

# Romania

[ROMÂNIA]

RESEARCH PARTNER CENTRE

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## COUNTRY FACT SHEET

- **Population** 21,584,365 inhabitants (2006)
- **Area** 238,391 sq. km
- **Population density** 90.9 inhabitants sq. km

- **System of government**

Republic. Legislative power lies with the Parliament composed by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, both elected by nominal vote since 2008 (before 2008 both chambers were elected by party list); executive power lies with the President (elected directly by the people) and the Government (with a Prime Minister appointed by the President and validated, alongside its governmental team, by the Parliament); judicial power is independent, the highest institution is the Constitutional Court (composed by 9 supreme judges appointed for 9 years mandates as follows: 3 by the Senate, 3 by the Chamber of Deputies and 3 by the President).

- **European elections** June 2009: 33 European parliamentarians.

- **Social security and welfare system**

Social policy, in Romania, is concentrated in a set of policies coordinated by the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity and sustained by the activities of other ministries such as Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Research. The domains of activity for the national social policy are the following: labour market (including unemployment) and policies regarding salaries; pensions and other social security rights; social assistance and family policies; work relations, health and work security. In addition to these 4 main domains for which the responsibility lies with the Ministry of Family and Social Security, there are also the following: social insurance, housing policies, education policies, and social policies related to probation and

social reintegration of ex-offenders. Each of these domains has its own legal and institutional framework, priorities for actions and specific issues.

- **Public health system**

The Romanian health care system is in a transition phase from a situation in which it was almost entirely state-owned, and coordinated by the Ministry of Health through 41 district health directorates and the Bucharest Health Directorate, to a situation in which the relationships are more complex and the number of actors involved is larger. Since 1999, the main actors involved in the health care system have been: the Ministry of Health and the district public health directorates; the national and the district health insurance funds; the national and the district colleges of physicians; the health care providers.

- **Level of education**

20-24 years old  
 who have completed upper-secondary education 2007: 77,4%  
 Number of people  
 who have graduated from secondary schooling 2006: 231,842

- **Immigration rate**

2008: -0.13%  
 Number of people  
 who acquired the residence permit 2006: 7714

- **Growth rate**

2006: 0.136%

- **Employment rate**

2008: 59% (overall)  
 Total number of people in employment : 9,313,000 out of which 95.1% represents the 15- 64 age group and 45.5 % represents the percent of women within the 15-64 age group.

- **Unemployment rate**

2008: 4.1%

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# Glossary

## 1 DEFINITIONS

### VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

#### 1.1 VOLUNTEER

There are two definitions for the word “volunteer”: I. a person who engages in voluntary action for the public benefit without a financial gain. The volunteer is not necessarily a member of an association and can perform the volunteer activity within the framework of a registered organisation (formal volunteering) or on their own (spontaneous volunteering); II. a member of an association which adheres to the values and statutes of the association and pays a membership fee. Some organisations use the first and the second definition of the term volunteer interchangeably, generating sometimes confusion.

#### 1.2 VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

An activity performed out of free will by an individual for the public benefit or the benefit of the organisation s/he is affiliated to.

#### 1.3 VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

A voluntary organisation is defined as: I. an organisation involving volunteers in their daily operations dedicated to the public benefit or to the benefit of a particular category of beneficiaries; II. an organisation dedicated to a particular cause that acts through its members who are considered volunteers.

#### 1.4 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRE

An organisation or department acting mainly to promote and develop volunteering and serving as a broker between the supply and demand of volunteers within a given community; to be noted that the term used extensively in Romania is “volunteer centre” (*centru de voluntariat*) and not volunteer support centre as mentioned here.

There are several terminological problems which need to be acknowledged here for a correct understanding of the situation of volunteering in Romania and the difficulties encountered when trying to measure volunteering<sup>1</sup>. Most of the national surveys are conducted on representative samples and are based on self assessment by the respondent of their volunteer involvement such as "Have you been involved in any type of volunteer activity during the past 12 months?". When stating the involvement in volunteering activities, what is reported as volunteering can range from being a member of an association to participating in an awareness raising campaign, from helping someone in need to giving money to the beggar at the corner of the street or in front of the church. The definition problems come from a variety of sources. First, the Romanian Law on Volunteering (Law 195/2001) defines volunteering as "the public interest activity performed out of free will by any individual, for the benefit of others, without any financial benefit." The law only refers to the volunteering activities carried out in an organised setting, namely in the frame of a legal not for profit entity. This is very limitative as the informal volunteering activities are left out and, based on this law, should not be considered volunteering. Second, the misuse of the term *volunteer* in the public discourse of various state actors increases the confusion. The law on the *voluntary* military service states that "volunteer soldiers will receive a monthly payment" for their contracted services, thus contradicting the definition cited above. *Volunteer soldiers* are those that enrol freely in the army pursuing a career in this field. The Romanian Language Dictionary<sup>2</sup> explains the term *volunteer* as follows: "I. about people: acting from own free will; about actions: without constraint, based on free will, conscious; II. Person joining the army out of free will or performing a service willingly and unselfishly". Only the last part of this official definition of volunteering somehow touches the meaning of volunteering as approached by this

paper. Third, the communist legacy of the former compulsory patriotic work is still overshadowing the true meaning of the term *volunteer*. Fourth, the terms *volunteer* and *member* of an association have a surprisingly unclear relationship, varying from mutual exclusion to complete overlapping, making it very hard again to specify what exactly means to be a volunteer in Romania. The terminological tangle surrounding the terms *volunteer/voluntary* is far from being solved.

## 2 VOLUNTEERS ON VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS)

The ideas of the respondents about volunteering in Romania are linked to two main aspects. First of all volunteering is something social, is a tool and a component of society development. Secondly, volunteering is something personal: it represents the good part in people. The two aspects are in continuity so volunteering combines self-education, altruism, personal development and benefits for the community.

*"Volunteering is a powerful tool in any type of society because it combines self-education and benefits for the community. The willingness to perform a volunteering act is most commonly a way of letting go of your ego and the first step to true altruism. Second, most of the actions are concrete examples of how a human can help another and this alone can result in personal growth."*

Both from a social and a personal point of view, volunteering is an essential component of development. It allows the development of social cohesion and social capital because it represents the good part in people. And it represents an element of personal development through a process of reciprocity.

