

Participation in cultural activities as one of the explanatory factors of democratic citizenship

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1. Introduction

The role of cultural activities in society has been extensively discussed in terms of economic impact, while the weight of the effects that culture has on various aspects of social life was unduly neglected. Most studies have aimed to identify the influences that different leisure practices have on the accumulation of educational capital, on the consolidation of a local economy, on the provision of subjective well-being or on the increase of living standards. However, more recent approaches show that the effects of cultural life are not only reflected on the economy, but the effects end up being observed at a much wider social level, through processes aimed at the formation of social values.

The analysis of specialised literature has outlined a series of theoretical perspectives aimed at identifying the social impact attributed to participation in cultural activities, by analysing aspects related to active citizenship, civic engagement, social integration or democratic participation¹. For example, the *European Parliament Resolution of 11 December 2018 on the New European Agenda for Culture* stipulates „the role of culture and the cultural and creative sectors (CCSs) as a driving force in pursuing the objectives of cohesion policy and social inclusion”², thus specifying the unique contribution of cultural life in the consolidation of a democratic society. According to this perspective, public policies theoretically define culture as a tool that contributes to ensuring social cohesion and inclusion³, a fact that appears explicitly in the government documents of several states, among which Cyprus, Switzerland, Sweden,

Azerbaijan, France and Italy⁴. The implementation of such an approach is beneficial on a social level, providing a favourable framework for organising cultural activities.

The report commissioned by the European Union, entitled „Culture and Democracy: the evidence”, highlights the fact that there is a positive correlation between the level of participation in cultural activities and indicators of civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion⁵. Participation in cultural activities is understood as „participation in any activity that, for individuals, represents a way of increasing cultural and informational capacity and capital, which helps define their identity and/or allows for personal expression”⁶. Participation in cultural activities encompasses a range of leisure activities that are carried out in either formal or informal settings and that are part of everyday life, most often taking a habitual or routine-like form. Some authors believe that the distinction between elitist („highbrow”) cultural activities and mass („lowbrow”) cultural activities has faded over time, becoming less relevant in the context of today’s society, when cultural consumption has become more and more diversified as a result of the proliferation of the new media⁷. In Romania, the differences between culture and entertainment are maintained in certain socio-demographic categories and are amplified in

1 M. Sharon Jeannotte, *The Social Effects of Culture. A Literature Review* (Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa, 2017).

2 Comisia Europeană, *Rezoluția Parlamentului European din 11 decembrie 2018 referitoare la Noua Agendă Europeană Pentru Cultură*, 2018 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0499_RO.html>.

3 Vladimír Bína & Teunis Ijdens, *Social Participation and Cultural Policy: A Position Paper* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2007).

4 H.K. Anheier et al., *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies. A Thematic Report Based on the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy* (Council of Europe, 2017), p. 14.

5 William Hammonds, *Culture and Democracy: the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion. Lessons from International Research*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, p.6.

6 UNESCO, *Measuring Cultural Participation: A Framework for Cultural Statistics Handbook*, 2012, p. 51.

7 Desirée Campagna, Giulio Caperna and Valentina Montalto, ‘Does Culture Make a Better Citizen? Exploring the Relationship Between Cultural and Civic Participation in Italy’, *Social Indicators Research*, 149.2 (2020), 657–86 (p. 659).

the absence of coherent cultural education programmes to educate the aesthetic tastes of young consumers.

The scope of cultural activities includes not only the practices that take place within traditional cultural institutions, but also other types of activities that meet one of the following conditions: they involve the functioning logic of the creative sectors, they aim at the consumption of cultural products or services and they require interaction with media content. In cultural activities, it is considered that participation takes place voluntarily, consciously and intentionally, based on a motivational and volitional support acquired through the assimilation of the set of social significations.

Parker and Jarolimek (1984) cited by Doganay define democratic citizenship as the adoption of a “set of practices and activities that equip young people and adults with the resources necessary to participate in democratic life by assuming and exercising the rights and responsibilities they have within society”⁸. According to the Council of Europe, democratic citizenship implies a high level of „participation, social cohesion, access, equity and solidarity”⁹: „democratic citizenship is more about inclusion than exclusion, more about participation than marginalisation, more about culture and values than procedural rationales (like voting), it’s about being civically and socially active”¹⁰. Understood in this manner, democratic citizenship represents an essential foundation for the functioning of democratic institutions, being made of an attitudinal component (values oriented towards equal opportunities, social justice, respect for

human rights) and a behavioural component (participation in decision-making, involvement in the community, development of associative life, political and social activism). On the one hand, democratic citizenship corresponds to the building of a sense of solidarity and social responsibility that contributes to the collective well-being and, on the other hand, democratic citizenship implies individual autonomy and an assumption of independence in relation to the elements that define personal life¹¹. As such, democratic citizenship presupposes an orientation towards collectivity and community, by showing interest in participating in how society is organised and by engaging in actions alongside others.

8 Ahmet Doganay, 'A Curriculum Framework for Active Democratic Citizenship Education', in *Schools, Curriculum and Civic Education for Building Democratic Citizens*, ed. Murray Print and Dirk Lange (Rotterdam: Sense Publishing, 2012), pp. 19–39 (p. 25).

9 Hugh Starkey, *Democratic Citizenship, Language, Diversity and Human Rights. Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education* (Strasbourg, 2002), p. 8.

10 Idem.

11 Anne Larason Schneider and Helen Ingram, 'Public Policy and Democratic Citizenship: What Kinds of Citizenship Does Policy Promote?', in *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis. Theory, Politics, and Methods*, ed. Frank Fischer, Gerald Miller, and Mara Sidney (London & New York: CRC Press), pp. 329–46 (p. 333).

2. Research methodology

In the context of this study, cultural participation is understood as assimilating a series of diverse activities that contribute to the building of cultural capital, assuming relevant forms of involvement in society. Three dimensions of cultural participation were considered: (1) the dimension of public cultural participation (which involves activities carried out in the extended community, in the social space where other members of society are physically present), (2) the dimension of non-public cultural participation (corresponding to the cultural consumption carried out especially in the domestic space, but which in particular presupposes a form of individualised exposure to a specific content) and (3) the dimension of cultural participation in the online environment (corresponding to the forms of cultural

consumption that presuppose the use of digital technologies, requiring an Internet connection). Certain indicators have been set for each of the dimensions, and each of these indicators is part of several aggregated cumulative indices that measure not only the frequency of cultural participation, but also the diversity of the forms of involvement in cultural life. Thus, we have calculated an index of public cultural participation (as the sum of the frequencies associated with the activities carried out in the public space), an index of non-public cultural participation (as the sum of the frequencies associated with the activities performed in a private context, regardless of the actual place where they are carried out) and an index of online cultural participation (as the sum of activities undertaken through the use of the Internet).

Table 1. Operationalisation of cultural participation

The dimension of public cultural participation	Frequency of attending classical, symphonic, opera or ballet performances
	Frequency of attending theatre performances
	Frequency of attending entertainment shows
	Frequency of going to the cinema
	Frequency of attending music festivals
	Frequency of participation in film festivals
	Frequency of participation in theatre festivals
	Frequency of going to the library to read or borrow books
	Frequency of visiting a historical monument or archaeological site
	Frequency of visiting a museum, exhibition or art gallery
	Frequency of going to discos or clubs
	Frequency of walking in parks and green areas
	Frequency of going on trips in the country
	Frequency of going on trips abroad
	Frequency of practising a sport
	Frequency of participation in sports competitions as a spectator
	Frequency of attending meetings with relatives or friends
	Frequency of going to church
	Frequency of attending local celebrations or events
	Frequency of going to restaurants, pubs or cafés
	Frequency of going to the mall

The dimension of non-public cultural participation	Frequency of reading newspapers, magazines, online or on paper
	Frequency of reading books in print format
	Frequency of reading books in electronic format
	Frequency of listening to music
	Frequency of watching TV programmes
	Frequency of taking photos or filming video
	Frequency of editing, cropping or modification of pictures or video material
The dimension of online cultural participation	Using the Internet to download pictures or audio-video materials from Internet pages/social networks
	Using the Internet to upload pictures or audio-video materials to Internet pages/social networks
	Using the Internet to visit the websites of museums/libraries/theatres/festivals/pages with cultural events
	Using the Internet to watch online streaming movies or TV shows
	Using the internet for computer/laptop or console/phone games
	Using the Internet for professional/school activities (e-mail, video conferences, etc.)
	Using the Internet to attend online courses or tutorials
	Using the Internet to read books, manuals, articles
	Using the Internet to buy books, CDs, theatre tickets, event tickets (concerts, etc.)
	Using the Internet to use social networks
	Using the Internet to make online purchases of any kind
Using the Internet for other activities	

Democratic citizenship represents, on the one hand, a set of attitudes aimed at accepting diversity in relationships with others and showing an interest in topics of social relevance, and, on the other hand, a set of behaviours that imply the engagement in community life and responsible participation in decisions regarding the organisation of community life. According to this approach, democratic citizenship is defined in relation to 7 dimensions: (1) the dimension of social belonging (which describes the degree of involvement in associative life), (2) the dimension of social identity (which describes the way individuals position themselves in the social space), (3) the dimension of social tolerance (which describes the degree of acceptance of marginalised social groups subject to risks of discrimination in the immediate proximity), (4) the dimension of social trust (which describes the proclivity towards strengthening social relations), (5) the dimension of social inclusion (which describes the importance given to initiatives supporting minority groups)

(6) the dimension of civic concerns (which describes the interest in certain topics relevant to the functioning of democratic institutions) and (7) the dimension of social freedom (which describes the tendency towards accepting the values of individual and collective autonomy in the public space). It should be noted that the ordering of these dimensions was not established based on reasons related to the statistical considerations inherent in bivariate or multivariate analyses. In particular, the sequence of dimensions was established based on reasons assimilated to the practices of conceptualisation and operationalisation of the notion of democratic citizenship in line with the theoretical foundation of the hypotheses. In order to capture the different nuances related to the influence of cultural consumption on democratic citizenship, each of the indicators is addressed separately in the analysis if the variability of the data allows it, without using extended cumulative measures like aggregated indices as independent variables.

Table 2. Operationalisation of democratic citizenship

The dimension of social belonging	Subjective belonging to communities of a cultural or artistic nature
	Subjective belonging to communities of people who share the same musical preferences
	Subjective belonging to professional development or continuous learning communities
	Subjective belonging to communities of people practising a sports activity
	Subjective belonging to communities supporting an athlete or sports teams
	Subjective belonging to religious or church communities
	Subjective belonging to professional communities or associations
	Subjective belonging of ecologist (environment protection) groups
	Subjective belonging to humanitarian or charitable associations
	Subjective belonging to alumni communities of an educational institution
	Subjective belonging to communities of people with the same hobbies
The dimension of social identity	The importance attributed to the preservation of national identity and patriotic feeling
	The importance attributed to the alignment of the measures in the country with the directives of the European Union
The dimension of social tolerance	Acceptance of people of other ethnicities as neighbours
	Acceptance of foreign workers as neighbours
	Acceptance as neighbours of people with LGBTQIA+ identity
	Acceptance of people of other religions as neighbours
	Accepting as neighbours people who have recently been released from prison
The dimension of social trust	The degree of trust in family members
	The degree of trust in the people of the neighbourhood/village/community
	The degree of trust in people known in person
	The degree of trust in people met for the first time
	The degree of trust in people of another nationality
	The degree of trust in people of another religion
	The degree of trust in the information presented in the mass media
The dimension of social inclusion	The importance attributed to equality between men and women
	The importance attributed to supporting ethnic minorities (Roma, Hungarians, other ethnicities)
	The importance attributed to supporting people with LGBTQIA+ identity
	The importance attributed to the freedom of every man to practise their religion of choice
The dimension of civic concerns	The importance attributed to the protection of nature and environment
	The importance attributed to people's participation in voting when there are elections
	The importance attributed to employers' respect for employees' rights
	The importance attributed to the punishment of delinquent acts in proportion to their gravity
	The importance attributed to the fight against corruption
	Signing an electronic / online petition
	Participating in peaceful protests or street demonstrations
	Participating in violent protests or street demonstrations
The dimension of social freedom	The importance attributed to the freedom of every man to express their point of view
	The vision on the freedom of choice and control over one's life
	The importance attributed to freedom in relation to the importance attributed to safety

Apart from these indicators, which operationalise the concepts of cultural participation and democratic citizenship, a series of socio-demographic variables were included in the analysis, including: gender, age (18-35 years old, 36-50 years old, 51 -65 years old, over 65 years old), level of education (middle school at most, post-high school at most, higher education), income (under 1500 lei, between 1501 and 2500, between 2501 and 4000, over 4000 lei) and the size of the locality (rural, urban under 30,000 inhabitants, urban between 30,001 and 100,000 inhabitants, urban between 100,001 and 200,000 inhabitants and urban over 200,000 inhabitants).

In order to test the theoretical models identified in the specialised literature, which we shall detail henceforward, a series of hypotheses were formulated, each of them having as a foundation the reasons and assumptions integrated with the empirical results obtained in previous studies conducted in different cultural contexts or timeframes. In general, the indicators used to measure democratic attitudes are inspired and adapted from the „Social Values Barometer” study carried out internationally and conducted in Romania by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life (ICCV) within the Romanian Academy.

