



SHAPING ROMANIA'S NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN*

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Nicolae Toderaş

Introduction

■ For over three decades, the European Commission (EC) has guided member states to apply the principle of partnership in managing European funds. Being a key principle, it propels the involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) throughout the implementation of programs financed by European funds – from identifying needs, prioritizing, designing, and monitoring implementation to evaluating and revising programs (as per Commission Delegated Regulation No. 240/2014). Through this approach, the aim of the partnership would lead to the prevalence of socio-centric governance arrangements, an aspect that fosters achieving a higher degree of upward convergence in the EU.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is a temporary funding instrument established by the EU to overcome the crisis generated by the COVID–19 pandemic, as well as to support the green and digital transitions. Funding is granted to member states until August 31, 2026, based on a National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) negotiated and approved by the EC. Compared to the classical European funds to which member states are accustomed, the implementation of the RRF also focuses on the institution of a different governance system (Capati 2023). Thus, it was expected that, during the shaping phase of the NRRP, the involvement of stakeholders, including CSOs, would unfold in an agile interaction framework through various national thematic networks. This is intended to contribute to the strengthening of new mechanisms of democratic representation

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specific to socio-centric governance at the level of member states. In the case of Romania, the drafting phase of the NRRP can be paralleled with the period of EU accession negotiations which took place between 2000–2004. As emphasized by Ciot (2023), throughout the accession negotiations, Romanian CSOs were involved in the preparation, implementation, and decision-making regarding EU accession. Therefore, there is a precedent in Romania's recent history for CSOs' involvement in achieving a national strategic objective. Half of the interviews conducted in this research (N=6) highlighted the fact that CSOs were involved during the EU pre-accession period. However, following the historical moment of EU accession, their involvement in policy-making processes has gradually decreased.

At the supranational level, at the end of the approval phase for most NRRPs, confusion was found regarding the involvement of CSOs by the provisions of the RRF regulation. On one hand, the EC positively appreciated that stakeholders, especially CSOs, were involved in the process and continue to play a key role in the implementation of plans (European Commission 2022: 4). On the other hand, the European Parliament took a critical approach and emphasized that CSOs and the academic environment were not sufficiently involved in shaping the NRRPs (European Parliament 2021: 87). Also, a series of studies and analyses highlight the fact that at the EU level, CSOs have been marginalized or ignored in the process of shaping the NRRPs (Vanhercke et al 2021; Zeitlin et al 2023), contradicting the arrangements of socio-centric governance. Given this state of confusion, there is a clear need for further investigation into the dynamics of CSOs' involvement processes in shaping the NRRPs and identifying the causes underlying the opening or closing of processes about the CSOs.

According to the data presented in section 34 of Romania's NRRP, to define and prioritize the reforms and investments to be included in the plan in correspondence with the bottom-up approach, consultations were carried out on two levels. The first level consisted of organizing, in February 2021, 20 inter-ministerial meetings and twelve thematic public consultations. Associations of local and regional authorities, social partners, CSOs, the business community, and other relevant stakeholders participated in these events. The second level consisted of conducting a written consultation on the completion of an online form for reform and investment proposals. According to the information described in Romania's NRRP in section 34, a total of 1939 proposals were received, which were systematized in a database and subsequently analyzed on thematic clusters to adopt relevant proposals by country-specific recommendations. This process ensured a series of scale-up, multiplication, or experimentation interventions that were included in components such as the environment, health, social inclusion, good governance, education, tourism, and culture.

The first iteration of drafting Romania's NRRP was carried out from June to December 2020, when the top-down decision-making approach prevailed regarding the types of investments included in the first version of the plan. The involvement of social partners in the elaboration of plan components was quite limited.



However, in the case of social inclusion, there was tighter cooperation, resulting in a larger allocation for interventions dedicated to this sector.

