

CeRe in 2022

A year about vulnerability, collective civic power, caring for the environment, gratitude, response and solidarity

The war next door. The turbulence in society, the insecurities, the noise of politicians and the public agendas on which the urgent needs of communities are barely scratching the surface. Increasingly pregnant political discourse that discredits civil society action, toxic online narratives that restrict space for civic expression and action and alter popular confidence in citizenship, participation, democracy. The year 2022 was for us about empathy and solidarity, and also about a permanent need to join forces with groups, communities and NGOs to respond to the constant attempts of public institutions to cover our voices. We are grateful to you and thank you to all of you who have been there for us this year! We look forward to a 2023 in which the word POWER will be the mirror of our common endeavours and the expression of a much stronger voice, protecting citizens' rights and democracy.

2022, in a puzzle of words that defined our work:

VULNERABILITY

Homeless people need to be seen by all of us and by the authorities, and their voices need to be at the heart of public decisions. Through the "Homeless Citizens' Voice" project, we are working with colleagues at the Carousel Association and pushing the issues faced by homeless people onto the agenda of the authorities through advocacy. We have had one-to-one discussions with 40 clients of the Carousel Association to find out what their most pressing needs are and have included them in the ["Voice of the Citizens Without Shelter" report, together with a Social Services Overview of the municipality.](#)

Following public appeals and efforts made early last year with Carusel, [the authorities started vaccinating homeless people without ID against COVID 19.](#)

How do the most vulnerable live? We have continued to constantly bring the problems to the attention of the public authorities, through the meetings we have had with the sector town halls, but also through the events we have held at the Grivița Cișmigiu Carousel Centre. These included community dinners attended by members of the public administration, together with people living on the streets, and the launch of the book of poems "Versuri polimorfe", whose author is Constantin Pitorac, the poet who sleeps in the DGASPC night shelter in sector 6. Details about the event can be found in the article published in the newspaper Libertatea ["<<A homeless person launches a book of poems in Bucharest: "I wrote everywhere and anywhere: on the street, in the park, on the bus">> and here.](#)

What's it like to be a woman and live on the street?

Libertatea journalists continued to document the realities faced by homeless people in the report & podcast ["Invisible women living on the streets of Bucharest"](#)

What are 5 things you would take with you if you lived on the streets for a week?

We asked this question in a [series of videos](#), to people who are notorious in the public eye for the extreme experiences they have exposed themselves to on their solo journeys. [Andrei Rosu](#), [Radu Păltineanu](#), [Radu Diaconescu](#), [Sabina Fatj](#) and [Elena Axinte](#) know what it means to live with minimal resources and in precarious conditions and have agreed to support our approach to bring more empathy around the vulnerable context in which homeless people live, through their own testimonies about what it means to live life in the extreme. We thank them for this too!

The end of the year finds us preparing two more events that bring the issue of homelessness into new public contexts, making their voices more audible to the authorities and the general public. Two exhibitions of photographs taken by the clients of the Carousel Association using the Photovoice method. The photographs taken by homeless citizens and the messages of the authors will be exhibited in January and February at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Bucharest and on the fence of the Şuţu Palace - Museum of Bucharest.

The project "Voice of citizens without shelter" is implemented by CeRe: Resource Centre for Public Participation, in partnership with CARUSEL Association and benefits financial support from the Active Citizens Fund Romania, program financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the SEE 2014-2021 Grants

COLLECTIVE POWER

This year we have again supported civic groups and organisations in their efforts to put important community issues on the public agenda. A large number of the civic groups we have mentored on advocacy issues are included in the projects "Civic steps for a strong community" and "Bucharest, whose are you?", run with financial support from the the Active Citizens Fund Romania, program financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the SEE 2014-2021 Grants

Mentoring or advocacy assistance that we provide to selected civic groups in the programmes "Civic Steps for a Strong Community" and "Bucharest, whose are you?" primarily involves adapting to the needs of the civic groups we work with, whether they are in the process of forming/strengthening the group or in the middle of a complex advocacy campaign.