Table 3. The relationship between theoretical models, hypotheses and indicators

Theoretical model	Hypothesis	Indicator
The explanatory model of social capital	The higher the index of cultural participation (public, non-public or online), the greater the ability to accumulate social capital through involvement in associative life.	The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of social belonging
The explanatory model of values cultivation	The higher the index of cultural participation (public, non-public or online), the more strongly the values related to openness to those around are reinforced.	The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of social identity
		The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of social tolerance
		The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of social trust
The explanatory model of social mobilisation	The higher the index of cultural participation (public, non-public or online), the greater the predisposition to social mobilisation.	The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of social inclusion
		The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of civic concerns
The explanatory model of social empowerment	Social status is a shaping factor of the relationship between the indicators of cultural participation and those of democratic citizenship	The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and indicators of social freedom
		The role of indicators of cultural participation in explaining democratic citizenship diminishes when the influence of education, income (or other aspects associated with privileged social positions) is taken into account.

In order to analyse the data, the following statistical procedures were used:

- a) **Univariate analyses:** These types of analyses are used in order to make an in-depth analysis of the way in which democratic attitudes are distributed at the level of the Romanian society. Univariate analyses involve primary data processing that has an exclusively descriptive purpose. In the context of this study, they are used to identify a series of relevant aspects regarding the consolidation of democratic citizenship (articulation of the feeling of social belonging, the importance attributed to socially relevant themes, the manifestation of social tolerance attitudes, the degree of trust in people around, the preference for freedom of expression and the defining elements of identity construction).
- b) **Bivariate analyses:** On the one hand, bivariate analyses are used to test the direct relationship between forms of cultural participation (operationalised through composite measures such as aggregated indices) and the dimensions that make up democratic citizenship (analysed through specific indicators, analysed, in their turn, individually or overall). On the other hand, bivariate analyses are used to test the relationship between different types of cultural consumption and

socio-demographic variables (categories of gender, age, education level, income and locality size). Specifically, for the bivariate analysis, the Bravais-Pearson Correlation Coefficient is used in order to identify those relationships that are statistically significant, with a view to their subsequent introduction in the multivariate analyses.

- c) **Multivariate analyses:** Multivariate analyses are used to test causal models by identifying the combined influence of multiple factors on components of democratic citizenship. More specifically, logistic regression models are used to identify whether the correlation between the forms of cultural consumption and democratic citizenship, identified through bivariate analyses, is maintained when the effects of socio-demographic variables are controlled. In logistic regression models, the dependent variables (what is explained) are made up of indicators of democratic citizenship, re-coded to match the statistical assumptions of these analyses, and the independent variables (what explains) are made up of those variables corresponding to cultural consumption, as well as those corresponding to socio-demographic data, in accordance with the statistically significant relationships resulting from the application of bivariate analyses.

3. Explanatory theoretical models

This study aims to explore the relationship between cultural life and democracy, in the context of Romanian society. As a theoretical foundation, we shall present a series of explanatory models that define the mechanisms through which participation in cultural life ends up shaping the democratic citizenship.

Theoretical models represent the existing theoretical framework that synthesises different perspectives from academic research on the analysed topics. Theoretical models are intended

to substantiate research hypotheses and directions for analysis and interpretation. They help limit generalisations and provide the framework for analysis focused on particular circumstances. The primary purpose of the social sciences is to provide the conceptual framework for understanding and explaining human behaviour¹², and explanatory theoretical models focus on describing, explaining, and identifying the effects of social practices.

¹² Roger D. Evered, A Typology of Explicative Models, *Technological Forecasting And Social Change* 9,259-211 (1976), p. 260.

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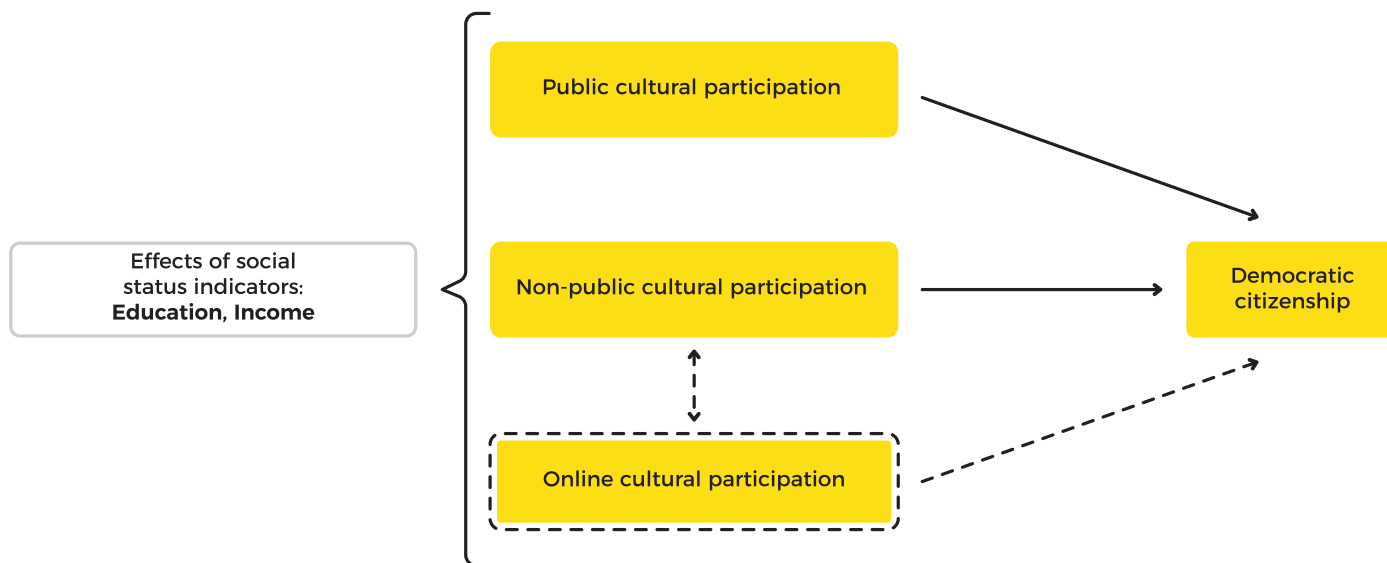
The analysis of specialised literature highlights the fact that democratic citizenship was explained by taking into account the action of economic, political or historical factors. Some authors believe that democratic citizenship is much more likely to be consolidated in economically developed societies, in societies where political institutions function adequately, in societies where an efficient and fair system of government is found, or in societies that have faced fewer wars or natural disasters throughout history. Cultural factors, especially those related to participation in cultural life, were only relatively recently introduced to explain democratic citizenship.

The analysis of the specialised literature highlighted two theoretical models: the model of democratic engagement and the model of democratic disengagement. The model of democratic engagement, in its turn, includes: the explanatory model of social capital, that of values cultivation, that of social mobilisation and the model of social empowerment.

The theoretical model of democratic disengagement includes: the explanatory model of isolation, the explanatory model of alienation and the model of trivialisation.

The present chapter aims to test the relationship between cultural participation and democratic citizenship. We set out to identify which of these theoretical and explanatory models best applies to the existing situation at the level of Romanian society. We considered four explanatory models (1) the social capital model (testing the relationship between involvement in associative life and cultural participation), (2) the value cultivation model (testing the relationship between the values of openness towards others and cultural participation), (3) the social mobilisation model (testing the relationship between interest in civic issues on the public agenda and cultural participation) and (4) the social empowerment model (testing the influence of social status on the relationship between cultural participation and democratic citizenship).

Figure 1. The analytical model used in the study to test the relationship between cultural participation and democratic citizenship



3.1 The theoretical model of democratic engagement

According to the theories identified within the model of democratic engagement, participation in cultural activities would represent a favourable condition for the formation of a democratic citizenship, which can be explained by means of factors that intervene on social capital, on social mobilisation and on the cultivation of values.

The explanatory model of social capital

This model starts from the premise that the accumulation of cultural capital contributes to the activation of some mechanisms that trigger the formation of social capital. The explanatory model of social capital differentiates between the effects of cultural practices that presuppose a form of passivity that is implied by participation by watching a cultural act („watching activities”) and the effects of cultural practices that presuppose a form of involvement, communion or sociality („joining activities”)¹³. The model identifies a range of leisure activities which have the capacity to generate social capital and which, as a result, are considered to be essential elements in the consolidation of a democratic society¹⁴. Even the forms of cultural consumption carried out in the non-public space, which were usually criticised for producing the phenomenon of isolation, may contribute to an activation of social capital, to the extent that they manage to coagulate a mobilising force with reverberations on community development.

The explanatory model of social capital considers that cultural activities play an important role in the formation of a democratic citizenship, taking into account their social

component in particular. Some of the cultural activities are essentially social events that manage to bring people into contact with each other and foster a sense of community by creating collective memories and stories shared with others¹⁵. These types of cultural activities contribute to the strengthening of informal structures that bring people together around common topics of interest, thus facilitating the production of social interactions that can be cultivated on a longer term. Likewise, a series of cultural activities are likely to bring together people who share the same tastes and preferences, which contributes both to the cultivation of trusting relationships with those around them, and to the activation of the norm of reciprocity in interactions with others. In addition, those cultural activities that take place in a social setting contribute to the formation of an awareness of the presence of others and the acceptance of cultural diversity. Through all the previously described mechanisms, the aspects related to sociality subscribed to cultural activities nurture the care towards people around and the willingness to act in the common interest, aspects that are absolutely necessary for the formation of a democratic citizenship¹⁶.

More recent studies have confirmed the explanatory model of social capital, showing that it is not the environment of cultural consumption itself that is relevant in the articulation of democratic citizenship, but the artistic content within the cultural products made available to the public: any form of cultural consumption can support democracy if it manages to direct the attention of a group to topics of social relevance¹⁷. For example, the results of such studies have shown that forms of cultural consumption with an informative nature are able to activate social capital to a greater extent than activities

13 Dhavan Shah et al., 'Nonrecursive Models of Internet Use and Community Engagement: Questioning Whether Time Spent Online Erodes Social Capital', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79.4 (2002), 964–87. (p. 967).

14 JL Hemingway, 'Leisure, Social Capital, and Democratic Citizenship', *Journal of Leisure Research*, 31.2 (1999), 150–65.

15 H.K. Anheier et al., *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies. A Thematic Report Based on the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy* (Council of Europe, 2017).

16 Idem.

17 Dhavan V. Shah, 'Civic Engagement, Interpersonal Trust, and Television Use: An Individual-Level Assessment of Social Capital', *Political Psychology*, 19.3 (1998), 469–96.

that mainly fulfill recreational or entertainment functions¹⁸. It is also worth noting that, according to the results of some consumer studies, the participants in performances and the art consumers are more active in their communities and participate to a greater extent in associative life, being thus more anchored in the values that lead to the adoption of a democratic culture¹⁹. The degree of participation in cultural activities is closely related to both the level of social trust and the predisposition to support democratic institutions, not only at the national level, but also at the individual level²⁰. In support of the explanatory model of social capital, the positive correlations that have resulted between the development of the cultural sector and the ability to form sustainable communities or between the number of cultural events held in a space and the development of the community can also be brought into discussion²¹.

The validity of the explanatory model of social capital turns out to be even greater with regard to the use of the Internet for cultural purposes. In certain studies, a series of intergenerational differences have been observed regarding the possibility of cultural activities to strengthen democratic citizenship: while for the elderly people the print media and the radio are the most important vectors associated with democratic attitudes, for adults television plays a more important role, and for young people the Internet is a decisive factor²². Studies have shown that

participation in online cultural activities favours the formation of a sense of trust and generalised reciprocity, which results in the expansion of the online-built social capital into the offline environment²³. Patricia Moy and colleagues showed that online cultural activities explain civic participation, social participation and membership in formal groups: the higher the degree of Internet use, the greater the degree of interaction with public authorities and the degree of involvement in volunteering²⁴. We emphasise, however, that other authors have highlighted the ambivalent effects of the use of the Internet for cultural purposes (inter alia) on the users' civic behaviour: sometimes this may lead to slippages within the democratic system of values (see the fake news phenomenon)²⁵. Other researchers have observed that the high degree of Internet connectivity explains the high degree of organisational membership, a relationship explained by the fact that online media have the ability to provide additional resources in the formation of interpersonal relationships²⁶. Some authors have highlighted the fact that the development of interactive digital media is a phenomenon associated with the formation of a democratic citizenship, as a result of the fact that new technologies offer users easier and more accessible possibilities to be active in the community²⁷. This is more valid for intensively digitised societies, unlike Romania, where digitisation is still in its

of Social Capital', *Political Communication*, 18.2 (2001), 141–62.

- 18 Elizabeth Stoycheff, Erik C. Nisbet și Dmitry Epstein, 'Differential Effects of Capital-Enhancing and Recreational Internet Use on Citizens' Demand for Democracy', *Communication Research*, 47.7 (2020), 1034–55.
- 19 Henry Fogel & Dana Gioia, *The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life* (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008).
- 20 Liam Delaney and Emily Keaney, *Cultural Participation, Social Capital and Civil Renewal in the United Kingdom: Statistical Evidence from National and International Survey Data* (Economic and Social Research Institute (Dublin) & Institute for Public Policy Research (London), 2006).
- 21 Sharon Jeannotte, 'Singing Alone? The Contribution of Cultural Capital to Social Cohesion and Sustainable Communities', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9.1 (2003), 35–49.
- 22 Dhavan V. Shah, Nojin Kwak and R. Lance Holbert, "'Connecting" and "Disconnecting" with Civic Life: Patterns of Internet Use and the Production

- 23 Tetsuro Kobayashi, Ken'ichi Ikeda and Kakuko Miyata, 'Social Capital Online: Collective Use of the Internet and Reciprocity as Lubricants of Democracy', *Information Communication and Society*, 9.5 (2006), 582–611.
- 24 Patricia Moy et al., 'Linking Dimensions of Internet Use and Civic Engagement', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82.3 (2005), 571–86.
- 25 Vian Bakir and Andrew McStay, 'Fake News and The Economy of Emotions, Digital Journalism', 6.2 (2018), 154–175.
- 26 Barry Wellman et al., 'Does the Internet Increase, Decrease, or Supplement Social Capital? Social Networks, Participation, and Community Commitment', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 3, 2001, 436–55.
- 27 Dhavan Shah et al., 'Nonrecursive Models of Internet Use and Community Engagement: Questioning Whether Time Spent Online Erodes Social Capital', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79.4 (2002), 964–87.

infancy. Last, but not least, a strong association between social media usage and civic participation has been highlighted²⁸.

