

# 2022 in summary

Somehow, it's been TEN years since Funky Citizens, [ten years](#) since we've asked for transparency, integrity, and if there's any left on the bottom of the barrel, competence from our elected officials. Our reason for being has remained unchanged: we still want to convince Romanians that they deserve to be active citizens, who know and demand their rights. That's why we do civic education and put the magnifying glass carefully on institutions and situations that threaten the rule of law. We look back at the year that challenged us to do new things (humanitarian aid) and plan for 2023 as a prelude to 2024, when we are going to have four rounds of elections. Also, our editorial projects have grown: Factual is now a third-party fact-checker for the Facebook and Instagram platforms, and you can also follow the journalists from Bucharest Bulletin in a weekly newsletter.

This year our team has grown significantly. We "welcomed" Diana Tăbleț to our team who will become a little wizard of budgets, and Ana Mocanu, who helps us with project management and logistics for the many projects and events we are planning to organize.



# Funky Republic



*Photo from the training in Timișoara, the first outing in the field*

The project through which we proposed to expand in the country took off last year. We have finally reached the stage where we are already discovering people in the country who have similar ideals to ours and want to contribute to the life of their own communities. A sociological research showed us 7 communities in the country where to focus the project's efforts. Later, a call to NGOs brought us face to face with 7 associations in the territory that will help us build the network and will become the first official members.

Thus, we started to travel the country with trainings in 4 fields in which we have experience: budgets and public money, civic education, local administration and journalism+fact-checking (thanks to the RISE Project partners). The places where we start talking about how we get out of the spiral of non-assurance are:

1. Brașov, where Olga Popescu supports us, with the help of Paul Ciocan

2. [Timisoara](#), where I met Gabriel Amza from [Pedallez](#)
3. [Medias](#), where we are supported by Vlad Chiș ([Medias on two wheels](#)) and Tamás Kádár ([Mediaș Alert](#))
4. [Târgu Jiu](#), Roxana Pistol ([Be TeeN](#))
5. [Iasi](#), where our friends from [CIVICA](#) will help us
6. [Bistrita](#), where I met Diana Alexandrina Moldovan from the [Impact Bistrita Association](#)
7. [Chilia Veche](#), a small place from Tulcea county, where Vasile-Dan Dicu from the association “[Together for Chilia Veche](#)” also works
8. Bucharest is the eighth city from which we will look for collaborators and also the place where we will announce the launch of the network soon

Together with these representatives we will try to bring positive changes into communities and small victories that we want to be contagious. Also through the project we will launch educational materials from the 4 fields mentioned above, available to any citizen involved, as well as [analyzes](#) on the transparency and openness of local authorities.

## Public money



### *Elena explaining the mysteries of the public money tables*

The main lead was the Center for Monitoring Budgetary Fiscal Transparency and Responsibility ([CMTRFB](#)), a large project through which we create an online support center for those who want to speak budgetary and organize [trainings](#) to put this knowledge into practice. Part of the project are also two summer school-type sessions in which the participants will deepen what they learned in the previous trainings, as well as the traditional [analysis of the state](#) budget that the new colleague Diana worked on.

Another big project to which we dedicated ourselves was the opening of public contracts through the application of [Open Contracting](#) principles. I called on the help of friends from T.I. Ukraine to better explain the advantages of these principles both to those in [civil society](#) and [to entrepreneurs and employees in the private sector](#). In November, we held a roundtable as an opportunity to learn from the experience of [other countries](#) that have opened public procurement.

Beyond these projects, we had a pleasant surprise when we were invited to [a debate about the need for transparency in the Capital's budget](#), especially since we always ask for a [public debate on the budget](#). We were saddened when the [Open Budget Survey](#) showed that we had not made progress on budget transparency and oversight, and explained [the challenge to budget credibility and the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

## How we helped Ukraine

It's an understatement to say that Thursday, February 24th "affected our affairs". We are not an association with experience in humanitarian aid but ... the war in Ukraine shocked us enough to use all our resources and accumulated knowledge to help those who decided to take refuge in our country.

We started with what we know best: we immediately urged caution [in the consumption of war news](#), we asked the government to tell us [how we could help](#), we were happy when we received [a positive response](#) under the form of a constructive meeting (but I was also saddened when I found out that on the "online working group" there was some disconnection from the reality and the needs on the ground), I asked that [the AU and MD be welcomed into the European Union](#) and drew attention to [the risk of human trafficking](#). In the first phase, the big challenge was at the North Railway Station in Bucharest, where the flow of people was constant, there were white nights and we tried to show how [a little](#)

organization would take us far. We tried and failed, because for a reason known only to them, the authorities refused to engage properly for a flawless partnership with civil society.

Later, we teamed up with Declic and managed to raise over 195,000 lei to pay for the transport of people from the Palanca customs office, in the Republic of Moldova, 60km from Odessa, to Iași and Bucharest. 3,000 people thus got away from the war and then we handed over the baton to a corridor made by the authorities. The funds came from donations, either through the Declic fundraiser, or through fairs or products sold online by friends and partners.