The second iteration of consultations took place from January 2021 to September 2021. This period encompassed several sequences opening to CSOs and the economic environment, thereby instituting a temporary framework closer to the socio-centric governance concept. The change in approach was due to the takeover of governance by the political coalition formed after the parliamentary elections on December 6, 2020. According to the sharing of political objectives, the responsibility for updating and preparing negotiations for Romania's NRRP with the EC fell to the *Save Romania Union* Party. Being a party rooted in civil society (Mătiuța 2023), its representatives were interested in opening the process to CSOs and updating the first version of the Plan according to the EC's requirements through successive bottom-up consultation iterations.

The analysis focuses on Romania's experience in involving CSOs in the shaping phase of the NRRP and is structured in five sections. The first section presents the research design. A synthetic analysis of the literature is then carried out and the way the CSOs were involved in shaping Romania's NRRP is presented and discussed. The next section presents the results of the conducted interviews, and finally, the results are analyzed and potential perspectives regarding the potential for changing the current situation are discussed.

Research design

The research aims to analyze the way CSOs in Romania have been involved in the shaping of Romania's NRRP. The hypothesis considered focuses on the fact that, during the drafting phase of the NRRP, an environment conducive to creating institutional arrangements specific to socio-centric governance was established. However, these arrangements were not enduring and could not alter the path dependency specific to state-centric governance arrangements. Therefore, to test this hypothesis, perceptions of CSOs regarding their involvement in the shaping of Romania's NRRP are presented. After the analysis of the collected data, I aim to answer the following two questions:

1. What factors influenced the involvement of CSOs in the shaping of Romania's NRRP compared to other European fund programming processes?
2. What are the prospects for improving the current governance regime concerning the management of European funds from the perspective of CSO involvement?

The analysis combines qualitative evidence from both primary and secondary data sources. As primary sources, the semi-structured interview method was used. Secondary data sources included official documents from EU institutions and public documents, articles in specialized scientific journals, studies, analyses, and



reports from the category of grey literature, as well as statements from political decision-makers in Romania.

In the period from February to March 2024, I interviewed twelve people holding leadership positions in relevant CSOs, including from the perspective of involvement in the Economic and Social Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, and with an impressive portfolio in the reference areas of the NRRP (Appendix 1). The interviews targeted also CSOs promoting advocacy-type initiatives or supplementing public services. The interviews were structured around the following seven key perception variables:

- 1) Previous experiences of CSOs involvement in strategic decision-making moments/processes for Romania.
- 2) Perception of how CSOs were involved in the elaboration of the NRRP.
- 3) Initial expectations by CSOs and their dynamics throughout the NRRP elaboration.
- 4) Expectations of authorities regarding the involvement of CSOs in the elaboration of the NRRP.
- 5) The effectiveness of CSOs' involvement in the elaboration of the NRRP.
- 6) Causes of the current state of the governance regime concerning the management of European funds.
- 7) The potential for improving the current governance regime concerning the management of European funds from the perspective of CSO involvement.

The research is based on the theoretical and conceptual framework specific to the new historical institutionalism in the field of European integration. According to this approach, institutional arrangements defined in the past can persist linearly for an extended period. Usually, arrangements change marginally, adapting incrementally to changing political environments (Pollack 2018). At certain critical junctures, particularly due to external pressures, institutional arrangements undergo substantial changes. Typically, these kinds of changes are temporary and reversible. Sometimes, critical junctures can lead to the stabilization of arrangements resulting from substantial changes. Looking back, the RRF has favored the creation of such a critical juncture.

State-centric governance arrangements are oriented towards policymaking in a top-down manner. Thus, public administration is autonomous and entirely responsible for policy conception, carrying out reforms, and associated investments. Only under certain conditions, to respect decision-making pluralism, CSOs are also involved, equally with the economic environment (known as "social and economic partners"), to support the substantiation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of processes. The involvement is formal and mimics the principles and values of good governance. Therefore, the space allocated to CSOs is extremely limited, although it can make essential contributions to the policy-making process, especially in the field of assessment of public interventions (Toderas 2023: 262).