The explanatory model of value cultivation:

According to the explanatory model of value cultivation, cultural consumption contributes to the formation of value systems and attitudes compatible with the development of a democratic society. Cultural activities involve exposing participants to heterogeneous ideas, facilitating contact between several cultures and making it possible to expand the horizons of knowledge or experience of those involved. All this stimulates thinking in alternative ways, which implies the formation of favourable attitudes towards freedom of expression. At the same time, the exposure to cultural contents represents a communicative act that offers diverse perspectives towards the world and life, which cultivates a set of norms based on valuing diversity, openness, tolerance or empathy towards those around. Cultural participation outlines a space for the circulation of ideas about how a society works, offering a perspective on the problems that exist in that society or on the types of actions that could be taken to solve them. Last but not least, cultural participation contributes to the formation of identity constructions that work in a democratic society, by circulating specific symbols or by creating opportunities to express individuality.

Some of the empirical approaches in the field have highlighted the positive impact that active cultural consumption and passive cultural consumption have on social cohesion, group membership and the adoption of pro-social behaviour²⁹. The study carried out by the Council of Europe on a sample of

20 European countries highlights the fact that, at the national level, cultural participation is very strongly associated with attitudes of social tolerance, with trust in people around and with participation in community life, but its association with valuing freedom of expression is weaker³⁰. Furthermore, some data have shown that spending free time in front of the TV explains the attitudinal component of social capital (based on cognitive aspects) to a greater extent, while explaining the structural component (based on relational aspects)³¹. to a lower extent. At the same time, participation in performing arts and activities practised within cultural institutions favours the formation of altruistic attitudes, tolerance and social trust, explaining the willingness of society members to get involved in civic actions³². In the same order, visiting art museums turns out to be a very important influencing factor for supporting minorities, for adopting liberal attitudes over conservative ones, and for the likelihood of participating in the culture of critical discourse³³.

Studies targeting the value cultivation model have shown that cultural participation in the online fulfills the same roles as cultural participation in general. The data show that the use of the Internet for cultural purposes contributes to the reduction of information uncertainty, having a direct influence on the acquisition of information on social issues³⁴. However, the acquisition of information could translate into civic action only

28 Homero Gil de Zúñiga, 'Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17.3 (2012), 319–36.

29 Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies of the University of Western Sydney, *Social Impacts of Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activities. Stage Two Report. Evidence, Issues and Recommendations* (The Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies, University of Western Sydney, 2004).

30 H.K. Anheier et al., *Cultural Participation and Inclusive Societies. A Thematic Report Based on the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy* (Council of Europe, 2017).

31 Marc Hooghe, 'Watching Television and Civic Engagement: Disentangling the Effects of Time, Programs, and Stations', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 7.2 (2002), 84–104.

32 Kelly Leroux and Anna Bernadska, 'Impact of the Arts on Individual Contributions to US Civil Society', *Journal of Civil Society*, 10.2 (2014), 144–64.

33 Paul DiMaggio, 'Are Art-Museum Visitors Different from Other People? The Relationship between Attendance and Social and Political Attitudes in the United States', *Poetics*, 24.2–4 (1996), 161–80.

34 Michael Xenos and Patricia Moy, 'Direct and Differential Effects of the Internet on Political and Civic Engagement', *Journal of Communication*, 57.4 (2007), 704–18.

under certain conditions. At the same time, the approaches in this category show that the use of the Internet in general acts on the system of beliefs and values, especially in societies that are in the phase of consolidation of democratic institutions, but not in autocratic regimes³⁵. Last but not least, the use of the Internet for cultural purposes correlates with the development of a global identity: the greater the degree of participation in cultural activities in the online environment, the more pronounced the degree of belonging to an international community³⁶.

The explanatory model of social mobilisation

According to the theories within the explanatory model of social mobilisation, participation in cultural activities contributes to the development of critical thinking and formation of civic skills. Cultural consumption is considered by some authors to be an element that makes people more aware of the events taking place in the world in which they live, cultivating the interest in participating in public decision-making and, through this, acting on the formation of democratic citizenship.

In support of the explanatory model of social mobilisation, some researchers brought into discussion the results according to which people whose cultural consumption is directed towards the side of social information through the mass media develop their democratic attitudes to a greater extent³⁷. There is also a differentiation within information practices: people who watch news on television engage in less civic action in comparison to people who get information from print media or

radio broadcasts³⁸. On the one hand, this relationship between the participation in cultural activities and the civic involvement appears to be significant regardless of the action of education or the effects of other socio-demographic variables³⁹. On the other hand, the relationship between the participation in cultural activities and the civic involvement appears to be mediated by the intervention of certain factors: (1) media consumption has the ability to influence democratic citizenship only if the content circulated focuses on the transmission of civic messages or involves exposing the public to certain information that favours the organisation of discussions with other colleagues or friends⁴⁰ and (2) people who take part in various cultural practices perceive themselves as having more knowledge about how democratic institutions work and, as such, they show a predisposition to participate more frequently in relevant civic activities⁴¹.

It can be stated that, through all these mechanisms, participation in cultural activities in combination with education generates a capacity for social mobilisation, as media contents make people more aware of the relevance of certain social themes⁴². The flip side of this situation is that certain media exposures give people reasons to be dissatisfied and interfere with optimism about how society will evolve in the future⁴³.

35 Erik C. Nisbet, Elizabeth Stoycheff and Katy E. Pearce, 'Internet Use and Democratic Demands: A Multinational, Multilevel Model of Internet Use and Citizen Attitudes About Democracy', *Journal of Communication*, 62.2 (2012), 249–65.

36 Nojin Kwak, Nathaniel Poor și Marko M. Skoric, 'Honey, I Shrunk the World! The Relation Between Internet Use and International Engagement', *Mass Communication and Society*, 9.2 (2006), 189–213.

37 Pippa Norris, 'Does Television Erode Social Capital? A Reply to Putnam', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 29.3 (1996), 474–80.

38 Sonia Livingstone și Tim Markham, 'The Contribution of Media Consumption to Civic Participation', *British Journal of Sociology*, 59.2 (2008), 351–71.

39 Desirée Campagna, Giulio Caperna and Valentina Montalto, 'Does Culture Make a Better Citizen? Exploring the Relationship Between Cultural and Civic Participation in Italy', *Social Indicators Research*, 149.2 (2020), 657–86.

40 Dhavan V. Shah et al., *Information and Expression in a Digital Age: Modeling Internet Effects on Civic Participation*, *Communication Research*, 2005, XXXII.

41 Sei-Hill Kim and Mijeong Han, 'Media Use and Participatory Democracy in South Korea', *Mass Communication and Society*, 8.2 (2005), 133–53.

42 Kenneth Newton, 'Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise?', *British Journal of Political Science*, 29.4 (1999), 577–99.

43 Eric M. Uslaner, 'Social Capital, Television, and the "Mean World": Trust, Optimism, and Civic Participation', *Political Psychology*, 19.3 (1998), 441–67.

The explanatory model of civic mobilisation has acquired a series of nuances in the context of the development of the digital society and the advancement of mass media. Some authors believe that the use of the Internet triggers a force of civic mobilisation that derives both from the power of social networks to facilitate the organisation and coordination of collective actions⁴⁴, and from the ability of online platforms to show users that they are not the only ones with certain interests or concerns⁴⁵. Certain empirical approaches have highlighted the fact that accessing certain websites (of public authorities, cultural organisations or discussion forums) correlates with the adoption of democratic attitudes, while the preference for using the Internet strictly for entertainment purposes diminishes the tendency for civic participation⁴⁶. Some researchers have observed a correlation between the development of the Internet infrastructure and the perception of the consolidation of democratic culture, but also between the degree of individual use of the Internet and the need for the existence of democratic institutions for the proper functioning of society⁴⁷. Such correlations have become increasingly strong over time as opportunities for civic engagement have increased as a result of the diversification of digital media⁴⁸.

44 Dhavan Shah et al., 'Nonrecursive Models of Internet Use and Community Engagement: Questioning Whether Time Spent Online Erodes Social Capital', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79.4 (2002), 964–87.

45 Shelley Boulianne, 'Social Media Use and Participation: A Meta-Analysis of Current Research', *Information Communication and Society*, 18.5 (2015), 524–38.

46 Tom P. Bakker and Claes H. de Vreese, 'Good News for the Future? Young People, Internet Use, and Political Participation', *Communication Research*, 38.4 (2011), 451–70, (p. 461).

47 Elizabeth Stoycheff and Erik C. Nisbet, 'What's the Bandwidth for Democracy? Deconstructing Internet Penetration and Citizen Attitudes About Governance', *Political Communication*, 31.4 (2014), 628–46.

48 Shelley Boulianne, 'Twenty Years of Digital Media Effects on Civic and Political Participation', *Communication Research*, 47.7 (2020), 947–66.

However, certain empirical results have shown that the influence of the Internet on the formation of democratic citizenship is much more complex than it appears at first sight, involving multiple causal relationships. In this sense, some researchers have highlighted the fact that the use of the Internet correlates with civic participation, since both variables are associated with political interest, which in fact represents the element that can influence both civic participation and the use of the Internet. Moreover, some studies have shown that not only can it be said that Internet use influences civic participation, but also that civic participation acts on the Internet use, which implies a dynamic two-way relationship and makes it impossible to precisely identify the causes or effects involved⁴⁹.

The explanatory model of social empowerment

The theories within the explanatory model of social empowerment emphasise the fact that there is not a positive correlation between cultural consumption and democratic citizenship in all situations, but the related influences are conditioned by the degree of access to material or symbolic resources. In other words, the socio-economic status represents the necessary ingredient for cultural participation to have effects on the consolidation of democratic citizenship through the mechanisms associated with social capital, social mobilisation or value cultivation. Structural position is a conditioning factor, which means that cultural participation favours the emergence of democratic attitudes only among people who occupy privileged positions in the hierarchical system, and not among those who are deprived of access to education, income or other resources.

Such a perspective is supported by the results of studies showing that cultural participation is related to the adoption of democratic values only because cultural participation

49 Shelley Boulianne, 'Social Media Use and Participation: A Meta-Analysis of Current Research', *Information Communication and Society*, 18.5 (2015), 524–38, p. 528.

explains the position in the social hierarchy⁵⁰. The authors of these studies showed that the influence of education on democratic citizenship is greater than the influence of cultural consumption⁵¹. Likewise, the influences of mass media on community integration, on knowledge of the functioning of democratic institutions and on involvement in civic actions do not appear to be valid for minority populations or for people in conditions of vulnerability or marginalisation⁵². This is why it is believed that the presence of an activation potential (most often given by education and income) is necessary so that exposure to cultural content in various forms can contribute to the consolidation of solid democratic reference points⁵³.

3.2 The theoretical model of democratic disengagement

Another series of studies tends to outline a theoretical model of democratic disengagement, highlighting that cultural participation evolves in the direction of eroding democratic attitudes and behaviours⁵⁴. In this theoretical discussion, cultural participation is particularly assimilated to media consumption, and the differential effects of

preferences for certain information sources on civic engagement are analysed. Thus, studies in this category show that newspaper and magazine readers show a higher degree of support for democratic values, as compared to TV show viewers or Internet users⁵⁵. Considering these aspects, certain forms of media consumption are considered to produce negative effects on the democratic citizenship through three processes: isolation, alienation and trivialisation.

The explanatory model of isolation

Some authors believe that media forms of cultural participation lead to the "privatisation of leisure activities⁵⁶, which, on the one hand, prevents the engagement of cultural consumers in activities that involve the building of significant relationships with those around them and, on the other hand, it introduces a series of psychological barriers in social interactions⁵⁷. According to these explanations, certain forms of cultural participation favour weak civic engagement, as some types of cultural products end up keeping people captive in certain media universes, acting directly on the time capital⁵⁸ and reducing opportunities for engagement in public life⁵⁹.

50 Paul DiMaggio et al., 'From Unequal Access to Differentiated Use: A Literature Review and Agenda for Research on Digital Inequality', in *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn Neckerman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), pp. 355–400.

51 Karin Gwinn Wilkins, 'The Role of Media in Public Disengagement from Political Life', *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 44.4 (2000), 569–80. (p. 577).

52 Teresa Mastin, 'Media Use and Civic Participation in the African-American: Exploring Participation Among Professionals and Nonprofessionals', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 71.1 (2000), 115–27.

53 Liam Delaney and Emily Keaney, *Cultural Participation, Social Capital and Civil Renewal in the United Kingdom: Statistical Evidence from National and International Survey Data* (Economic and Social Research Institute (Dublin) & Institute for Public Policy Research (London), 2006).