What we offer concretely through this mentoring is usually (but not limited to):

- advice on setting up and developing a civic group or organisation, on managing difficult/collaborative situations
- creating a plan and advocacy strategies for desired campaigns
- workshops and training sessions according to the needs of the groups
- networking and recommending collaborations and partnerships with key individuals and organisations
- advocacy support and examples of advocacy techniques, including drafting useful documents or persuasive text/message for various campaigns
- advice on approaching other entities - public institutions, press, other organisations, etc.
- advice and help on methodology and steps for monitoring the work of public institutions
- familiarising groups with some concepts, rights and laws and what they entail (e.g. transparency, steps in organising a protest)

Together with the CIVICA Association from Iasi we run the project ["Civic steps for a strong community"](#) and provide mentoring in advocacy to organizations in Bucharest and the region of Moldova. The challenges of the initiative groups range from a lack of responsiveness of public administration to the urgent needs expressed by the community, a lack of transparency from institutions and a low enthusiasm from the general public to get civically involved.

In Bucharest, the civic group ["For playgrounds and green spaces in Bucharest"](#) has gathered a strong community of supporters, with whom they have succeeded in convincing the authorities to reopen the Politehnica campus to citizens and have collected over 1500 signatures for the park, in its entirety, to be returned to City Hall administration and opened to everyone.

In Sector 1 is the "16 February" district, which is the subject of a constant ping-pong between the public authorities, who for years have been dragging their feet on solving serious infrastructure problems in the area, as well as repairing a bridge that is a public hazard at all times. The problems faced by residents are manifold, from muddy public roads to the lack of a public water supply for the whole community. Ms Pascu, a member of the community and the most active member of the ["16 February Civic Association"](#), has participated on numerous occasions in meetings of the local council of Sector 1 and in public actions aimed at bringing the issue to the attention of the media and the authorities, but public institutions do not react or respond with empty promises. This neighbourhood is in the richest sector and yet [no public authority cares about children playing and going to school in the mud](#). Ms Pascu continues to oversee the local government's solution for children going to school - the minibuses sent for them are usually few in number or operate on a schedule that does not suit the children's timetable, with many of them left without transport, in an area that is difficult to access and full of mud, with no lights.

[Civis Mogoșoaia](#) have set out to mobilize the community in activities that bring citizens closer to the members of the administration. They sent requests for an audience to local councillors and requests for information, in order to find out as many details as possible about their work and the projects they have proposed for the community. One of the difficulties the group encountered was that most councillors did not respond to requests and [did not have public contact details where they could be reached directly](#).

[The Bartolomeu Avantgarten Community Association](#) in Brasov is an important civic actor, and their approaches are aimed at solving various issues of interest to citizens: the development of playgrounds, sidewalks or speed limiters, participation with community projects in the participatory budgeting process, infrastructure projects for the "Avantgarten 3 Brasov" residential neighbourhood or the provision of public services by the Romanian Post in the neighbourhood. Together with the community, the group supported a campaign in support of Ukrainian refugees. At the same time, the group made several petitions to solve the parking problem in the area and intervened with valuable feedback on the development of the area (PUZ).

[The Caravan with Doctors](#) is an association of mainly volunteer doctors who want more efficiency and flexibility in providing medical services, education and help for prevention and screening. [The main goal of the association is to bring free medical services to the villages](#), and their work in the field and constant advocacy has made the "Mobile Healthcare Law" possible. This will create the legal framework for the settlement of medical services provided to rural patients by mobile medical units. We recommend the [DOR article](#) which tells the story of the organisation.

[The civic group Dizabil.eu](#) is active in Focșani and works for the accessibility of the city and public institutions with the necessary infrastructure for people with disabilities. One of their projects that attracted the attention of the local administration was the ["Accessibility map of Focșani"](#), and one of their recent actions was the involvement of the authorities for the accessibility of the Multipurpose Hall. [The video with Răzvan, a person with locomotor disabilities](#), shows the immediate solutions that could be put in place so that people with disabilities can attend handball matches without help from accompanying persons.

[The Horpaz Civic Association](#) animates the village of Horpaz in Iasi county, and the main topic on their advocacy agenda is the campaign through which they strive to convince the local administration about the need to develop the Horpaz-Ezăreni park, in a green area of the village, left untended. "We realised the town hall's intention to concession everything that can be concessioned and we said we had to do something to keep that imaș from becoming anything other than a landscaped green space," Marcel, one of the group's leaders, told us. The lack of interest and vision of the public administration regarding the land near the village has led to the accumulation of rubbish in the area, an ecological bomb for the environment and an unacceptable situation for the health of the inhabitants. The interview with Emanuela and Marcel, two of the group's active members, is available [here](#).