*"Volunteering is an essential component of society development. It*

<sup>1</sup> The discussion about the difficulties of defining volunteering in Romania is excerpted from Rigman, C. 2009. "Volunteers in Romania: A Profile". Paper presented at the international workshop *Roots of Social Capital: Civic Engagement and Socialization*. July. Cluj-Napoca: Babes-Bolyai University, Political Science Department

<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://dexonline.ro/search.php?cu=voluntar>, accessed November 16<sup>th</sup> 2007, 15:40

*represents the good part in people and needs to be further supported by all countries."*

*"One of the best personal development tool allowing to (re)discover yourself over and over again."*

In the end volunteering makes the difference in the communities and represents in Romania too an element of saving for the social and economic systems and a tool for a democratic community being based on the participation of individuals to community issues. It is an instrument of learning and practising participatory democracy.

*"Volunteering is being able to make a difference in the communities without expecting something in return."*

*"Volunteering is an important and unexploited resource in Romania. It is a great chance of diminishing costs and engaging individuals to solve communities' issues."*

The aspect of saving is evident with respect to social welfare as Saulean and Epure underline: "In Romania, the share of public social costs in the GDP increased nominally from 14.9 percent in 1990 to 16.5 percent in 1994. In real terms, however, social welfare expenditures decreased significantly: if in 1990 these expenditures were 20.3 percent

higher than in 1989, in 1993 they were 22.9 percent less than the level of 1989 (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1995: 426). In the context of the diminishing ability of the state to support social welfare, a comprehensive government policy towards the financing of the not for profit sector did not emerge after 1989. Nevertheless, there were a number of attempts to initiate governmental collaboration programmes with civil society organisations. These grew out of the special concerns of some particular public authorities. Occasionally, non-governmental organisations were able to receive direct support in the form of subsidies from the state budget. Examples include open competition funding programs established by the Ministry of Youth and Sports; or allocations from ministry budgets in reaction to specific requests, as has been the case with the Ministry of Culture and the Ethnic Minorities Department. In general, however, the overall legal framework still hinders the development of outright public-private partnerships".<sup>3</sup>

As a respondent asserts *"Romania still has a lot of work to do in order to promote and establish the volunteering spirit at all levels in the society"*. As another respondent states *"So in terms of theory things are decent, but in practice, they are moving quite slow."*

<sup>3</sup> Saulean D., Epure C., 1998.

# Historical Overview

## 1 BACKGROUND, EVOLUTION AND DISTINCTIVE TRAITS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

In Romania, civil society developed historically at a later stage and to a lesser degree than in other East Central or Western European countries. The main inhibiting factors include geo-political factors, the influence of the Orthodox Church, and the rural and community-based social structure of Romanian society which persisted well into the 20th century.

**Geo-political Factors.** The late emergence of both state institutions and the elements of what would be now called civil society is due to the long vassalage status and the resulting internal instability of these territories, as well as frequent internal and external migrations, caused by the constraints that local populations faced up to the 20th century. Given its precarious geo-political location, the Romanian territories lacked the modernization impetus that characterised the historical development of Western and Central Europe. In fact, the building of the Romanian modern state was accomplished only after the First World War with the unification of all territories inhabited by Romanian ethnic majorities. This was only a result of the disintegration of the three neighbouring empires (Ottoman, Russian and Austro-Hungarian), and only then did a vibrant civil society begin to take shape.

**The Role of the Church.** Within the influence sphere of Byzantine culture, Romanians embraced the Christian-Orthodox faith, whose theological foundations, unlike Catholicism, did not emphasise and promote charity as a means of salvation. With a highly ritualised canon and more interest in exploring the mystery of the divine revelation than in the well-being of its followers, the Orthodox religion was conducted by a clergy with little social standing, preaching a partial asceticism, and preserving traditional values. In the absence of a proper state administration, the church was nevertheless forced to fulfil some functions of social assistance. Orthodox monasteries became involved in hosting and supporting the poor. Many of these religious establishments had significant sources of income from agriculture, trade and service provision. Insofar as the Church came to encourage charitable deeds, it only did so where it was the main beneficiary and it could thus increase the welfare of its own members within their own organisational structures. The increased wealth that the clergy, together with land and village owners or tradesmen, began to accumulate triggered Romanian rulers to limit “luxury” through official legal acts. These concerns led to the control and limitation of the Church assets in 1857, further reducing the influence of the Orthodox Church on the development of the not for profit sector.

**Ruralism and Community-based Organisation of Romanian Society.** Before and after the modern base of the Romanian state was put in place in 1859 with the union of the Moldavia and Wallachia Principalities, all three Romanian territories shared a common feature: the social Western societies. The population pre-dominantly consisted of peasants, representing a substantial lower class, which was poor and provided low cost labour. By contrast, a middle class that could have supported the general institutional development never emerged in the Romanian territories. As a

consequence, the persistence of traditional rural mentalities led to the isolation of village communities. Society suffered from chronic atomization, manifest at all levels of community life, maintained a primitive way of living and thus remained an impenetrable environment for progressive ideas. Throughout its history, ruralism represented a defining feature of the Romanian nation as a whole. Tönnies<sup>4</sup> conceptual polarity *community vs. society* offers an appropriate explanation in this case. In this climate, traditional community forms of collective organisation did not provide a fertile ground for the development of civil society institutions. The peasantry remained largely passive with respect to the exercise of “civic responsibility” due mainly to the limitations of its sphere of interest or aspiration. The existence of an overwhelming proportion of rural population (78.6 percent at the census of December 1930), largely excluded from the actual processes of governing or formal participation, represented a real obstacle for the modernization of the Romanian society and the development of a vibrant not for profit sector.

## 2 ROOTS: BEFORE 1900

Civil or not for profit institutions nevertheless developed in Romania beginning in the late Middle Ages. In an approximate chronological order of their formal emergence in Romanian society, they can be differentiated in guilds, social and charity establishments, cultural associations, freemason societies, political parties, trade unions, and co-operatives.

**Guilds.** Guilds are perhaps the first associative and voluntary institutions that emerged in Romanian territories. Structured, in variable degrees of formalization, around the callings and handicrafts, these institutions guarded the general interest of the members of specific professions and contributed to the development of group awareness. Guilds

began to prosper in the Middle Ages, mainly in fortified cities where they benefited from local legal provisions.

