

## How we became circular? Institutionalisation of the CE concept in Polish regions

*Urs Nicolae*

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

*Roja Alexandru*

*Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

*Nisioi Ioana*

*Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

**Abstract:** Communities around the world are increasingly demanding a bigger say in the way their localities are run. This increasing assertiveness dovetails with the possibilities offered by new technologies, and especially the internet, to connect community stakeholders (citizens, NGOs, academia) with public institutions. This paper studies the evolution of the eParticipation tools offered by urban localities in Romania during the last 4 years. Our study highlights how local governments have adopted and adapted these tools to foster civic engagement and enhance democratic processes. By mapping the advancements achieved by Romanian cities, this research not only shows the strides made by municipalities in embracing digital governance but also identifies persistent challenges and barriers to effective eParticipation. The findings suggest that while there is an increasing trend toward moving participatory channels online, and displays the main obstacles to increased participation, namely digital literacy, trust in public institutions, and the digital divide, all of which continue to impact the overall efficacy of these tools. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations for policy-makers, administrators, and developers to refine eParticipation strategies, aiming to enhance citizen involvement and improve public service outcomes in the context of an increasingly digitized society.