Executive summary of activities carried out during the implementation period (max. 1 page)

The report summarizes the results of the first stage (July–December 2025) of the project "Intricate Entanglements: Associational life, Nation-building and Democracy in Transylvania. The Romanian Case (18th Century to 1920s)". In these first six months, the emphasis was placed on defining the methodological framework and initiating empirical research on Romanian civil society in modern Transylvania, both in its institutionalized and non-institutionalized dimensions, including in relation to phenomena such as national indifference and interethnic interactions.

Preparatory activities and research infrastructure. The stage included the acquisition of the necessary equipment and the carrying out of 11 research trips to archives and libraries in Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic, for access to sources and bibliography in the context of the temporary closure of the University Library in Cluj-Napoca. The team identified documentary funds useful for internationally relevant case studies, such as those on the transition from pre-modern professional structures to modern forms of association with a confessional and national character.

Methodological framework for institutionalized civil society. A key result was the formulation of the methodological framework for defining and analyzing the institutionalized actors of Romanian civil society. This was based on team consultations, a critical review of international and Romanian literature, and the analysis of primary sources (statutes, registers, protocols, correspondence). The compilation of an extensive list of Romanian associations functioning between the 18th and 20th centuries, complete with their names in the languages of the period, was also initiated. The post-1919 period will be investigated based on „Monitorul Oficial", and the final list will be published in 2026.

The methodological framework for non-institutionalized civil society. The project also developed the analytical framework for non-institutionalized practices (petitions, occasional charity, public debates, informal circulation of ideas). We adopted a "micro-processual" approach, focused on the mechanisms of mobilization and aggregation of interests. The three established directions of analysis are: a) socio-processual (initiators, types of mobilization, social networks); b) discursive-mediatic (rhetorics, ideas, collective representations); c) visibility and impact (administrative reactions, public influence). The first two themes of analysis in this direction were also outlined: the evolution of petitionalism in the long term, respectively the public responses to charitable initiatives of the elites.

Interethnic, supranational practices and national indifference. An innovative component for the Romanian research is the analysis of national indifference and the participation of Romanians in associations with a different ethnic profile. Two case studies, submitted for publication, build the necessary conceptual framework: one on the elites, which shows the difference between "national indifference" and "indifference to nationalism" and another on the popular level, where 25–30% of the electorate manifests ethnic or political indifference, thus also providing a possible explanation for the limited impact of national cultural associations in rural areas.

Scientific results and dissemination. Two international articles have been submitted for publication, another national study is in the process of being written, and the resulting datasets are ready for Open Access publication in 2026. The team participated in six international and national conferences, carried out outreach activities on Wikipedia, and strengthened online communication through the website, blog, and social networks. An international conference, invited lectures, participation in major conferences, international publication, and expanded dissemination through an academic podcast are planned for 2026.

Project Manager,

Associate Professor Dr. Vlad Popovici