**Social and Charity Establishments.** As noted above, any charitable initiatives that were taken by the Orthodox clergy retained a rather discontinuous nature and were not organised on permanent bases, as was the case in societies under the influence of Catholicism or Protestantism. Poverty was “officially” declared a social issue by the Romanian noble courts early enough. During the 15th century, brotherhoods of the poor were founded, following the model of professional groups, and eventually eleemosynary actions were tracked. A document from 1686, registered at the Treasure House, for instance, contains a list of poor people from Bucharest who received money, clothes and footwear from the Church. The Organic Regulations introduced by the Russian authorities in 1831 and 1832 in Moldavia and Wallachia founded what could be called the beginning of a state social policy, with the establishment of hospitals, maternity hospitals, or orphans homes, which institutionalised the socially disadvantaged both in Moldavia and in Wallachia. In 1876 the Romanian Red Cross Society was set up through a Decree signed by Prince Carol I.

**Cultural associations.** Emerging in the Romanian Principalities during the last century, cultural associations sought to satisfy the need for homogeneous development of the Romanian nation, which was lagging behind due to the state of political-administrative disruption. Cultural associations promoted nationalistic values and political emancipation.

**Freemason societies.** Freemasonry first emerged in Romania in the mid-18th century, promoted by merchants from Florence and Venice who had connections at the court of Constantin Mavrocordat. The links of Romanian elites with France further contributed to the penetration of ideas that radically changed the traditional Romanian society of the 19th century. The work of many cultural associations during the 19th century took place in close connection to freemason activity.

<sup>4</sup> Tönnies F., *Community and Society*, East Lansing, Mich., 1957; orig.1887.

**Political parties.** The first political organisations in the Romanian Principalities emerged after Tudor Vladimirescu's revolution in 1821, which Romanian historians associate with the institutional beginnings of modernity. While the use of the term party was spreading earlier, these political organisations only transformed into Western-style, ideology-based political parties after 1866, when the rules of the political life were completed with the introduction of parliamentary and democratic procedures of representation. The regularization of the political life signified a capital element in the settlement of the relationship between the civil society and the state. In Transylvania, which was still separated from the Romanian Kingdom, the first Romanian political parties were founded shortly after the settlement of political life in the Kingdom. Organized along ethnic and religious criteria (with the participation of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic clergy), their main goal was to obtain political and civil rights for the Romanian population.

**Trade unions.** The idea of trade unions began to spread in Romania in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the working class began to grow substantially. Political debates over trade unionism and attempts to introduce legislation represented one of the political deadlock subjects of Romanian parliamentary life by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A first draft bill—influenced by the Austrian model due to the commercial ties with the Austro-Hungarian Empire—was rejected in 1883. In 1902, a law recognising the right of association on professional grounds and along the organisation of trades was finally enacted, which offered the legal conditions for the creation of professional corporations.

**Co-operatives.** A cooperative was defined in the 1935 law as “a society established by individuals or legal persons, varying in number, having the aim to encourage, or to vouch for, certain economic and national interests of its members, through a common action” (article 1).

### 3 THE BRIEF CENTURY: 1900 – 2000

Social assistance activities increased during the First World War and in the enthusiasm following the creation of the Great Romania after the war. A new legal framework greatly facilitated the growth of the not for profit

sector in the interwar period. The period of economic impetus between 1920 and 1929 saw the emergence of the greatest number of private social assistance institutions in the whole modern period in Romania. Civil society in Romania had made substantial progress by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the interwar period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a further blossoming of a large variety of not for profit organisations. However, these promising developments came largely to a halt after the imposition of Soviet-style communism on Eastern Europe after the Second World War. In Romania, the communist state annihilated all possible competitors to its power, ranging from households to businesses and trade unions, churches, newspapers, and voluntary associations. The atomizing effect that these policies had on society led on the one hand to a very powerful state, but on the other hand it isolated individuals and families and prevented the development of larger, alternative social relationships. Although the state aimed for the total destruction of civil society, some moderate forms of a civil society or, perhaps more accurately, a zone of resistance and civic initiatives remained alive, particularly in the decaying stages of the authoritarian and ideological state. The state exerted direct control in fields like education, health, labour and social protection. These conditions made the existence of a not for profit sector in Romania after the communist take-over practically impossible, although the Framework Law of 1924 on associations and foundations was never repealed during this period.

Nevertheless, in combination with the Decree-Law No. 31/1954, the 1924 law laid the basis for the legal existence of certain organisations generally tolerated by the communist authorities, especially during the “liberal” period of the regime, which began in August 1968 with Romania's opposition to the military intervention in Czechoslovakia and lasted until the mid-1970s. Also tolerated were mutual aid houses and tenants associations. However, these organisations did not constitute a truly independent not for profit sector in Romania. Many of them only enjoyed formal autonomy, even if they were not literally subordinated to the state institutions. In practice, they were subject to severe limitations on their freedom to initiate and implement projects and the ideological compliance of organisation activities was strictly controlled. Moreover, the state's monopoly on welfare barred all formally autonomous organisations from engaging in the provision of social services—often seen as a core function of a fully developed not for profit sector.

To summarise, prior to the communist era, several historical factors, in particular a delayed modernization of the country, contributed to the relative underdevelopment of Romania's not for profit sector. A distinct associative life developed nonetheless towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and gained particular force in the interwar period, when a new legal framework was put in place. In this respect, the subsequent communist period signified a big step backward for Romanian civil society and for the voluntary associative movement in general.

#### 4 WHERE WE STAND: 2001 - 2008

Although not for profit or non-governmental organisations come under many different names in Romania, including associations, foundations, leagues, clubs, movements, committees, councils or societies, most formally constituted organisations take one of the four main legal forms prescribed by the Government Ordinance 26/2000<sup>5</sup>: association, foundation, union or federation. In addition, there are other legal forms, such as cooperatives, trade unions and political parties, which constitute the “broader” section of the Romanian not for profit sector.

According to the law, an association “is a convention through which several persons put in common, on a permanent basis, their material contributions, their knowledge and their activities, in order to achieve a goal with no pecuniary or patrimonial benefits.” The text of the law contains a special provision referring to the aim of the association, stating that this could be “purely ideal, complying with the general interests of the community, or with those of a social category to which the members belong, or complying with the non-patrimonial personal interests of the members.”

By contrast, a foundation is defined as “an act by which an individual or a legal person makes up a patrimony, distinct and autonomous from his own and devotes it, generally on a permanent basis, to the

achievement of an ideal public interest purpose.”

From the legal perspective, handicraft co-operatives are defined as “associations having an economic nature based on the consent, freely expressed, of individuals subsequently becoming their members, with the aim of carrying out activities in common, using collectively-owned or rented production means”.

