represented their locality.
- Of the institutions under review, the Army appeared first in the confidence ranking, with an average of 3.9 on a scale from 1 to 5, that is 58% of respondents declared they had very high or high confidence in it.
- The survey reveals very little confidence in the Parliament, that scored very poorly - average score of 2.1 on a scale from 1 to 5. 58% had little or very little confidence in the Parliament.
- In what usefulness of political institutions is concerned, despite the scores highlighting acknowledgment and importance thereof for most respondents (average scores above 3 on a scale from 1 to 5, and more than 40% assessing them as useful or very useful - except for the Parliament with 39%), it is worth noting that an important proportion of respondents rated the Parliament as of little or very little usefulness - 36%.
- The Army was considered the most useful of the State's institutions, with a score of 4.2, that is 69% found it useful or very useful.
- Civil society organizations were not reported to enjoy either high confidence, or overwhelming usefulness, with 48% of respondents having no confidence in them, and 29% rating them as of little or very little use.

- Church is not trusted by 40% of respondents, and 44% recognized their usefulness as high or very high.
- Among the key criteria applied to assess the performance of the Prime Minister or the Mayor, we found keeping the promises made in the election campaign - 53%, results of programmes implemented - 35%, and membership of a political party - 5% of respondents.

Civic involvement over the last year in Piatra Neamț



V. *Civil society* dimension

Civil society is formed of voluntarily established formal and informal groups that underpin a functional democracy. Civil society organizations are independent from the State and its institutions, and counterbalance its coercive institutions.

Civil society organizations get involved in the community, as well as in decision-making. The Barometer aimed to assess *Civil society* dimension and considered a concept that described formal and informal associative structures that declared themselves apolitical and were neither forms nor parts of

public institutions or the business environment. The substance of our research relied on the Anglo-Saxon model of the concept, that is, in general terms, civil society refers to those organizations and structures that act in between the State and its coercive institutions, the business environment and the family. Under such circumstances, civil society includes not-for-profit organizations, social organizations, charity organization, trade unions and employers' associations, social movements or informal groups of initiative - broadly, forms of participation in the community life.

5.1. Methodology and composite indicators

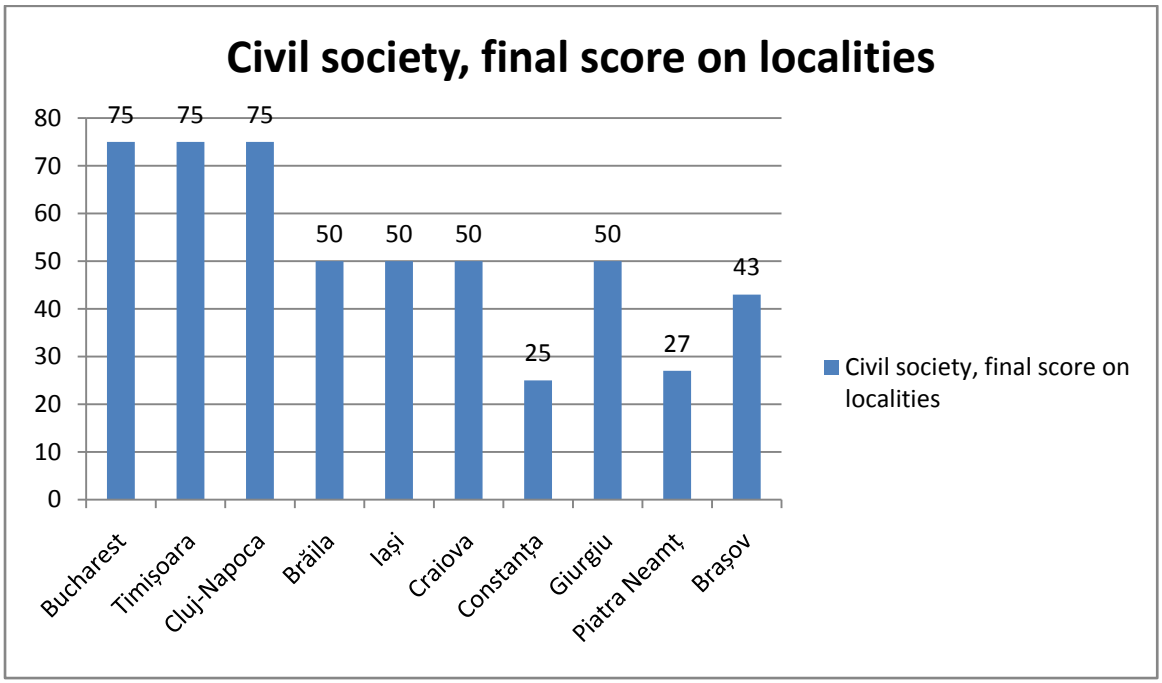
For the purpose of this survey, the group of independent experts considered that the new organizations of the civil society were more relevant for the quality of democracy than the traditional ones. Thus, to asses this dimension at local level, a database of 360 new-type organizations of the civil society in all the localities covered by the Barometer was built. The research universe was formed based on the National Register of Organizations, Foundations and Federations, as updated in March 2016. The database built from the register was filtered according to the following criteria: active website/Facebook account; actions/projects implemented over the last 6 month. In the next stage, the filtered database was left with 300 organizations that were included in two categories: new-type modern organizations and traditional organizations. The third stage consisted in conducting a sociological inquiry on a representative sample at national level and for each locality included in the Barometer. It tested civic involvement of citizens in each of the 10 cities, as follows: membership of a civil society organization, characteristics and degree of civic involvement over the last year, and citizens' perception of the social society.

In the theoretical model employed, the modern organizations advocate protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms, democracy strengthening or fostering civic participation. These organizations act as watchdogs in community matters, feminism, environmental protection, rights of the patients or the persons with disabilities. The second category includes the traditional organizations of the civil society, that were initially measured against the new-type civic organizations in the first Barometer that covered the period 2012-2013. The two types should not be seen in contradiction, but as completing each other. While the traditional civil society strengthens the social links and fosters social cohesion around social institutions, modern civil society fosters citizens' participation in decisions by participation in public consultation, and makes proposals of topics for the public agenda based on their advocacy efforts and the rapid reactions they can produce given the poor efficiency at political level and of public institutions. Of the traditional civil society organizations, we list trade unions, women's associations and foundations (excluding those promoting gender equality), ethnic organizations, cultural associations, guilds, sport associations or fan-clubs. LDB methodology scored high the localities where the new civil

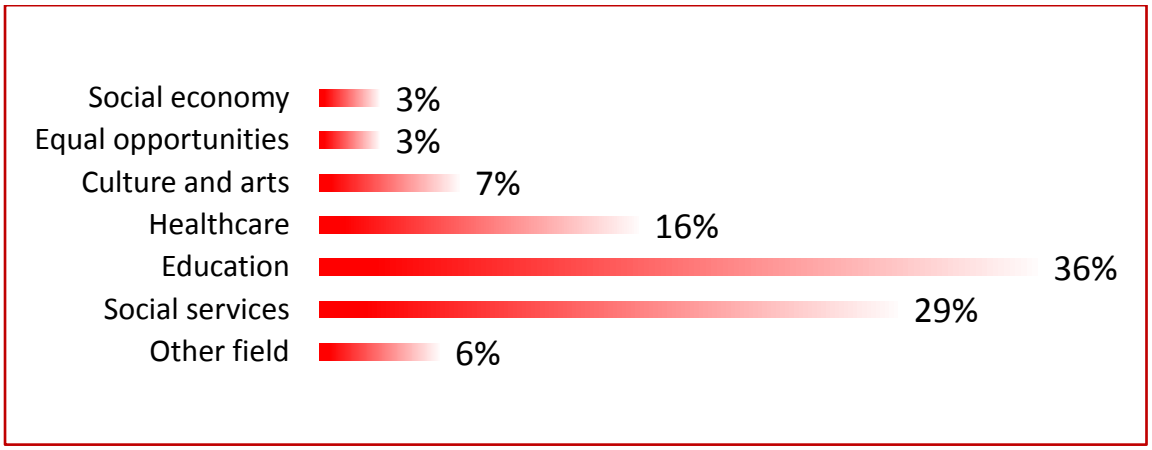
society was more active and citizens declared themselves, to a higher extent, members of NGOs. Thus, in the two broader categories, organizations were further regrouped in the following sub-categories:

Traditional civil society	**New-type civil society/civic organizations**
Trade unions	Protection of fundamental rights
Women's associations and foundations	Democracy development/strengthening
Ethnic organizations	Protection of women's rights
Employers' associations	Protection of patients' rights
Craftsmen's associations or traditional guilds	Protection of sexual minorities' rights
Crafts	Protection of the rights of people in distress
Sport associations	Landlords' associations
Fan-clubs	Community associations
	Social services
	Youth organizations

