
CENTER FOR PUBLIC INNOVATION

Annual Report 2022

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About us

Mission

The Association Centre for Public Innovation (CPI) is an organization established in 2014. Based in Bucharest, CPI is doing research and advocacy work at national level, on topics related to human rights, democratic institutions, and inclusive society, and it is developing innovative grassroots civic education projects.

Our mission is to promote the open society in Romania. We are building a country where citizens are in solidarity with each other, without exception, and at the same time take an informed attitude towards what is happening around them. We are building a country where transparent institutions provide access to information in open formats and decide together with and in the interest of the citizens, guaranteeing equal rights for all people.

Scope of work

We implement programs and projects on three pillars:

- *Democratic institutions and human rights* - our work comprises a mix of advocacy, policy research, and watchdog activities. We are working in coalitions, together with like-minded organizations and individuals.
- *Civic education* - focusing on developing innovative grassroots projects, supporting communities, schools, and students with civic education projects.
- *Inclusive Society* - our work is currently focusing on the migrants living in Romania. Our tools remain advocacy and policy analysis, and we are not providing direct services to migrants.

We are also providing services (consultancy), and we use the profits generated to advance our mission and objectives.

Organization

CPI is registered as an Association. According to the national legislation, the overseeing body is the General Assembly, currently comprised of six persons (five women, one men). The executive body is the Council of Directors (CD), comprising of three members of the association (as required by the law). The executive director (member of both the association and CD) is in charge with the daily management and the representation of the Association.

In 2022, four persons made the permanent staff of the Association, including two of the CD members. Another ten persons were involved as experts or volunteers, on short term, in the projects of the Association.

In 2022, the total spending of the Association was 893,159 lei (approximate 180,000 euro). The most important funders were, in this order: European Union (through the AMIF and Interreg programs), Open Society Foundations, the Civil Society Development Foundation (through the EEA Grants), and the Civitates Foundation.

More information

Please visit our website: www.inovarepublica.ro, or contact us by email at: scrie@inovarepublica.ro

Our work in 2022

I. Democratic institutions and human rights

We believe in liberal democracy and the universality of the fundamental rights

Our work on democratic institutions and human rights comprises a mix of advocacy, policy research, and watchdog activities. We are working in coalitions, together with like-minded organizations and individuals.

The State of Democracy

Monitoring the health of the democracy and the civic space. Project supported by: Open Society Foundations; Civitates Foundation.

CPI is a founding and active member of the Coalition NGOs for Citizen. The Coalition is aiming to convene the voice of the watchdogs and human rights organizations, in a period of civic fatigue, to defend the civic space and civil liberties. CPI is contributing with research and advocacy work.

The Coalition is monitoring the legislative framework and the government's actions, and it reacting quickly to any threat to civil liberties. The website [Stareademocratiei.ro](https://stareademocratiei.ro) is displaying some of our work, on topics such as: legislation on national security; surveillance; access to information; transparency in decision-making; pressures and harassment of independent voices; force evictions etc. The Coalition is publishing yearly the report 'The State of Democracy', remembering the hot issues of the previous year. International organizations working on human rights are often quoting the reports.

In the future, on medium and long term, we aim at bringing the State of Democracy at local level. CPI is leading the development of an innovative approach to measuring and increasing the openness of the local public authorities. Together with the partners from the Coalition, we aim to develop a meta-rating of local openness, and propose a package of guidelines and support for local institutions that want to improve their practices related to citizen participation, access to information, and transparency in decision-making.

Campaigning for the freedom of public assemblies

Enhancing civil liberties. Project supported by: Open Society Foundations; Civitates Foundation.

In Romania, the Law on public assemblies was adopted in 1991, and it suffered minimal changes since then. The vision of the Law is rather to protect the state from its citizens, than to enact the fundamental right to peaceful public assemblies. Together with the partners from the Coalition NGOs for Citizens, we have started an advocacy campaign to amend the Law. In 2020, a group of Members of the Parliament, from several political parties, accepted most of our suggestions, and embedded them in a legislative proposal.

The main improvements brought by the proposal are: removing excessive restrictions and prohibitions; eliminating subjective terms, which are now a reason for the arbitrary ban of some public gatherings; improving the proportionality of the sanctions with the possible acts committed, and proportionality of law enforcement intervention with the severity of the incidents; recognizing spontaneous gatherings and citizens' self-organizing using social media.

In the same year, the Senate approved the bill. Since 2021, the bill is under debate in the Chamber of Deputies, the deciding chamber on this issue. Despite our advocacy efforts, the legislative process seems stuck. In 2022, the Coalition initiated an online campaign, the Great Virtual Assembly ([Marea Adunare Virtuala](#)), to raise awareness on the topic.

