

## **Formal, Non-formal, and Informal Approaches in Prosocial Crisis Communication while Dealing with Refugees from Conflict Areas**

**Aurelia Ana VASILE<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Assoc. Prof., College of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest, Romania, [aurelia-ana.vasile@fjcs.ro](mailto:aurelia-ana.vasile@fjcs.ro)

**Abstract:** *The way formal organisations (governmental), non-formal (non-governmental) organisations, and informal citizen communication deal with social crisis pro-socially, that is, to the benefit of others, accounts for some characteristics that are worth fathoming in order to create the framework for the development of better communication strategies and better and faster prosocial reaction within socially challenging crisis contexts. Crisis communication has been tackled in public relations mostly with regard to governmental and nongovernmental organisations, whilst citizen informal communication has not been a matter of PR scientific focus so far, and neither has a comparison between these ways to communicate been approached for that matter. As speed is key in communication, and mostly within a refugee crisis, a double fold quantitative and qualitative analysis of the communication content and strategies used by key social actors in a hub-country of refugee reception like Romania in the emergency context created by Russia's invasion of Ukraine may provide useful scientific information to generate consequent strategic improvements. This content analysis methodological approach on communication in the social media and on websites of such various outlets (the Facebook pages and groups of the Romanian Red Cross, UNICEF, Romanian Government, the "Uniți pentru Ucraina" group, the Romanian government, UNICEF and Red Cross websites) from 24th February 2022, the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, to the moment, allows intriguing conclusions about the effectiveness, timeliness, and constancy in communicating support in times of social crisis within a prosocial approach in Romania to receiving refugees from the conflict areas in Ukraine.*

**Keywords:** *formal; non-formal; informal; prosocial communication; social media.*

**How to cite:** Vasile, A.A. (2023). Formal, Non-formal, and Informal Approaches in Prosocial Crisis Communication while Dealing with Refugees from Conflict Areas. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 14(4), 157-174. <https://doi.org/10.18662/brain/14.1/412>

## 1. Introduction

The Russian attack of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 brought about a tense refugee situation, first in the countries neighbouring Ukraine, and then mostly throughout Europe. Mostly the neighbouring countries, like Romania, had to cope with waves of refugees from Ukraine that were looking for shelter, and survival means. Within such circumstances, the fast reaction, first and foremost in point of effective communication, was extremely important in order to avoid more tragedy for the refugees who found themselves stranded, and weak in times of war, overnight.

The first step in offering support to the refugees, had to do with the way organisations and ordinary people communicated in order to grant help. Providing support was, to a large extent, conditioned by effective communication between the refugees and their helpers.

Identifying the best way to communicate in times of crisis is key to diminish the effects of the crisis, to reach out for those who need support, to find the best sources of help.

Usually, there is much interest in the way mainstream media, the government, and important institutions communicate in such a context. However, when the time of reaction needs to be fast, some lag in institutional reaction may be exhibited due to the fact that governmental organisations are bound to abide by rules and regulations. Therefore, the way governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the civil society communicated and acted to cope with the sudden armed conflict circumstances may provide meaningful insight into the improvement of communication strategies.

In point of the kind of purposes communication may target in times of humanitarian crisis, prosocial communication aims at exchanging information that is relevant in order to “benefit others” (Eisenberg, 1982), “including helping, cooperating, comforting, and donating” (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Greener & Crick, 1999).

Within the crisis generated by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine that escalated on the 24th of February 2022, prosocial communication has been the way of dealing with the Ukrainian refugees drama. Effectiveness, promptitude, and kindness would be key characteristics to be correlated to prosocial communication in times of refugee crisis.

Such prosocial communication may be approached from various angles. The angle approached here is focused on the idea of the degree of

formalisation in communication. And this degree of formalisation in communication is strongly connected to the context.

Among the criteria that may differentiate among various kinds of prosocial communication, that of the formalisation of communication, may distinguish among formal, non-formal and informal communication strategies.

Thus, this research resorted here to the extrapolating into the field of communication the terms formal, non-formal and informal used first by Phillip Hall Coombs in 1968 in education, having in view an analysis of the way governmental and nongovernmental organisations and a civil society group communicated in times of war crisis in order to help refugees.

## **2. Research Background Considerations and Literature Review**

According to Chavez et al. (2020, p.2) people use communication as “the life blood of existence and realise how important it is in their lives”. Communication is not only about exchange of information. It is also about grasping emotions and intentions beyond factual information. It is about understanding others and being understood by others in turn (Bequiri, 2017).