[Rise OUT](#) is the first grassroots organisation in Iasi with a mission to support people from the LGBTQ community. The first Pride march in Iasi that they organized was a challenge both from the perspective of the opposition constantly expressed by Mayor Mihai Chirica and most of the administration representatives, and by many voices in the community, who invoke religious reasons to disapprove the voices of the gay community. However, with all this wave of opposition, Rise OUT have organised this year's [Pride march](#) with the community. They are carrying out various advocacy activities to open up access to public cultural institutions in Iasi, which are currently hindering them and do not allow them to carry out educational and cultural activities in the city's best-known museum spaces. The interview with Rise OUT colleagues is available [here](#).

[APTA - Alliance for the Promotion of Alternative Transport Iasi](#) is a coalition of 11 organizations working for the accessibility of public space in Iasi and a better infrastructure, both for the use of bicycles, scooters and public transport. APTA wants to create a bicycle master plan for the Municipality of Iași. On 20 November, APTA organised the ["Pedestrians and Cyclists March"](#) The march aimed to "raise awareness among the authorities about the problems caused by red bicycle lanes on pavements. The current lanes do not comply with current regulations, are broken, full of obstacles and are a daily hazard for pedestrians and users of bicycles and scooters. Accidents occur frequently on these lanes and delaying their removal means maintaining this dangerous situation on Iasi's pavements." - source: FB APTA.

The project "Civic steps towards a strong community" is run by CeRe, in partnership with the CIVICA Association, and benefits financial support from the Active Citizens Fund Romania, program financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the SEE 2014-2021 Grants.

["Bucharest, whose are you?"](#) is the project we are running together with colleagues from ActiveWatch, to provide advocacy assistance to groups in Bucharest who want to bring the issues faced by their communities to the agenda of public authorities. In doing so, we mentor the civic groups below to ensure that their campaign issues are heard as much as possible in their communities and among decision-makers.

[The civic initiative group Izvor Park](#) started its activity with the organisation of the Nostalgia festival in Izvor Park in Bucharest. The community reacted vocally and sent public messages of disapproval to the authorities about the fact that the event had a negative impact on the soil and vegetation in the park. The group, along with other civic groups and organisations in Bucharest, [vehemently opposed the proposal publicly expressed by Mayor General Nicușor Dan to concession Izvor Park to a private event organiser, who would organise similar events there with large numbers of people participating](#).

[New School in Otopeni](#) is the group that has mobilised a large community to ask the local public authorities to quickly find solutions so that the space of the "Ioan Petruș" High School in Otopeni, where students now study in 3 shifts, can be supplemented with additional

spaces adapted to the educational process. Although the campaign started more than a year ago, and the civic approaches of the community have been constant, members of the administration are late in offering clear solutions to solve the problem of overcrowding of students in this school. [Some 800 families have signed the petition for a new school in Otopeni.](#)

The Icoanei-Parc Ioanid group has already brought nearly 400 members to its Facebook group and has held activities and events in the community throughout the year to hear directly from neighbors interested in getting involved about citizens' priorities for the neighborhood. The members of the group are currently working on defining advocacy actions and campaigns to bring their community's wishes to the authorities as effectively as possible.

[The Cherry Orchard Parents Group](#) - Domain Square has been working for a long time to find openness from the authorities about improving community access to the Cherry Orchard Sports Centre. In the summer of this year the group organised a protest action to ensure that the green space was not massively deforested, as the authorities are proposing, and that the sports buildings and spaces for educational and vocational activities for children were improved and not changed their use. More details are available [in the letter to the authorities.](#)

Civic initiative group in the Traian Hall area- Andra Jurjiu, Bogdan Diaconu and Iulia Dromereschi are 3 citizens motivated to mobilize the community in the Hala Traian, Ozana and Berceni areas and together to ask the authorities for the necessary changes to improve their communities, both administratively and culturally. We are with them in the project Bucharest whose you are, through assistance and mentoring in community organizing.