Law No. 54/1991 defines trade unions as organisations with no political character, set up with the aim of defending and promoting the professional, economic, social, cultural and sportive interests and rights of their members, as stipulated in labour legislation and in collective work contracts. Trade unions are independent of state bodies, political parties and any other organisation and are allowed to possess patrimony.

Political parties are legally defined as “associations of Romanian citizens enjoying the right to vote, who participate freely to the shaping and exertion of their political will, carrying out a public mission guaranteed by the Constitution. They are public law legal persons” (Law No. 27/1991). In legal terms, the parties' mission is a civic-moral one. With the relatively recent reestablishment of political pluralism in Romania, it is expected that the role and functions of the parties will attain an increased importance in the post-totalitarian period, as they are the essential actors of the re-building of civil society.

Largely revived after the collapse of communism, the Romanian not for profit sector, as indicated above, consists of a network of diverse organisations. The structure of this network can be captured through a set of criteria, as put forward with the “structural-operational” definition (Salamon and Anheier, 1997). The five components of the definition refer to the *organised, private, self-governed, not for profit distributing and voluntary* features of the not for profit sector.

The first descriptive element of this definition is the *organised* feature, according to which organisations should display some degree of

<sup>5</sup> Ordinance n. 26 of 30 January 2000 on associations and foundations, issued by the Government of Romania, published in the Official Gazette, n. 39 of 31 January 2000. (accessible at [www.usig.org/countryinfo/romania.asp](http://www.usig.org/countryinfo/romania.asp) , chapter II Applicable Laws)

formality as opposed to spontaneous, ad hoc or otherwise uncoordinated activities. While the criterion does apply to the Romanian not for profit sector at large, there are nevertheless certain manifestations of traditional associative behaviour (e.g. voluntary work and giving) that remain excluded. Such informal associative behaviour is prominently present in rural communities and mainly based on social relationships. The most prevalent examples are informal or semi-organised forms of local mutual aid and assistance.

The separation from the state is indicated by the *private* status of these organisations. They are not part of the public administration system, and this fact essentially separates them from the governmental sector, yet it includes them in a homogeneous category along with private organisations from the for-profit sector. In the Romanian case, this criterion raises a number of borderline cases, the most prominent of which is the National Red Cross Society.

The principle of *self-governing* refers to the autonomy of organisations. In practice, many formally independent organisations might not be fully autonomous in their decision-making because they are either part of supra-organisations, such as federations or umbrella groups created within the processes of network building, or subject to pressures to adhere to donor interests. The self-governing criterion is nevertheless generally applicable to not for profit organisations in Romania.

An important and universal criterion is that of *non-distribution of profits* which captures those private organisations that either do not obtain profits or, if they do, do not distribute them to their members. This does not exclude the possibility to carry out economic activities in order to generate income that is used to support the organisation's mission. This major criterion distinguishes the not for profit sector from the business sector. The restriction on the distribution of profits thus confers to organisations the specialised "no profit" status.

*Voluntary* participation is one of the core features of privately initiated groups and organisations that comprise the not for profit sector. In fact, volunteering is an instrument of learning and practicing participatory democracy. In this respect, the re-emergence of voluntary associations in the Romanian society represents a significant democratic achievement after the long interruption during the totalitarian period in the recent history of Romania. As such, the voluntary criterion fully

captures the essence of the Romanian not for profit sector.

## 5 VOLUNTEERING NOW (INTERVIEWS)

Volunteering is seen as a support and sometimes a substitute of public authorities in particular with regard to social work, health care, environment, education. It completes some of the areas that public authorities cannot reach or are not covering in social work and health care. These are areas mainly connected with churches but in the past couple of years volunteering started to build up around environmental issues and it is still linked to non formal education.

*"For the time being volunteering is trying to complete some of the areas that public authorities cannot reach or are not covering well (e.g. social services or environment protection)."*

*"There are long term benefits from volunteering in social work and health care, which are mainly connected with churches. In the past couple of years a stronger volunteering movement started to build up around the environmental issues. There is still plenty of room for volunteering in non formal education like student associations, artistic circles and high school clubs."*

What is important when considering volunteering is the generational aspect. Volunteering is something good especially among the older and younger people. Volunteering helps the elderly have an active life and provides training and education for young people. Respondents affirm also that volunteering is a tool offering practice for non-formal education. It is very important for developing active citizenship among young people representing in Romania 27.6 % of the country's population.

*"To provide work experience and training for students and pupils. To help elderly to regain part of their independence and to have an active life."*

*"I do feel that there is an increase in volunteering and that people are seeing volunteering as something good – but this is more among the youth."*

*"I would say that at the moment, wider society generally considers volunteering as something for youth, as in high school, university stu-*

*dents, but it's not seen as something to be done by everyone."*

The people interviewed represent volunteering as an important component of the community. They look to volunteering from a micro point of view as a big part of life of each individual. It is a structural component across all ages and backgrounds so it can be considered a necessity.

*"I see volunteering as something that can be done across all ages and irrelevant of their backgrounds."*

*"Volunteering should be an important part of each organisation and community, a big part of the life of each individual from school students to older persons"*

In particular volunteering is able to complete the work done by the state and business sector at local level. It's a dynamic and not static force for developing the community and the sense of community. The respondents underline that much of what happens in the community can be supported by volunteer work particularly in issues that are relevant but too small to be taken into consideration by local administration.

*"... completing the work done by the state and business sector, ... addressing issues that are relevant, but too small to be taken into consideration by local administration."*

*"Working for and developing the community (as well as the sense of community)."*

*"I think most of the developed countries can speak on their name but so much of what happens in the community can be supported by volunteer work. I see the role of volunteering as a core value for each human- but I might be biased in my assertions due to the fact that this is my life creed*

*– "Be the change you want to see in the world" – (M. Gandhi)."*

Regarding the current situation of the not for profit and volunteering sector in Romania respondents seem to be agree: in the past years volunteering in Romania developed but a lot of things have to be done to make volunteering what it ought to be. One of the main step is to connect international level to local level of action.

*"Volunteering in Romania developed a lot in the past 20 years, but is still far from what it ought to be in society."*

*"I have seen volunteering developing in Romania, but I don't know too much about the overall landscape. Our organisation works a lot with teams of international volunteers and occasionally involves local volunteers."*

*"Steps have been taken in Romania, but there are still lots of things to be sorted out to make volunteering what it ought to be"*

They realise it is a cultural question both at macro and micro level. At the macro level there are different approaches related to what volunteering is. At the micro level volunteering is remote for people: civil society doesn't spend time and resources on volunteering.

