

## Community and civic participation in Oradea

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### **Abstract:**

*In the current paper I will focus on community and civic participation, describing these phenomena on a representative sample of citizens from Oradea. civic participation is measured through membership in different types of non/governmental organizations, while community involvement is studied as taking action in several activities at neighborhood or local level: volunteering, help for others, participation in public meeting at different levels, making official complaints to public administration authorities.*

*We compare the rates for community and civic participation, in order to show, as a continuation of other arguments in the Romanian literature, that in our society there is a lack of involvement in formal civic associations, which in the classical understanding of civil society is a sign of weakness, yet people find other ways to get involved in their community and the actions undertaken in such manner are relevant for the improvement of their life. The disponibility for participation in such actions is also rather high which makes the rather negative opinions on the possibility of a strong Romanian civil society less negative. We will analyze the factors that influence community participation with the intention of finding ways for promoting participation and explaining the low rates of engagement in the community. As it is shown in this article the most important factors stimulating participation is generalized trust, the perceived power to influence decision at local and state level, and household income.*

*In this paper we will present different aspects of the forms of community participation in Romania, actions realized by a sample of people living in apartment blocks in Oradea. The data presented is derived from the research activity conducted within the project **Leaders, Participants and Viewers: Determinants of Community Participation in Urban Romania**, CEEX grant code 192, coordinated by conf. univ. PhD. Adrian Hatos, Faculty of Social Studies – University of Oradea, in which I am a team member.*

**Key words:** *community participation, associational life, civil society*

### **Theoretical frame**

Political and civic participation of citizens, social responsibility, community spirit, civic activism along with other concepts from civil society's rhetoric entered, along with the effort of entering the European Union, on the public agenda, being the topic of several studies conducted in this direction. The need for a strong civil society with citizens interested and engaged in the life of their community, oriented toward social and economic development is part of the same discourse of strong democracies described from different perspectives in the literature starting with Tocqueville, Alomnd and Verba, till Putnam and many others. Parallel with this line and the analyses derived by it, we have the studies and theories of community and sustainable development which are on the one hand oriented to developmental policies, regulations, institutional framework, but include also at methodological level aspects of civic involvement as participation in assessing community's problems, involvement in decision making as well as in the implementation of the actual measures considered. In this paper we will try to combine the two perspectives which overlap mostly in regard to social capital which is equally important in both.