Better legislation for human rights

Improving effective observance of fundamental rights and liberties. Project supported by: Open Society Foundations; Civitates Foundation.

In Romania, the law requires public institutions that initiate normative acts, to include a preliminary analysis of the impact of the respective acts on fundamental rights. In 2022, the Government updated the templates of the documents required to fundament new legislation. During the public debate, CPI recommended improving the visibility of the section on fundamental rights, and the Government accepted the recommendation. Our monitoring shows that the general practice has not improve, and most initiators are simply ignoring the section on fundamental rights. In fall 2022, we have initiated a dialogue with the relevant department in the General Secretariat of the Government, and with the Ombudsman institution, on how to apply these legal provisions. In the following months, we will work together with these institutions to develop guidelines, tools, and trainings for the civil servants involved in drafting new legislation.

Surveillance of the public space

The false dilemma between privacy and security. Project supported by: Open Society Foundations

In the last three years, the authorities in Romania concluded more than 8,300 direct procurement contracts for public space surveillance cameras. The total amount is close to 40 million euros. Investments in the surveillance of public space are generally well received by citizens, because they bring at least the illusion of better security. Encouraged by this support, and because the equipment is becoming more affordable, mayors continue to purchase surveillance cameras.

Starting in 2022, in partnership with the Association for the Technology and Internet, the Centre for Applied Ethics of the Faculty for Philosophy, and our media partner, Panorama.ro, we are looking at how this surge of investments in surveillance equipment may affect fundamental rights, in particular privacy and the right to information. We are gathering information from public sources, and discuss the issue from legal and moral perspective. We want to know what happens to all the data collected by surveillance cameras? What is the impact of using cameras? Who gains from investments? And, finally, where are the cameras? Our media partner is already hosting a [series of articles](#) based on the project.

Electoral reform and transparency of political party financing

Advocating for fairness and transparency of the political processes. Supported by: Open Society Foundations.

CPI is a founding member of the Coalition Electoral Code Now (Cod Electoral ACUM!), a platform of the civil society advocating for the improvement of the electoral legislation, to improve fairness and transparency, and to enhance citizens' participation. Unfortunately, from a positive approach in 2020-2021, the Coalition was forced in a defensive stance, rather protecting the existing framework against political attacks.

One of the key issues is the transparency of political parties. Yearly, the political parties represented in the Parliament receive around 50mln euro in public subventions. A large part of this money is used for advertising and mass media. The larger parties are now effectively among the largest advertisers on the social and political niche. Using public money, the parties are effectively buying the complicity of media outlets.

The parties are subject to the law on access to public information but they refuse to comply. In 2021, CPI sued all political parties, in an attempt to obtain Court decisions forcing them to disclose how they are spending the public money. The trials are ongoing in 2022.

In 2022, CPI was the most active participant in the public debate on the new draft law on political parties financing, proposed by the Permanent Electoral Authority. The debate will continue in 2023, in the Parliament.

II. Civic education

We believe that informed citizens are the backbone of liberal democracy.

Our work on civic education is focusing on developing innovative grassroots projects, supporting communities, schools, and students with civic education projects. Media literacy is

Participatory budgeting in schools

Learning participatory processes in schools. Supported by: Open Society Foundations.

We have adapted to the Romania context the concept of Participatory Budgeting in Schools (PBS), developed by International Budget Partnership in US. PBS is a democratic process through which a community – a class or a school – decides how to use a small budget available for educational activities.

We have piloted the concept in five schools from different backgrounds, and we found out that it is an excellent learning tool. It gives students a positive experience of civic engagement; it strengthens ties between students, teachers and administration, improving the educational climate; it establishes key competences and skills for democratic citizenship: teamwork, critical thinking, analysis, negotiation, research and documentation, and problem solving; it introduces elements of economic education: understanding and building a budget; and it raises students' awareness of community issues.

We are now planning scaling up the project.

Media literacy: the *Melia Observatory* project

Developing media literacy competences. Supported by: European Union (Interreg Danube Transnational Programme), Open Society Foundations.

[Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy](#) is a transnational project involving 23 organizations from 13 countries from the Danube region. The main objective of the project is to improve democratic transnational governance by developing transnational media literacy observatory, based on cooperation between different relevant stakeholders. The main target groups are the youth and the people who work with them. Citizen's competence is of crucial importance for active political participation, which is one of the main components of good governance and sustainable democracy. The core element of the citizen's competence is high level of media literacy. It is necessary for citizens' reflection of social reality and their resilience to negative media phenomena, like hate speech and fake news. For strengthening the media literacy competence, the observatory provides tools, available for both young people as well as their educators.