Bhamare’s observation that communication is constantly evolving (2018) is pretty obvious when regarded in relation to the progress in technology which nowadays makes social media a main area of parasocial communication. As parasocial communication (Rubin & McHugh, 2009) actually fosters long distance communication in real time on the internet, in war refugee crisis circumstances it is the main, fastest and most convenient means to reach out to those in need, to connect those who can provide support to those who need it.

Perse and Rubin (1989) stated that “parasocial interactions occurred as a natural by-product of time spent with media figures”. If parasocial interaction deals with the kind of relationship “experienced by an audience in their mediated encounters with performers in the mass media” (Horton & Wohl, 2016), parasocial communication is about exchanging messages on a virtual platform by becoming (and beholding of other) social media main characters.

Nowadays, social media play an important part on a daily basis inasmuch as active, employed people and the young and very young are more and more involved in communicating digitally, including on the social media platforms.

Research on social media broadly classifies communication activities as either *active* (in our opinion) contribution (posting) or consumption (lurking or observing), *passive* (as we see it) communication (Schlosser, 2005; Shao, 2009); it suggests that most users consume rather than contribute to social media (Jones et al., 2004).

If, according to Brosdahl and Carpenter's (2011), those from Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981) use social media to a significant extent as some sort of Digital Immigrants (Prensky, 2001), Generation Y (born after 1981) have spent their entire life in the digital environment as Digital Natives (id.). To "Digital Natives." However, in times of crisis, these two generation persons use the social media group to communicate, as Digital Natives or Digital Immigrants, rather instrumentally (due to the circumstances), not ritualistically, as we will discuss in a further paragraph.

Communication is the main reason for the Generation Y's use of social media (Euajarusphan, 2021; Hartijasti, 2013; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008), and, in challenging times, when they need to work out problems fast and easy, they certainly resort to the social media, and so do those from the X Generation, as it happened with those who contributed to the "Uniți pentru Ucraina" group in Romania, as we may further see.

Bolton et al. (2013) stated that "social media have the potential to increase Generation Y's civic engagement", which we may further see when discussing about formal, non-formal and informal prosocial communication. Further on, social networks may become the "organising form of collective political action", as we this research dwells on (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Back in 1984, and referring to watching television, Alan Rubin specified that there were *two types of (social, we may add) media users: ritualised (habitual) users and instrumental (non-habitual) users*. He defined the ritualised users as "individuals who had a high regard for the media", used it often, and mostly for entertainment and as a main tool to communicate (even to someone who is in the next room) (1984). The instrumental users were defined as having a lower degree of interest in the media, and using it in order to obtain information. In other words, ritualised users relate to the media as to an idol, whereas the instrumental users resort to the media just inasmuch as it serves other higher purposes, without any kind of media idolatry manifestation.

Alan Rubin's classification of media users works just fine even nowadays, with the difference that the proportion of *ritualistic* reference to the media increased at the cost of *instrumentalism* with regard to the media that seems to be gradually downsizing. When reaching out to the Ukrainian

refugees in need in times of war, the use of the social media for that matter was definitely instrumental

The term formal communication is extrapolated from the term formal education which was coined by Phillip Coombs. As it is approached here, formal communication refers to the official communication issued by governmental organisations, by the government itself. This kind of communication needs to be highly regulated and intentional, planned and structured, and sequenced beforehand (Hoon, 2020), systematic (Dib, 1987). This kind of communication is/should be performed by specialised employees, mostly as it is issued to have impact at a large scale, targeting the whole population that lives within the boundaries of a country.

If formal organisation communication is planned and structured, the informal one is “experience-dependent and context-sensitive (Jenkins, 2011). It suggests participants’ immersive engagement in activities with minimal constraints, control and intention while being empowered. It occurs in situations where communication is a participant-centred, self-motivated experience, and where the objectives and outcomes of communication are more intrinsic. It is not sequenced beforehand. (Hoon, 2020). Informal prosocial communication is developed by volunteers, not by specialised employees, and it is rather interpretive in the way it functions, not normative.

By non-formal communication this paper refers to the communication generated by non-governmental organisations (like the Romanian Red Cross, and UNICEF Romania). It may be regarded as “a possible manifestation between the two poles” (Hoon, 2020) of formal and informal prosocial communication. It is normative because of its accountability to governmental structures, and interpretive as it resorts to the work of many volunteers, besides the few employees and the employer founder of the nongovernmental organisation. In its outward manifestation, non-formal prosocial communication should be rather normative, it should abide by rules, norms. In its inward functioning based on the work of few employees and many volunteers, it is rather interpretive, mostly in the volunteering area.