At the opposite end, socio-centric governance arrangements are oriented towards the involvement of CSOs and social partners as much as the public administration.



In this context, CSOs and other social, economic, or cultural partners thus use their forces of non-electoral representation as much as political parties do (Loia 2022:12). The policy-making process is carried out in a bottom-up and mixed manner, and the principles and values of good governance are fully applied and respected. Thus, all involved actors, regardless of their status, behave as trustworthy partners and are responsible for the commitments undertaken. In this arrangement, public administration retains only the authority to control and sanction in case of non-compliance.

Literature review

In the specialized literature, the topic is addressed from the perspective of ensuring inclusion in the shaping of NRRP, subsequent negotiations with the EC, as well as the first years of implementation. Analyses and reports from the grey literature category predominate, especially those carried out by umbrella-type CSOs at the European level. However, academic literature tangentially examines this topic, either from the perspective of instituting the RRF or from the perspective of the design and implementation of NRRPs. Nonetheless, some articles and studies also point to the way CSOs were involved in the process of shaping the NRRPs.

The analyses highlight the fact that CSO involvement was inadequate or superficial, both at the European level and the national level (Vanhercke et al. 2021; Dumitriu 2022; Zeitlin et al. 2023). These reveal that formal consultation requirements were met, but the quality of the process was low. The consultation process and involvement in shaping the NRRP were adequate only in Portugal and Belgium, and to a lesser extent in Spain (Zeitlin et al. 2023). In Poland, involvement was broad and aimed to ensure a judicious allocation of funds to avoid polarization and regional disparities (Hartwell et al. 2022).

Bokhorst–Corti (2023) highlighted that this situation is a consequence of the EC's definition of the type and mechanism of RRF implementation favoring the centralization of the decision-making process. This led to an enhancement of the democratic deficit at the internal level of the member states, as well as at the EU level. The cause of this phenomenon lies in the fact that the process of deepening European integration leads to the state becoming impermeable to societal interests and demands promoted by CSOs. Hence, in the context of designing and implementing the RRF, the impermeability character is strengthened precisely by applying the performance-based principle that underlies the management of this temporary financial instrument. Therefore, designing the NRRPs did not permit the establishment of a policy-learning framework extended to actors outside public administration. Consequently, old institutional arrangements prevailed, contrary to the theory of change that underpinned the RRF foundation.

Research results

From the twelve interviews conducted, it is apparent that the involvement of CSOs in key decision-making processes related to Romania's national strategic objectives is considered fluctuating and insufficient. Although there is a legislative framework that stipulates the participation of CSOs in these processes, most interviewees highlighted that this involvement is considered formal and mimicked just to meet legal requirements (N=8), without having a real and substantial impact on the final decisions. In addition, the lack of transparency and openness from state institutions was pointed out, resulting in limited CSO involvement. However, there are some examples of genuine and effective involvement of CSOs, especially during the pre-accession periods to the European Union, when they played a significant role in areas such as judicial reform or anti-corruption. However, in the case of programming and managing European funds, the situation appears far better compared to other sectors or public domains. Most of those interviewed (N=8) indicate that there is openness, and throughout time the interaction with certain ministries has been constructive and beneficial, or that there was a gradual increase in the authorities' openness in recent years. The following consideration is relevant in this context: *"In the latest funding cycle, civil society was massively involved"* (I.5). However, even in the case of programming and managing European funds, the feeling persists that CSOs are often seen as troublesome structures or potential obstacles for authorities and that consultation processes are carried out just because they are required by the financial regulations specific to European funds (N=4).

In the opinion of all interviewed persons, the NRRP is considered a major national strategic objective. Thus, the plan is viewed as crucial for Romania's development. The subject of funding and proper allocation of every cent and synchronization of the plan with national objectives is reflected in most of the interviews. However, there are also concerns about the timely completion of the proposed reforms and investments under the NRRP to benefit from the allocated funding, which could be considered a strategic failure.

