Back to "normal": The short-lived impact of an online NGO campaign of government discrimination in Hungary

Online Appendix

Gabor Simonovits, Bori Simonovits, Adam Vig, Peter Hobot, Renata Nemeth and Gabor Csomor

A   Stimuli

A.1   Letter from HCLU

Dear Sir/Madam

The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union is a non-governmental organization defending civil rights since 1994, having concerned itself with helping Hungarian citizens to effectively exercise their civil rights - including their right to access information. HCLU sees it as its primary undertaking to defend minorities and to ensure their equal access to their rights.

In our experience, there has been an increase in requests to local governments through online channels due to the Covid epidemic. In order to support your effective and lawful operation, we would like to inform you that any requests received by local governments including those through telephone or electronic means should be understood within the framework of information freedom. According to Hungarian law, any request of information pertaining to the operation of the local government or local issues qualify as a request for public data – even if this is not explicitly stated, or the pertinent law is not specifically referred to, in the inquiry. This means that citizens have the right to be provided with a response, and that the local government receiving such a request is legally bound to respond – with the exception of cases defined by law.

The notion of "public data" is defined by the Freedom of Information Act of 2011. Accordingly, information that is known to local governments and its employees due to their job and duties – as opposed to their private data – is always public data. For instance, a phone request

about how to access local healthcare services, or an email inquiring about construction permits is to be be treated as a request for public data.

- According to the law, such inquires shall be responded to within 15 days.

- A possible denial of response needs to be justified within 8 days

- If the requested information can be found online, it is sufficient to share the respective link with the requester

- The request shall be responded to in an accessible manner of writing

- If the request is ambiguous for the local government official, instead of ignoring the request, he or she is to respond to it with a request for clarification

We view it as especially important that when approaching local governments citizens from minority groups should be treated equally. Let us work together so that everyone in Hungary may receive responses to the questions they have about local affairs, local governments, or procedures regulating the life of local citizens. In order to achieve this goal, we would like to ask you to please provide responses to citizens turning to you with requests irrespective of their identity, or mode of request.

Sincerely,

Máté Szabó Director

HCLU

A.2   Attributes in audit study

Attributes	Levels	Operationalization
HCLU Treatment	Yes, No	email
Randomized follow-up	Yes, No	follow-up email in 1w
Request	nursery, hiking, wedding, cemetery	text of email, subject of email
Ethnicity	Roma, non-Roma	name, email address
Gender	Male, Female	name, email address

A.3 Request emails

A.3.1 Request 1

Dear Sir/Madam

We are planning to visit the remains of a relative of ours who is buried in the cemetery of [TOWN]]. At this point, we are uncertain about the date of our visit, but we are planning to arrive in the evening hours, and so I would like to ask how long the cemetery is open until?

The other thing we would like to ask is whether one can drive into the cemetery by car if we have a special pass for disabled people? My mother is old and unfortunately she has difficulties walking. This would make it much easier for her to get around.

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely

[Sender]

A.3.2 Request 2

Dear Sir/Madam

We are looking for a place for our wedding, my fiance and I, and we thought [TOWN] would be a great choice for us since we both have relatives living nearby.

We would like to ask for advice about a couple of issues. Is there a venue nearby that would be suitable for a wedding party? And do you think you could recommend us some affordable accommodation?

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely

[Sender]

A.3.3 Request 3

Dear Sir/Madam

I am planning to do a bike trip with my family around [TOWN].

We would like to ask for advice about a couple of issues. Is there a bike trail in the area? Could you recommend us affordable camping sites in the area? And is there a limit on how long we may stay?

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely

[Sender]

A.3.4 Request 4

Dear Sir/Madam

Our family is thinking of moving house, and we would like to ask you for some advice regrading nurseries in [TOWN].

We have four kids (a 2, 9, 11 and a 12-year-old) and we are looking for daycare options for the youngest. Could you please provide information about local public daycares, and if there are not any, about ones in the area? We would also be grateful if you could inform us about the expected date of enrollment and about fees. And are we right in assuming that we would qualify for free school lunch as a big family?