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ENVIRONMENTAL CARE

We have been working for more than 3 years together with the "Mai Mult Verde" Association in the project "With Clean Waters", financed by LIDL Romania. Our role is to contribute to the formation of civic groups and communities in 10 cities along the Danube and to mentor these groups to become self-sufficient over time and continue civic activities to solve problems in their communities. During these years, we have managed to help the formation of 10 civic groups in the cities of Galati, Braila, Cernavodă, Sulina, Mahmudia, Turnu-Magurele, Oltenița, Drobeta, Zimnicea and Giurgiu. Thus, we supported the civic efforts of the groups on issues such as prevention of plastic pollution, citizens' concern for selective collection and making the authorities responsible for creating the necessary infrastructure to store and collect plastic and household waste in optimal conditions.

Some of the successes of the project, which have increased our enthusiasm this year: the civic groups have managed to mobilise more than 40 people in the sanitation actions, to have their own calendar of activities on Water Day, Danube Day, Environment Day and to organise debates with local authorities on separate collection. Three of the civic groups have decided to turn themselves into NGOs and attract funding to continue their activities. The civic groups have acquired the necessary skills to make their voices heard in their dealings with decision-makers.

REACTION AND SOLIDARITY

This year we have also witnessed a political context in which the efforts of state institutions to restrict civic space have accelerated. Together with the Centre for Public Innovation and ActiveWatch, we are facilitating the efforts of the "NGOs for Citizens" network, which includes more than 20 groups and organisations that are linked to our concern for the defence of civil rights. Our joint demands can be found on www.stareademocrației.ro and on our [dedicated FB page](#).

We mention some of our reactions to the attempts and public decisions that have marred Romania's democracy this year:

[The completely non-transparent amended law on decision-making transparency. Under the pretext of urgency, any decision can be taken without informing and consulting the public.](#)

[Well done to the whistleblower! And what about the security laws!](#)

[Brăila's Public Health Department makes access to information of public interest more difficult through various bureaucratic tricks](#)

[Why we want to change the Law on Public Assemblies](#)

[Romania's Parliament shows illiberal tendencies - NGOs' right to strategic litigation severely limited](#)

Since 2020 we have been [campaigning for improvements to the law on public assemblies](#) (Law 60/1991 on the organisation of public assemblies). The current law is an outdated law, dating back to the time of the mineriads, which does not respond to the current context and leaves room for [many abuses](#) by law enforcement and state institutions for those who participate in protests or organize public assemblies. The biggest problem at the moment is that our proposal to improve the law is stuck in a drawer in the Chamber of Deputies, opposed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Gendarmerie. As we wanted to make sure that this issue did not remain only on our advocacy agenda, we launched a communication campaign, explaining in detail [why the current law on public assemblies is not good](#).

GRATITUDE

For 12 years, we have been organising the [Public Participation Awards Gala](#) to give public recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that succeed in making a positive impact in their communities through their advocacy. It's an event that brings forward the

brave and courageous, the tireless and the tireless who are not content to wait for the mayor or minister to fix things that are bothering their neighbourhood, city or society and put pressure on decision-makers to fix them. This year's edition of the Gala had at the centre of [the travelling award events](#) the [Civic Acrobats of the Year 2021](#), who, despite social and political crises, have managed to give back to the community not only hope and confidence in the power of civic-mindedness, but also [concrete beneficial changes](#).

More details about the Public Participation Awards Gala are available on www.galacere.ro and the [dedicated FB page](#).

Thanks to the Romanian American Foundation, ANPCDEFP - National Agency for Community Programmes in Vocational Education and Training, Nhood, Hotnews and PressOne for their support.

END OF YEAR

Launch: 2 Monitoring Reports, after 2 years in office: City Hall and Sector 2 City Hall

Together with colleagues from ActiveWatch, we continued our annual tradition of monitoring the social agenda and compliance with the principles of good governance in the work of the General City Hall and the General Council of Bucharest and launched on 20 December the report "[Half a mandate gives with a comma](#)" at an event attended by citizens and members of public authorities. For the first time, at the same event, we were joined by the Floreasca Civică and Lacul Tei initiative groups, who launched the "[Quiet debates, united votes](#)" report on the work of the Sector 2 City Hall and the Sector 2 Local Council. The two reports are the result of the monitoring of the two City Halls and Councils in the second year of the new administration's mandate, with a focus on the transparency of public decision-making, collaboration with citizens and the fulfilment of promises made during the electoral campaign.