The dynamics of designing the NRRP were perceived and experienced differently, ranging from non-involvement (especially in the energy sector) to hyper-involvement (e.g. youth and social inclusion), and subsequently to a sudden interruption of involvement. In general, concerns were expressed about the lack of coherence, transparency, and adequate consultation with CSOs from the initial stages of NRRP design (the period from June to October 2020). The following considerations are emblematic: *"It was more like a rollercoaster, with very strong peaks and troughs. When you expected that wow, okay, now it's going to be solved, we're going to be super involved, let's make worksheets, let's ..., it turns out that absolutely nothing has happened and absolutely nothing that came as input from civil society is taken into account at all"* (I.12) and *"It was a rather accelerated and unplanned dynamic of the process"* (I.6).



In less than half of the interviews (N=5), the chronology, iterations, and critical moments specific to drafting Romania's NRRP were briefly outlined and described. The majority of those interviewed claimed that they were invited to provide feedback and proposals, but later in the process (only from January 2021 onwards), their contributions do not appear to have had a significant impact on the outcome. For example, the following consideration is relevant: *"It was something like too little, too late, in the sense that the vision was already harmonized, made. Nobody wanted to change anything anymore. Things were calculated down to the last comma, but this involvement was opened to civil society to check off a participatory process"* (I.10). Nevertheless, more than half of the interviewees (N=7) mentioned that they had positive and productive interactions with certain ministers and state secretaries during the process, but these were later confused by unexpected changes or ones not communicated in time.

After conducting bottom-up consultations, several representative CSOs were involved in the drafting of NRRP components, as well as in agreeing upon them with the authorities involved (especially those in the environmental field, social services, youth policies, health, etc.). For example, one of the major challenges was agreeing with the Competition Council on the investment package addressed to CSOs. However, the organizations involved exhibited proactive and agile behavior in supporting the justification efforts and in negotiating the proposed interventions with the EC services on a case-by-case basis.

Interview participants perceived variations in the level of openness from authorities throughout the NRRP process. While some reported an elevated level of openness and dialogue (in the case of social, environmental, and health sectors), others indicated a lack of transparency, limited, closed-off, superficial, and late collaboration (in the case of energy sectors and even education). For example, in the case of the energy sector, the following perception is dominant *"The government team that led this process worked with private consultants, probably for reasons of efficiency and rapidity. Stakeholder involvement suffered"* (I.9). These variations seem to have been related to personnel changes and priority directions of various ministries and ministers. The following consideration is emblematic: *"On the youth area, the openness was at its maximum. Authorities were open to the participation zone. So open that we were invited, even in the negotiation with the European Commission when the first iteration was discussed"* (I.4). Likewise, considerations were also stated that they were more active in defending their causes and proposals in the first iteration of the process (June–October 2020), when *"discussions were somewhat deeper and the dialogue was good"* (I.7). All interview participants specified the methods and tools used in the consultation and involvement process of CSOs to shape the NRRP. The answers confirm the tools and methods described in the previous section of this analysis. Moreover, the interviewees' responses highlight the fact that in many cases, the methods and tools used varied depending on the phase of the process or the specific organizational culture of the involved ministries. However, several criticisms were also stated regarding the use of



involvement and consultation methods and tools. Thus, although hybrid consultations with CSOs were conducted thematically, targeted participant selection was not ensured. Also, the consultations were not managed in a structured manner and a follow-up process was not ensured, including on the reform and investment proposals submitted.

The interviewed CSOs expressed a variety of expectations regarding their involvement in shaping the NRRP. Firstly, the majority (N=10) hoped for early and continuous involvement in the process, allowing them to direct and adjust their measures, including ensuring coordination and specialized human resources for such complex strategic planning activities. Expectations ranged from the desire to be recognized as essential parts of this joint effort and to develop a broader dialogue and greater transparency in the process, to benefit from funds from this temporary instrument. Thus, some organizations expected their proposals to be considered and integrated into the final document, while others wanted to be included in the funding as beneficiary groups (such as the case of creative industries or cultural workers – I.3).