54 Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperback, 2000).

55 John C. Besley, 'The Role of Entertainment Television and Its Interactions with Individual Values in Explaining Political Participation', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11.2 (2006), 41–63.

56 Robert Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', *Journal of Democracy*, 6.1 (1995), 65–78.

57 Robert Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', *Journal of Democracy*, 6.1 (1995), 65–78.

58 Michael Peterson and Robert Kraut quoted by Dhavan Shah et al., 'Nonrecursive Models of Internet Use and Community Engagement: Questioning Whether Time Spent Online Erodes Social Capital', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79.4 (2002), 964–87, (p. 965).

59 Patricia Moy, Dietram A Scheufele and R Lance, 'Television Use and Social Capital: Testing Putnam's Time Displacement Hypothesis', *Mass Communication and Society*, 2.1–2 (2011), 27–45, (p. 51).

Explanatory model of alienation

Other authors consider that media forms of cultural participation articulate a sense of social insecurity as a result of the fact that they expose consumers (in their capacity as television viewers or internet users) to messages that signal continuously and repeatedly the existence of dangers and threats in society⁶⁰. According to this perspective, certain types of cultural media consumption can contribute to the decrease of the reserve of social trust, thus having indirect consequences on the formation and consolidation of democratic citizenship⁶¹.

The explanatory model of trivialisation

A number of researchers believe that the media forms of cultural participation, through the mode of exposure, produce a trivialisation of the aspects on the public agenda, thus minimising the importance of certain subjects and interfering with the manifestation of interest in the events taking place in society⁶². According to this explanatory model, certain forms of cultural consumption contribute to the loss of the sense of reality, producing a disorientation of individuals in relation to the world in which they live. The situation is presented by the authors as being all the more worrying among young people, whose interest in the topics on the public agenda turns out to be diminished and who, according to studies, have a less consolidated identity, have less knowledge about the way democratic institutions work and a lower degree of involvement in associative life⁶³.

However, the democratic disengagement model has received a number of criticisms and has been challenged by other researchers for multiple reasons. One of the critics points out that the studies that confirmed the model of democratic disengagement focused exclusively on the intensity of media consumption (using indicators of time spent interacting with mass media), but extended their conclusions to a much broader domain of cultural participation. Studies within this theoretical model are criticised for ignoring aspects of engagement patterns, by including measurements of the type of content received, or by emphasising personal motivations or subjective consumption preferences.

Furthermore, other criticisms of the model of democratic disengagement show that related studies are very tightly anchored in the philosophy of technological determinism, considering that the impact of cultural consumption on democratic citizenship depends, to the greatest extent, on the intrinsic characteristics of the communication medium. The development of the technological infrastructure and the diversification of the ways of using the Internet have shown that the model of democratic disengagement is not supported in today's society, since the forms of cultural consumption in the online can contribute to reducing the costs of civic engagement, they may represent viable sources of information and of general knowledge fostering, they can promote openness and autonomy and represent opportunities for identity expression. All these aspects demonstrate that the impact of cultural consumption on the democratic level is generated through much more complex mechanisms pertaining to personal and social characteristics or differentiated consumption patterns, and it does not represent an exclusive function of the dominant communication and information media.

60 Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperback, 2000).

61 John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, 'Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41.3 (1997), 999–102.

62 Patricia Moy and Dietram A Scheufele, 'Media Effects of Political and Social Trust', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77.4 (1996), 744–59.

63 Kenneth Newton, 'Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise?', *British Journal of Political Science*, 29.4 (1999), 577–99.

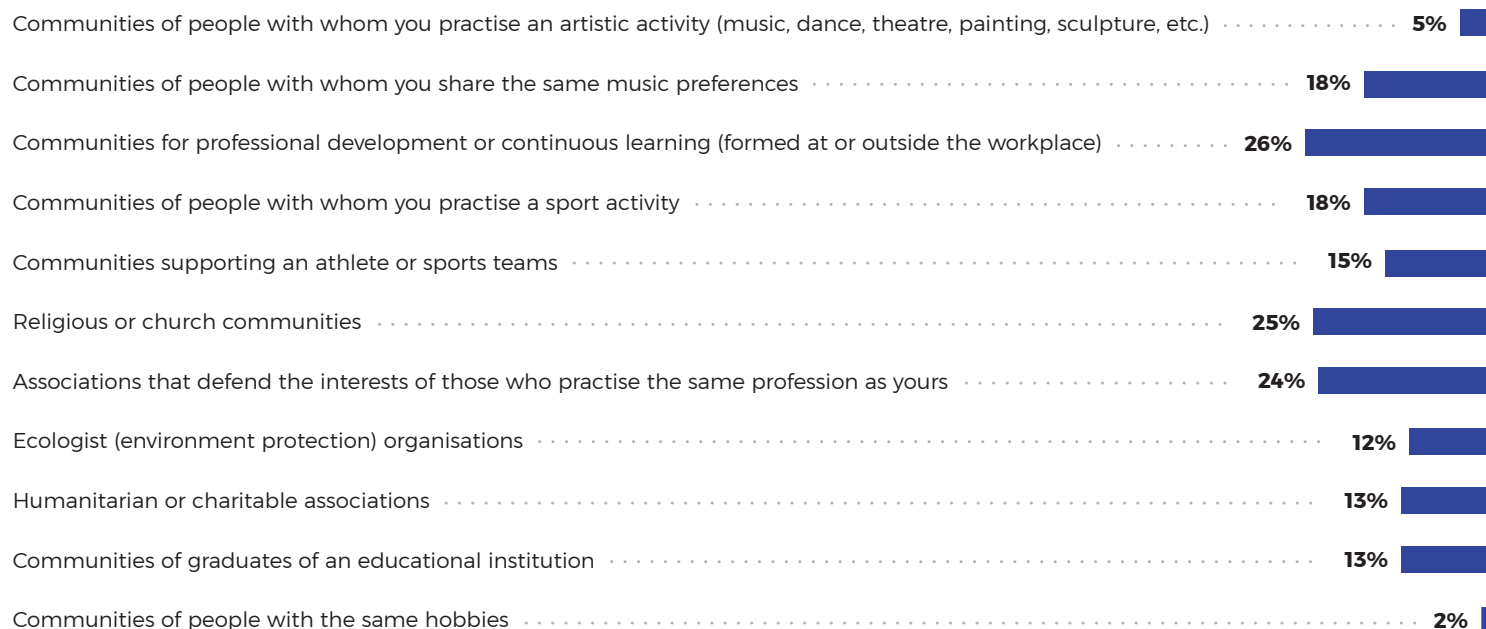
4. Statistical data analysis

4.1 The dimension of social belonging

In general, at the level of the Romanian society, the degree of belonging to formal or informal communities is relatively low. Moreover, the diversity of the communities wherein the respondents perform activities is not very great either. In this context, the best consolidated sense of belonging emerges in the case of occupational communities: 26% of respondents state that they are part of professional development and continuous learning

communities, and 24% assume the status of members in associations that defend the interests of those who practise a similar profession. Furthermore, a considerable percentage of respondents (25%) are part of formally or informally constituted religious or church communities. The feeling of belonging to the community is also noticeable in relation to practising a sports activity (18%) and supporting an athlete or sports teams (15%). A much smaller percentage of respondents are part of alumni communities, humanitarian associations, environmental, cultural or leisure organisations (under 15%).

Graph 1. Percentage of people who report a sense of belonging to various social communities
(Please tell me if you are a member of one of the following types of communities, including online.)



The position in the social structure seems to explain the involvement in associative life. More precisely, we can notice that people in less privileged social positions are less involved in communities, which amplifies the tendency of social marginalisation. For example, the correlation coefficients resulting from the statistical analysis show that the feeling of belonging to the community: (1) is more significant among men than among women, (2) is more significant among young people than among the elderly, (3) is more significant among people with a high education level than among people with a low level of education, (4) is more significant among those with higher income than among those experiencing financial problems, and (5) is more significant among those who come from localities with a larger number of inhabitants than among those who live in small localities.

It is worth noting that the data show cultural consumption as a factor favouring the manifestation of the feeling of belonging to at least one community. This is true not only in terms of public cultural participation or online-specific participation (based on forms that to a greater extent presuppose the awareness of the presence of others, engaging the group in joint activities), but also in terms of cultural participation in the non-public space (based on forms that rather involve individual consumption). In other words, the people who are more frequently involved in several cultural activities, regardless of their nature, are those who are part of social communities, having a strong sense of belonging.

Members who belong to professional development or continuous learning communities (formed at or outside the workplace) listen to music, watch TV programmes and go to the mall (for shopping, movies, restaurants) the most frequently. People who go more often to the theatre or to the library, who visit a historical monument or museum, an exhibition or art gallery, who read newspapers/magazines or books, listen to music or watch TV programmes are members of professional development or continuous

learning communities (formed at or outside the workplace). As expected, communities of individuals who share the same music preferences are mainly made from people who listen to music or watch TV programmes the most.

In addition to this, the data show that the sense of social belonging is not strictly articulated in relation to the cultural or entertainment activities performed within the group, but also to the activities that can be mainly performed individually or in a more restricted group setting. Thus, we can notice that people who are part of at least one community visit museums, exhibitions, art galleries, historical monuments or archaeological sites more often, they read books more often, go to the cinema more often and attend theatre, classical or symphonic music performances more often. Furthermore, the people who show a consolidated sense of social belonging go more often on trips in the country or abroad, they are also the ones who practice sports more often or who go to restaurants, pubs or cafés more often. Another element that can be pointed out is the fact that the frequency of participation in sports competitions as a spectator is a factor that strengthens group identity.



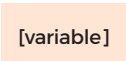
All these aspects disprove, to some extent, the results of previous studies which showed that the participation in activities of an elitist cultural nature („highbrow culture“) has the ability to activate social capital to a higher extent than the participation in activities which have a more pronounced entertainment component. For example, the effect that the frequency of going to the cinema exerts on the possibility of accumulating social capital is similar to the effect exerted by the frequency of going to theatre performances and symphonic or classical music concerts. Last but not least, as expected, the data show that people who use social networks exhibit a stronger sense of belonging to a community. However, accessing websites with cultural content does not appear to be a significant factor in explaining the participation in associative life.

The results of our study highlight a process that shows that the activation of cultural capital can contribute to an activation of social capital. The influence of cultural consumption on the feeling of social belonging does not disappear in the aggregate models where the indirect effects of different socio-demographic variables are controlled. More precisely, the effects of cultural activities on social belonging are manifested independently of the influence of education or income. In addition, the index of non-public participation appears as the most important explanatory factor of social belonging, followed by the index of online cultural participation and the index of public cultural participation.

Table 4. The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and the manifestation of the feeling of social belonging

	Manifestation of a sense of social belonging to at least one community (including online)
Index of public cultural participation	
Index of non-public cultural participation	
Index of online cultural participation	

Note:

-  → statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
-  → statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
-  [variable] → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

4.2 The dimension of social identity

National landmarks seem to be somewhat more important than European landmarks in the building of identity constructs: 85% of respondents consider the preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling to be important and very important, while 82% of participants in the study attribute high and very high importance to the alignment of measures in the country to the directives of the European Union. However, the two aspects do not appear as divergent topics of interest, but rather as complementary elements: 40% of all respondents consider that both the aspects related to the preservation of the patriotic feeling and those related to the alignment of the national measures to the directives of the European Union are concomitantly very important.

The preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling turns out to be a topical theme mainly for young people, with high education, with high income and from localities with a larger number of inhabitants. The manifestation of interest in aligning the measures in the country with the directives of the European Union seems to be a more topical issue for women, for young people and for people from urban areas.

Both the concern for the preservation of the national identity and the manifestation of the preference for a European identity are aspects that are in a direct connection with all three forms of cultural consumption. Consequently, people who participate more frequently in several activities in the public and non-public space, as well as in the online are the ones who tend to consider that the patriotic feeling and European value orientations are equally important or very important aspects in strengthening a democratic society.

Moreover, we can notice that the predisposition towards the preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling correlates statistically significantly to a greater extent with the participation in theatre performances, with visiting museums, exhibitions or art galleries, with participation in music festivals, going on trips in the country and reading newspapers or

magazines. In contrast, the preference for aligning the measures in the country with the European Union directives correlates statistically significantly with going to the cinema, with visiting historical monuments or archaeological sites and with reading books in printed or electronic format. It is worth noting that going on trips abroad does not correlate statistically significantly either with the predisposition towards the preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling, nor with the preference for aligning the measures in the country with the directives of the European Union. However, such a result may be influenced by the fact that the reference period of the study overlapped with the pandemic period, which greatly affected spatial mobility and the possibility of carrying out some travel activities.



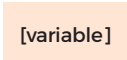
On the one hand, the analysis highlights the fact that using social networks and obtaining information from the print press (newspapers, magazines) simultaneously explain the assimilation of national identity landmarks, as well as the assimilation of European identity landmarks, thus confirming the fact that in the public conscience there is no divergence between the valorisation of the preservation of the patriotic feeling and the preference for aligning the measures in the country with the directives of the European Union. On the other hand, the consumption of TV programmes and the use of social networks do not correlate statistically significantly with any of the indicators that make up the social identity dimension.