Professional Fellowship Programme

This spring, 6 community organizers and professionals went to the US, where for 1 month they observed how different organizations work in communities, how communities influence the public agenda and public policy. They were guided throughout the programme by a mentor, a community organising expert from the US, some of them with over 30 years' experience.

Ioana Dumitrescu, Loredana Pană, Gabriela Anghel, Olga Popescu, Alex Tomescu and Petra Pintilei are the 6 community organisers and activists who visited the US this spring.

In the autumn, it was the turn of a new series of Professional Fellowship Programme participants to visit US organisations. Viviana Huțuleac from Rădăuțiul Civic, Una Clara Sighetu from Amfiteatru Foundation and Nicoleta Orlea from Autism Voice had a great learning experience.

We have opened the recruitment process for a new round of scholarships in the US

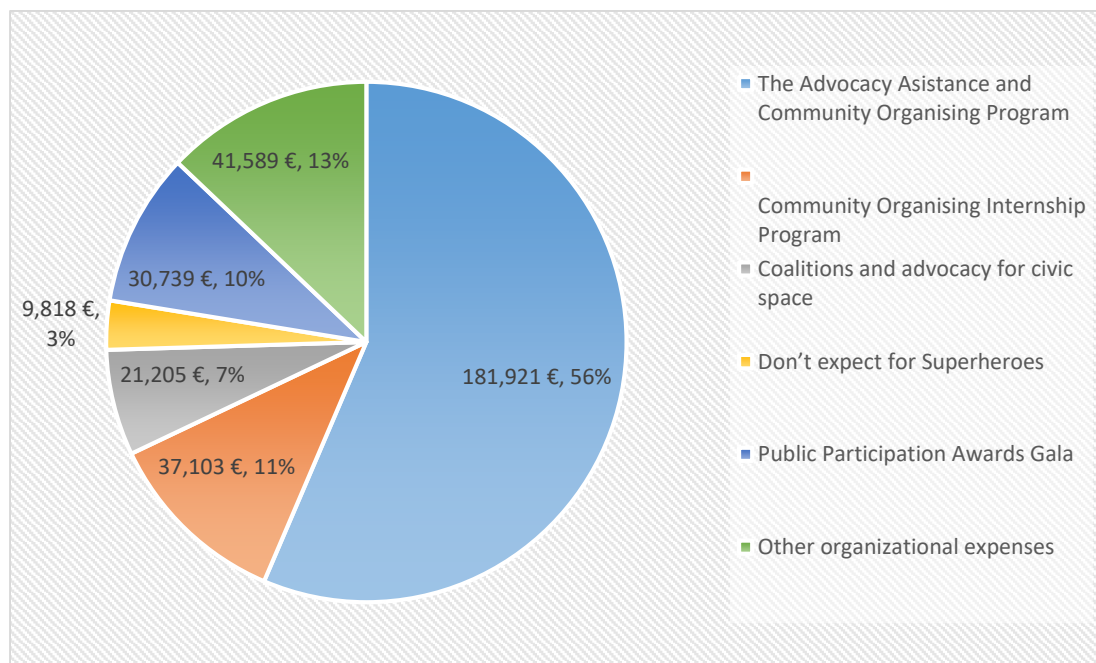
We invite activists from Romania, who are leaders in civil society or in their communities and have experience in the fields of public participation, advocacy or community organizing, to apply for the US fellowship program run by CeRe: Resource Center for Public Participation, with financial support from the U.S. Department of State - Great Lakes Consortium (GLC). Applicants should be actively involved in programs and organizations related to these fields.

Deadline for applications: 31 January 2023

More details are available [here](#)

Expenses 2022	
The Advocacy Assistance and Community Organising Program	181,921 €
Community Organising Internship Program	37,103 €
Coalitions and advocacy for civic space	21,205 €
Don't expect for Superheroes	9,818 €
Public Participation Awards Gala	30,739 €
Other organizational expenses	41,589 €
TOTAL *	322,374 €

* Contains budgets allocated to partners.



Other partnerships

Together with our partners in the European Network of Community Organisers (ECON), we have continued this year our European-wide partnerships with organisations in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, Spain and Albania. Through the Erasmus+ programme we have contributed to the development of online and offline community organising tools and learning sessions.

Thank you all for your support and for being close to us!