

# **Civic Responsiveness in Times of Crisis: Lessons from the Pandemic and Refugee Crisis Experiences in Romania**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The fundamental idea underlying this study is that, in order to enable citizens to become active members of their communities and sources of support in times of crisis, we must understand the values, behaviors, and skills shared by citizens who demonstrate high engagement during such times, but also have a clear perspective on the public space readiness to facilitate their contribution. To address this, we identified Romanian citizens from civil society who actively participated in drafting and implementing actions in response to recent crises: the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian refugee crisis, and we collected qualitative data on their experiences.

The area of citizens' responsiveness and readiness to actively participate in times of crisis is relatively understudied. Yet, the last decade has highlighted that there are moments when every helping hand can mean the difference between life and death. From ordinary citizens welcoming refugees with a warm bowl of soup and a place to rest, to informal groups and NGOs supporting basic needs, raising public awareness, and offering counseling during the difficult days of the COVID-19 pandemic, each person who answered the call to help played a part in resolving challenges more swiftly. Communities must shift from being groups divided between public service providers and passive members to a collaborative model, where each individual can—and is willing to—contribute to the safety and well-being of others.

In this article, we aim to highlight the importance of individuals stepping up during crises and the need for the public sector to support them in doing so. To this end, we conducted interviews to gather qualitative data on how people responded to crises and the dynamics of their cooperation with the public sector. This data was used to design a profile of the „responsive citizen” and to identify vulnerabilities and best practices for creating an optimal framework for active civic participation in times of crisis.

**KEYWORDS:** Civil society, Citizen Responsiveness, Covid19, Refugee crisis

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