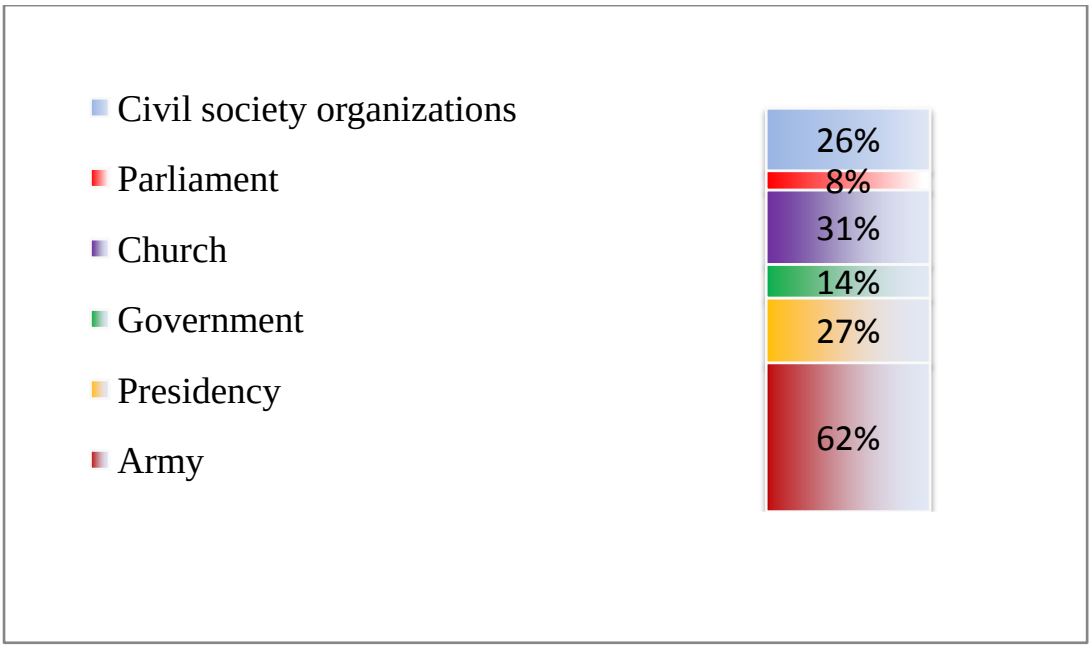
5.2 **Overall scores, on localities**



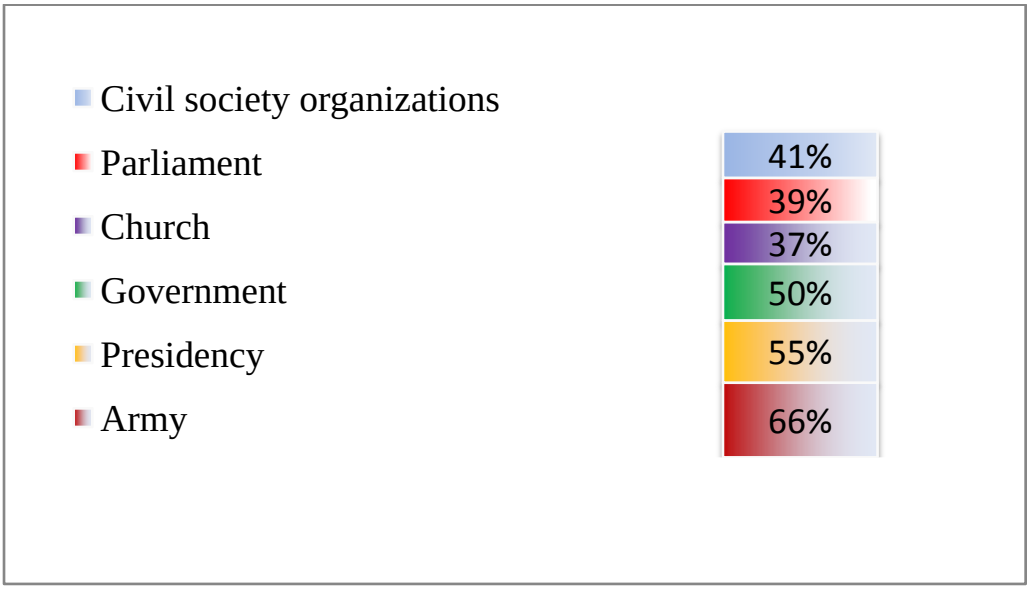
Civil society in *Bucharest*



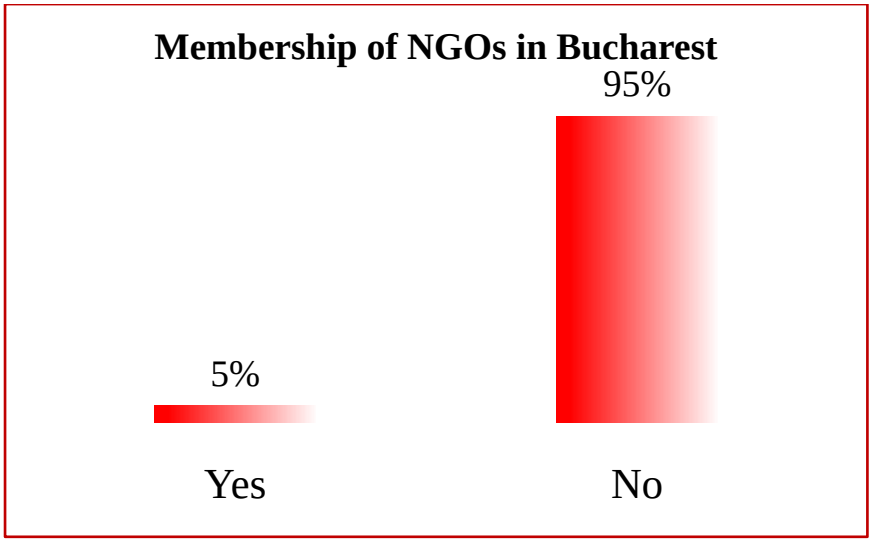
Prevalence of new-type civil society in Bucharest



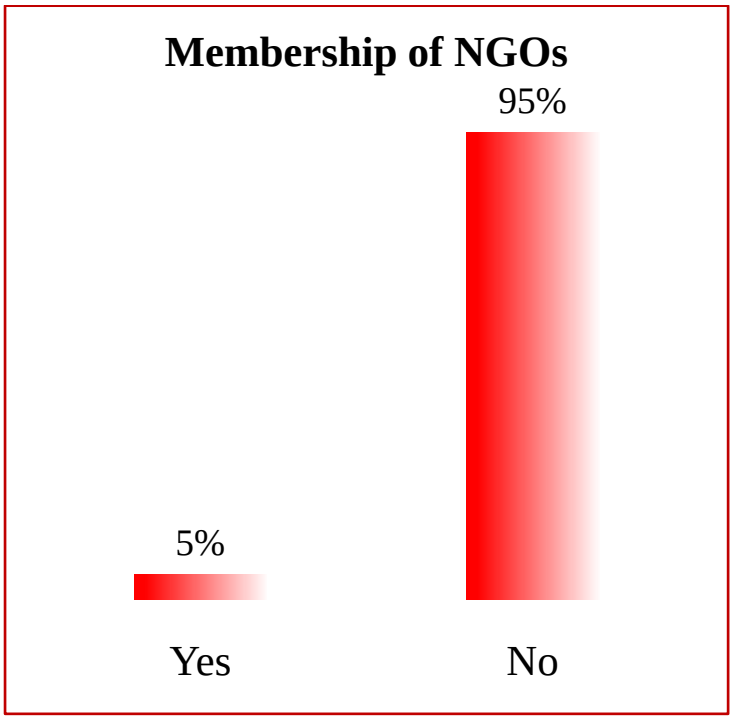
Confidence of Bucharest inhabitants in civil society as compared to other institutions and organizations

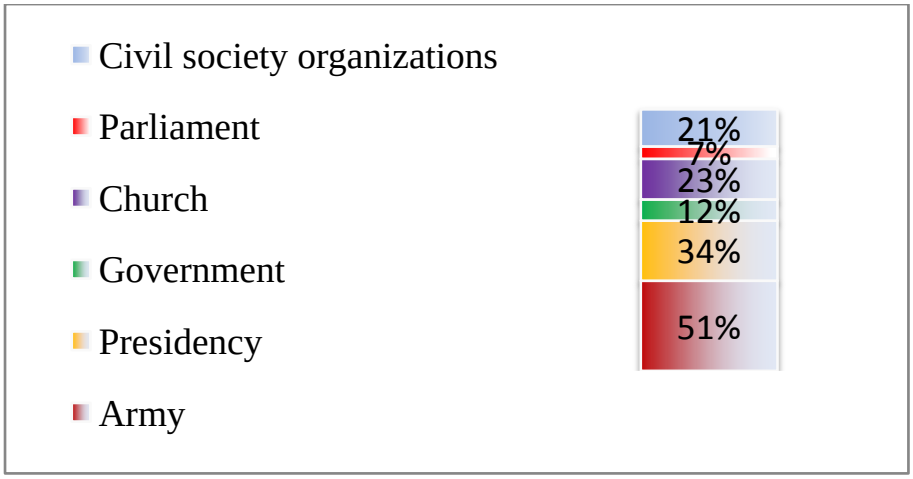


Perception of Bucharest inhabitants of the usefulness of civil society as compared to other institutions