Informal communication, as it is tackled here, is about the messaging from among those who belong to the civil society. It does not have to comply with laws, rules and regulations other than being civil and nice to one another. This kind of communication is not really much subject to public scrutiny and criticism, as it is formal communication of governmental organisations. People usually feel that government official communication should be most careful about their needs, and, therefore, they have high

expectations towards it, higher than towards non-formal nongovernmental organisation of informal civil society communications.

And, according to researcher scientific sense, the higher the public expectations, and the more important the laws, rules and regulations to abide, the longer it takes to prepare formal messages, and, consequently, the slower the reaction, even in times of crisis. However, such a researcher insight needs to be confirmed by research.

### 3. Research Aims and Objectives

This research on the online functioning (in the social media and on websites) of these three areas of communication (formal, non-formal, and informal communication) in times of refugee crisis may account for interesting conclusions that may prove to be quite relevant for future development of online strategies of communication. And this stands for the main aim that is triggered.

The objectives in view regard the pinning of the most effective ways of communicating within a context of humanitarian crisis, of showing which of the three kinds of communication (formal, non-formal, and informal) exhibits more promptitude, which encompasses, and motivates more participants to participate in the prosocial communication process, and which of the three is more comprehensive.

Another important objective is that of differentiating between active versus passive in the prosocial communication strategies within the contexts of analysis.

The subsequent research questions to be answered hereby refer to:

1. What kind of online communication — formal, non-formal or informal — elicits the *fastest and promptest* movings and reactions within a crisis context? (Rapidity)

2. Which of the three types of online communication — formal, non-formal or informal — reaches *more people* that provide feedback to messages within a crisis context? (Scope)

3. Which of the three ways to communicate online — formal, non-formal or informal — is the most reliably infra-structured, developing active prosocial communication strategies in dealing with a crisis context? (Reliability of Infra-structure)

### 4. Methodology

In point of the research methodology that best suits the above mentioned aims, objectives and research questions, it is content analysis

applied on the messaging on Facebook pages and groups, on the one hand, and on websites, on the other hand that may provide meaningful information towards such research purposes.

The number of postings, reactions (likes, and other kinds of reactions), comments, and forwards were measured quantitatively and then, the most representative ones in view of their quantitative relevance were related qualitatively to the content of the message that elicited more reactions.

Content analysis is a convenient method both in point of feasibility, and in point of relevance to the tackled topic. Intertwining its quantitative use with the qualitative interpretation of the messages that were relevant quantitatively (to see what kind of quality these messages exhibited), also in point of reactions to them: likes, comments, distributing figures.

Automated content analysis would be objective and faster and easier for the researcher to use (De Graaf & Van Der Vossen, 2013). As a downside of automated content analysis, the costs to purchase the necessary software may often be discouraging for researchers from some countries. However, if the meaning in the analysed content is important within the research endeavour, manual content analysis should be resorted to, in our opinion, which has actually been used in this research.

If automated content analysis is focused on measurement, approaching phenomena from a normative viewpoint, manual content analysis concentrates on appreciation from an interpretive angle, in our opinion.

If the analysed content is huge in size, the automated method may better cope with the large amount of research data. However, if meaning is more important in research, manual content analysis works better.

Manual methods for content analysis have been rather used in communication science traditionally mostly in order to study communication also qualitatively, not only in quantitatively. These methods, though rather time consuming, and prone to subjective interpretation, have the main advantages of identifying meaning in the messages and of explaining communication phenomena instead of just measuring. According to Entman (1993, p. 52), manual content analysis is “used in messages in order to provide the receivers with causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and solutions for the issue by highlighting certain aspects of an issue”.

The choice of manual content analysis here is motivated by the reasons above, including that of feasibility within the researcher’s specific context.

## 5. Research Corpus

Due to the main aims of this research, there is a special focus on social media communication, also tackling the communication background of websites for formal governmental organisation communication and the non-formal nongovernmental organisation communication towards their publics. The website backup for formal governmental organisation communication and non-formal nongovernmental organisation communication may function like a setback of like a reinforcement factor within the online communication package of the main targeted research initiators.

Thus, from among the research corpus items we may mention the following platforms (and channels) below.

First, the Facebook official pages of the Romanian Government, UNICEF Romania, Crucea Roșie Română, and the Facebook group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” have been monitored for fifty days, from 24th February 2022 (the day of the Russian attack of Ukraine) to the 12th of April 2022 (when the conflict was still ongoing).