CPI is one of the two partners from Romania (the second is the Babes-Bolyai University). It contributed to the project with methodological input, testing and piloting innovative tools, content for the online tools, and dissemination of the project's outputs.

Observatory of Discrimination and Exclusion – a media literacy project

Developing media literacy competences. Supported by: Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania, Open Society Foundations.

ODE (Observatory of Discrimination and Exclusion) is a grassroots project, implemented in partnership with five high schools from different localities. The project's main objective is to set up an effective and sustainable support system, designed to empower local community facilitators to dismantle fake news and disinformation, to enable critical thinking and to enable inclusiveness, social cohesion, trust and healthy community relations. CPI team is working with five facilitators (mostly high school or secondary school

teachers in communities consisting of diverse cultural minorities) and 25 secondary or high school students from the respective communities. As long-term impact, we considered the project community / platform / web domain / resource centre (The Observatory of Disinformation and Exclusion) developed and used. Reintegration or integration of individuals or groups experienced effects of false information, disinformation or hate speech and educated answers delivered to communities to change to way to enact properly.

III. Inclusive Society

We believe that human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language.

Our work on inclusive society is currently focusing on the migrants living in Romania. Our tools remain advocacy and policy analysis, and we are not providing direct services to migrants.

Immigration policies

Human rights have no borders. Supported by: European Union (Asylum and Migration Fund), Civil Society Development Foundation (EEA Grants), Open Society Foundations

CPI is a founding member of the Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR), the main (and single) platform of the civil society organizations advocating for the rights of migrants, or offering direct services. Our contribution is research, advocacy, and coordination.

In 2016-2022, we were the national partner of the strategic EU-funded project NIEM (NIEM – National Integration Evaluation Mechanism. Measuring and improving integration of beneficiaries of international protection), which is a trans-national project covering 16 states and including 20 partners, financed by the European Commission. The aim of the project is to mainstream an integration evaluation mechanism into the integration policies for refugees and beneficiaries of international protection at the national level in the participating project countries. The six-year project represents both an element of financial and organizational stability for the organization, as well as an opportunity to establish itself as a source of information on migration policy in Romania.

Since the start of the war on Ukraine, CPI was actively involved in advocacy efforts, together with the colleagues from CDMiR. Our common contribution included:

- Convening the energies of the civil society – from the first day, we were involved in various discussion, working groups, and coordination activities, trying to match help and needs;
- Providing expertise for the integration of the refugees – direct participation to the working groups drafting the plan of measures for the integration of refugees, adopted by the government in June 2022;
- Providing input to the Parliament – constant communication with the Human Rights Committee of the Senate.

Looking forward, we are actively monitoring the implementation of the Plan of Measures for the integration of the beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Financial information 2022

Income

In 2022, our total income was 376,475 Lei. The sources of income are:

Donor / source	Amount (Lei*)
European Union – Asylum and Migration Fund	96,556
European Union – Interreg Programme	149,786
Embassy of Netherlands in Romania	73,973
Civil Society Development Foundation	25,979
Individual donations under the 3.5% mechanism	1200
Civitates Foundation	651
Services provided (consultancy)	28,329
Total	376,475

*) The amounts received in other currencies were converted using the National Bank of Romania yearly average exchange rate.

Spending

In 2022, our total spending was 893,160 lei. Please note that some of the grants we received are multi-annual. In 2022, we have used money from grants received in 2021, from two important donors, Open Society Foundations and Civitates Foundation. The spending on the main pillars of our work was:

Dimension	Amount (Lei)
Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	200,801
Civic Education	296,180
Inclusive Society	303,739
Services provided (consultants)	20,166
Administration	72,274
Total	893,160

Public money

In 2022, we have received public money from the European Union (AMIF and Interreg programs) and individual donations under the 3.5% mechanism. The total amount was 247,543 lei.

In addition, we have spent in advance the amount of 114,205 lei, which should be reimbursed by the European Union (Interreg) in the course of 2023.

We used the public money for the following expenses:

Category	Amount (Lei)
Salaries (staff implementing projects)	299,477
Travel	19,910
Goods and services	41,161
Kept in reserve	1,200
Total	361,748

The goods and services purchased with public money were:

Contract	Amount (Lei)
[consultant - physical person]	4,935
[consultant - physical person]	9,626
[consultant - physical person]	20,000
Agrafa Print (promotional materials)	1,042
Atelierul de Pânză (promotional materials)	1,309
Star Gift (promotional materials)	4,250
Total	41,161