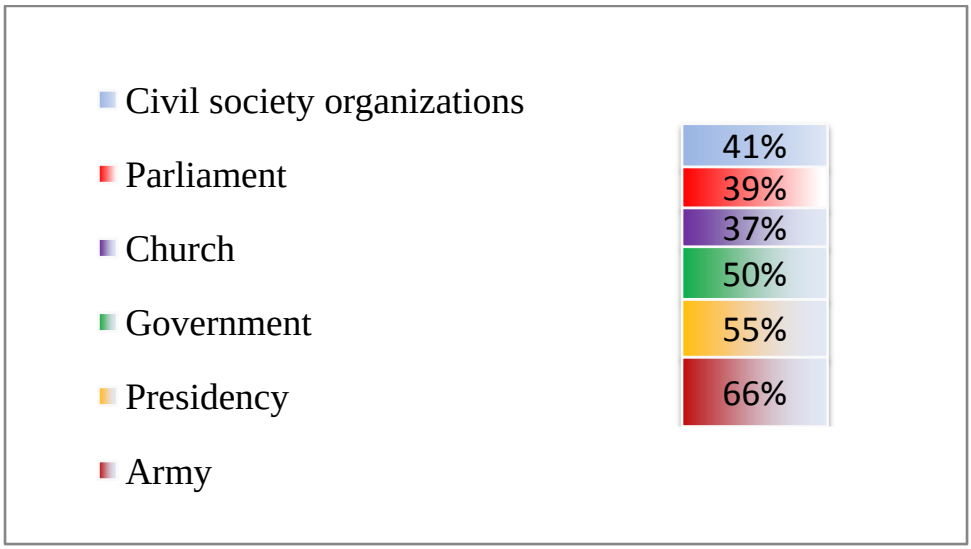


Civil society in *Cluj-Napoca*



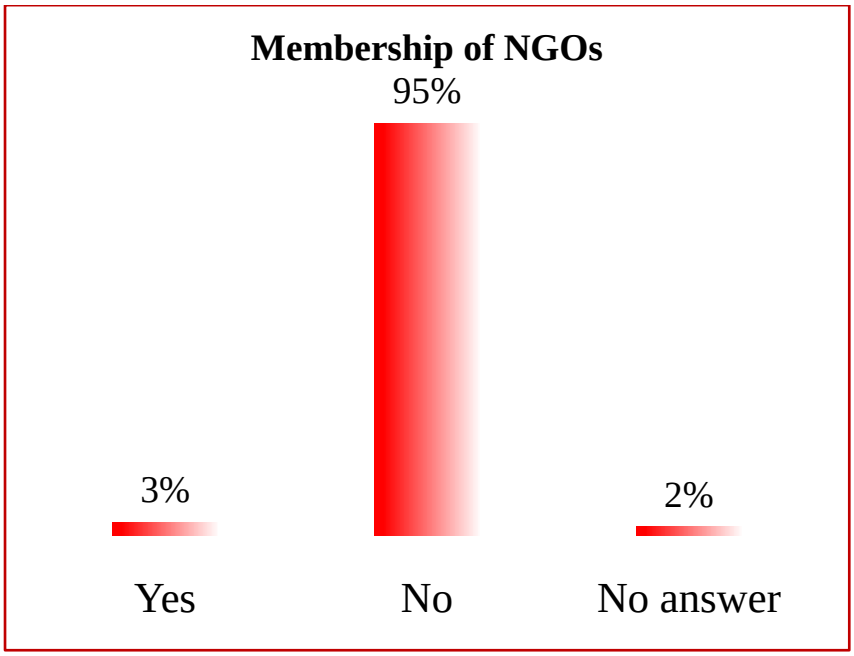


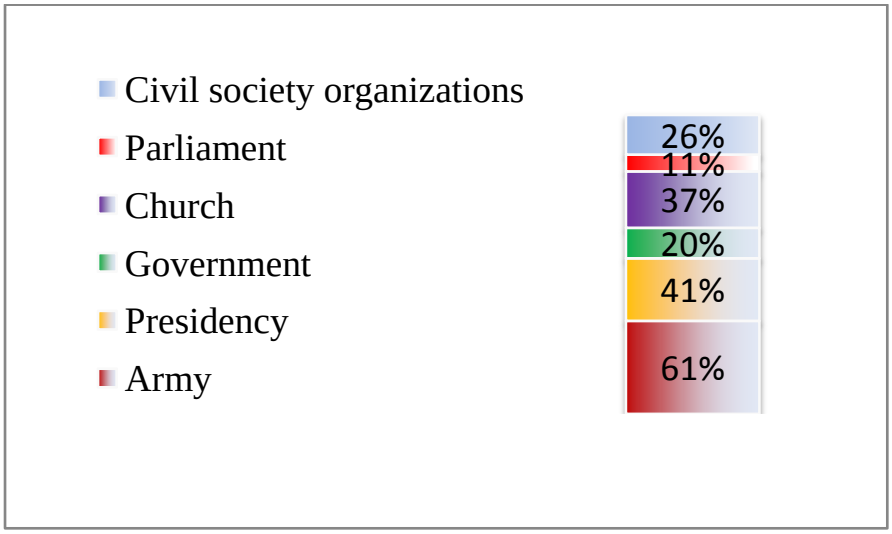
Confidence of Cluj-Napoca inhabitants in civil society as compared to other institutions and organizations



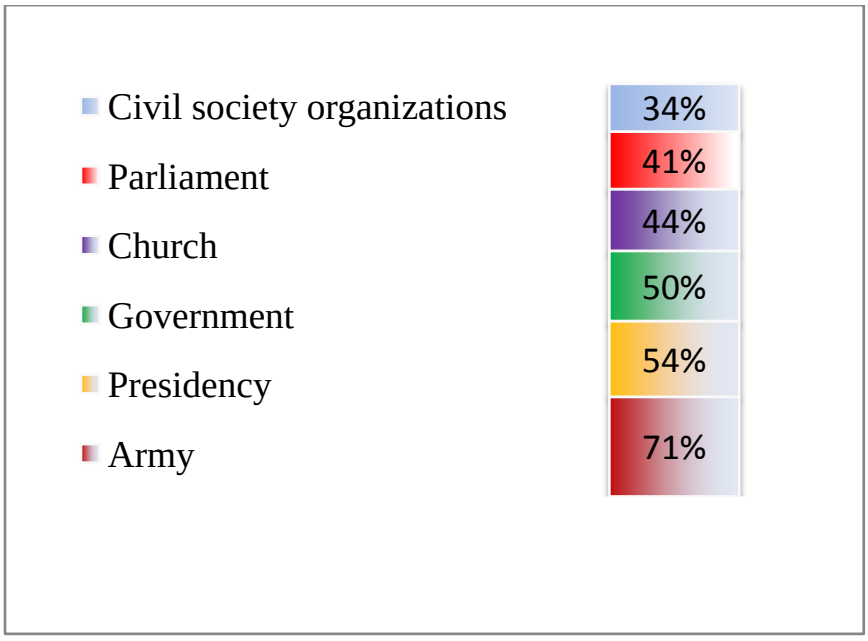
Opinions on the usefulness of civil society in Cluj-Napoca

Civil society in *Brașov*





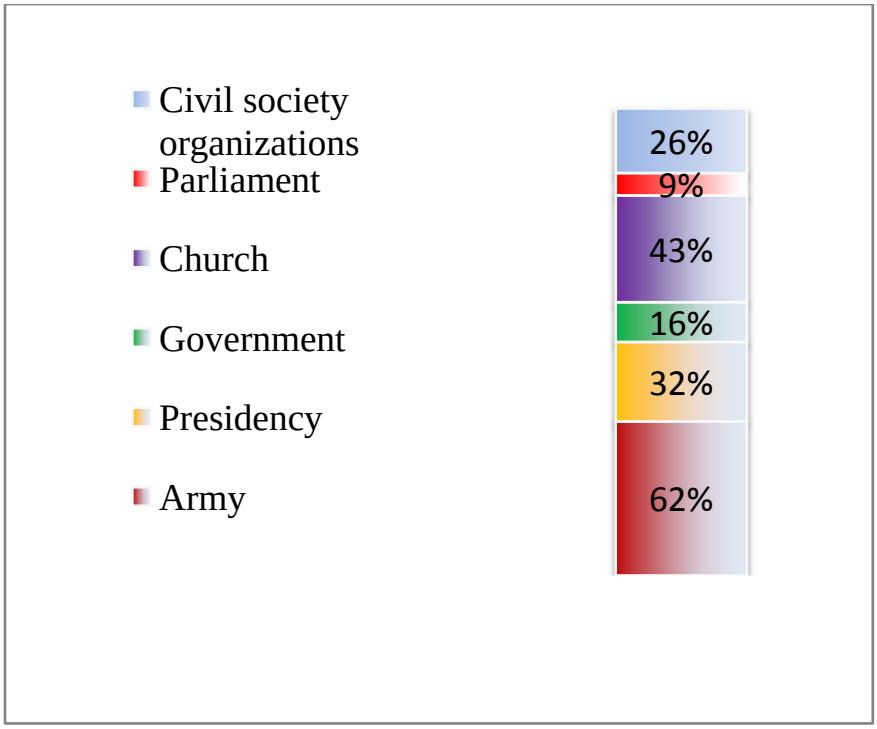
Confidence in civil society as compared to institutions in Brașov