However, the data show that it is not exposure to certain cultural content that would necessarily make people more likely to adopt patriotic attitudes, but education is the decisive factor, as its influence is maintained when analysing the aggregate effects. It should be noted, on the other hand, that the frequency of participation in public cultural activities continues to explain the predisposition to put national decisions in a global context, but not the tendency towards the preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling: people who participate in cultural activities in the public space perceive to a greater extent the need to align the measures in the country with the directives of the European Union.

Table 5. The relationship between indicators of cultural consumption and aspects of social identity

	High or very high importance attributed to ...	
	... the preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling	... aligning the measures in the country with the directives of the European Union
	B	B
Index of public cultural participation	[education]	
Index of non-public cultural participation	[education]	[other aspects]
Index of online cultural participation	[education]	[other aspects]

Note:

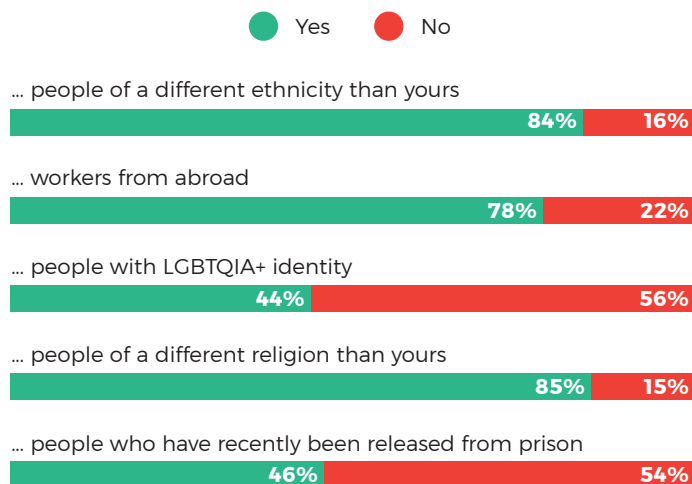
-  → statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
-  → statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
-  [variable] → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

4.3 The dimension of social tolerance

The level of tolerance records considerable variations depending on the social groups of belonging (socio-demographic categories). The highest degree of social tolerance is recorded for people of different religion and ethnicity. A relatively high degree of acceptance is manifested in the case of foreign workers. The results highlight that people with LGBTQIA+ identity and people who have recently been released from prison represent the social segments with the highest risk of being discriminated against: more than half of the respondents would feel disturbed if they had as neighbours people who have a sexual identity different

from the majority or who have been convicted of crimes. What is important to emphasise is that social tolerance was measured with reference to the acceptance of these people in the proximity of the residence space („would you accept as neighbours”), and the differences can be explained by the subjective evaluation of the consequences of this proximity on one’s own person or their family.

Graph 2. The level of acceptance of people belonging to certain social groups („Would you accept as neighbours...?”)



On the one hand, it is worth noting that women show a more dismissive attitude towards foreign workers, towards people with LGBTQIA+ identity and towards people who have recently been released from prison than men. On the other hand, young people show a higher level of social tolerance towards people of another ethnicity, towards workers from abroad, towards people with a sexual identity different from the majority and towards people of a different religion. In contrast, from the age viewpoint, there are no differences in the social acceptance of people recently released from prison. Also, what appears significant is the fact that people with high education, people with high income

and people living in urban areas show more tolerant attitudes towards all the social categories under study.

Cultural consumption correlates statistically significantly with the degree of social tolerance. The situation is valid not only with regard to cultural participation in the public space, but also with regard to cultural participation in the non-public space or in the online environment. In other words, people who participate more frequently in cultural activities, regardless of their type, embrace to a greater extent attitudes of social tolerance towards all those social categories for which, in general, there is a tendency of marginalisation (people of other ethnicity, foreign workers, people with LGBTQIA+ identity, people of another religion and people recently released from prison).

Moreover, the specific cultural activities that explain social tolerance to the greatest extent are the following: attending online courses or training programmes, attending entertainment shows, going to the cinema, watching movies broadcasted online, attending to theatre performances and visiting museums, exhibitions or art galleries. The listed cultural activities simultaneously correlate with social acceptance of people of other ethnicities, foreign workers, people with LGBTQIA+ identity, people of other religions, and people recently released from prison.

Tolerance towards minority groups is also significantly explained by the frequency of getting information from the print media: the more frequently people read content from newspapers and magazines, the more they display more tolerant attitudes towards all five groups considered in the study. More frequent use of social media explains a higher level of tolerance towards people of other ethnicity, towards foreign workers, towards people with LGBTQIA+ identity and towards people of other religion, but not towards people who have been released from prison recently. Moreover, accessing cultural websites statistically significantly explains the tolerance towards ethnic minorities, immigrants and sexual minorities. Another relevant aspect is the degree of tolerance of people

who spend more time watching programmes or shows on TV and who tend to show more discriminatory attitudes towards people with LGBTQIA+ identity.

Nevertheless, the exposure to online cultural content is the most important explanatory factor of social tolerance, given that the index attributed to this form of cultural consumption remains statistically significant in explaining the degree of acceptance of all categories prone to marginalisation, even when the concurrent influences of other different socio-demographic characteristics are taken into account.

The effects of public and non-public cultural participation fade in the aggregate analyses, given that the manifestation of the attitude of social acceptance towards people of another ethnicity and towards foreign workers is explained by education. A similar trend is found in accepting as neighbours people who have recently been released from prison. In this



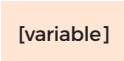
situation, a significant role in explaining the social acceptability of people convicted of crimes is played by income, which thus subtracts from the influence of cultural consumption in public and non-public spaces.

On the other hand, both the online cultural participation, and the non-public cultural consumption are significant factors in explaining the social acceptability of people with LGBTQIA+ identity, along with age, education and the size of the locality. A similar pattern also results when considering the acceptance of people of another religion as neighbours. In this context, we can notice that the level of social tolerance is higher in smaller localities, which indicates the operation of a solidarity logic, and the attitudes of social acceptance turn out to be dependent on the cohesion factors involved in strengthening relationships and in the processes subscribed to direct interactions.

Table 6. The relationship between cultural consumption indicators and aspects of social tolerance

	Acceptance as neighbours of...				
	... people of another ethnicity	... workers from abroad	... people with LGBTQIA+ identity	... people of another religion	... people who have recently been released from prison
Index of public cultural participation	[education]	[education]	[age] [education] [locality size]	[education] [locality size]	[gender] [income]
Index of non-public cultural participation	[education]	[education]			[gender] [income]
Index of online cultural participationonline					

Notă:

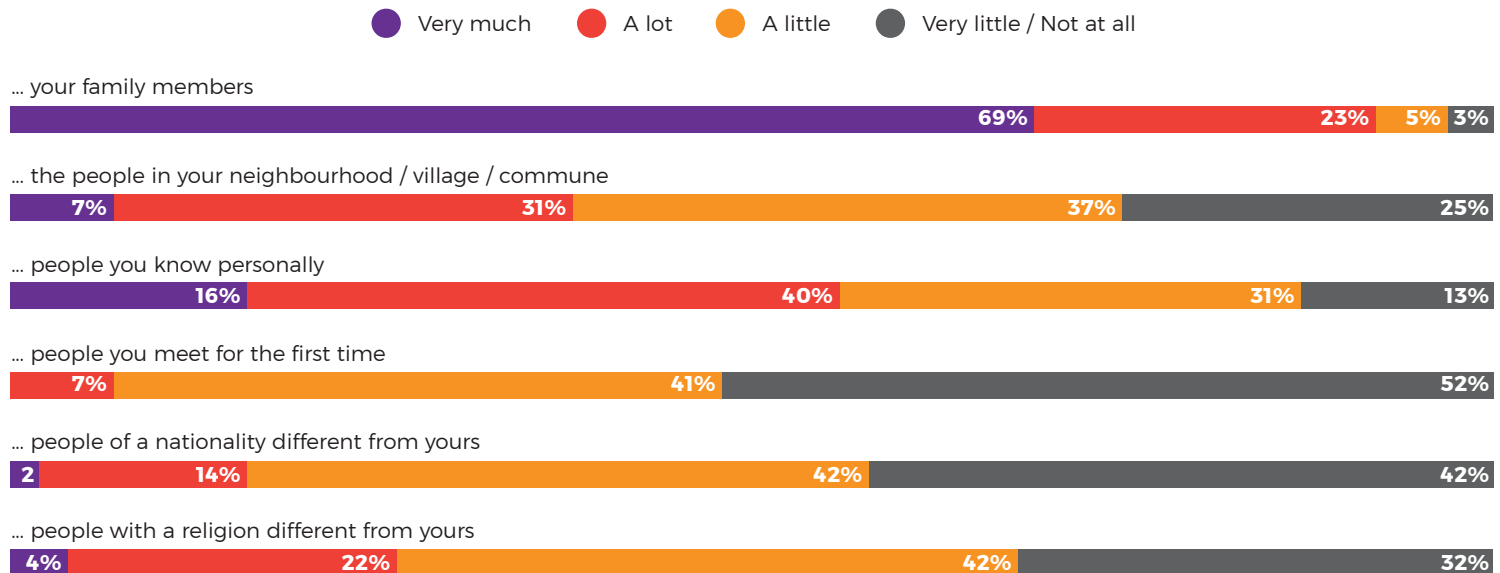
-  → statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
-  → statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
-  [variable] → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

4.4 The dimension of social trust

The data show that in the Romanian society there is rather a culture of mistrust in people around. This may reflect at several levels: at the level of cooperation within organisations, at the associative level, at the level of social interactions in the public space, as well as in the non-public space. Respondents have the most trust in family members (91%), in people they know personally (56%) and in those in the immediate community (38%) (neighbourhood, village or commune). Conversely, the lowest level of trust is manifested in relation to people met for the first time (7%). Sociological theories define trust as an „attitude,

based on beliefs and feelings, and involving expectations and dispositions”⁶⁴, which is vital for social interaction and maintaining cooperation. Putnam believes that trust is the factor that makes democracy work⁶⁵, because it is indispensable for social communication. Trust is based on both experiential beliefs and intuitive expectations. The results of our study confirm that trust in physically and socially close people (called „thick trust”⁶⁶), with similar values, is the most widespread within the Romanian society, while trust in people who are less close physically and socially is lower.

Graph 3. The level of trust in people belonging to certain social categories („In general, how much do you trust ...?”)



64 Trudy Govier, "Social Trust and Human Communities", Polity Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 4.

65 Barbara A. Misztal, „Trust in Modern Societies The Search for the Bases of Social Order”, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996, p.14.

66 Trudy Govier, "Social Trust and Human Communities" McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 1997, p.6.

In general, women tend to be less trusting of people in their neighbourhood, in people they know personally, people they meet for the first time, people of another nationality and people of another religion. The data also indicate that young people show more trust in family members, but adopt more reserved attitudes towards neighbours, towards people of another nationality and towards people of another religion. On the other hand, education and income correlate positively with the level of trust: the higher the level of education and income, the higher the level of trust in different categories of people. The explanation for these results can be found in sociological studies that highlighted the relationship between trust, vulnerability and social tolerance. The perception of risk and personal vulnerability influences the level of trust, cooperation and tolerance, which may explain the lower level of trust and tolerance of women and young people in certain social groups. In general, contrary to expectations, the level of trust is higher in urban areas, as compared to rural ones: we can notice that respondents from urban areas have more trust in people in the proximity community, in those they know personally and in those of another nationality or religion. It is also worth noting that the level of trust in people known personally, in people met for the first time, in people of another nationality and in people of another religion increases with the size of the locality. These somewhat surprising results contradict certain social theories that have shown that in smaller, traditional communities, trust and cooperation are greater than in large communities. To explain these results we can launch some hypotheses that can be tested in future analyses:

1. The Romanian society is marked by transformations of values in the rural world and in small communities, which causes a decrease in trust and cooperation,
2. In small and traditional communities a high degree of mistrust is currently manifested, but only temporarily, as an exception that confirms the rule identified by Marcel Mauss in archaic societies, in which there is no middle ground⁶⁷, and mistrust can take the place of trust in certain periods;

3. The Romanian society is marked by the increase in the perception of risk and vulnerability, and small communities seem to be more exposed to risk situations, which may explain the results presented previously as a result of the crisis situations generated by the pandemic.

The results indicate that people who participate in public and non-public cultural activities show a higher level of social trust in relation to all the categories of targeted people. On the other hand, online cultural participation tends to correlate only with trust in people with whom direct interactions have been established, with trust in people of another nationality, and with trust in people of another religion.

All the indicators that make up the dimension of social trust correlate simultaneously with the frequency of visiting historical monuments or archaeological sites, with the frequency of going on trips in the country and with the use of the Internet for the purpose of buying books, CDs, theatre tickets, tickets to events. Furthermore, as expected, it is visible that trust in family members correlates most strongly with the frequency of visiting relatives or friends. Trust in the people of the neighbourhood, village or commune correlates most strongly with the frequency of participation in sports competitions and with that of participation in music and entertainment shows. Trust in people met for the first time is related both to the frequency of visiting museums, exhibitions or art galleries, and to the frequency of attending music festivals. Activities with a cultural component, such as reading books and attending theatre performances, have the specificity of being associated with a higher level of trust in people the respondents know personally.