*"Volunteering is still very remote in the mind and heart of many of our fellow countrymen and women. They have no time or interest in dedicating their time to others. Still, there are a lot of activities run with the support of volunteers, efforts are made by civil society and not only to promote volunteering."*

*"There are good perspectives but on the other hand there also are very different approaches in the sector related to how the concept should be developed and even to what volunteering is."*

# Legal framework

## 1 OVERVIEW OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

The main law governing the existence of the not for profit sector is the Government Ordinance 26/2000, amended in 2005. This Ordinance replaced the 1924 Law on Associations and Foundations which existed throughout the entire communist regime, although very few organisations actually existed and functioned during communism. The 2000 Law sets the bases of what is now called the not for profit sector, regulating the conditions for registering an association, foundation or federation, the basic principles of organisation and functioning of such entities and the procedures for legal registration.

There are several other laws or regulations of particular Ministries touching upon issues affecting the existence and functioning of not for profit organisations, although their main aim is different. Some of the laws complementing the Ordinance 26/2000 include:

Law 32/1994 – Law on Sponsorship, amended in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, and 2006 (this law regulates the procedures and conditions under which sponsorships can be provided and sets the thresholds for tax exemption of the amounts granted as sponsorships. The law does not refer exclusively to not for profits.)

Law 195/2001 – Law on Volunteering, changed in 2002 and 2006 and currently under review (the law defines volunteering as discussed above and sets the basic rules for the relationship between the volunteer, the host organisation and the beneficiary of the volunteer activity. The law allows for a volunteering contract to be signed between the organisation and the volunteer whenever deemed appropriate and places the eventual conflicts under civil law. The law includes explicit references to the former Youth programme of the European Commission, creating confusion by mentioning the age limits of the Youth programme, e.g. 16 to 26. The law has not been changed following the extension of the age limit, for the European Voluntary Service of the Youth in Action programme of the European Commission, to 30 years, thus creating problems to organisations hosting volunteers over 26 years old as part of this programme. The current revision aims at making the law on volunteering non-discriminatory by clearly stating that individuals of all ages can volunteer. In addition, the current revision efforts aim at specifying the role of several state institutions in supporting the development of volunteering and including volunteer-based programs as eligible projects under public funding schemes. Special chapters on corporate volunteering have been requested by companies implementing employer supported volunteering programs as the current legislation on labour can impose severe consequences on employers allowing their employees to volunteer during their working time in the absence of special provisions regulating such situations.)

Law 350/2005 – Law on funding from the public budget for not for profit activities of general interest (this law

sets the bases for public funding schemes at local, country and national level for general interest activities. The law does not explicitly mention volunteering as an eligible activity for public funding, leading to different interpretations by authorities at different levels. The public funding is allocated on a bidding process base and follows the rules of public spending. One special feature of these funding schemes is that they do not support personnel related costs.)

Government Decision 1024/2004 – Approval of the methodology for accreditation of social services providers (as part of the accreditation of social services providers, accreditation necessary for not for profits receiving public support for provision of social services, includes evaluation items related to involvement of volunteers in the provision of social services. Following this law the amount of volunteering in social services has increased and particular attention was paid to the quality of volunteer involvement in social services provision.)

Order of the Ministry of Public Finance 2017/2005 – regulating the 2% (known as the transition philanthropy – the 2% regulation allows an individual to redirect 2% of its income tax towards a not for profit entity of choice). The “2% law” as it is called was directed exclusively for the benefit of associations and foundations at first, but several changes in the application procedures slowly extended the beneficiaries of the 2% to include also churches and schools, diminishing the amounts the associations and foundations receive through this mechanism.

Government Decision 1317/2005 – regarding volunteer activity in the home care for the elderly (this law regulates the involvement of volunteers in home care services for the elderly provided either by public or not for profit entities. The law sets the specific content of the volunteering contract and the requirements for volunteers involved in home care activities and also the identification systems and the certification of the volunteering activity.)

Order of the Ministry of Environment 439/2002 – regarding the

volunteer activity in environment protection (this provision regulates the organisation and functioning of the Environmental Guard Volunteer Corps, a special volunteer corps set up in conjunction with the Environmental Guard, a public institution with responsibilities related to environment protection.)

Government Decision 1579/2005 and several ordinances, orders and decisions complementing it – regarding the approval of the statutes of the voluntary personnel of the voluntary emergency services (the civil protection regulations include the existence of voluntary intervention teams in each locality where there are no professional civil protection services. This includes mostly small cities and rural communities. The volunteers have specific benefits, such as food allowances, special training programs and equipment. In practice, there are several problems with the functioning of the voluntary intervention teams because the law does not specify the obligation of the employers to allow the volunteers to take part in training or intervention during the working time.)

In addition to these specific laws and regulations most of the legal framework for the not for profit sector in Romania dates back to after 1989, and major pieces actually are dated after 2000.

## 2 FISCAL POLICIES

There are specific provisions<sup>6</sup> of the Fiscal Code regulating the income tax for not for profits or the accountancy requirements for not for profits. The income of certain not for profit organisations carrying out specific kinds of activities is exempt from corporate income tax, while not related business income is subject to tax under certain circumstances. Certain sales of goods and services are subject to a Value Added Tax (VAT), with a fairly broad range of exempt activities. There are provisions in the income tax law and the corporate tax law providing benefits for donors.

<sup>6</sup> They are detailed below and relate to the limit for income tax.

### 3 ROLLS AND REGISTERS

The only registers of not for profit organisations are those locate at the Courts of Law where initial registration occurs. No rigorous mechanisms for setting up updateable registries allowing accurate and updated information on the number of registered not for profits, their form of registration, their field of activity, the size of their operations, the number of staff employed or the number of volunteers engaged exists in Romania. Data can be compiled from several sources, mostly based on the information from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public finance and the National Institute of Statistics. Data provided by the Civil Society Development Foundation for the 2008 meeting of the Council for Consultation of Associations and Foundations shows a total number of 53,418 not for profits registered as associations (36,593), foundations (16,154), and federations (671). Some initiatives emerged from within the not for profit sector and since 2008 the Civil Society Development Foundation set up the on-line Catalogue of Civil Society where not for profits can register. However, this is an optional registration and practice showed that only the most active and well connected not for profits registered, while there are lots of local not for profits which have not yet heard of this initiative and thus have not registered.