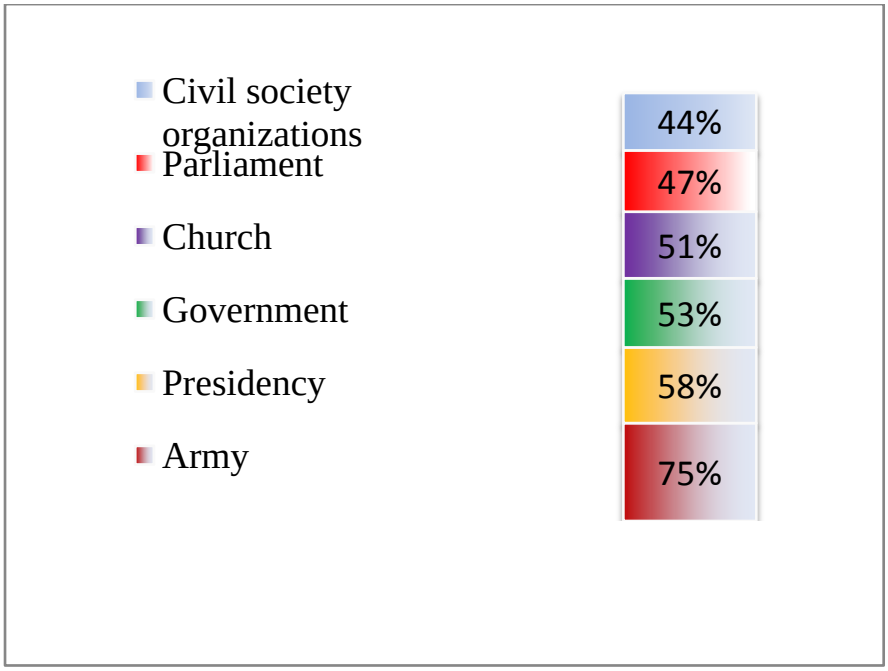
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Brașov

Civil society in *Iași*



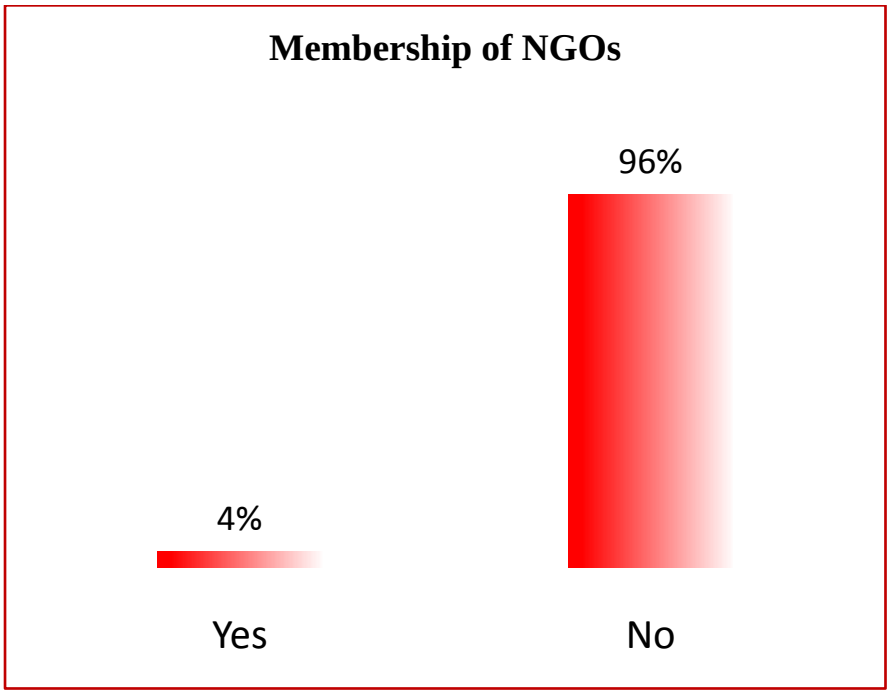


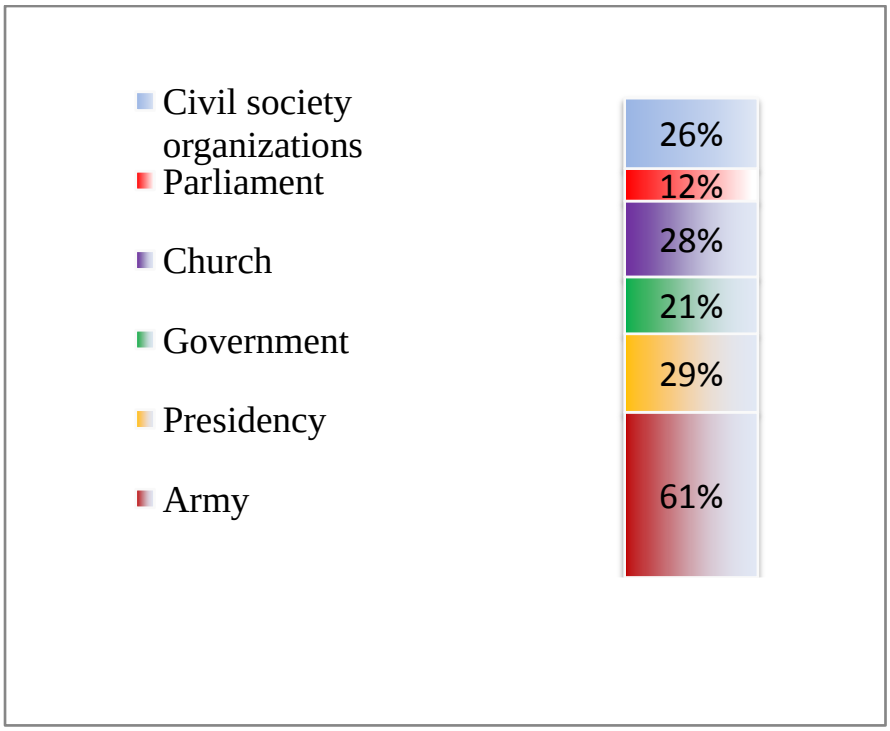
Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Iași



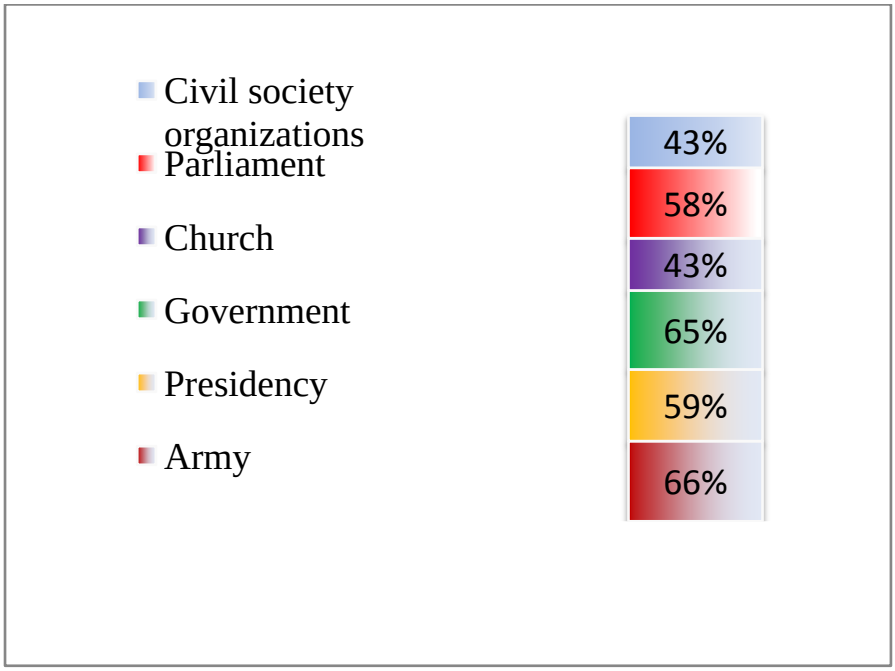
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Iași