Why have we chosen Facebook content for analysis? Mainly because these groups on Facebook (and not others on other platforms) were the most active and effective in prosocial communication towards providing support for refugees.

Why was Facebook the most popular from among the social media platforms within the Ukrainian refugee crisis context? Mainly because the Facebook platform is more popular with the X Generation (Bolton et al., 2013; Euajarusphan, 2021), not only with the Y Generation (Millennials), and representatives from these two generations seem to have been those who were the most active in point of prosocial communication and actual helping.

Then, the postings, and the functionality of the websites “Ukraine — Împreună ajutam mai mult” of the Romanian government, UNICEF - “Refugiați”, Crucea Roșie Română have been analysed in order to pinpoint the most important characteristics of effectiveness of such websites, as backup (or setback, if they may have relied on the website mainly) factors for the communication in the social media.

## 6. Research Results on Facebook Pages and Websites

By far, an overwhelming number of postings appeared on the informal communication group “Uniți pentru Ucraina”, at a rate of 99,82% of the total number of postings on all of the four Facebook pages that this research has analysed (Table 1).

**Table 1** Facebook Postings (24.02.2022- 12.04.2022) on Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

<b>Category</b>	<b>Romanian Government</b>	<b>UNICEF Romania</b>	<b>Red Cross Romania</b>	<b>Uniți pentru Ucraina GROUP</b>
Total number of postings	103	11	19	73,536
Average number of postings per day	2.15	0.23	0.40	1532
Rating of the number of postings (from total: 73,699)	0.001 (0.1%)	0.0001 (0.01%)	0.0002 (0.025%)	0.998 (99,82%)

Source: author's own conception

The most important part of the likes or other kind of emotional reactions (showed by means of emoticons) was received by the social media formal communication on the government Facebook Page, with a top number of 2,200 on the 26th of February 2022 with a posting regarding the DSU (DSU/ Departamentul pentru Situații de Urgență, that is, in English: The Emergency Situations Department) camps/shelters for Ukrainian refugees, as we may see in Table 2, below.

Some significant emotional reactions were also received by the informal “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group postings.

**Table 2** — Facebook Communication Reactions (likes, etc) to Postings (24.02.2022- 12.04.2022) on Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

<b>Category</b>	<b>Romanian Government</b>	<b>UNICEF Romania</b>	<b>Red Cross Romania</b>	<b>Uniți pentru Ucraina GROUP</b>
Total number of emotional reactions/emoticons (likes, etc)	34,065	1,562	2,099	11.606

Average number of emotional reactions/emoticons per posting	330.72	173.6	110.5	0.16
Rating of number of likes/emotional reactions/emoticons (from total: 49,332)	0.69 (69%)	0.031 (3%)	0.042 (4.2%)	0.235 (23,5%)

Source: author's own conception

Formal social media communication on Facebook received an overwhelming 90.7 percent of comments from internet users, whilst the informal "Uniți pentru Ucraina" group postings elicited only 8.5% of the comments from the corresponding target public.

Non-formal nongovernmental organisation (Romanian UNICEF and Red Cross) pages received insignificant feed-back in the form of comments (a lot less than 1 %), as Table 3 below shows.

**Table 3** — Facebook Comments to Postings (24.02.2022- 12.04.2022) on Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

Category	Romanian Government	UNICEF Romania	Red Cross Romania	Uniți pentru Ucraina GROUP
Total number of comments	17,007	24	110	1,595
Average number of comments per posting	165.12	2.7	5.79	0.02
Rating of number of comments per posting (from total: 18,736)	0.9 (90.7%)	0.001(0.1%)	0.006 (0.6%)	0.085 (8.5%)

Source: author's own conception

The Romanian government Facebook page postings (that account for formal communication) received the biggest number of forwards , corresponding to 75%, as compared to 16% for the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group and only 7% for Red Cross Romania and 2% for UNICEF. There is top of 621 forwards for the posting that announced the launching of the government’s online platform “Împreună ajutăm mai mult” (see Table 4).

