

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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## A YEAR ALONGSIDE PEOPLE WHO CHANGE THE WORLD AROUND THEM



In a world where democracy seems increasingly fragile and the voices of citizens are often drowned out by the noise of populism and anti-civil and human rights rhetoric, CeRe turned 18. The birthday of our organization didn't involve a party, but rather a wave of unprecedented challenges. In the face of a tense political landscape, with growing authoritarian trends, we remain anchored in what we know works: civic engagement, solidarity, and community participation to balance the power dynamic between citizens and public authorities.

Since 2006, we've stood alongside hundreds of individuals, civic groups, communities, and governmental organizations, united by shared values. We are now shaken by the rise of extremism and autocracy, but we are convinced that all the individual and collective civic efforts that have shaped the world around us in the spirit of shared values—protecting democracy, respecting citizens' rights and fundamental rights, and showing solidarity with the most vulnerable and stigmatized communities—cannot disappear overnight.

2025 will be a tough year for Romania, paying the price for the corruption, incompetence, and indifference of traditional political parties that have fueled support for populism and ultra-conservative policies. But for now, let's take a moment to look back and see how we can move forward together, how we can get involved to protect what we have, and most importantly, where we can find energy and optimism for the communities we live in.



At the end of the year, CeRe’s projects and partnerships speak of citizens who reclaim their power day by day by getting involved in public decisions that directly affect them.

Below, we present the stories of the people we supported this year through **PROTEUS**, our mentorship program focused on increasing organizational capacity, community building and advocacy. You’ll read the stories that inspired us at the 14th edition of **The Public Participation Awards Gala**, which we organized this year. You’ll see how we contributed to the creation of a “**Cu Apele Curate / Clean Waters**” **Community Network**. As part of our mission to protect civic space and democracy in Romania, we’ll also share with you some of the issues that kept us alert and to which we responded publicly, alongside other member organizations of the **NGO Coalition for Citizens**. We firmly believe that citizens and NGOs are a key part of the solution to address pressing problems facing communities.

The people we support help bridge the gap between citizens and authorities. Because through public participation, we can accomplish a lot—and for that, a democratic state is essential.

## ACTIVE PROGRAMS IN 2024

**PROTEUS**

**CLEAN WATERS**

**PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FELLOWSHIP**

**STATE OF DEMOCRACY REPORT**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AWARD GALA**

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## PROTEUS



**Protecting EU Values and Fundamental Rights through Public Participation and Civil Society Assistance in Central Europe**

### **MAIN ACTIVITIES:**

- training
- mentoring
- peer learning
- financial support
- supporting 27 local CSOs

**funded by: European Commission - CERV Program**

## PEOPLE WHO CHANGE THE WORLD AROUND THEM

Through the PROTEUS program, co-funded by the European Union, we strengthened this year the public participation capacity (through mentorship, training, and financial support) of 27 initiative groups and organizations. Their issues represent a multitude of problems that should be on the politicians' agenda. The struggles of the groups we support highlight the power of community to bring change where authorities stubbornly choose to ignore:

<b>Access to education for students in rural areas</b>
<b>Environmental protection and empowering communities in relation to local authorities</b>
<b>Learning opportunities for youth, such as Identity Journalism—writing about their own community</b>
<b>Access to housing and education for Roma communities living in poverty</b>
<b>Eliminating discrimination and stigma against Roma communities</b>
<b>Access to education and opportunities for young Roma women to live healthy and independent lives</b>
<b>Awareness and education around mental health issues faced by LGBTQ people</b>
<b>Youth involvement in putting community issues on the public administration's agenda</b>
<b>Sustainable development and greater care for heritage, people, and nature</b>
<b>A digital platform as an alternative to local media, reflecting the voice of the community</b>

## WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE IN THESE GROUPS TO GET INVOLVED AND WHAT HELPS THEM SUCCEED IN THEIR EFFORTS?