The frequency of obtaining information from the print media and the accessing of websites with cultural content represent some of the important aspects that are assimilated to a high level of social trust. More precisely, people who access cultural websites have a higher level of trust in people in the immediate vicinity (neighbourhood, village, commune), in people they meet for the first time and in people of another religion. In addition,

⁶⁷ Barbara A. Misztal, „Trust in Modern Societies. The Search for the Bases of Social Order”, Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996, p. 17.

people who are frequently exposed to newspaper and magazine content have a high level of trust in their own family members. Contrary to expectations, we can notice that social networks produce an ambivalent effect in terms of social trust. In other words, it cannot be stated accurately either that the use of social networks would make people trust those around them more, nor that such online platforms would generate an attitude of social distrust. On the other hand, the time spent in front of the TV set to a high extent tends to favour attitudes of suspicion towards those around: the higher the frequency of watching TV shows or programmes, the lower the levels of trust towards people met for the first time and towards people of other nationalities.

We can therefore observe that non-public cultural participation remains a significant factor in explaining trust in people from the neighbourhood, village or commune of residence, and the influence

of exposure to cultural content is preserved, despite the input of the characteristics assimilated to gender, age and education. These results confirm the social theories that demonstrated the influence of the similarity of values on the level of trust. Thus the emergence of communities of taste is explained through the fact that „social trust is based on the similarity of values: people tend to trust other people and institutions that tell stories“, that express values that are important today, stories that interpret the world in the same way as and they do.”⁶⁸

In other cases, the influence of cultural participation on the level of trust is eclipsed by the influence of other variables, of which education appears to be the most important in explaining trust in family members, people known personally, and people of another nationality, and age is an important factor for explaining trust in people of another religion.

Table 7. The relationship between cultural consumption indicators and aspects of social trust

	Great or very great trust in...					
	... family members	... people of the neighbourhood / village / commune	... people known personally	... people met for the first time	... people of other nationality	... people of other religion
Index of public cultural participation	[education] [income]	[gender] [age] [education]	[education]	[other aspects]	[age] [education] [income]	[age] [education]
Index of non-public cultural participation	[education] [income]		[education]	[other aspects]	[age] [education] [income]	[age] [education]
Index of online cultural participation			[education]		[age] [education] [income]	[age] [education]

Note:

- statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
- statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
- [variable] → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

⁶⁸ George Cvetkovich and Ragnar E Lofstedt, „Social Trust and Risk Management“, Earthscan, Abingdon, 1999, p. 10.

4.4.1 Trust in the information presented in the mass media

The data on the perception of mass media show that media organisations are facing a very high deficit of trust. Such a situation tends to be indicative of a difficulty that the public has in identifying sources of information with credibility and validity in the interpretation of the events taking place in today's society. Thus, we can notice that more than 75% of the respondents either have little or no confidence in the news distributed through any of the information channels. This means that three out of four Romanians question the truthfulness of the messages that are circulated in the public space, which in the long term could constitute both a vector of instability in the formation of the system of representations of the world, and an element that could raise considerable obstacles in articulating the reference points necessary for the functioning of a democratic culture. These data also suggest the difficulty of undertaking effective information or awareness campaigns through the media. Habermas believes that the ability to communicate involves a shared understanding that is based on three validity claims: truth, fairness and sincerity⁶⁹. Without them, as Bok points out, „[a] society whose members are unable to distinguish truthful from deceptive messages would collapse.“⁷⁰

The highest level of trust seems to be attributed to news published on social networks and shared by relatives or friends: 28% of respondents state that they have a high or very high trust in such information. The component of greater trust in information from social and value proximity sources appears again. This configuration seems to indicate that respondents tend to select their opinion leaders more from the immediate circle of acquaintances or friends and less from people with visibility in the public space. It is also

visible that the respondents have more trust in the news transmitted on the radio (24% high and very high trust) than in those transmitted on television (21% high and very high trust). A much lower level of trust is recorded for news published in printed newspapers or magazines, alongside news published on websites or shared on social networks by media entities (below 15% high and very high trust). A possible explanation for the low level of trust in the news shared on these channels is related to the low level of information consumption through these media sources at national level. Last but not least, we can see that only 3% of respondents trust the news shared through social networks by strangers, which in certain contexts could be an inhibiting factor in perpetuating the distribution of false information.

The data on the level of people's trust in certain sources of information reveal a certain tendency of isolating the public into distinct media consumption communities. More precisely, we can notice that people who use social networks give credibility only to news sources assimilated to such platforms, and they are not open to other information channels. Similarly, people who frequently watch TV programmes or shows only trust the news broadcast on TV or radio, and they are not receptive to information transmitted through other possible sources. Another approach on these results may bring into discussion the connection between the level of trust and the level of consumption. In other words, it is possible that the very trust in certain sources of information generate a higher level of consumption. Other theoretical explanations bring into question the connection between factors such as familiarity, habit or ritual, on the one hand, and the level of trust, on the other. All these might explain the greater trust of frequent traditional media consumers in these information sources.

69 Barbara A. Misztal, "Trust in Modern Societies The Search for the Bases of Social Order", Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996, p. 13.

70 Idem.

Graph 4. The level of trust attributed to the news transmitted through various information channels
 („Please tell me how much trust you have in the information presented in the following media sources.
 How much trust do you have in the news transmitted/published...“)

● Very much
 ● A lot
 ● A little
 ● Very little / Not at all

On social networks, published by media entities (newspapers, magazines, TV stations)



On social media, shared by people you don't know



On social networks, shared by people you know (relatives, friends)



On websites



In printed / online newspapers / magazines



On the radio



On TV

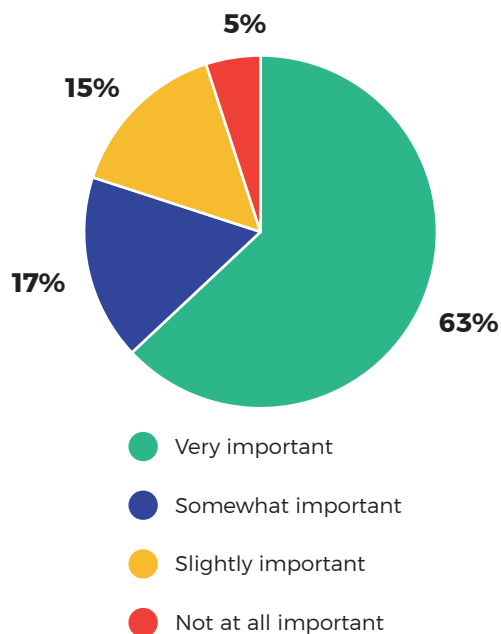


People who access cultural websites show a high trust in the news broadcast on the radio or in the print media, but not in the news broadcast on television or in those circulated through social networks. Conversely, people who read newspapers or magazines more frequently are more receptive to the content of multiple news channels (television, print media, online media, news shared on social networks by friends, and news shared on social networks by media institutions).

The lack of trust attributed to the mass media ends up manifesting itself against the background of a desire for

accuracy and objectivity in the reporting of current events. This desideratum is shared collectively and appears to represent a criterion by which the public evaluates the truthfulness of a piece of information. More precisely, we can notice that 80% of respondents want quality news, considering that, for the good running of things in today's society, it is important for the media to inform citizens correctly. Such data tend to suggest that the trust deficit attributed to media outlets appears to have formed in the context of an experience of repeated and generalised exposure to information that was either perceived to be inconsistent or later proven to be false.

Graph 5. The importance attributed to the quality of the press (For the good running of things in the society we live in, how important do you think it is that the press informs citizens correctly?)



Older people, people with higher education, and people with higher incomes find it easier to identify a credible news source depending on which they would interpret current events. The corollary is the fact that young people, people with low education and people at risk of poverty are the social categories that find it more difficult to orient themselves in the circuit of information that characterises the current media system, which in the long term may have repercussions in the formation and the practice of active citizenship as an important aspect in an inclusive society. At the same time, the gender and the locality size do not correlate with trust in the news transmitted through at least

one media channel; in other words, there is no dependency relationship between trust and these variables.

As regards cultural consumption, we can notice that the index of public participation and the index of non-public participation correlate positively with the level of trust in media channels: the higher the frequency of participation in cultural activities practised in the public space or in the private environment, the more probability of trusting at least one media channel of news distribution. However, the index of online cultural participation does not explain the level of trust in the news, as no statistically significant correlation is found between the two associated variables.

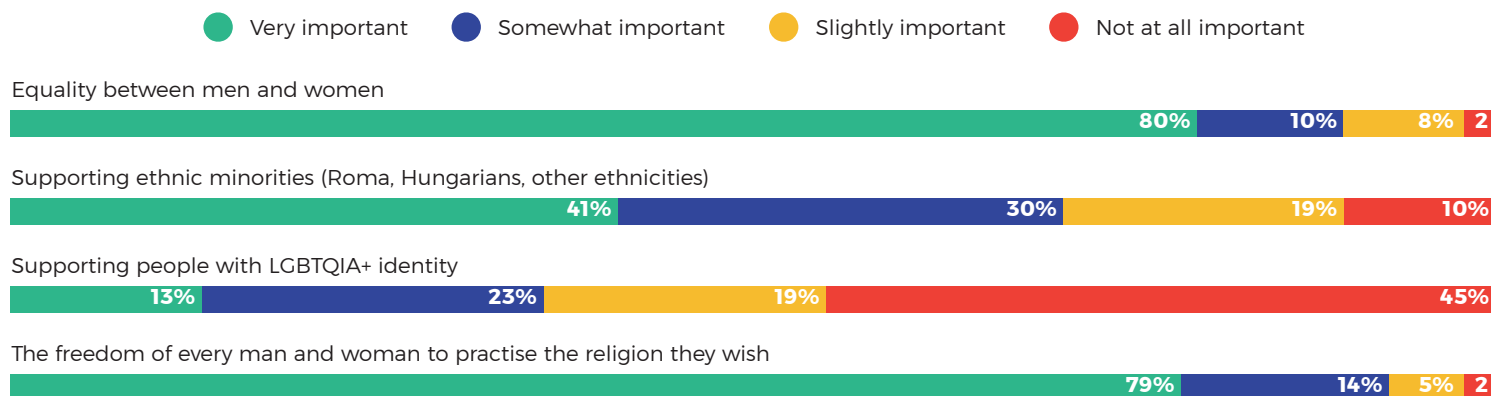
The aggregate statistical analysis highlights the fact that the effects of public cultural participation and of income on the level of trust in the news are diminished by the influencing factors attributed to non-public participation, age and, above all, education. This means that non-public cultural participation is more important than public cultural participation in explaining the mechanisms involved in establishing the interpretative benchmarks needed to evaluate media content. Furthermore, the educational level is more important than the living standard in terms of the ability to identify a credible source of information.

Taking into account the specificity of non-public cultural activities, we can put together the hypothesis according to which the ability to identify veracity factors in the media space and to formulate cognitive benchmarks in the reception of information is greater among people who are involved in activities that presuppose critical autonomy in the interpretation of content (e.g. reading books), as well as among those who engage in practices that presuppose an individualised approach to information (editing photos, videos).

4.5 The dimension of social inclusion

Religious freedom and gender equality represent the themes that constitute the foundation of democratic attitudes within the Romanian society: 93% of the total participants in the study believe that every person should have the freedom to practise the religion they want, and 90% of the respondents believe that it is important that men and women have the same rights. A lower level of importance is attributed to

Graph 6. The level of importance attributed to social inclusion (How important do you consider the following topical issues to be for the good running of things in the society we live in?)



Gender equality is a concern that expressed especially among people with higher education and high income. Supporting ethnic minorities is mainly included in the sphere of interest of women, young people, people coming from large localities, but also of people with a high level of schooling and with financial stability. In general, these categories of people also show their support towards sexual minorities, except that in the area of support for people with LGBTQIA+ identity no significant differences are observed between men and women.

the respect of the rights of ethnic minorities, where we can notice the percentage of 71% that represents the study participants who believe that ethnic minorities should be given governmental or non-governmental support. The lowest level of support is recorded for the aspect aimed at respecting the rights of people with LGBTQIA+ identity, in which case a percentage of 13% of those who attribute a high level of importance to this theme is noted, while the percentage of respondents who consider that such a theme is not a priority at all reaches 45%.

Social inclusion attitudes are in a very close relationship with cultural participation. Thus, all three indices of cultural participation correlate positively and statistically significantly with the importance attributed to gender equality, ethnic equality, sexual equality and religious equality: the higher the degree of participation in cultural activities, the higher the level of expressing support for minority groups or vulnerable social categories. This is true whether we are talking about cultural consumption in the public space, or whether we are referring to cultural participation in the non-public space or to the online participation.

When considering specific activities, the data indicate certain particularities of cultural consumption depending on the social inclusion dimension. More precisely, we can notice that the equality between men and women is mainly supported by people who visit historical monuments and archaeological sites more often, by people who watch movies broadcasted online more often, by people who read more often (books in any format, manuals, articles) and by people who travel abroad more. Support for ethnic minorities is also expressed to a greater extent by people who read books in either print or electronic format, in addition to people who get their information more often from print newspapers or magazines and to those who visit more often museums, exhibitions or art galleries. People who show more support for people with LGBTQIA+ identity mostly read books in electronic format, visit museums, exhibitions or art galleries more often, watch more movies online and go to the cinema more often.

In confirmation of the results highlighted in the previous sections, it can be noted that watching TV shows or programmes does not correlate with social inclusion attitudes (i.e. there is no dependent link). Conversely, accessing the websites of cultural institutions is the most important factor in explaining the concern for gender equality, while information from the print media (newspapers or magazines) is the most important element in explaining the concern for supporting ethnic minorities and respecting the rights of social minorities. It is also worth noting that the use of social networks correlates particularly well with the concern for religious freedom (the more a person uses the Internet to access social networks, the more he/she is interested in religious freedom).