**Table 4** — Facebook Forwards of Postings (24.02.2022- 12.04.2022) on Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

Category	Romanian Government	UNICEF Romania	Red Cross Romania	Uniți pentru Ucraina GROUP
Total number of forwards	7,060	183	621	1,524
Average number of forwards per posting	68.54	16.6	32.68	0.02
Rating of number of forwards per posting (out of the total: 9,388)	0.75 (75%)	0.02 (2%)	0.07 (7%)	0.16 (16%)

Source: author’s own conception

### **6.1. Website Analysis Conclusions**

In communicating constantly and effectively, a website to be regarded as some sort of infrastructure of online communication may well be most useful to provide support in times of crisis. This infrastructure may be built *pro-actively* (like the US FEMA website or the governmental DSU/Department for Emergency Situations in Romania) or *reactively*, and specifically, as the “Împreună ajutăm mai mult” Romanian government website.

1) The Romanian government website “Împreună ajutăm mai mult” provides easy access, and counselling regarding all kinds of support (employment and schooling rights, medical assistance, accommodation,

asylum, etc). Donations are encouraged. <https://www.gov.ro/ro/ucraina-impreuna-ajutam-mai-mult>

2) The UNICEF website offers counselling phone numbers for refugees. Donations are encouraged. <https://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/topics/refugiati>

3) The Romanian Red Cross website offers a call centre for Ukraine phone number. Donations are encouraged. <https://cruceariosie.ro>

4) The informal group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” has not developed or sustained a website (that would have cost the group extra resources and would have needed more time to design and manage).

The best organised and most interactive website, that offered various kinds of needed support to refugees (in detail: employment and schooling rights, medical assistance, accommodation, asylum, etc) was the formal one, by the Romanian government.

The non-formal Romanian Red Cross and UNICEF websites only offered phone numbers to be contacted by the refugees.

The informal group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” did not rely on designing a website. It rather acted “on the spot”, without much communication or other kind of infrastructure.

## 7. Interpretation of Results

In the time interval 24.02.2022 - 12.04.2022

The most active in point of **postings** among the Facebook outlets has been, by far, the informal group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” (“United for Ukraine”), with 73,536 postings, as compared to 103 by the government Facebook page, and very few on the NGO’s Facebook pages.

This may be explained:

- first by the fact that on the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group all of the members contribute, and that people tend to trust acting on the spot, on their own, rather than relying on intermediaries, and do not need any formal approvals to act

- and second, as formal organisational structures, like the government, usually tend to exhibit lagging in reactions due to the formal hierarchical structure of the organisation and to the norms, roles and regulations that cost time in the decision-making process towards any kind of decision, including the development of communication outlets/platforms.

The non-formal NGOs (UNICEF and Red Cross) exhibited (due to their dichotomic status between their both formal and informal areas) the

lag of formal organisations (their employees need to abide by laws) and the lag of structured reaction due to the time taken by volunteer gathering.

The government Facebook page elicited most of the average number of **reactions per posting** (likes, and other kinds of reactions showed by means of emoticons), 330, and the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group the least (<1). Still, the highest number of likes on the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group, 2,502, was elicited by a posting of refugee gratitude towards Romanian citizens’ aid. The second in the top (2,200) per one posting on the 26th of February 2022, was that for a government posting about the organisation of a first camp for refugees at the Northern border of Romania.

This may be explained:

- first by the fact that on the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group many of the postings just showed that some refugees problems have been worked out, and therefore these postings did not need any reactions;

- second, the government Facebook page and website (“Împreună ajutăm mai mult”) were promoted intensely by all mainstream media outlets even in the news casts, and therefore, it was easier for people to find out about them, and then have reactions;

- third, people tend to have the biggest expectations with regard to the government, and therefore, they look for communication from the government and react to the information provided thereof;

- and fourth, official information may be found by those who look for it, mainly on the government social media pages and/or website.

The non-formal NGOs (UNICEF and Red Cross) postings have obtained a fair number of reactions per posting due to the general visibility of such organisations, despite the few postings.

The significant average number of **comments per posting** on the government Facebook page, 165, shows interest in the governmental decisions because these have a strong impact on citizens. Many comments showed a critical thinking approach by the commentator citizens on controversial topics (sometimes regarding social support from the government for Romanian citizens as well as for Ukrainian ones). The average of few comments per posting on the informal group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” (“United for Ukraine”), accounts for the pragmatic approach of the participants to the communication in the group, as it juts out from the content of the comments that actually provide solutions. Many postings did not elicit comments, as they just announced worked out problems.

The most commented posting, on the 3rd March 2022, about the talks between the Romanian PM and the EU representative Ursula Von Der

Leyen, elicited 912 comments. The topic was approached by the comments as a controversial one.

The non-formal NGOs' (UNICEF and Red Cross) activities and postings did not stir any controversy, nor many comments.

Generally, most of the comments addressed controversies.