*“People generally do things for their children—they want to be an example for them. In these groups, we have young mothers who want a better future for their children and to set an example. Others work in education and want to pass on values, to leave something behind in their communities. When motivation is high—when they want something for the good of the community—it lasts.”*

Raluca Boișteanu - mentor in PROTEUS



Photo by Asociatia Right

*“People have different motivations—some get involved to fix a problem that affects them personally, others to correct an injustice, others simply to contribute to change or learn, or grow personally.”*

Oana Preda - advocacy expert and mentor in PROTEUS

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## CLEAN WATERS



The "Cu Apele Curate" program was launched in March 2019 by the Mai Mult Verde Association in partnership with CeRe and Bloc Zero

### MAIN ACTIVITIES:

- 18 community events organized
- training, mentoring and peer learning
- 9 requests submitted to address identified local needs
- 12 direct meetings with decision-makers
- 720 event participants
- 18 local associations and grassroots groups are members of the "Cu Apele Curate" Community Network

funded by: Lidl

## "CU APELE CURATE" COMMUNITY NETWORK

For six years, through our partnership with Mai Mult Verde Association, we have contributed to the development of local grassroots initiative groups in 10 cities along the Danube.

This year, we helped establish the "Cu Apele Curate" Community Network.

The goal of the 2024 actions was to hold local public authorities accountable for cleaning riverbanks and implementing preventive measures.

The "Cu Apele Curate" Community Network brought together 18 organizations and organizers along the Danube and its tributaries this year, engaging over 1,000 volunteers in environmental protection activities.

Actions included mapping waste-affected areas and organizing 18 community events.

Our colleague Raluca Boișteanu supported the community organizers' network through mentoring sessions and workshops on community mobilization and dialogue with decision-makers.

We also took part in roundtable discussions with local authorities and in awareness-raising actions across various communities.

We had a wonderful time at the #DanubeTalks during the Danube Festival in Sulina, where we spoke to event participants about the importance of civic engagement.

## PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



### U.S. Learning & Exchange Program – Professional Fellowship Program 2024

Learning never ends for most of us. In 2024, through the Professional Fellowship Program, two community organizing experts experienced grassroots advocacy in San Francisco and Boise (Idaho).

Another 6 experts began the online component of the fellowship, and 4 were expected to intern at U.S. organizations in 2025.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of 2025 the program lost funding and was canceled due to the new policies in U.S.

**funded by: U.S. State Department**

# COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FELLOWSHIP



In 2024, we supported **14 extraordinary people** who improve their communities every day.

We know how alone and unsupported activists, organizers, and local leaders often feel in their battles. That's why we awarded fellowships to 14 people who, even when they feel like they've reached their limit, keep pushing—fighting for their communities just a little more.

funded by: OSF

## THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN 2024



Starea democrației

As in past years, alongside the **NGO Coalition for Citizens**, we tracked democratic backsliding and worked to protect civic space for organizations and citizens. Together with the Center for Public Innovation, ActiveWatch, and ApTI – The Association for Technology and Internet, we released the “State of Democracy 2023” Report (available in ENG) in March.

funded by: CIVITATES

## THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN 2024

Many issues stemmed from the multiple election rounds in 2024—starting with election merging debates, the exclusion of a candidate in a manner we found undemocratic, and ending with the cancellation of the presidential elections after Romania almost fell into the hands of a leader with anti-democratic views.

We also addressed the rise of SLAPP lawsuits (strategic lawsuits against public participation). We supported individuals and organizations targeted by SLAPPs and advocated for the European Anti-SLAPP Directive to be transposed into Romanian law and expanded to cover domestic cases as well.

Read more about coalition efforts at [www.stareademocratiei.ro](http://www.stareademocratiei.ro).

In 2025, based on 2024 findings, we'll push for legislative reforms to strengthen democracy and civic space—covering laws like Public Assembly, Access to Public Interest Information, and Decision-Making Transparency.

Want to stay updated on our civic space defense efforts? Subscribe to our dedicated newsletter.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AWARD GALA



The past years have shown Romania's democratic decline: rising authoritarianism, repeated democratic backsliding, blocked access to public info, SLAPP intimidation, and widespread disillusionment with politics. This has led many citizens to retreat into personal struggles, with less civic engagement and more civic fatigue.

Through the Public Participation Awards Gala, the event we organised in 2024 for the 14th edition, we presented powerful examples of how civic involvement brings positive, tangible change. We strongly believe that these stories can reignite hope and trust in democratic processes. The event brought together over 300 participants, who applauded the civic stories shared by the awardees on the gala stage.