Civil society in *Craiova*



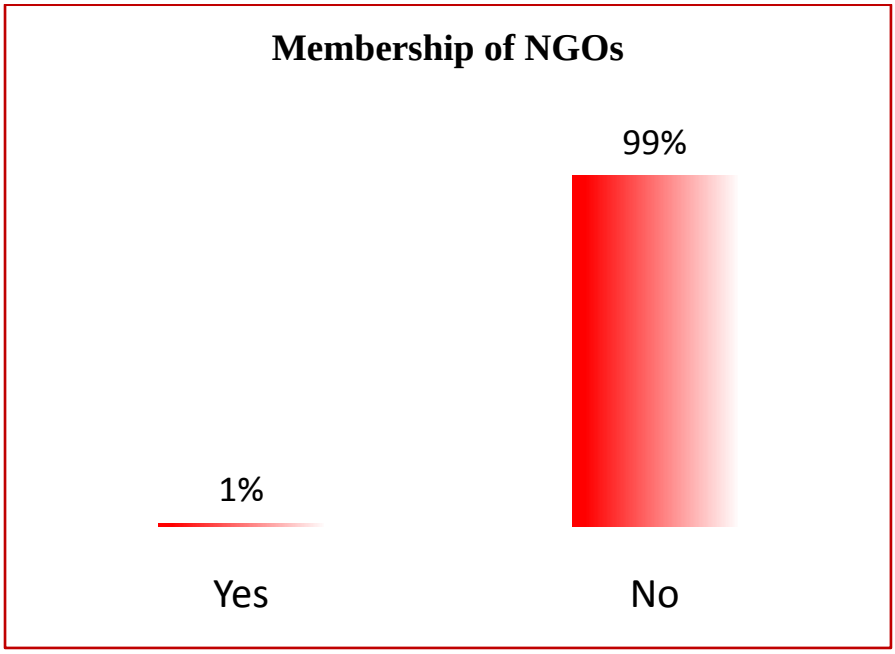


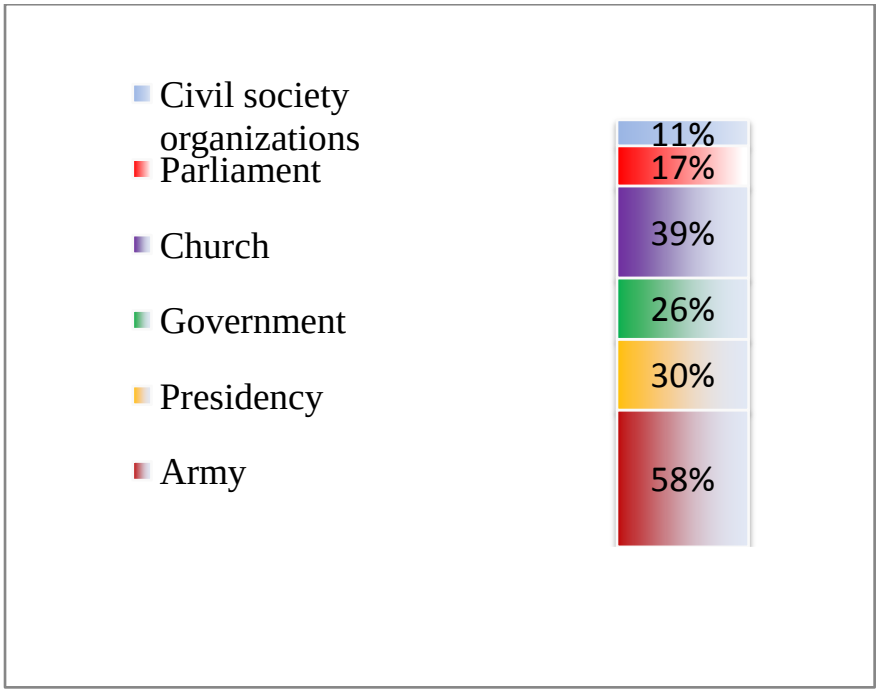
Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Craiova



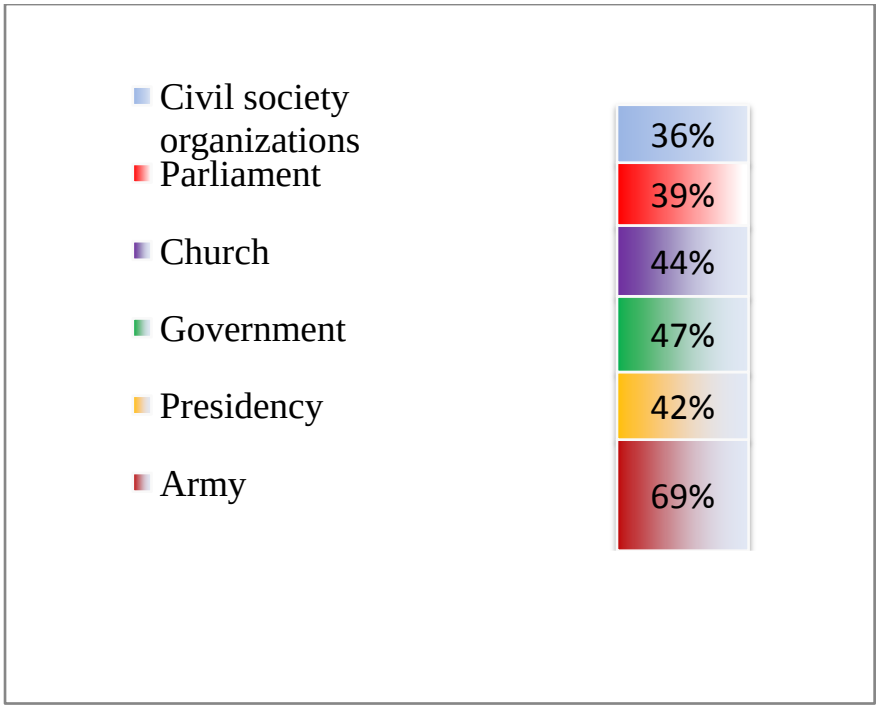
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Craiova

Civil society in *Piatra Neamț*



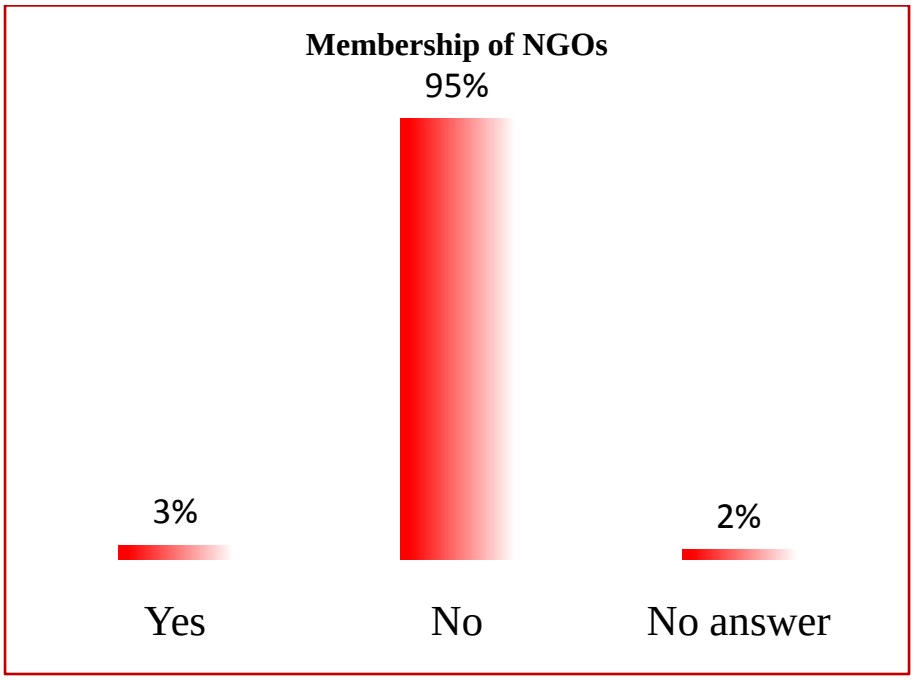


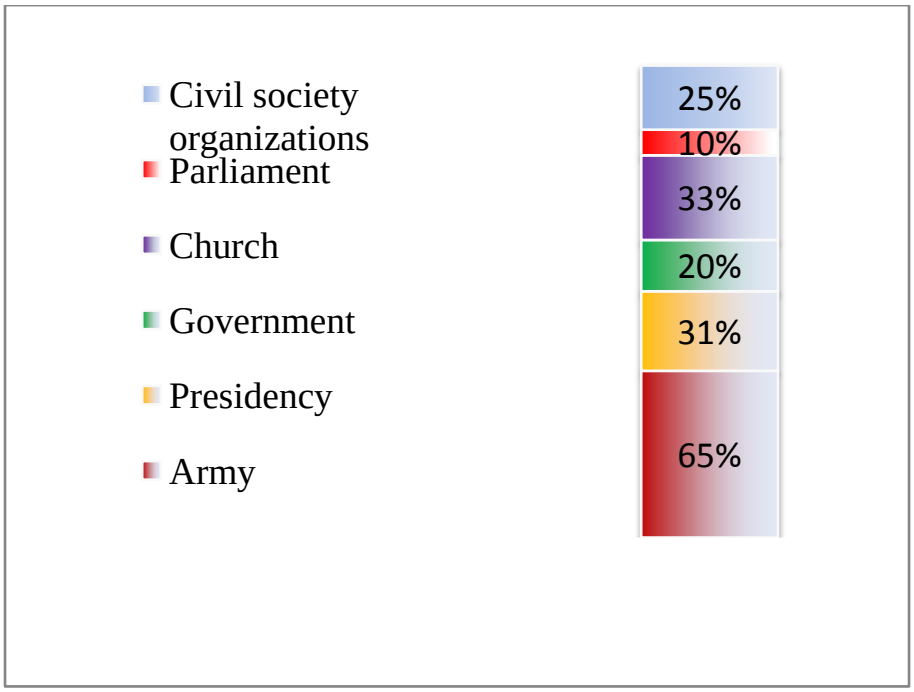
Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Piatra Neamț



