November 20th 2026

Poison by derogation: Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS campaign against neonicotinoids honoured at the 2026 CeRe Awards

Press release, Ecoruralis - ROMAPIS

Bucharest, 18 November 2026 – A campaign led by Romanian peasants and beekeepers against derogations allowing the use of neonicotinoid pesticides banned in the European Union has been recognised at the 2026 Public Participation Awards, organised by the Centre for Public Participation Resources (CeRe).
The award, entitled "Poison by Derogation", recognises the efforts of Eco Ruralis and the Romanian Federation of Beekeeping Associations (ROMAPIS) to put an end to an abusive practice through which Romania's Ministry of Agriculture repeatedly authorised the use of these pesticides for 12 years, despite the EU ban intended to protect bees, the environment and human health.

Representatives of Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS received the award together on stage, alongside lawyer Dumitru Dobrev, who has represented the organisations in their legal proceedings.

A victory built on courage and perseverance

Through this campaign, Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS succeeded in preventing the use of neonicotinoids banned in the European Union on approximately 3 million hectares of agricultural land, equivalent to one-third of Romania's arable land. The European Commission also initiated infringement proceedings against Romania concerning derogations for these pesticides.

Further information about the campaign, its achievements and the ongoing legal proceedings is available here: https://www.ecoruralis.ro/category/pesticide/

The joy of being recognised by civil society

Alongside Ramona Duminicioiu, President of Eco Ruralis, the award was received by Stela Zamoiu from Dâmbroca village and Bogdan Suliman from Vadu Pașii village, Romania. On stage at the CeRe Awards, Eco Ruralis representatives shared a message of gratitude and solidarity:
"*This award brings us immense joy and is a great honour. Recognition from Romania's civil society means so much to our peasant farming community. We know from our own experience that it is possible to farm without neonicotinoid pesticides, and we want people to know that peasants stand with them. We are both food producers and consumers, and like everyone else, we want to put healthier food on our tables. We share this joy with everyone who has stood by us and given us the strength to carry on*" said the representatives of Eco Ruralis.For ROMAPIS, the award carries particular significance.

In 2014, the federation organised its first protest against neonicotinoids, drawing attention to the dangers these pesticides pose to bees and other pollinators.
Twelve years have passed since then.
"*Twelve years ago, we took to the streets for the first time to protest against neonicotinoids. Today, we can see that our perseverance, together with the peasants of Eco Ruralis, has paid off. Beekeepers deserve this recognition. Their work is far more important to society than many people might initially realise. Through the bees they care for, beekeepers contribute to the pollination of agricultural crops, food production and the preservation of biodiversity. We are delighted that this contribution is being recognised and that our struggle to protect bees has become a cause supported by civil society. We share this award with all the beekeepers who have stood alongside us throughout these years*" said Constantin Dobrescu, Vice-President of ROMAPIS.

When peasants and beekeepers stand up, society as a whole benefits

The recognition of the Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS campaign echoes other long-standing struggles led by rural communities in Romania, including the campaign to protect Roșia Montană. Despite the differences between these causes, they share the perseverance of rural people who have defended their land and the environment, not only for themselves but for society as a whole.

Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS will continue their legal action and public awareness activities, with the hope that European legislation on pesticides will be respected in Romania.

Eco Ruralis and ROMAPIS extend their gratitude to the Centre for Public Participation Resources (CeRe), the CeRe Awards jury, lawyer Dumitru Dobrev and their members. They also thank their partner organisations, Pesticide Action Network (PAN Europe) and the European Civic Forum, as well as WWF Romania, Hosman Durabil, CRIES, ASAT, AFFMR, ALAS and all the other organisations that have offered their support and solidarity throughout the campaign.

The "Poison by Derogation" award is a moment of shared joy for everyone who believes that peasants and beekeepers can bring about positive change for society as a whole.

The 2026 CeRe Awards catalogue brings together the inspiring stories of this year's award winners, celebrating civic courage, community solidarity and the power of citizens to bring about meaningful change.

About Eco Ruralis

Eco Ruralis is an association representing peasants and small-scale agricultural producers in Romania. It advocates for peasant farming, agroecology, human rights and environmental protection.

About ROMAPIS

ROMAPIS – the Romanian Federation of Beekeeping Associations – represents the interests of beekeepers and advocates for the protection of bees and other pollinators.

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