*The CNN appearance that put us in touch with CORE*

This effort did not go unnoticed and after an appearance on CNN we were contacted by the American association CORE to whom we made available the institutional platform so that they could provide support in the refugee crisis in a total, cumulative value of 750,000 USD. CORE Response is a specialized association, since 2010, in interventions in crisis situations and they are the way we were able to contribute more than we could have done alone. Part of their team worked for many months from our headquarters in Colivia. Among them was Mariya, our first employee from Ukraine and the person who now helps us integrate those who flee from the war.



*Some of the supplies we helped get to Ukraine and went to those in the Nikolaev area*

## Journalism and fact-checking

In the context of the war on the border, we have also stepped up our efforts to combat [disinformation and fake news](#), and we have shown our skepticism about government initiatives that fight disinformation through censorship.

This year we continued the collaboration with journalists by helping the Recorder people in the "[Free Voices](#)" project, about the importance of whistleblowers in democracy. Our role was to better [explain what it means to be a whistleblower](#) and what legislation currently protects. Speaking of laws, the draft of the new law on whistleblowers had [a tumultuous passage in the Parliament](#) and we showed our indignation towards [the parliamentarians who started to do what they wanted and didn't want through the committees](#), both [directly](#) and through [a joint letter](#). In the end, the project (milestone in PNRR) became law but leaves much to be desired ("substantial indications" of violation of the law). Our interest in the subject continued with [a debate held at the French Institute](#).

Bucharest Bulletin , our local press editorial project, has grown (including through [donations](#)) and we are happy when its [reporters grow along with it](#). The editorial office also showed how we could see the [Capital in 2050](#) and followed the effort of those who did not ignore the refugee crisis, through [a portrait of a volunteer](#) seen through the photographic eye of Bogdan Dincă. The journalists of the newsroom also started [a weekly newsletter](#) and wrote about topics such as [Andrew Tate](#), the expenses [of the town halls in Ilfov](#) and [the people of the one in the Capital](#) or [behind the scenes of the strike at STB](#). We contributed with budgeting skills by following [how the public money of the 7 town halls was managed](#).

Factual.ro diversified its activity and [joined the fact-checking program of META](#). Basically, the newsroom received new forces and started checking the posts from the social platforms Facebook and Instagram. Like third-party-fact checkers, Factual journalists can now directly flag misleading posts that are subsequently reduced in visibility. These efforts will intensify and diversify in 2023 through several projects on the same topic. One of them will even focus on [the myths and fake news surrounding climate change](#).

We are living in times where there [are attempts to limit the freedom of the press](#) and a shocking example was [the kompromat attempt in the case of Emilia Sercan](#) for which [we showed our unequivocal support](#) and [insisted through a debate](#) that reminded the essential role of journalism in a healthy democracy .

Last but not least, we were happy to be able to organize the first [Reporter Slam](#) event in Romania, a live competition between journalists with entertaining stories.

## Advocacy

This year started with our contribution to the European Commission's [Rule of Law](#) report which later ended with [recommendations](#). We asked our politicians for [a public debate on the project to abolish SIIJ](#), but we were disappointed that [the project](#) did not take into account all the guarantees to ensure the independence of the press. Later, the Ministry of Justice proposed to abolish the SIIJ in a paper-only form. [I condemned the proposal](#), which President Iohannis asked [not to promulgate the law](#) and recommended waiting for [the opinion of the Venice Commission](#).



*Our view of the Special Committee on the Justice Laws*

A similar epic was this year with the package of Laws of Justice. Initially surprised by the fact that [the projects were not published on the website of the Ministry of Justice](#), we later asked for [transparency in the works of the parliamentary committees](#) and kept you updated with [a live text from the meetings](#) of the Special Committee. The package passed quickly through the Parliament, due to the lifting of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, so I checked [how many of the MCV checklist manage to tick off](#) the new versions of the laws.

We also talked extensively about one of the whistleblower gestures in communism, that of [Gheorghe Ursu](#) who warned us that the blocks in the Capital were not consolidated after the earthquake of '77. Engineer Ursu received, postmortem, the Title of Excellence for this effort, and there was no shortage of opportunities to remember how vulnerable we are and [how we can prepare](#).

The friends from Văcărești Natural Park continued their efforts to form [a Network for Urban Nature](#). We helped them by explaining to the public [why we need an urban natural areas law](#).

It was not easy to be an NGO in 2022, something put into question by a legislative proposal that we could only categorize as [anti-NGO](#). The government also gave us trouble when it wanted [to expand the interception of communications](#) under the pretext of transposing a Directive.

Not everything was painful though. This year we were also able to talk about [the future of Rosia Montana](#), about [what the 4 \(5?\) rounds of elections](#) in 2024 have in store for us, about [how civically fit young people can run their own campaigns](#) and we found the energy to adopt a documentary at [OneWorld Romania](#). We continued to analyze [what the MPs are doing](#) in the two [sessions](#) and we were happy when the leader of the opposition from Belarus, [Svetlana Tikhanovskaya](#), visited us.



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