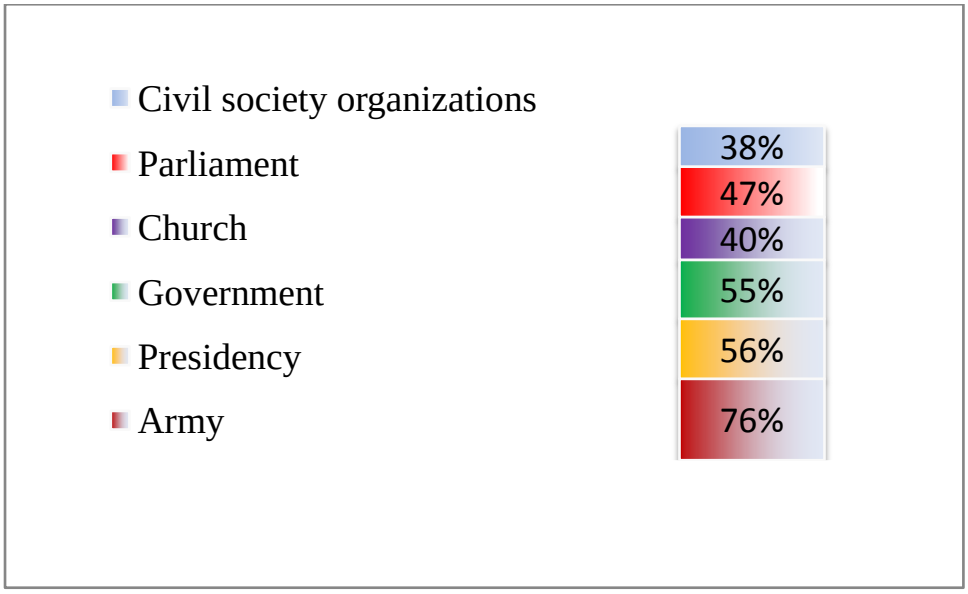
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Piatra Neamț

Civil society in *Timișoara*



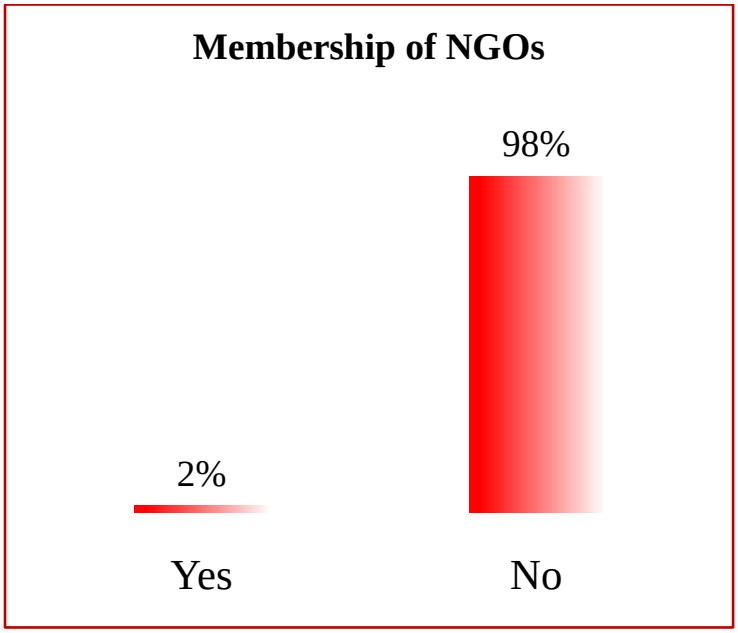


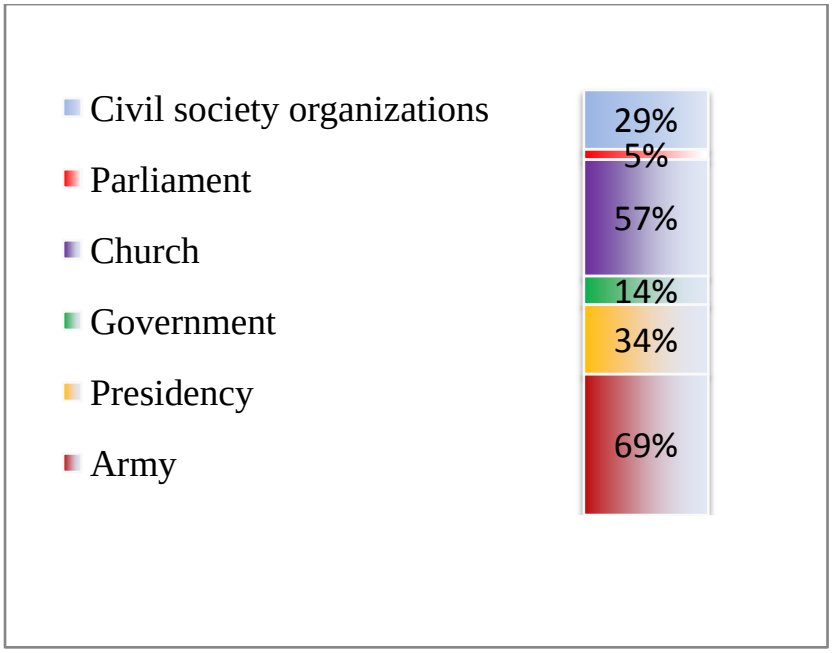
Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Timișoara



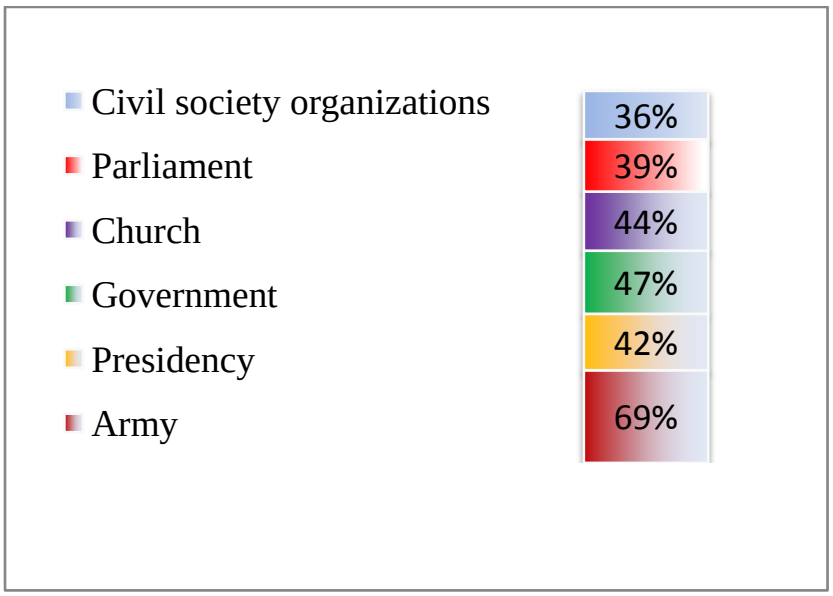
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Timișoara