The majority of those interviewed (N=7) would have liked the organizations they represent to assume responsibilities in the NRRP implementation, while others (N=3) argued this is the government's duty, not the CSOs', as one comment exemplifies: *"We can't take on something where we don't have decision-making power – the decision was with the state"* (I.2). For some organizations, taking on responsibilities in implementation would be seen as an opportunity to have a greater impact and to use their experience and expertise to ensure that the NRRP achieves its objectives. Others (especially those in major infrastructure fields) pointed out that CSOs cannot replace governmental authorities or do not have the necessary resources. However, there is a general recognition that civil society can play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the plan.

Regarding the materialization of expectations, all interviewees stated that their expectations were not fulfilled following their involvement in the NRRP drafting process. The majority of those interviewed highlighted their disappointment, pointing out that *"our competencies were used when they were needed, and then the dialogue closed, which is quite frustrating"* (I.11). Despite the efforts made, most of those who stated that the organizations they represent were involved in the consultation and conception of reform and investment proposals emphasized that the forwarded proposals were not integrated into the final plan submitted to the European Commission.

Some respondents indicated that some aspects of their proposals were integrated into the plan, particularly in areas that violated the DNSH principle in environmental investments, energy efficiency of buildings, and local development. However, grievances were highlighted regarding the fact that certain sectors, such as the railway or social services, were neglected or did not receive sufficient funding. Even if there were positive interactions with certain responsible authorities, these did not always lead to tangible results. Some interviewees (I.4; I.5; I.7) high-



lighted that during official negotiations with the EC services, some non-integrated proposals were suggested to be funded from the programs financed by the EU cohesion policy. However, even if this promise was respected, it was later found that the respective proposals had been diverted in favor of the public sector. Similarly, the interviews reveal a broader range of perceptions regarding authorities' expectations of CSOs. Thus, some responses (N=8) indicate that authorities would have expected CSOs to have practical contributions and innovative ideas from them, while others (N=4) stated they rather felt seen as an obstacle or just as a tool to fulfill formal requirements, more of a necessary exercise than an opportunity to receive substantial feedback. In this sense, the following consideration is suggestive: *"The impression was that the competent authorities do not have time and interest for a substantive interaction with civil society organizations"* (I.9). A few positions (N=3) suggested that authorities' expectations were perceived as CSOs effectively taking over drafting tasks that would otherwise have fallen to public officials without expertise in programming such complex interventions (a phenomenon noted especially in the field of youth policies – I.4). However, in the case of two responses, it was indicated that at that time perception was created that the authorities did not seem to have clear expectations.

From the process of elaborating the NRRP, interview participants specified that they had learned several important lessons. Firstly, these refer to the need to act proactively and strategically. Thus, forming strong coalitions and getting involved from the initial stages of the process using lobbying mechanisms rather than advocacy is important. Also, there is a critical need for structuring the interaction and consultation process better, including timely identification of relevant organizations and individuals who can provide relevant expertise. Another lesson learned focuses on the efficient management of expectations so that processes are approached and managed realistically. Therefore, the importance of political thinking and insight is definitive to anticipate, and correct certain turns in the policy-making processes caused by political decision-makers.

The responses from those interviewed indicate a range of ideas about how CSOs' involvement in the decision-making process regarding European funds could be improved. Among the suggestions mentioned are involving these organizations from the initial stages of the process, cultivating better relationships with them, identifying organizations that can provide added value, and improving the education and training of both CSOs and authorities. Also, some participants point out that deeper structural issues could be resolved by establishing funding instruments for CSOs, especially those in small towns and rural areas, to compensate for the lack of human resources and skills in substantiating, implementing, and monitoring public interventions. Finally, developing a stronger culture of civic dialogue can be achieved by mandatorily involving the Economic and Social Council in all processes of managing European funds.

