

Citizens' free access to information in local authorities. The case of rural communities of the North Western Region from Romania.

Olaru Ioana Gabriela

Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Ana Elena Ranta, lecturer.dr., Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communications Sciences, Department of Administration and Public Management, Cluj- Napoca, Romania.

Viorel Ion Stanica, conf. dr., Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communications Sciences, Department of Administration and Public Management, Cluj- Napoca, Romania.

Abstract: Nowadays, access to information is demanding for people in order to be heard regarding public problems, but also to strengthen their relationship with public institutions, all of these contributing to an increased good governance and quality of life. Regarding this topic there are a few researches, that is why we decided to explore this domain.

As such, this paper aims to explore the degree of compliance of Romanian rural public authorities in providing information of public interest, in accordance with the national legal provisions. In Romania the right to information was included in the actual constitution adopted in 1991 (article 31), but also in law 544 from 2011 on free access to information.

Every public authority has the obligation to communicate ex officio some information, in accordance with law 544 from 2001, such as: normative acts that regulate the organization; the organizational structure; the name of the leader and the name of the person which is in charge with dissemination of public information; the contact details of the organization; financial information; own programs and strategies; the list with the documents that are considered of public interest; the list of documents elaborated or managed; the ways for contesting the decisions of the organization.

Being a member state of the European Union, Romania is obliged to be in line with other member states regarding the free access to information, for increasing the trust of people in public authorities and also to stop corruption. This study is relevant because there are no studies regarding the free access to information for rural public authorities and the results of the study can determine these communities to focus more on this topic, and also to understand that this is important not only for citizens, but also for them, because it contribute to their development and to an increased quality of life, an increased trust in public authorities, and can help them to involve people in public decision process.

This study is a descriptive one, that seeks to evaluate the level of compliance with the law and this will help public authorities to have a bigger picture of the importance of implementation of this law, but also being in line with other European states.

We analyzed all websites from rural communities from North Western region (403 websites), based on a developed grid in consistence with the law, in order to see the level of transparency of each community.

We would like to identify the level of compliance with the mentioned law, practically our research question is which is the he level of transparency of each analyzed community in character with the law of free access to information?