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely

[Sender]

A.4 Emails addresses/names

	Roma emails	majority-emails
Female	lakatos.evelin1988@gmail.com	bernadett.toth1986@gmail.com
	orsos.dzsenifer88@gmail.com	molnar.panna84@gmail.com
		molnarpanna85@gmail.com
Male	kanalas.kevin86@gmail.com	matenagy1983@gmail.com
	kolompar.mario84@gmail.com	petervarga0086@gmail.com

B Coding rules for response quality

B.1 General considerations

The holistic logic of the coding was to disentangle the factual content of the response letters from the manner and tone in which they were written. This is not an easy task: politeness often correlates with the degree to which responses contain information. However, we took this principle very seriously.

B.2 Coding helpfulness

We first placed response emails into 4 groups, as described below:

- **0 point:** None of the inquiries is answered.

- **1 point:** Only one of the inquiries is answered.

- **2 points:** Some of the inquiries are answered/Refers to another institution to contact but no contact information provided

- **3 points:** All of the inquiries are answered/Refers to another institution and provides contact information

We then added an extra point if the response included further instructions on how to solve the problems raised by the inquiry, or some other creative ideas. The final scores are characterized below with examples for each provided.

---

3 points: The answer encompasses all of the expected content and is considered to be useful.

Dear XXXX

I would like to inform you that if you are thinking of a civil marriage ceremony, the joint presence of the groom and the bride is required at the registrar. The intent to marry needs to be recorded in writing, and during the procedure birth certificates, personal identification documents (identity card or passport), proof of marital status documents (in the case of being divorced or widowed), as well as address cards must be presented. If the two witnesses have

already been chosen, their records (personal identification number) ID card, address card) also needs to be presented. The ceremony can take place after 32 days after submitting a letter of intent.

On weekdays – and during office hours – ceremonies can be held for free at the Mayor's office and in the Hungarian-Serbian Agricultural Trade Center. Outside these location (e.g. Márta Sántha Cultural House and Library, or other room) and outside office hours there is a fee of HUF 17,000 on the premises of the local government of [X].

I would like to inform you that the Hungarian-Serbian Agricultural Trade Center can only be used from about early October on. Of course, due to the coronavirus epidemic, we reserve the right to make changes during the epidemiological preparedness period. The question arises as to what exactly you mean by a wedding venue, what you mean by a venue for a civil ceremony or a wedding, or both ... the answer also depends on the number of people to be invited. I do not know of accommodations in XXXX – perhaps your relatives could ask around in XXXX or in nearby villages.

If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Hope this helps,

Best regards,

XXXX

---

2 points: The answer contains most of the expected content and is considered to be useful.

Dear XXXX

In XXXX the Granary Center (restaurant and B & B) is a nice venue for such a ceremony. You can have the ceremony there, in the open, if the weather permits it. There are also places to stay at, and they could also serve as venues for a party. I recommend that you check the website of the venue online. I can also recommend our own wedding room.

Hope this helps,

Best regards,

XXXX

1 point: The answer contains little of the expected content and is considered non-useful.

Dear XXXX

As an outdoor venue the couple can use the courtyard of the government building.

Best regards,

XXXX

---

0 point: The answer contains none of the expected content and is considered non-useful.

Dear XXXX

Thank you for you inquiry about organizing your wedding. Unfortunately due to the Mayor's Office's scope of duties we are unable to provide a response to your question.

Best,

XXXX

B.3   Coding politeness

We defined the following essential and non-essential indicators for politeness.

Essential:

- Basic formal requirements for a letter are fulfilled. (The letter contains these elements: greeting, body, closing, signature.)

- A polite tone is used

Non-essential:

- After the greetings section the administrator thanks the requester for the inquiry

- The letter contains elements of kindliness. (for example: We wish you a pleasant vacation in our community!)

We defined politeness in two steps. First, we evaluated whether the letter contained the essential requirements for politeness.

- 2 points: The letter contains all essential requirements for politeness.

- 1 point: The letter contains some essential requirements for politeness.

- 0 point: The letter does not contain essential requirements for politeness.

In cases where the response contained all essential requirements for politeness, we checked whether the letter contained at least one extra requirement for politeness. We added 1 point to the score when the letter contained at least one extra requirement for politeness. The final scores with examples are below.

---

3 points: The letter contains all the essential requirements for politeness and at least one extra requirement for politeness.

