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Romania: first licences for community radios

Technological changes, high connectivity, and participation all fits in a bucket

For the first time in Romania, two community radio station licenses have been issued in the framework of the European project [Grassroot Wavelengths](#). The new high-tech FM stations will broadcast in, engage with, and serve two remote villages of Romania.

The Grassroot Wavelengths consortium innovates both the technologies and the community models for small community radio stations to be highly connected, and easily started and maintained. The project will create two community prototype stations each in Portugal, Ireland, and Romania, with the aim of building regional decentralized networks, connected to European and international journalism and information.

The [licenses](#) for Radio Civic Vârvoru de Jos (Dolj) and Radio Civic Sfântu Gheorghe (Tulcea) were granted by the Romanian [National Council of Audiovisual](#) on June 7th 2018.

[Vârvoru de Jos](#) (Dolj) is an agricultural village of around 3000 inhabitants. [Sfantu Gheorghe](#) (Tulcea) is a fishermen village in the Unesco protected Biosphere Reserve of the Danube Delta, with a population of about 1000 villagers. The small stations will transmit signal a distance of 10km.

The stations will be powered by the [RootIO](#) technical platform, which provides all the connectivity and functions of a large station for 1/100th of the cost. The station is run off a smartphone, without the need of a studio. The audience listens on regular FM radios, but can interact with the station by calling, or through the Web. Stations have exceptionally low operating expenses, making them ideal for rural communities, and have very low power consumption, able to be run for days on a battery in case of power outages or emergencies.

The high connectivity of the stations means they can receive any audio content from the internet, such as news; podcasts; or recordings from national or international sources, and broadcast them through traditional FM. The whole system is small enough to fit inside a single [plastic paint bucket](#). Like many small community stations, it will be run mostly through volunteerism and community effort.

FM radio is over a hundred years old, but it is still a vital and important form of media, especially for those on the wrong side of the "[digital divide](#)." It can be listened to when

working or driving, it is free to receive, and requires no literacy. In an age of complex social media politics, radio still offers anonymity to its users. For these reasons, community radio is seeing a surge of growth around the world, as communities find it to be a perfect low-cost and immediate form of communication, deliberation, and entertainment.

The Council of Europe and the European Parliament have stressed the fundamental role of community media in reinforcing social cohesion and as a key element to foster civil participation in public discourse. The community stations point to a new direction for Romanian media, one by which rural citizens can move information into, between, and out of their communities.

Finally, the consortium hopes to use the results of the project to advocate for adjusting national policies and laws so that the community radio's social role would be better acknowledged by authorities, and more progressive regulations adopted.

Grassroot Wavelengths is a European [Horizon 2020](#) project (Grant Agreement #780890), part of the program on Collective Awareness ([CAPS](#)). Its consortium includes:

- ActiveWatch (RO)
- Madeira-ITI (PT)
- AMARC (BE)
- University College Cork (IR)
- Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism (RO)
- RootIO (PT)
- CereProc (UK)
- Adenorma (PT)
- Bere Island (IR)
- MedAlert (RO)

The project will be launching stations in Ireland and Portugal, in addition to Romania.

For more information about the project or the stations, please contact gwinfo@m-iti.org.

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<https://grassrootsradio.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Grassrootswave-248927779007008/>

<https://twitter.com/grassrootswave>



Radio Civic Sfântu Gheorghe

89,9 FM



Radio Civic Vârvoru de Jos

106 FM