The most forwarded postings (average per posting) were those of the government Facebook page, 7,060 (an average of 68.54 forwards per posting), and those of the "Uniți pentru Ucraina" group, 1,524 (with a low average per posting: 0.02, because many postings were about worked out problems). This may be explained by the fact that people are more interested in knowing and letting others know about the governmental decisions that have a wide impact on the life of citizens, be it Romanians or Ukrainian refugees.

The most forwarded posting (on the government FB page) announced the launching of the online Romanian government platform "Împreună ajutăm mai mult", on the 26th February 2022 (with 621 forwarding).

The non-formal NGOs (UNICEF and Red Cross) exhibited also a significant average number of forwards per posting, as these postings, like those from the government, regard a wide area of influence in the country.

## 8. Research Limits and Feed-Forward

A possible limit of this research endeavour, that may function like a feed-forward incentive, is that a questionnaire addressed to those who reacted (with likes, comments, forwarding of postings) to the social media (Facebook) postings may provide more explanatory data with regard to the content analysis performed within this research.

As those who reacted to Facebook postings (with likes, comments, forwarding of postings) used their Facebook accounts for that matter, they can be easily contacted and have questionnaires sent to them.

However, if such feed-forwarding research is performed, it needs to be done as soon as possible. Otherwise, the targeted Facebook users may simply forget the reasons why they reacted, and how they really provided help, a.s.o..

## 9. Conclusions

Complex crisis situations, like the one created by the conflict in Ukraine, require complex and manifold approaches in communicating

towards organising social response in order to support the refugees, and all those who are affected by the challenging conflict context.

All the communication on the informal group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” (“United for Ukraine”) showed higher speed of reaction, as the group and its postings and refugee relief actions started activity from the very first day, 24th February 2022, when Ukraine was attacked by Russian troops, whilst the government’s first posting were rather passive (diagnostic), and actual actions started on the 26th of February. Then, the total number of postings on the group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” (“United for Ukraine”), 73, 536 (in 48 days) was by far bigger than the next decreasingly, on the governments page, only 103, and even less on the NGOs pages.

However, formal communication on the Romanian government Facebook page elicited by far the majority of the reactions (likes, comments, and forwards), as compared to the informal group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” and to the non-formal Romanian Red Cross and UNICEF.

The existence of websites developed by the government and by the nongovernmental organisations triggered more controversy and therein, more communication feed-back from the citizens on their corresponding Facebook pages.

The least prodigious in all respects (postings versus reactions) have proven to be the non-formal nongovernmental organisations’ Facebook pages.

Consequently, we may infer that the most effective in point of prosocial communication were the formal communication Romanian government Facebook page, and the informal “Uniți pentru Ucraina” group communication.

The research questions have been answered as follows:

1. The informal online communication — on the Facebook group “Uniți pentru Ucraina” has elicited the *fastest and promptest* movings (postings) and reactions within a crisis context. (Rapidity) The fact that formal communication is expected to be subject to applying laws and regulations, makes it exhibit some lag as compared to informal communication that is less restrictive in point of law and regulation provisions.

2. Both the formal government communication (on the Facebook group “Împreună ajutăm mai mult” and on the website) and the informal one of the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” Facebook group reached *many people* that provide feedback to messages within a crisis context? (Scope) The most obviously active has proven to be the informal group communication in terms of the number of postings, whilst the formal government communication

3. The formal communication on the government group “Împreună ajutăm mai mult” with the supporting website proved to be the most reliably infra-structured, developing active prosocial communication strategies in dealing with the crisis context. (Reliability of Infra-structure) The informal communication on the “Uniți pentru Ucraina” Facebook group platform showed that benevolence can still function well prosocially, even without the infra-structure that a whole government of a country may provide.

Consequently, we may infer that non-formal nongovernmental organisations' communication exhibited both the lag of law abiding formal organisations and of the relying on volunteer recruitment, which made this kind of communication less effective as compared to formal and informal communication.

All in all, combined communication, formal, non-formal, and informal, proved for sure to be more successful in supporting the refugees from an open conflict area, rather than only a limited approach, be it from any of these three ways (formal, non-formal, informal) and sources (governmental organisations, non-governmental organisation, and the civil society) of communication.

The idea of coining the terms “formal”, “informal”, and “non-formal” — terms launched back in 1968 by Ph. H. Coombs — for the field of communication may provide useful insight into the effectiveness of communication within various contexts, so as to help improve communication strategies through the selection of the most appropriate kind of channel, platform of communication, etc.

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