Dear X

Thank you for thinking of our town as a place for your wedding. In XX there are so many beautiful places for young couples to hold wedding ceremonies. Not only is our public park exceptional, but there are two lakes in the middle of the town, which make for perfect photo ops. There is a private beach on one of the lakes but it is open to the public after the summer season – you can walk around and take photos. The other lake is also picturesque and is also often used for photo ops. If you are not familiar with our town I would recommend that you search these places online – they are both gorgeous.

We have recently renovated our wedding room, ready to be used by couples and their guests, offering an elegant and exquisite milieu.

As for the venue for the party I would recommend Negresco Restaurant, which offers fine dining and views on the lake, or the more traditional Halászkert with mid-range prices. You can look up both online if you are interested.

I hope I was able help,

Best regards,

XXX

2 points: The letter contains all the essential requirements for politeness.

Dear XXXX

Thank you for thinking of our town as a place for your wedding. In X I can only recommend our wedding room, which is in the attic of our cultural center. I cannot think of an outdoor location. I can only remember one or two weddings held outdoors but those were in private resorts. In a neighboring village there are multiple venues that may be suitable for holding wedding parties. But I could not recommend specific places as I don't know them well. I think they are probably advertised online, too.

I would also suggest that you look for accommodation online. Look at the website of the town or other places.

Yours truly,

XXX

1 point: The letter contains some of the essential requirements for politeness.

Dear XXXX

I would like to inform you that I can recommend the George Castle as a venue. Unfortunately there is no possibility of accommodation. That could be solved in nearby villages.

XXXX

0 point: The letter does not contain any of the essential requirements for politeness.

If you would like to marry here, you need to register. I cannot give you information about venues.

XXXX

B.4 Inter-coder reliability

Agreement between the qualitative coding of responses was imperfect as shown in Table OA1. The low rate of agreement is likely to reflect the inherent difficulty of the task. To reduce noise in our dependent measures we use the simple average of the ratings for both outcome measures.

Table OA1: Inter-coder reliability

Helpfulness					
Rater 1			Rater 2		
0	13	5	1	2	21
1	8	48	36	10	102
2	3	64	469	241	777
3	1	3	54	372	430
Total	25	120	560	625	1,330
Politeness					
Rater 1			Rater 2		
	0	1	2	3	Total
0	3	2	1	0	6
1	4	20	37	5	66
2	25	253	587	132	997
3	6	5	57	193	261
Total	38	280	682	330	1,330

C Supplementary analyses

We report our estimates of the Complier Average Cauaal effects in Table . In these specifications, we use a measure of treated status based on the mass mailing software used by HCLU and only classify units as treated if they opened the email from HCLU. Analogously, we create an interaction of these variable (Opened email) and Roma treatment. We use the randomly assigned treatments as instruments. As expected, the obtained estimates are much larger in magnitude than our estimates of intent to treat effect.

Table OA2: Treatment effects accounting for non-compliance

DV	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	R	H	R	H
Opened email	-71.1**	-61.8**	11.8	9.4
	[29.5]	[25.6]	[21.8]	[17.9]
Opened email X Roma	89.8**	75.8**	-16.3	-14.1
	[37.3]	[31.6]	[31.4]	[24.8]
Roma	-11.2***	-12.6***	-15.8***	-13.5***
	[3.9]	[3.3]	[3.9]	[3.0]
Female	0.9	-1.7	-7.2***	-3.9*
	[2.9]	[2.4]	[2.8]	[2.2]
Cemetary	16.1***	11.9***	19.5***	15.0***
	[4.2]	[3.4]	[3.8]	[3.0]
Nursery	4.6	3.4	3.4	0.5
	[4.2]	[3.5]	[3.9]	[3.1]
Wedding	2.6	2.6	4.1	3.5
	[4.3]	[3.7]	[3.9]	[3.1]
Constant	52.9***	45.4***	57.2***	42.9***
	[4.2]	[3.6]	[3.9]	[3.1]
Observations	1,260	1,260	1,260	1,260

Notes: Estimates are from 2SLS models where *Opened email* and *Opened email X Roma* are edogenous variables instrumented with *Treatment* and *Treatment X Roma*. Robust standard errors in brackets