### 4 LIST OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Law 60/1991 – *Law on public gatherings/meetings.*

Law 34/1994 – *Law on Sponsorship.*

Law 189/1999 – *Law on Legislative Initiative of Citizens.*

Law 195/2001 – *Law on Volunteering.*

Law 544/2001 – *Freedom of Information Act (Law on Free Access to Public Interest Information).*

Order of the Ministry of Environment 439/2002 – on volunteering activity in environment protection.

Law 52/2003 – *Law on Transparency of Decision in Public Administration.*

Government Ordinance 68/2003 – *Regulations for the social services provision.*

Government Decision 1024/2004 – *Approval of the methodology for accreditation of social services providers.*

Law 350/2005 – *Law on funding from the public budget for not for profit activities of general interest.*

Government Decision 1317/2005 – on the volunteer activity in the home care for the elderly.

Government Decision 1579/2005 – on the approval of the statutes of the voluntary personnel of the voluntary emergency services.

Order of the Ministry of Public Finance 2017/2005 – regulating the 2%.

# Volunteers involving organisations

## 1 ORGANISATIONAL FORMS

### VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

The legislation in Romania allows for three types of not for profit organisations: associations, foundations, and federations. There is no data available to indicate how many of each kind exist and function in Romania.

The **association** is composed of at least three members, and has a democratic structure. The totality of members forms the General Assembly, the supreme decisional body of an association, which elects the Board of Directors who appoints the executive director. The association functions based on a statute (by-laws) drafted upon registration and which can only be changed by the vote of the General Assembly. In order to register an association at least three individual members, the statutes, an address to register on (property or rented), an initial capital equivalent to the minimum salary, and a certificate for the official name of the association, issued upon request by the Ministry of Justice, are needed. The registration is made at the Court of Law in the locality where the registered address of the association is assigned. Any changes in the statutes need to be registered at the same Court of Law. Specific functioning of each association is decided, in addition to its statutes, by internal rules and regulations developed wither by the general assembly or by the board of directors.

The **foundation** can be set up by one or more founding members which can be ether individuals or legal entities. There are particular amounts of the initial capital which can be either cash or in kind (up to 100 minimum gross salaries at the time of registration, or, if the foundation has a specific fund raising and local grant making purpose up to 20 minimum salaries at the time of registration). The foundation functions according to its internal rules and regulations and the existence of a Board of Directors is left at the decision of the founder. A very common practice among Romanian foundations is to have an Executive President who acts both as executive director and president as these positions are foreseen within an association. The registration requirements also include the address (property or rented) and the certificate for the official name issued upon request by the Ministry of Justice. The registration procedure is similar to the one described above for associations.

The **federation** is similar to the association in terms of structure, governing requirements and registration requirements. The only difference between an association and a federation is that federations can only have legal entities as members.

Volunteer involving organisations are associations, foundations, or federations.

## 2 RULES AND FUNCTIONING

There are no specific regulations for volunteer involving organisations in terms of registration or functioning, but their work with volunteers is subject to the regulations of the Law 195/2001 – Framework Law on Volunteering. The

law regulates the relationship between the organisations and the volunteer. There is the possibility of signing a volunteer contract if parties find it appropriate. The insurance issues are included in this law, however it is not compulsory. The law states that, based on the volunteering contract, the organisation is responsible for insuring the volunteers during their volunteer activity, unless there is a written and explicit renunciation of the insurance claims by the volunteer. The law does not regulate the issue of insurance in cases where no volunteer contract is signed. Practice shows that very few organisations actually provide insurance for volunteers as insurance costs are rarely considered eligible costs by the existing funding sources and the overwhelming majority of volunteer involving organisations have no funds available for covering insurance schemes for volunteers. This is made possible by the public insurance system that does not take into account the specific circumstances of an injury for instance, and covers the treatment of an insured person regardless of the circumstances the injury occurred in (for instance, if a volunteer is a student, s/he benefits from a specific insurance as a student that will cover medical treatment also for an injury that occurred while volunteering.)

No specific support schemes, funding schemes, or insurance schemes are available for volunteers or volunteer involving organisations in relations with the public authorities at any level (national, regional, local).

The accreditation procedure for social services providers includes, if the accredited provider is not for profit, specific requirements related to the involvement of volunteers in the current activity of the not for profit entity. Such procedures do not exist in other fields.

Other legal requirements regard the accounting system for any not for profit and their income generating activities. Regardless of its specific form of registration each not for profit has to have a qualified accountant and has to submit its balanced accounts to the Ministry of Finance by the end of April each year. Any not for profit may engage in income generating activities with the strict requirement that all profits are to be reinvested in the core activity of the not for profit entity. The not for profits' income from such income generating activities is exempt from income tax up to a threshold of 15,000 Euros per year, above which they are subject to the same income tax applied to profit making en-

terprises. Other fiscal facilities include the 2% regulation described earlier and some VAT exemptions changed several times in the past 10 years. Currently reimbursement of VAT for not for profits is available only for EU funds (exclusively on the EU share of funds from a co-funded project), the procedure is highly bureaucratic and currently there are severe delays in the reimbursement of VAT since the pre-accession funds (such the PHARE programme where VAT was also reimbursed for not for profits).

### 3 RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLIC SECTOR

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW

In general the not for profit sector has a specific relationship with the public sector. The relationship is twofold: one is related to the financial relationship and the other to partnership and collaboration. There are little data to document in depth how the overall relationship could be rated. However, observation points to the prevalence of the human dimension of such relationships, based on mutual understanding and long term collaboration between not for profit workers and employees of the public authorities. Most of the times the relationships are not institutionalised and they rely exclusively on the human dimension, becoming hard to preserve when personnel changes occur either in the not for profit sector or within the public authorities. The financial relationship is much more institutionalised, being based on clear rules of funding from public authorities for the not for profits.

Direct material support granted by local administrations constitutes one of the major source of government assistance for the not for profit sector. Indeed, many non-governmental organisations request the collaboration of municipalities in obtaining facilities to enable them to develop their activities. Common forms of such in-kind support of municipalities, local governments or other decentralized services of the administration include rent discounts or exemptions, the provision of office space, equipment (e.g. telephone lines, office furniture), construction sites for institutions such as orphanages, hospitals, or religious facilities, and free building permits. On the whole, however, gover-

nment subsidies to the not for profit sector, whether at national or local level, have not yet reached substantial proportions. Therefore, it can be stated that the development of non-governmental organisations in Romania has been largely achieved without significant and direct support from the State (Saulean, D., Epure C., 1998).

### 3.2 FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW (INTERVIEWS)

In general respondents value the relation between voluntary and public sector as quite negative both because public sector is closed and the initiatives come from NGOs.