Regarding the factors or agents of change in the way CSOs are involved in managing European funds, most responses (N=9) suggest that change should start



endogenously, from the level of civil society organizations, by increasing confidence in their ability to add value to the policy-making process. This process also includes the need for institutional reform at the level of public administration, by making changes in organizational culture, as well as adequate training of officials considering the principles of good governance. Additionally, several responses (N=4) indicate the crucial role that exogenous factors could play, such as EU institutions (especially the EC), OECD, UNESCO, and other international organizations in boosting dialogue and CSOs involvement in managing European funds.

Analysing the results and prospects for changing the status quo

In the analysis of Romania, the services of the European Commission underlined the fact that “public consultations and the integration of feedback received from civil society are not systematic” (European Commission 2021: SWD 276). As can be seen from the research findings, all interviewees validate this consideration by the EC, even though the situation is better in the field of European funds compared to other public sectors. Romanian authorities have a varying degree of openness to CSOs' involvement in decision-making processes regarding European funds. However, there is a persistent perception that consultation processes are carried out primarily to ensure compliance with European regulations. Thus, CSOs are involved in the public consultation stage after the elaboration of policies, programs, and proposals for public interventions financed by European funds. Therefore, the results highlight that persistent issues regarding CSOs' access and participation in national strategic planning and evaluation continue to exist.

Regarding the first research question on the factors that influenced CSOs' involvement in drafting Romania's NRRP compared to other European funds management processes, the following aspects are relevant. First, the NRRP design required varied efforts to ensure bi-directional communication between involved government authorities and CSOs. The RRF was difficult to understand, equally so for both public authorities and CSOs, due to the lack of analysis capabilities of public policies at a macro level, as well as understanding the specificities of the RRF. Therefore, while certain CSO proposals were considered for some sectors, due to the specific eligibility conditions of the RRF, these were either partially accepted and maintained or modified, not accurately reflecting the original intentions of the CSOs anymore. At that moment, this method of integration could not be fully explained and understood by both parties. Hence, the disappointment and frustration at the end of the process are understandable.

Secondly, there is a persistent perception that the two sectors operate in parallel, but in diverse ways. In general, CSOs are knowledgeable about grassroots processes, but they do not have an overall sectoral view, nor do they have appropriate resources for active and responsible participation in all phases of deliberative processes, akin to lobby structures.



On the other hand, public authorities lack experience in collaborating with CSOs and grassroots evidence. Additionally, due to the inability to balance the inter-ministerial and territorial authority collaboration flow with the CSO's collaboration flow, in certain negotiation processes with EC services, the points of view of public administration were given more weight than those of CSOs. In the event of opportunities like the NRRP, these two worlds must converge to generate strategic planning documents of much higher quality than what was developed in 2021. This underscores the need for CSOs to cultivate a deeper understanding of public policy implementation mechanisms and anticipate certain complex processes.

Thirdly, in the absence of coalition contexts and the coagulation of a common sectoral vision, the problem of establishing sectoral consensus arose. As emerged from the analysis of the interviews, CSOs are disproportionately involved compared to other societal components (such as employers' associations, trade unions, or lobbying organizations) that act much more cohesively. For example, a coalition phenomenon of organizations only occurred during consultations in the social field through the creation of the Social Platform of Romania, or through the conception of a component dedicated to youth policies. Thus, the noticeably brief time did not allow for successive iterations that would have led to identifying a compromise between various stakeholders and which would have favored a tougher negotiation with public authorities and EC services. Also, the mix of perspectives on the expectations that government authorities had of CSOs suggests that there is a degree of uncertainty regarding the potential and quality of contributions expected from CSOs in policy-making processes.