Perhaps among the topics our winners fight for, you'll find causes close to your heart. Get your civic inspiration dose from the [Gala Newspaper](#) (available in RO) or check out the [event video](#) and [photo gallery](#).

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## GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORTED IN 2024 UNDER THE MENTORING AND ASSISTANCE IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM: 1/2

### DIZABIL.EU Informal group

Asociatia cu Drag din Sulina

Asociatia Culturala Gabriela Ionescu si Slavomir Popovici - art200

Asociatia Împreună pentru Chilia

Măgura civică

Grupul de inițiativă locală Prietenii Dunării

Romanian Youth Movement for Democracy

Platforma de Inițiativă Locală Vâlcea

Grupul de Inițiativă din Mizil

Grupul Tinerilor Romi "Revendicări din sat"

Asociatia AIDE

Asociatia Hope4Humanity

Asociatia Right

Asociatia True Health

Asociatia Cernavodă Plus

Organizația de Incluziune socială Găujani

Asociația Rădăuțiul Civic

Asociația Raconium

Asociația Dunăvăț, natură, oameni, tradiții

Asociația Hârșova 3D

Mica Redacție rurală

Grupul informal Vibe Tineresc Pârjol

Grupul informal Tinerii Bereșteni

Grupul informal Tinerii Lipoveni

Grupul informal Peștera

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## GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORTED IN 2024 UNDER THE MENTORING AND ASSISTANCE IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM: 2/2

Asociația Mod of Life, Drobeta-Turnu Severin  
Grup civic Eliberează-ți aripile, Galați  
Centrul Cultural Delta Dunării, Mahmudia  
Asociația Împreună pentru Chilia, Chilia Veche -  
Opportunity Club, Tg. Jiu  
Go Romania, Craiova  
Asociația Ahere ,Giurgiu  
Asociația Bicicleta Verde, Curtea de Argeș  
SOS Parcul Est, Cluj-Napoca  
Ruralis, Bistrița  
Organizator comunitar Andra Silvaș, Bicz, jud. Neamț  
Asociația ARNI,Sibiu  
Asociația Urban Lab Valea Jiului, Valea Jiului  
Asociația Cu Drag din Sulina, Sulina  
Organizația Salvați Prutul Iași(OSP Iași)

Grupul „Floreasca civică”  
Grupul de inițiativă civică Lacul Tei  
Grupul de Inițiativă Civică IOR – Titan  
Grupul informal Aici a fost o padure  
Platforma de mediu București

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## WHAT OUR MENTORING AND ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME ENTAILS:



- adapting to the needs of the civic groups and organisations we work with, whether they are in the formative/consolidation period of the group or in the midst of a complex advocacy campaign
- advice on setting up and developing a civic group or organisation, managing difficult/collaborative situations;
- creating an advocacy plan and 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;
- support and examples of advocacy techniques, including drafting useful documents or persuasive text/messaging for various campaigns;
- advice on approaching other entities - public institutions, media, 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).

## FUNDING IN 2024

<b>Romanian American Foundation</b>	<b>11,771 €</b>
<b>WSOS Community Action Commission Inc. - SUA State Department</b>	<b>40,830 €</b>
<b>Network of European Foundations (Civitates)</b>	<b>65,000 €</b>
<b>Open Society Institute Foundation</b>	<b>116,801 €</b>
<b>CERV</b>	<b>124,997 €</b>
<b>Incomes from the economic activities</b>	<b>31,492 €</b>
<b>Incomes from contributions and sponsoring</b>	<b>66,484 €</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457,375 €</b>

Thank you to all the people and organizations we had the joy of working with in 2024.

Thanks also to our Partners & Sponsors, without whom our mission would be far harder to accomplish.

OUR WORK MAKES SENSE IN  
A DEMOCRATIC STATE

CITIZENS' VOICES MUST BE  
HEARD AND RESPECTED BY  
AUTHORITIES

In **2025**, alongside continuing to support changemakers, we're launching an **Online School of Community Organizing and Advocacy** and a **Community Organizers' Network**.



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