*"I see cooperation at several levels, but the public sector is still a little bit 'closed' and it does not encourage the involvement of volunteers."*

*"The relationship is more project based and at the initiative of the NGOs."*

They talk about timid collaboration and partnership between voluntary and public sector. It depends on the lack of dialogue and support. Voluntary and public sector should be working in the best interest of the community but in reality most of the times this is not the case.

*"More dialogue, timid collaboration and partnerships."*

*"Both should be working in the best interest of the community and should be supporting each other. Unfortunately this is actually not the case most of the times."*

One respondent is slightly more positive: *"I would say that it's been quite weak up until now."*

But in general they conclude that the relationship between volunteer organisation and public sector: *"Should be stronger and more collaborative."*

Because of this difficulties respondents state that *"Volunteering, . . . is not high on a list of a priorities for any public institution in Romania"* and that *"public authorities are only at the beginning of their involvement in the development of volunteering infrastructure in Romania and we still need strong lobby and advocacy in the area."*

The participation of the voluntary sector to the definition of public policies seems to be contingent such as it *"depends on the timing, topic of collaboration, and especially the person you are actually working with."*

*"The relationship is rather weak; most of the time it is based on a particular personal relationship you have with a specific person, but it is not institutionalised. Once the person you know is no longer in the same position, you have to start building the relationship from scratch over and over again."*

# Data overview

## 1 RESEARCH AND STATISTICS HIGHLIGHTS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Very little comprehensive data is available on the not for profit sector in general and the volunteer involving organisations in particular. One of the most comprehensive set of data belongs to the Johns Hopkins Comparative No profit Project. The research on Romania dates back to 1995 and the main results are as follows: number of registered organisations was not available and data on the operating expenditures of the not for profits amounted to 90.3 million US dollars, representing 0.3% of the Romanian GDP. In terms of employment the Romanian not for profit sector employed an estimated 37,000 people, equivalent top 1% of the total government employees and 1.2% of the service sector employment. Subsequent analysis performed on data from 2002 made available by the Ministry of Finance and Civil Society Development Foundation in 2004 show 17,373 active not for profits out of the 38,826 registered not for profits, with operational expenses of 492 million dollars representing 0.8% of the Romanian GDP. In terms of employment the not for profit sector employed 62,638 people, almost equal with the number of employees in banking, finance, and insurance (66,000). Most recent data compiled from several sources, mostly based on the information from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public finance and the National Institute of Statistics, and provided by the Civil Society Development Foundation in 2008 show a total number of 53,418 not for profits registered, out of which 36,593 are associations, 16,154 are foundations, and 671 are federations.

In terms of funding sources, the Johns Hopkins Comparative No profit Project shows as main sources of funding the public sector, accounting for 45% of total funding for not for profits (38% from international public sector and 7% from domestic public sector), 26.5% from private philanthropy (no specific data is available on the domestic or international source of the private philanthropy) and 28.5% from fees (including membership fees, fees for services etc.). Data from 2002 made available by the Ministry of Finance and Civil Society Development Foundation in 2004 show 22.2% of support from donations (no specific information is available on the international or domestic source of such donations), income generating activities (15.7%), membership fees (15%), foreign support (10.8%), domestic public funding (4.1%), sponsorships (6.8%) and 15% other sources. These data should be interpreted very carefully as they are based on self-declaration of sources of funding. This allows for severe misclassification of sources and is biased by the re-granting mechanisms available through large grant making foundations active in Romania but funded by various sources.

As a general conclusion the not for profit sector in Romania has been undoubtedly growing and diversifying itself in the past 20 years, but the available data is limited and comparisons are very difficult. In the past 5 years observations allow to say that there has been an increased sub-contracting of social services to not for profit providers, but no data is available to estimate the size in number of beneficiaries and operating expenses of such sub-contracting.

## 2 OF VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANISATIONS (INTERVIEWS)

### 2.1 MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

Motivations for volunteering are multiple, idealistic and opportunistic. Individuals decide to become volunteers to do something good, to feel good, to know and socialise with others and so on. But, beside this, volunteering is something attracting people in the relational and not monetary sphere of life. They feel special and they appreciate the benefit of meeting new people, friends, doing good.

*“To do something about some things other people don’t care about and it bothers you . . . to feel good for doing good . . . to build up work experience in a short time . . . to know more people from a lot of places.”*

*“When I became a volunteer the concept was rather new (especially in my circle) and we thought it was different, interesting – we were special compared with others. Nowadays, the volunteers I work with are motivated by career and learning opportunities, trends, brands and also the desire to help others. For example, when people come to the Red Cross to volunteer, they imagine they will go to conflict or disaster areas and experience exciting and dangerous things, they will feel like Florence Nightingale. It needs of course a lot of training and experience to do that.”*

*“Some are idealists, some are looking for some quality socialising, some just need to add something in the CV, but for most is a combination of all of the above.”*

*“My personal motivation is a very intrinsic one – I am volunteering for a better Romania. Right now for example my personal focus is to volunteer with a team of people to work on improving public policies and instruments in Romania.”*

*“People are motivated to volunteer out of a willingness to make a difference in the wider society without receiving any monetary benefit. They may well receive the benefit of meeting new people, friends, feeling good about what they’ve done, but it’s not a financial benefit”*

*“For me, to do good and support the community. For others, I can not say, there are various reasons”*

As for the main barriers, respondents have a critical point of view. In Romania respondents see a line of continuity for not engaging in vo-

lunteering coming from the communist period. During that time volunteering was a duty: people were forced to volunteer 3 times a year for 2 weeks. In the communist period volunteering was patriotic work and individuals had no choices; respondents speak of apathy. This representation is hard to die also because in the transition to a more liberal regime the most important conquest is choosing what you want to do in life. The cultural inheritance and the actual conditions are at the basis of the lack of information and of a culture of volunteering. At the end of their discourse, respondents give importance to the crisis of values or better to the difficulty of transforming values in practices. Similarly to others countries in Romania people like to live in a materialistic and egoistic way and there is a general lack of time and opportunities for volunteering:

*“. . . ignorance, lack of information, stories from the past communist times, bad time management skills that cause a false lack of time, volunteering is not for everybody.”*

*“Lack of time, lack of information, egoism generated by social problems, years of communist regime where everybody was doing ‘patriotic work’, lack of facilitating legal provisions for people who work as volunteers or who are employed.”*

*“Lack of a volunteering culture. Lack of understanding of what volunteering is and can offer you back. Social pressure to do something ‘productive’ and earn your living.”*

*“The communist apathy is not just an excuse. It is a fact even if is hard to explain. It is hard for people to volunteer after 40 years they were forced by the state to volunteer at least 3 times a year for 2 weeks each. This is why people developed a strong negative sense for this. Another reason is that during communism the state played a central role and you would have risked being punished if you had acted without state approval. Also during communism – the state was the provider and not the community/the people...this sort of mentality is hard to change even after 20 years.”*

*“I would say the main barriers are complacency, apathy and people not wanting to think outside their own little world. Nowadays too many people are too egocentric, I mean they think about themselves before others and want to have a better life ‘materialistically’, but in doing so, forget about the other things in life that can make things ‘better’ for others*

and the wider community.”