Table 8. The relationship between cultural consumption indicators and aspects of social inclusion

	Equality between men and women	Supporting ethnic minorities (Roma, Hungarians, other ethnicities)	Supporting people with LGBTQIA+ identity	The freedom of every human being to practise the religion they want
Index of public cultural participation		[gender] [education]	[age] [education] [locality size]	[education]
Index of non-public cultural participation	[education] [income]			[education]
Index of Online Cultural Participation			[age] [education] [locality size]	

Note:

- statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
- statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
- [variable] → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

The influence of cultural consumption on social inclusion is strong enough to show up even when testing the combined effects of several factors on democratic values. The concern for respecting the rights of minorities can be explained not only through aspects related to education, but also through certain particularities of cultural consumption. For example, people who participate in cultural activities in the public and online space are more supportive of equality between men and women, independent of the influence exerted by certain socio-demographic variables. Ethnic minorities enjoy greater support from people who participate more frequently in non-public and online activities. Moreover, the index of non-public cultural participation explains the support given to sexual minorities, and the index of online cultural participation appears as a more important factor in explaining attitudes favourable to religious freedom.

4.6 The dimension of civic concerns

Employers' respect for employees' rights is the most relevant topic of public interest: over 92% of respondents say that constructive workplace relations are an essential ingredient in the functioning of a democratic society. Moreover, a comparable level of importance is attributed to other themes, among which there are: the protection of nature and the environment, the punishment of delinquent acts in proportion to their gravity, the fight against corruption and the participation of people in voting when there are elections (each of these being rated as important by over 80% of respondents).

Graph 7. The level of importance attributed to some topics of civic relevance (*How important do you consider the following current topics for the good running of things in the society we live in?*)



The fight against corruption and the protection of the environment are topics embraced mostly by people who have a high level of education, by people with financial stability and by people who live in large towns. Furthermore, the punishment of delinquent acts according to their gravity is also an important concern for these socio-demographic categories, to which young people are added. The participation of people in voting when there are elections is considered to be a priority by young people, by people with higher education and by people coming from demographically developed localities. Income does not prove to be a relevant factor in explaining the interest in manifesting the electoral option. An element of particularity appears in the area of employers' respect for employees' rights. The profile of those who share this concern is shaped by gender, education, income and locality size. More precisely, women believe to a higher extent than men that an institutional framework stipulating working relationships based on mutual respect between employer and employee is necessary. It can also be noticed that people who attach high or very high importance to the respect of rights at professional level are more likely to have higher education and an income above the national average and to come from urban areas.

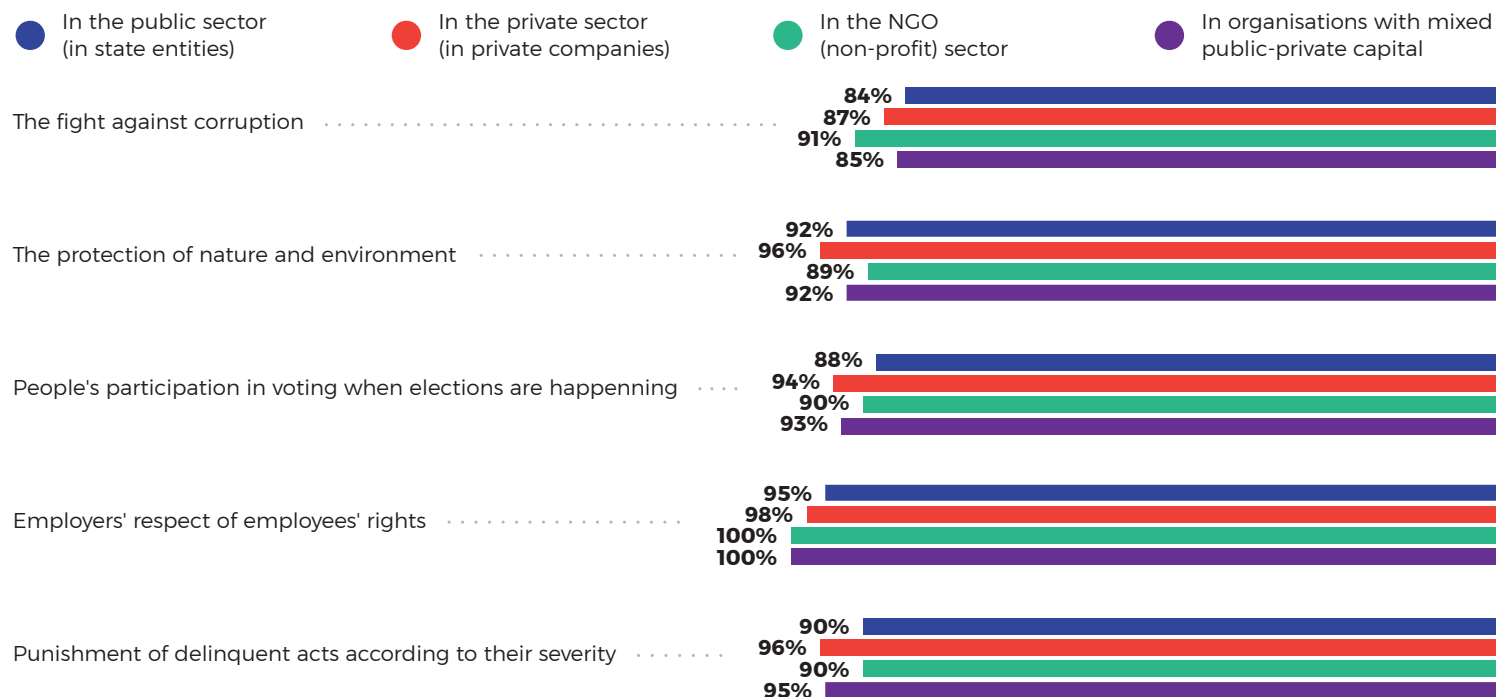
Concerns with various topics of public interest vary to some extent by occupational sector. The fight against corruption is an aspect that gains particular relevance in the non-profit sector, while environmental interests, electoral participation and a sense of justice are topics present mainly in the spectrum of interest of employees in the private sector. It is also worth noting that employers' respect for employees' rights is a concern that seems to be unanimously embraced by people who work in the non-profit sector and in mixed-capital organisations.

The data show that participation in cultural activities tends to favour the formation of relevant civic attitudes.

The higher the cultural consumption recorded, the higher the interest in topics on the public agenda: the fight against corruption, the protection of nature and the environment, the participation of people in voting when there are elections, the employers' respect for the employees' rights and the punishing of delinquent acts according to their gravity. We can also notice that, in this case, online cultural consumption has a much higher direct contribution than public and non-public cultural consumption, which suggests that access to the Internet and its use for cultural purposes play an important role in strengthening the interest in the topics on the public agenda.

An element of specificity in relation to the dimension of civic concerns is that the use of social networks is an indicator that strongly correlates (dependent relationship) with the importance attributed to the fight against corruption, the protection of nature and the environment, the participation of people in voting when there are elections and punishing delinquent acts according to their gravity. The same type of association can also be observed between the previously mentioned civic aspects and the frequency of watching movies broadcast online. When taking these aspects into account, we can notice that social networks can function as a mobilising factor in carrying out civic actions or organising social movements: people who use social networks are more concerned with more civic topics. Such a configuration appears significant, particularly in the context where accessing websites with cultural content statistically significantly correlates (dependent relationship) only with the fight against corruption, with people's participation in voting when there are elections and with employers' respect of employee's rights.

Graph 8. The percentage of people who attribute high or very high importance to themes of civic relevance, depending on the occupational sector



At the same time, it should be noted that the frequency of watching programmes on television does not correlate statistically significantly with the importance attributed to any of the civic concerns considered. Such an aspect tends to suggest that television does not seem to influence viewers to adopt attitudes aligned with democratic values, but such a hypothesis needs to be tested in detail through future studies. On the other hand, what stands out is the fact that both for young people (18-35 years old) and for the elderly (above 65 years old) civic concerns are formed especially through the use of social networks. Specifically, for these two age groups, a strong correlation is observed between the use of social

networks and the importance attributed to themes of civic relevance. Conversely, in the case of adults (35-64 years old), civic concerns are shaped to a greater extent by information from the print media (newspapers, magazines) than through TV consumption or the use of social networks.

It is also worth noting that people who visit museums, exhibitions or art galleries more often attribute greater importance to all the aspects that make up the dimension of civic concerns, including the one related to the respect of employees' rights. Reading activities in their multidimensionality (reading books in printed or electronic format, consulting manuals, scientific articles, newspaper or magazine articles) correlate

significantly (dependent relationship) with the importance attributed to the fight against corruption, people’s participation in voting when there are elections, the employers’ respect of the employees’ rights and the punishment of delinquent acts according to their gravity. Another aspect to be considered has to do with the statistically significant association between the frequency of participation in theatre performances and the importance attributed to the fight against corruption. In addition, as expected, the protection of nature and the environment is more important for people who walk more often in parks or green areas and for those who visit historical monuments or archaeological sites more often.



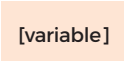
Certain forms of cultural consumption end up explaining different civic concerns despite the aggregate influences of socio-demographic variables. Thus, we can notice that participation in cultural activities in the public space explains

eco-friendly attitudes, independent of the level of education, while participation in online cultural activities is a more important explanatory factor in terms of social justice sense. Likewise, cultural consumption mediated by digital media explains the importance attributed to electoral participation, while decreasing the influence of all other explanatory factors. The concern for employers’ respect for employees’ rights is influenced both by the frequency of participation in cultural activities in the public space, and by the involvement in online-specific cultural activities specific, and all this happens despite the influence exerted by socio-demographic variables. On the other hand, the interest in combating acts of corruption mainly depends on the educational level, which takes over the entire influence, not being determined by the particularities related to the participation in cultural activities.

Table 9. The relationship between cultural consumption indicators and civic concerns

	The fight against corruption	Protection of nature and the environment	People’s participation in voting when there are elections	Employers’ respect of employees’ rights	Punishment of delinquent acts according to their gravity
Index of public cultural participation	[education]		[other aspects]		[age] [education]
Index of non-public cultural participation	[education]	[education]	[other aspects]	[education]	[age] [education]
Index of online cultural participation	[education]	[education]			

Note:

-  → statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
-  → statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
-  [variable] → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

In addition, the data suggest that the sense of personal autonomy could represent an explanatory factor of relating to

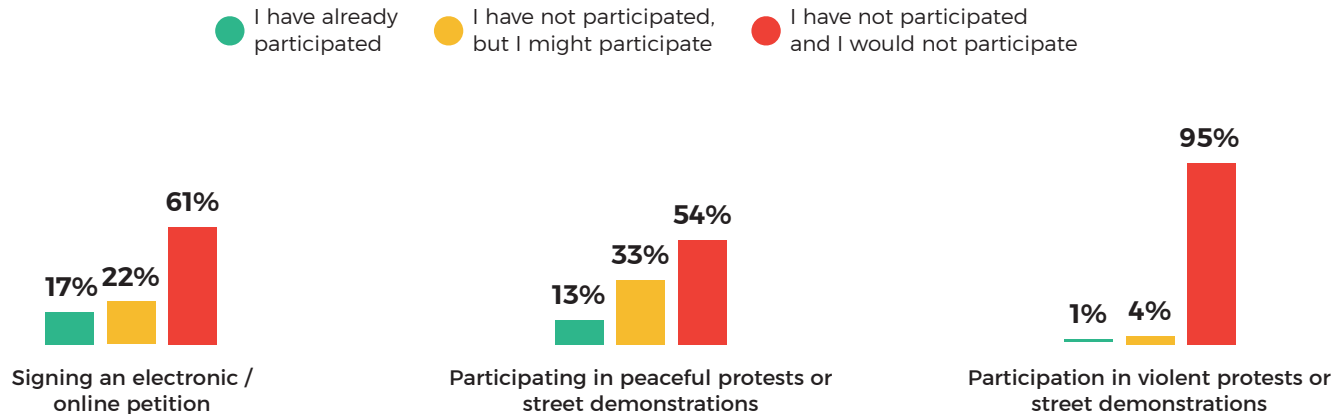
information transmitted through mass media. More precisely, we can notice that the level of trust in the news is higher among

people who would choose freedom over safety, among people who believe that they have control over the course of personal or social events, but also among people who express willingness to sign a petition or participate in peaceful protests in order to show their dissatisfaction with a situation or a government decision.

According to the data of the study, under the current circumstances, at the level of the Romanian society, there is a relatively low probability of coagulation for violent protest movements that would significantly change the social fabric. For example, we can notice that 95% of respondents have not participated and do not intend to participate in street demonstrations involving violence in the future, and more than half of the participants in the study would not even engage in peaceful protests, nor would they sign an online petition.

However, there is an emergence of a sufficiently large segment of people who can put pressure on decision-makers and determine the directions of public policy development. More precisely, it appears significant that a third of the population coagulates the group of people who, although they have been less visible in the public space and have not shown their critical attitude so far, could become active by participating in protest actions, should the society face a situation in which democratic values would be affected: 33% of respondents stated that they did not participate, but could participate in peaceful protests or street demonstrations if the situation was such of such a nature that interventions in the public sphere would be necessary.

