



“Gheorghe Asachi” Technical University of Iasi, Romania



EARLY COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS ON SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN ROMANIA. PERCEPTION AMONG POPULATION WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

**Elena Matei*, Oana-Ramona Ilovan², Christiana Brigitte Sandu³, Liliana Dumitrache¹,
Marinela Istrate⁴, Ioan Sebastian Jucu⁵, Athanasios Alexandru Gavrilidis⁶**

¹*Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest, 1 N. Bălcescu Av. Bucharest, 010041, Romania*

²*Faculty of Geography, Territorial Identities and Development Research Centre, Babeş-Bolyai University,
5-7 Clinicilor Street, Cluj-Napoca, 400006, Romania*

³*Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Al. I. Cuza University, 22, Carol I Av., Iași, 700505, Romania*

⁴*Faculty of Geography and Geology, Al. I. Cuza University, 20A Carol I Av., Iași, 700505, Romania*

⁵*Department of Geography, West University of Timișoara, 4 V. Pârvan Blvd., Timișoara, 400223, Romania*

⁶*Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies,
University of Bucharest, 1 N. Bălcescu Av., Bucharest, 010041, Romania*

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on the society and environment in Romania. It is based on the results of a survey conducted in May 2020 to emphasise the perception and reactions of the higher educated population to unprecedented measures taken by public and health authorities during the lockdown. The analysis of the population perception addressed four significant aspects: the awareness of the risks of infection; the adaptation to pandemic issues; behavioural changes due to the disease outbreak; and the prioritisation of social and environmental measures, aimed at minimising the spread of the virus and diffusion of COVID-19 disease it causes. A reliable cross-sectional online questionnaire was performed on a final sample of 719 Romanian adults aged 18-75 years. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied, using SPSS analysis and procedure, and respectively Application Programming Interface (API). Findings pointed out that in Romania, the higher educated population considered the risk of infection as being moderate. Although, they initially questioned the restrictions, they subsequently followed social distancing measures, initiated resilience actions by adopting new sanitary habits, healthy behaviours and reconsidering the importance of an inclusive living environment. In their views, the management of the crisis at the national and local level is satisfactory, thus outlining the directions for actions and placing health and the environment along with social issues as top priorities and needs for the Romanian communities.

Key words: COVID-19, environment, health risks, impact, pandemic, perception, survey

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