Civil society in *Giurgiu*



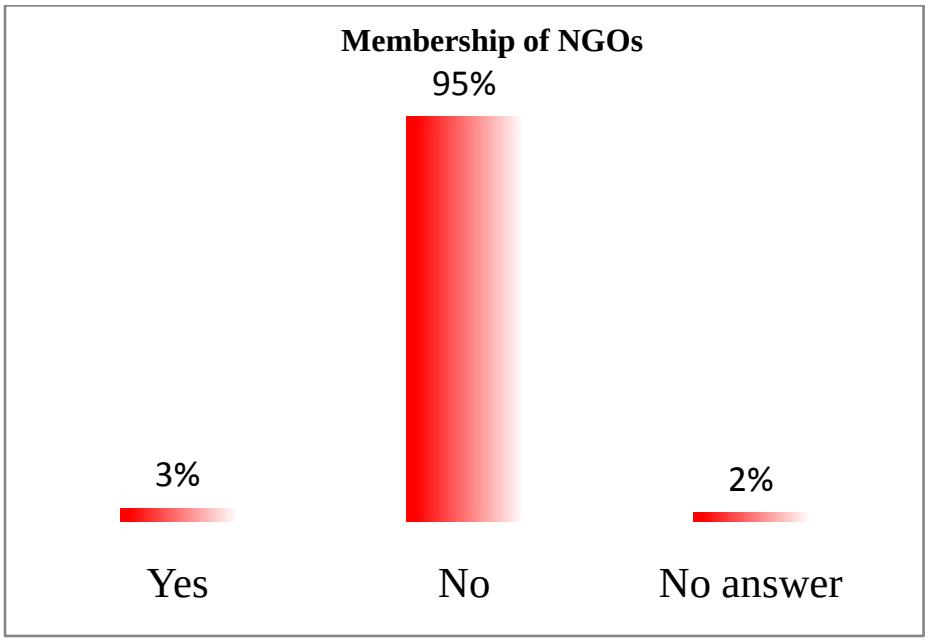


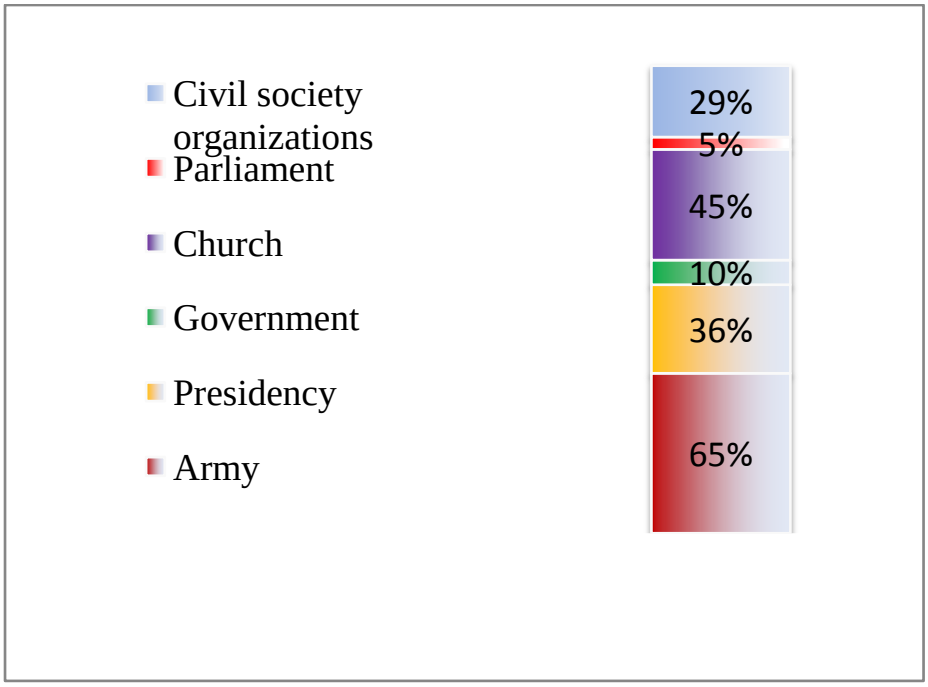
Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Giurgiu



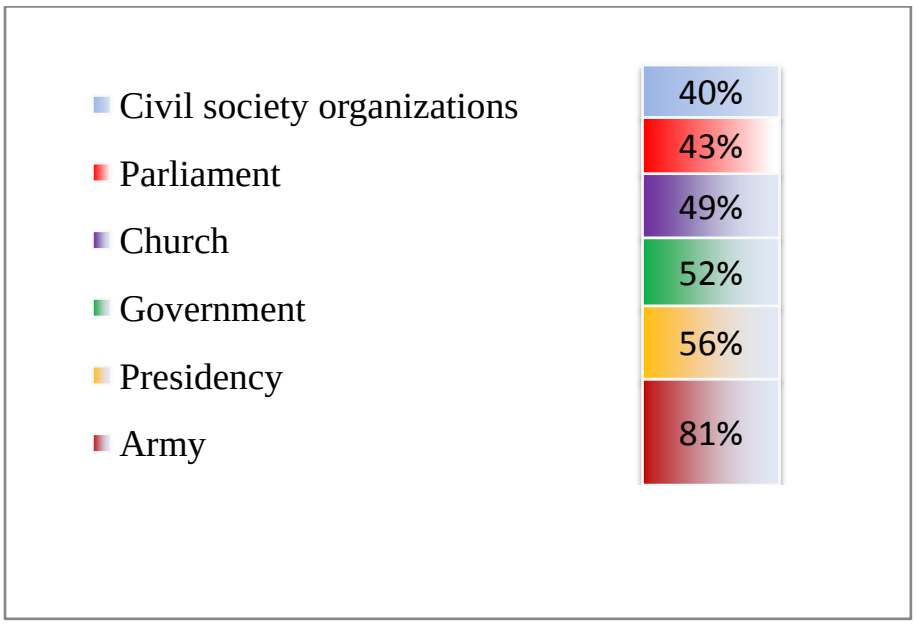
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Giurgiu

Civil society in *Brăila*



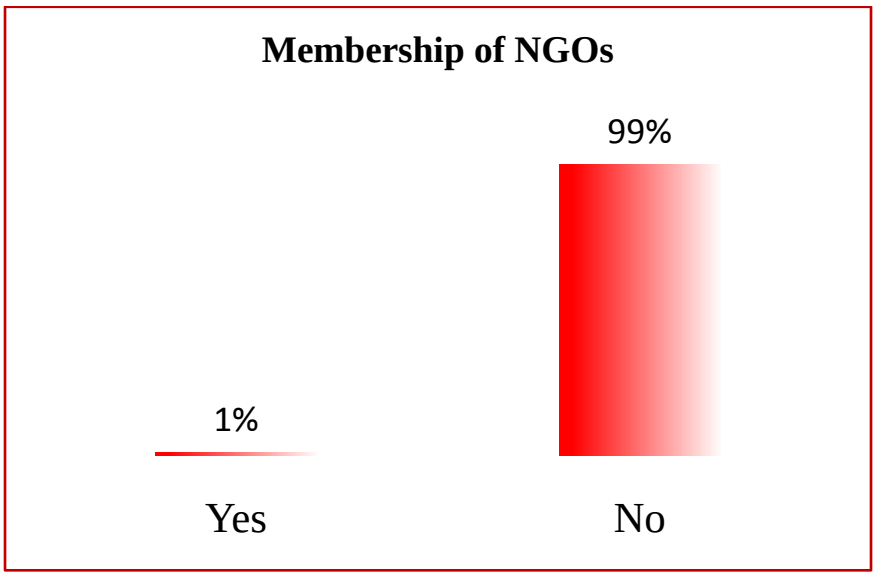


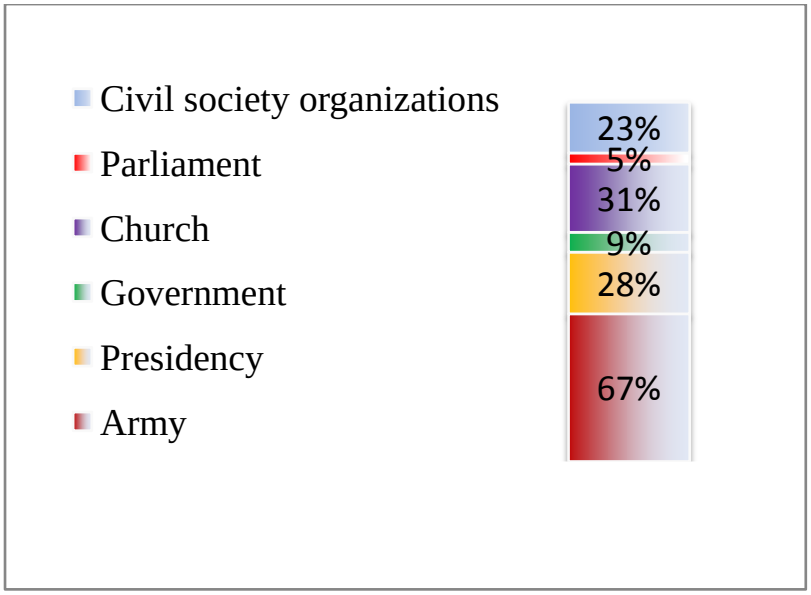
Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Brăila



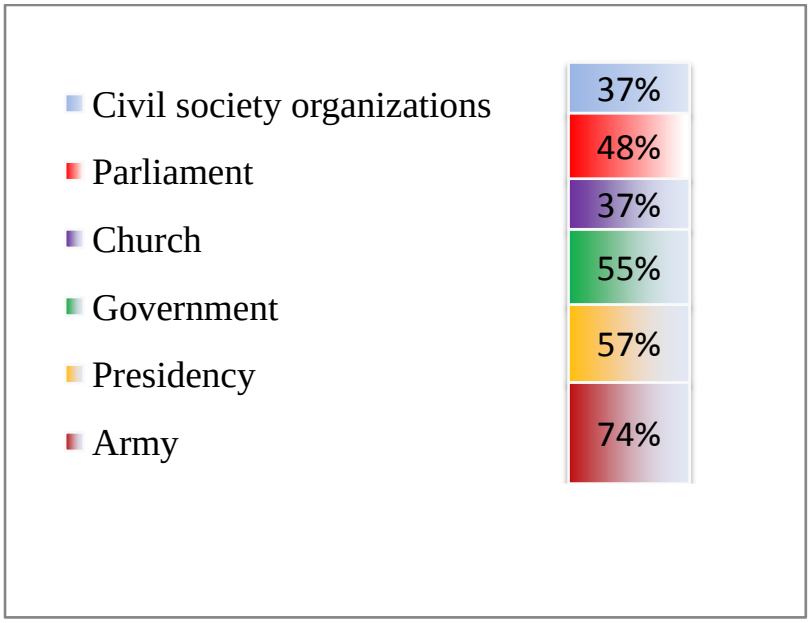
Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Brăila