Regarding the second research question, as emerged from the perceptions expressed by interview participants, for the moment no certain prospects are foreseen for changing the current governance regime concerning European funds management from the perspective of a larger and more responsible involvement of CSOs. According to the perception drawn from analyzing the interviews, the governance regime can be incrementally improved so that in successive temporal iterations it approaches the paradigm specific to socio-centric governance. This requires first carrying out a series of structural reforms at the public sector level, especially at the subsidiary level, in parallel with strengthening the administrative capacities of CSOs. A boost to this process is the acceleration of implementing investment four from component fourteen of the NRRP. As also emerged from the research, structured involvement of CSOs from the initial stages of designing programs financed by European funds is essential. Furthermore, changing the image of CSOs within public administration and demonstrating their contribution potential to complex processes of managing European funds can be achieved through regular invitations of officials to activities carried out by CSOs. In addition to this, organizing ongoing professional training programs in which public officials and CSO representatives participate concurrently can contribute to energizing cooperation between the two sectors.



At the same time, improved communication, and relationships between CSO representatives and political party leaders could boost transformative processes in public administration from the perspective of involving CSOs in implementing public interventions.

Conclusions

The CSO's involvement in drafting the NRRP consisted of legitimizing the definition of priorities and ways of economic and social recovery and taking on appropriate roles in contributing to the implementation of reforms or public investments included in the plan, especially in the case of those aspects that face strong resistance to change from the political environment or public administration. There are plenty of such examples implemented at the grassroots level, with or without European funds, in areas such as education, social inclusion, health, reducing energy poverty, reforestation, waste management, etc. However, the degree of CSOs' involvement in shaping the NRRPs depended heavily on the political and administrative culture, type of democracy, political conjunctures at that time, as well as the degree of decentralization and deconcentrating of the governmental authorities.

The research highlighted that in the process of shaping Romania's NRRP, the involvement of CSOs was dynamic but inconsistent. On one hand, in the initial phase, CSO involvement was extremely limited and carried out in a hermetically sealed and restricted framework. On the other hand, in the second phase, the openness to CSOs and their inclusion in the process was much greater, yet this effort did not have a concrete outcome. Too few proposals coming from CSOs were accepted following internal political deliberations and negotiations with EC services. Also, CSOs are involved with specific roles in implementing, monitoring or evaluating investments in too few reforms and investments in the NRRP.

According to the research results, in shaping Romania's NRRP, the arrangements specific to state-centric governance prevailed, even though arrangements close to the socio-centric governance regime were used in certain fields and critical moments of the process. These attempts were too small in scale and without the potential to demonstrate their effectiveness and thus produce a critical juncture. The phenomenon thus indicates the constancy of the state-centric governance regime in the field of programming and managing European funds, without a certain potential for approaching the socio-centric governance paradigm in the next period. The interviews conducted thus partially validate the research hypothesis. As derived from the research results, the fundamental cause of this phenomenon lies in the fact that a mature civic and participatory culture does not yet exist to favor the establishment and irreversible maintenance of arrangements that would provoke the change of current arrangements.



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Appendix 1. Interviews with CSO representatives

| Interview code | Name of the organization | Name of the person interviewed | Role in the organization |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| I.1 | Worldwide Fund for Nature – WWF România | Diana Cosmoiu | Climate and Energy National Manager |
| I.2 | Pro Infrastructura Association | Ionuț Ciurea | Executive Director |
| I.3 | Association for Theatre, Film, Music, and Dance – MUZE | Răzvan Ailenei | President |
| I.4 | National Youth Foundation | Mihai Vilcea | Chairman of the Administrative Board |
| I.5 | Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Social Services - FONSS | Diana Chiriacescu | Director, ESC member |
| I.6 | Romania Energy Center – ROEC | Eugenia Gușilov | Director |
| I.7 | NGOs Federation for Children – FONPC | Bogdan Simion | Director, ESC president |
| I.8 | Association for Integrated Territorial Development Valea Jiului | Alexandru Kelemen | Executive Director |
| I.9 | Energy Policy Group | Radu Dudău | President |
| I.10 | Center for the Study of Democracy | Corina Murafa | Expert, EESC member |
| I.11 | Sexul vs Barza Association | Adriana Radu | President, ESC member |
| I.12 | Funky Citizens | Elena Calistru | President, EESC member |