Graph 9. Willingness to participate in protest actions

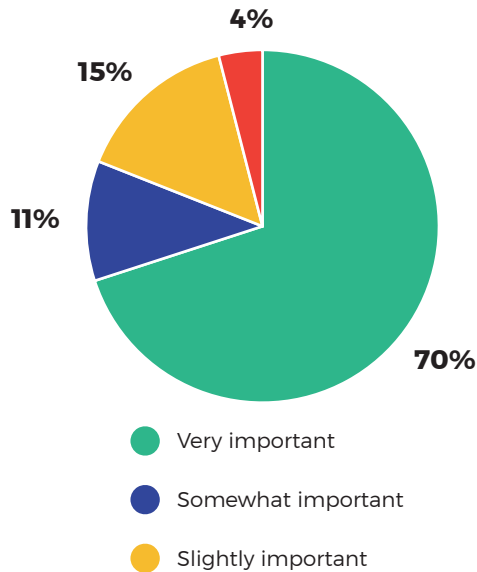


4.7 The dimension of social freedom

Social freedom is understood as representing an important component in the consolidation of democratic values. Thus, we can notice that 81% of the respondents believe that it is important for a society to provide citizens with the conditions necessary to express different points

of view, regardless of whether or not they are aligned with official or majority perspectives. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the respondents consider that censorship or restriction by any means of the rights of expression are undesirable aspects, as they could affect the good running of things in society.

Graph 10. The importance attributed to freedom of expression (How important do you consider the freedom of each person to express his/her point of view for the good running of things in the society we live in?)

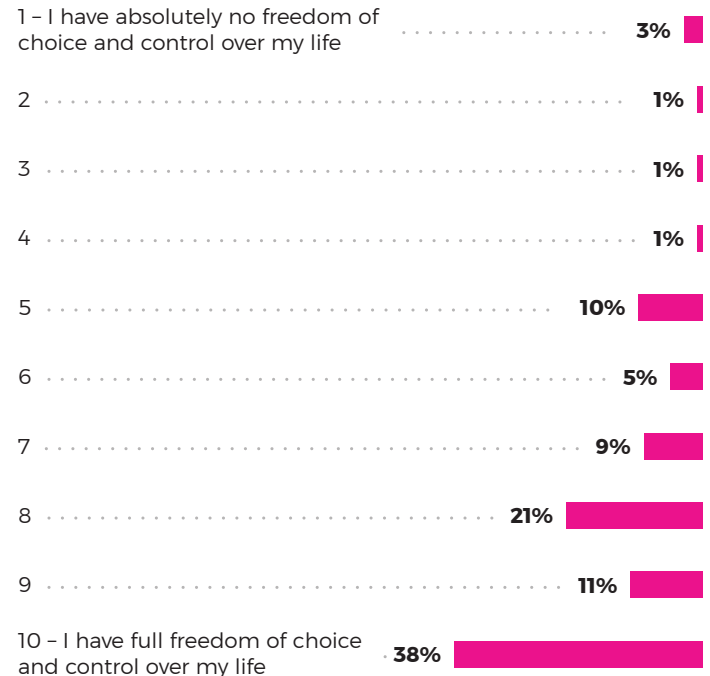


Freedom of expression is a value appreciated especially by young people, people with high education and people with high income. It is also visible that the area of residence is in a close relationship with the importance attributed to the right to freedom of expression: the larger the size of the locality, the greater the openness to the acceptance in the public space of more points of view. Conversely, from the point of view of gender, no differences are observed as regards the internalisation of this value regarding the freedom of expression.

The data show more visible manifestations of the internal locus of control, i.e. the respondents tend to attach individualised causality to events that are part of their lives. Such an attitude is articulated at the expense of adopting an external locus of control, a perspective that is assimilated to a tendency to consider that factors from the social, cultural or economic

environment influence how people’s lives unfold. More precisely, we can notice that 38% of the participants in the study believe that they have full freedom of choice and control over their lives, and only 3% state that they do not have such freedom at all. In addition, when analysing the percentages cumulatively, it is visible that 84% of the study participants mainly manifest an internal locus of control (they believe that they have the ability to influence the events that take place in society and that they have the power to decide on their own lives), while 16% opt for an external locus of control (they consider that what happens in their lives is, for the most part, determined by conditions acting independently of their own will or action).

Graph 11. Perspectives on external locus of control („I have no choice and control over my life at all”) and internal locus of control („I have complete freedom of choice and control over my life.”)



Furthermore, the survey data indicates a substantial preference among respondents for safety over freedom: 68% of the people surveyed at national level opt for safety, while 32% choose freedom as the central value in shaping their system of significations in life.

Graph 12. Expressing a preference for freedom or safety
(Most people consider both freedom and safety important.
However, if you had to choose between the two, which
would be more important to you?)



It is important to note that women, young people, people with higher education and those with higher incomes mention to a greater extent that they have freedom of choice and control over their own lives. The explanatory models may be different for each category of people: for women and young people, it is possible that the adoption of these attitudes represents the consequences of some needs for emancipation and affirmation of personal autonomy, while in the case of people with a high social status, the sense of controllability may be explained through a higher access to resources that expand the horizon of action. In the same line of argumentation, it can be pointed out that the preference for freedom over safety is especially manifested among men, people with high education, people with high income and those from large towns.

All three components of cultural consumption (public, non-public and online) correlate not only with the importance

attributed to freedom of expression, but also with the perceived level of control over one's life and with the manifestation of a preference for freedom at the expense of safety. People who engage more frequently in several types of cultural activities, regardless of the sphere wherein they are practised, tend to appreciate to a greater extent the relevance of openness to dialogue in a democratic society and to internalise freedom as a value able to shape their perspective on the world and life.

Specifically, all three dimensions of social freedom correlate (dependent relationship) with distinct forms of cultural consumption, including: the use of the Internet to attend online courses or training programmes, frequency of going to the cinema, use of the Internet for reading of books, manuals, articles, the frequency of trips abroad and the use of the Internet for professional activities. This means that people who internalise freedom as a value are statistically significantly more involved in the activities listed above.

In addition, we can notice that freedom is an aspect valued more by people who frequently get their information from the print media (newspapers, magazines). On the opposite side, the following relationship can be observed: the higher the frequency of watching TV shows or programmes, the lower the importance attributed to freedom (in its multidimensionality). Punctually, the data also underline the fact that the social networks users value freedom of expression to a higher degree. In contrast, the other two forms of social freedom do not correlate significantly with this form of consumption in the online. It is also worth noting that people who use the Internet to access websites with cultural content consider that they have greater freedom of choice and control over their own lives.

It is important to point out that cultural participation in the public space plays a much more important role than non-public and online cultural participation in attributing considerable importance to the freedom of expression. The data also point to the fact that age and education matter



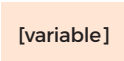
more than income and town size in forming the opinion that in a democratic society it is necessary that more points of view should be expressed. On the other hand, aspects different from those related to the peculiarities of cultural consumption and socio-demographics are important in explaining the freedom of control over one’s own life, , given that none of the variables considered during the study retains its statistically significant effects in the aggregate analyses anymore. However, the data show that the preference for

freedom over safety is solely explained by online cultural consumption, whose influence remains significant despite the effects of education or other socio-demographic characteristics. Such a result seems to suggest that the types of cultural content existing in the digital environment are more susceptible to the formation of liberal attitudes, in contrast to the types of cultural content corresponding to the public or non-public space, as understood in the context of this study. au non-public.

Table 10. The relationship between cultural consumption indicators and aspects of social freedom

	Great or very great importance attributed to the freedom of each person to express their point of view, for the good running of things in the society in which we live	Manifesting full freedom of choice and control over one’s life	Expressing a preference for freedom over safety
Index of public cultural participation		[other aspects]	[gender] [education]
Index of non-public cultural participation	[age] [education]	[other aspects]	[gender] [education]
Index of online cultural participation	[age] [education]	[other aspects]	

Note:

-  → statistically significant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from both bivariate and multivariate analyses)
-  → statistically insignificant correlation between the variables describing cultural consumption and the variables corresponding to democratic values (resulted from bivariate analyses)
-  → statistically significant correlation resulted from bivariate analyses, but which, following multivariate analyses, is cancelled by the influence of the variables indicated in square brackets

5. Conclusions

The analysis shows that, at the level of the Romanian society, the theoretical model of engagement is applied, over democratic disengagement. This means that cultural participation is a factor that stimulates (and does not inhibit) democratic citizenship. Moreover, the data highlight both a

high conformity of the explanatory model of social capital and social empowerment, and a partial conformity of the explanatory model of social mobilisation and value cultivation in explaining the proclivity towards the adoption of democratic attitudes and behaviours.

On the other hand, the explanatory models of social isolation, alienation and trivialisation cannot be considered aspects that include valid reasons in relation to the effects of cultural consumption within the Romanian society. More precisely, the rationales associated with the theoretical model of democratic disengagement are strongly refuted by the data, i.e. non-public

forms of cultural participation do not influence democratic participation in a negative manner. In other words, within the Romanian society, it is unlikely that exposure to media content will directly produce the phenomena of isolation, alienation and trivialisation.

Table 11. Synthetic results of testing the hypotheses on the relationship between cultural participation and democratic citizenship

Theoretical model	Hypothesis tested	Test results
The explanatory model of social capital	The higher the index of cultural participation (public, non-public or online), the greater the ability to accumulate social capital through engagement in associative life.	Hypothesis fully confirmed by data
The explanatory model of value cultivation	The higher the index of cultural participation (public, non-public or online), the more strengthened the values of openness to those around.	Hypothesis partially confirmed by data
The explanatory model of social mobilisation	The higher the index of cultural participation (public, non-public or online), the greater the proclivity to social mobilisation.	Hypothesis partially confirmed by data
The explanatory model of social empowerment	Social status is a shaping factor of the relationship between the indicators of cultural participation and those of democratic citizenship	Hypothesis partially confirmed by data (social status intervenes on the forms of value cultivation and on the proclivity towards social mobilisation, but not on the ability to accumulate social capital)

On the other hand, the data show that cultural participation exerts the greatest influence on the probability of belonging to a community: the higher the values of cultural consumption, the stronger the sense of social belonging. In other words, people who engage more frequently in more types of cultural activities are those who take part in the associative life to a greater extent. Such a result shows that in the Romanian society cultural participation does not isolate, but on the contrary, it favours social engagement, offering opportunities to accumulate social capital derived from belonging to a community of people who share common concerns, interests or preferences. The influences of all forms of cultural consumption on social belonging are maintained when the effects of the social status or other demographic variables are controlled. Moreover, not only the forms of public and online

cultural participation, but also the cultural activities practised in the non-public space are influencing factors of belonging to a community.

The abovementioned trend, highlighted for indicators of belonging to a community, is also noticeable in the case of tolerance towards people of another religion, in which case all forms of cultural consumption are significant in explaining democratic attitudes, independently of the influence of education, income or other demographic factors.

In general, the assumptions assimilated to the theoretical model of democratic engagement are partially confirmed, as it turns out that not all specific cultural consumption practices play a role in explaining the various components of democratic citizenship independently of the influence of certain variables,

but only a certain form or specific configuration proves to be significant.

Therefore, the following trends can be observed:

- *Participation in cultural activities in the public space* explains the importance attributed to the protection of nature and the importance given to freedom of expression. In these cases, neither education, nor other forms of participation in cultural activities in the non-public space, including the online environment, prove to have an influence.
- *Participation in cultural activities in the non-public space* explains the level of trust in people in the proximity – people who live in the same neighbourhood or commune – and the backing of public forms of support for people with LGBTQIA+ identity. In these cases, neither education, nor other forms of participation in cultural activities in the public space and in the online environment prove to have an influence.
- *Participation in cultural activities in the online environment* explains the tolerance towards people of another ethnicity and towards foreign workers, the importance attributed to the punishment of delinquent acts according to their gravity, the freedom of each person to practice their religion and the participation of people in voting. In these cases, neither education, nor other forms of participation in cultural activities in the public and non-public space prove to have an influence.
- *Participation in public and online cultural activities* explains the importance attributed to employers' respect for employees' rights and the importance attributed to equality between men and women. In these cases, neither education, nor other forms of participation in cultural activities in the non-public space prove to have an influence.
- *Participation in non-public and online cultural activities* explains the tolerance towards people with LGBTQIA+

identity and the backing of public forms of support for ethnic minorities. In these cases, neither education, nor other forms of participation in cultural activities in the public space prove to have an influence.

Taking into account the previously presented configurations, it can be concluded that the forms of cultural consumption in the online environment are more important than other forms of cultural consumption in terms of shaping democratic attitudes and behaviours. There are multiple situations for which it can be observed that the influence of online cultural participation reduces the influence of cultural participation in the public and non-public space.

Nevertheless, there are also cases where education is found to influence certain components of democratic citizenship more than participation in cultural activities. Specifically, education makes the influence of cultural consumption irrelevant in terms of: (1) the importance attributed to the preservation of the national identity and patriotic feeling, (2) trust in family members, in people known personally, in people met for the first time, in people of other nationality and in people of other religion and (3) the importance attributed to the fight against corruption.

In conclusion, the analysis of the relationship between cultural participation and democratic citizenship provides an empirical basis capable of highlighting both the need to implement initiatives based on a model of education through culture, and the usefulness of developing measures that closely follow a model of community development through culture. On the one hand, these assertions are supported by statistical analyses that highlight the particularly important role that the education variable plays in articulating the forms of cultural consumption in the public space, in the non-public space and in the online environment. On the other hand, there is a strong and stable relationship between the cultural and the social capital: both forms of capital represent not only vectors of economic development, but also important pillars of strengthening democratic attitudes and behaviours.

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