Civil society in *Constanța*



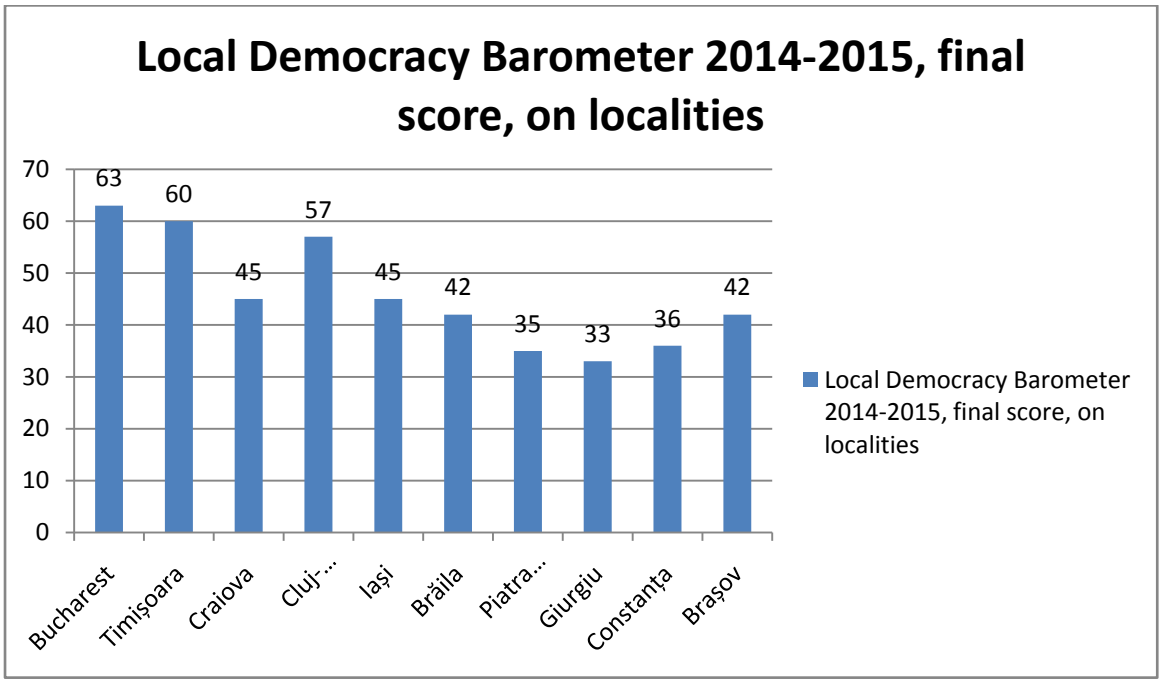


Confidence in new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Constanța



Opinions on the usefulness of new-type civil society as compared to institutions in Constanța

Local Democracy Barometer, final score, on localities



Conclusions

Democracy strengthening is a difficult process, which requires support from all stakeholders, that is institutions, political actors and citizens. Quality of democracy in local community is impaired by institutional shortcomings, incompetence, corruption and the management style fancied by the decision-makers. Best possible representation of citizens' interests and anticipating or mitigating the flaws of the political actors are the two major problems that democratic political systems seem to be faced with. The direct consequence thereof is that the main political institutions (Government, Parliament) are vested with but little confidence by citizens (an average of 2.3 on a scale from 1 to 5), and a significant share of citizens cannot see their usefulness (an average of under 2.3 on a scale from 1 to 5). Meanwhile, the Army is most trusted (with an average of above 4 on a scale from 1 to 5), which perception should be read in connection with the need for the stronger and well-designed institutions claimed by citizens (more than 75% of respondents). The general effect we anticipate is an ascending trend in the confidence in the State's power institutions, the efficiency of which has been positively assessed by the public because, by virtue of their nature, they are not subject to political conflicts or negotiations at sight.

Democratic institutions, seen as rules, operate as formal constraints, created and shared by citizens. Institutions are systems of collective rules that influence the operational and contemporary level of people's actions, so that the collective rules influence the operational rules according to which the daily interactions of citizens unfold. Thus, institutions contribute to outlining a political and civic culture in the society.

In the light of the democratic shortcomings experienced by institutions and found by the Barometer, the need to have the constitutional rules changed, from the top of institutions, becomes increasingly important to plug in certain administrative and institutional gaps uncovered for *Administrative efficiency and usable bureaucracy* dimension. A solution could emerge from the review of the administrative and territorial self-government advisability in respect of the benefits that decision-making autonomy at county and regional level could provide: bringing public administration closer to the community, and better knowledge of the local problems to substantiate public policies.

Considering the limited streamlining and faulty knowledge of the political actors, another conclusion that stems from the Barometer's results is that institutions are not always aware of what citizens want. Regarding representation of their interests, citizens do not always know what local public administrations intends to do or is (has been) actually doing. The cost of getting informed about the issues mentioned above are high, and the communication patterns observed through the Barometer are rather one-way, from institutions to citizens, without simulating any interaction with citizens. The Barometer found exemplary models of communication with citizens via the official websites' interfaces (municipalities of Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara), but fewer cases of interactive virtual communities with

notable impact. With very few exceptions, interaction of the decision-makers with the users of social networks or other virtual communities (that decision-makers themselves can initiate) is limited. We found poor interaction of decision-makers (Mayors, Vice-Mayors and in particular local and county counselors) with the users of social networks, which can be explained by the extremely limited capacity of the public institutions to interact with the public online. This situation should be analyzed by reference to the different target groups the institutional communication should target. Generally, citizens do not access official websites, unless they look for specific and thematic information. Audiences have migrated towards social networks and collect information within virtual communities. In general, presence of the institutions of local public administration on social networks is just an accessory interface to the mainstream communication via websites. Communication with, and consultation of citizens are poorly implemented. They come mainly in the form of one-way communication, with no debates being initiated. In case of the debates launched by decision-makers and institutions, initiators do not engage in communication rhetorics specific to online (for instance, replying to what citizens comment). Availability of online virtual communities highlights two of the functions found by the Barometer as not performed by the institutions under review: control and feedback, which, although can be easily implemented with staff specifically tasked with drawing up materials and messages dedicated to virtual communities (which a public institution website cannot offer), lack the required professionalism. We believe that targeted communication on social networks and in virtual local communities would enhance social cohesion and foster civic culture and democratic policy. For instance, the institutions of local public administration could start publishing photos, videos, and links to the official website, arranging celebrations of historical events of relevance for the local community, buildings relationships with the European and international community, and providing information about rights and duties. The most important is that communities interested in and concerned about local issues could be thus built.

In a perfect world, where information flows smoothly, political institutions would know exactly what each and every citizen wants, and proceed to representing their interests. As this is an unlikely scenario, in reality, some citizens hold more information about institutions than others, so that we can expect many of them to search for information. Communication with citizens has deep political implications because institutions are measured through the *efficiency* perceived by individuals. These implications are as follows: citizens do not access institutions' websites to view communications or press releases, but to have some personal problems falling with the responsibilities of that particular institutions solved. Media sets the public agenda, and journalists are used to take over only those communications that feature topics of political stake or are controversial in nature. Journalists are always in pursuit of the sensational or negative news about an institution and its leaders, and seem to care less, if not at all, about the institutional routine. Consequently, citizens will not be informed at all or will be partially informed of the operation of institutions, and their perception of institutional efficiency will be influenced by the data they have available and the editorial policy followed by journalists.

To conclude with, the *Local Democracy Barometer* raises the following question: Once established, are institutions able to guarantee the fair exercise of power to the benefit of the citizens? Can institutions be thus designed so as to favor only those decision-makers and politicians that pursue serving the public interest? Can a standard be secured for local democracy and the efficiency of those institutions the contribution of which is essential for the democratic processes? Is there any possibility for institutions to favor, by virtue of their rules, only those political actors that pursue public interest? The challenge we launch further to this Barometer is to take a look into the advisability of having the Constitution revised for the purpose of limiting the chances that institutions be run otherwise than in the interest of citizens. The rules that, *per se,* arrange the democratic processes should limit the negotiation margin available to the political actors, so that such negotiations would only result into a balance for the society.When people interact according to the specific rules of the democratic game, we have balance.Rules, however, have a social relevance because they apply to the interactions between individuals. Considering the individuals' freedom of action (in real terms, people have always the option of not submitting to rules), rules are meant to guide behaviors and, eventually, built a democratic culture. Democratic rules lead to mainstreaming of the social structures as they outline the behaviors expected from both the government and the governees. This acts like a pattern that shows the usual and expected behaviors against the democratic rules and standards. Thus, in order to be observed, rules themselves cannot constrain by content, but only through the fact they come hand-in-hand with controls and sanctions, as well as with cultural factors.

All of the above render even more manifest the significance of *Civic culture* dimension. Whether copy-pasted or adapted from external success models, the democratic rules and standards can only be efficient as long as those tasked with their enforcement are familiar with the democratic culture and see democracy as the only acceptable game for interaction in the society. Rule transfer is not enough to render rules efficient, too. In practice, citizens interact based on both formal and informal rules. In this respect, LDB points to worrying results: very low scoring (on average of 2 on a scale from 1 to 5) of usefulness of certain fundamental political institutions, such as the Parliament or the Government.

Of relevance for the evolution of the civic culture is the fact that a minimum-to-moderate share of the citizens assesses the performance of the mayor or prime minister in respect of their membership of a political party. For the citizens whose criteria are *the results of the implemented programmes* (on average 51%), and *keeping the promises made in the election campaign* (on average 50%), the *political membership criterion*seems to have but limited relevance, ranging from 1% (Timișoara), 2% (Bucharest, Iași, Giurgiu, Cluj-Napoca), 4% (Brașov) to 5% (Piatra Neamț) and 9% (Craiova). As compared to the results of 2012 edition of the Barometer, 2016 edition points to more refined civic competences employed by citizens to assess the outputs and outcomes of local and national public policies. The analyzed data shows a certain obsolescence of the electoral competition where too much focus is placed on ideological antagonism. The same data rather tends to suggest that institutional efficiency, as

translated into favorable results of the programmes and policies, should be taken up with priority in the local or national political programmes.

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