

Attitudes towards Solidarity in Romania¹

Bogdan Voicu², Horațiu Rusu³, Mircea Comșa⁴

Abstract:

The current study aims to present the attitudes towards solidarity in nowadays Romania. We investigate to which extent Romanians care about different status groups, vulnerable or not, in their proximity. We propose two types of comparisons: cross-country, having European societies as referent, and longitudinal, having in view the changes occurring in the last 13 years. Beside such comparisons, a second goal is to identify potential changes due to economic and societal crisis. Third we test if the usual solidarity predictors are functioning in the same way in Romania. The final aim is to assess how the attitudes towards solidarity can support social integration policies of the vulnerable people.

Our approach will contribute in three ways to the existing knowledge. On the one hand, we can prove that there is a measurement model for attitudes towards solidarity which can be used in the case of European transversal and longitudinal comparisons (being invariant across time and cross-Europe). Treating the variables measuring solidarity as continuous, we can offer another perspective than Kankaraš and Moors (2009) and we enlarge their analysis for more waves of the values surveys. Secondly, we show that at individual level, Romania is not different from other European countries with regard to the factors that determine attitudes towards solidarity. Finally, we discuss the way the social solidarity changed in the last 12-13 years in Romania and we show that economic crisis change at most very little of the attitudes towards solidarity.

The data analyzed in this article sourced from the well-known large-scale comparative studies European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS). Since the 1999 wave, EVS includes a package of items which measure explicitly the respondents' orientation towards solidarity. The package is repeated in 2008, as well as in the Romanian version of WVS 2010-2012.

Solidarity targets especially the ones in need. The ill and disabled are attracting positive attitudes to a larger extent than any other group. The old do not significantly differ from unemployed. Geographical proximity-driven differences overlap: there is a certain solidarity directed towards those living in Romania, which are born in Romania, and this solidarity is stronger than the care which concerns any other of the considered status groups. The immigrants from Romania and those who do not live here, irrespectively of their social status, are placed relatively lower than „people from Romania”. The local and regional solidarity are as low as global solidarity.

The analyses reveal that the level of solidarity is significantly lower in the case of the materialistic individuals than in the case of those having mixed orientations. It increases with religious faith and religious behavior, positively depends on intensity of the national identity, and especially with the level of trust in others. Surprisingly, belonging to a social class benefiting from financial transfers from the state (retired persons) in relation to employers, seems to disfavor the attitudes towards solidarity. The relation is a significant one only when considering solidarity as general, non-specific latent orientation, and when local solidarity is concerned. Regarding the other categories benefiting from state social transfers, the relations are not conclusive. Being housewife or being unemployed and not benefiting from state social transfers, significantly disfavor solidarity (in relation to all types of solidarity and solidarity as unique factor) as compared to having paid work. On the other hand, students and pupils are the only category which strengthen solidarity as compared to those who have a paid work, but only from the point of view of global solidarity. Concerning education, our results deny partially other results from literature. The higher the educational degree is the

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² Academia Română, Institutul de Cercetare a Calității Vieții, București. E-mail: bogdan@iccv.ro.

³ Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu. E-mail: horatiu.rusu@ulbsibiu.ro.

⁴ Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca. E-mail: mircea@mmt.ro.

higher the solidarity is. The social solidarity rises with community size, while the global solidarity decreases with the size of the community.

As far as solidarity in general is seen, Romania comparatively to other European countries, is slightly above the average, the situation here being comparable with the Northern European countries, Germany or the south of Europe. Regarding the global solidarity, in 2008, Romania reached the European average, being at the same level with other Eastern countries with a high degree of migration and reduced welfare (Albania, Bosnia, Georgia, Montenegro, Moldova, and Azerbaijan). In all the former communist countries (except Kosovo), the attitudes towards social solidarity registered a lower level than in Romania. Conclusions are not much different when the other two types of solidarity are taken into consideration: local and social. In those hierarchies Romania takes constantly the median. As a synthesis, from the perspective of attitudes on solidarity, one can say that the Romanian society is at the average of European model. This creates favorable premises for using models of social redistribution similar to the ones in other European countries, inclusively programs targeting vulnerable categories.

Concerning the dynamics of the Romanians' attitudes towards solidarity, one can notice significant changes only relatively at the category of "neighbors". In 1999, 26% of respondents declared as being concerned of this category's situation, the ones with moderated attitudes represented 33%, and 41% expressed cautioned attitudes, of less concern. In 2008, the number of those highly concerned increases to 37%, while those less concerned by their neighbors' life conditions decreased to 28%. The year 2012 brings into play a situation closer to that of 1999, with 15% highly concerned, 37% moderate and 48% with low concern for their neighbors' living conditions. Generally speaking, the fluctuations of a single category, on the one hand, and the reduced variations of the others, on the other hand, do not stand for substantial changes of the Romanians solidarity attitudes. This aspect is clearly indicated by the relative positions of the average rates calculated for the indicators of local, global and social solidarity in Romania, and of the average of the solidarity general indicator, as well. Consequently, one can state that for the examined period, Romanians maintain as unchanged their own attitudes on solidarity.

Keywords: attitudes towards solidarity, social solidarity, local solidarity, global solidarity, comparative analysis, measurement invariance.