*“Lack of time, opportunities, bad experiences just to name a few. The main barrier I see is the hardship of identifying a place to volunteer.”*

## 2.2 NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Regarding the future of volunteering, respondents state the importance of more support at the legislative and operative level. They underline the importance of a legal framework and appreciate the constitution of a national umbrella forum or having a more coherent approach in the sector.

Volunteer work is incorporated by respondents to the NGO sector and it needs more recognition and support from the state because it produces benefits for Romanian society.

*“My feeling is that the NGO sector (encompassing most volunteers) needs to get more recognition and support from the state level in order to underline in the Romanian society the benefits that it produces.”*

*“There is a lack of general support from the government not just to volunteering but even more to the whole NGO sector. I consider this as a major challenge especially since after adhering to the European Union funds have gotten lesser by the day and the bureaucracy of the government can lead to the tragic death of many NGO that don't have the ability to manage this type of problems.”*

Respondents underline also the questions related to the law on volunteering. That question was underlined by Saulean and Epure in 1998 when they wrote that the legal framework for the Romanian not for profit sector was insufficient and in urgent need of modernization but that was in relation to fiscal regulations, provisions and sponsorship. Now the respondents state that the voluntary sector is in need of a legal framework in order to involve people and to have a more coherent approach in the sector.

*“In Romania we need to have a strong and inclusive volunteering law, although there are opinions that volunteering does not need legal frameworks. I do not agree. What it is not written and especially in a formal way, has no value in nowadays Romanian society. Also, we have to find ways to involve people of all ages for experience-building, for active*

*ageing and for social spirit development.”*

*“Having a more coherent approach in the sector. Hopefully that will be achieved also with the help of setting up a national umbrella forum gathering the most relevant actors in the field.”*

Future challenges involve a mentality and cultural change so that people will become involved as volunteers not according to their background, age or status but considering it as something that anyone can do.

*“One main challenge would be for the perception of what volunteering means and changing the mindsets of the general population as to who can volunteer and what they can volunteer for. I see volunteering as something that anyone can do, irrelevant of background, age, status etc. I believe a lot of work needs still to be done to get local people involved as volunteers”*

*“Challenges: mentality and finding good placements for volunteers. Ideas on the future of volunteering: more functional and effective volunteer centres in Romania, increasing volunteering in Romania and valuing volunteers.”*

The most important need for organisations seems to be inherent to volunteers. They need volunteers, activities to motivate them, management strategy and general programmes to involve more volunteers. These needs are common so that human resources seem to be one of the most relevant resources to take into account. That has implication for governance and volunteer management strategy.

*“Adult volunteers, financial support, formal and informal recognition of skills and experience of our volunteers.”*

*“Volunteers management system in place and functional at all levels. Constant ways of volunteer motivation and retention. Activities that stimulate and motivate volunteers to join the Red Cross.”*

*“We are currently working in developing a volunteer management strategy. We grew so much so now we need to standardise this activity so we can have quality results.”*

One organisation's specific need relates to the construction of a common language with partner organisations.

*“In our case, being a public institution that manages a European program for NGOs that mainly work with volunteers, our most important need is to have a common 'language' with such organisations.”*

*The greatest difficulties they encounter are lack of funds and support:*

*“Lack of support at governmental level.”*

*“Limited resources and lack of openness from various NGOs and communities to embrace volunteering”*

On this issue respondents raise the cultural aspect. First of all they have to deal with an old mentality that generates lack of activities: in some sectors activities seem to stand still and that brings about a lack of funds. The old mentality reflects two conditions. First of all the difficulties of having people believe that they can do something to improve society; often people don't have the courage to do it. But there are con-

sequences on the level of responsibilities. Creating voluntary organisations implies the need of funds to implement activities for people and society; so volunteering carries several responsibilities. Implicitly respondents seem to state people are more constrained by lack of courage to participate than from the sense of responsibility.

*“Old mentalities. . . . Lack of activities in some sectors which generates lack of funds for constant development.”*

*“The hardest thing is to make people believe that they can be better than what they see around them and to have the courage to do it.”*

*“Making voluntary based organisations understand that requesting funds for volunteering activities carries several responsibilities.”*

# Representation and coordination bodies

## 1 NETWORKS AND FEDERATIONS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

There are few bodies, networks or federations within the wider not for profit sector in Romania. Formal federations exist and operate in the fields of child protection, environment, poverty reduction, student associations, and international development. In terms of consultation bodies, the Romanian Government has had since 2005 a Council for Consultation with Associations and Foundations made of appointed representatives from the major fields of not for profit activity. The volunteering movement is represented on this Council by the appointed representative of Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre.

With regard to the volunteering activity, currently there is the National Network of Volunteer Centres that has been functioning as an informal structure since 2001, meeting 3-4 times a year. It started in 2001 with 4 members and in 2009 it had 14 members. The main aim of the National Network of Volunteer Centres is facilitating the exchange of information and good practices and development of joint national projects aiming at promoting and developing volunteering.

Since November 2009 a concentrated effort has been carried out at the initiative of Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre to set up the VOLUM Federation as the national umbrella organisation of volunteer centres and volunteer involving organisations. The VOLUM Federation was formally registered in 2010 and will act as a national representation structure for volunteering with the designated aim of achieving support and recognition for volunteering, setting up the code of conduct and good practice for volunteer involvement, and implementing national-wide projects aimed at achieving proper recognition for volunteering at all levels within the society. The start-up meeting of the VOLUM Federation took place on 3 June 2010 in Bucharest. The federation was established with 25 founding members and another 12 joined, counting now 37 full members. The priorities of the VOLUM Federation include the successful implementation of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 in Romania and the initiation of a participatory process to develop and implement a long term strategy for support and development of volunteering in Romania.

## 2 NETWORKING (INTERVIEWS)

In general respondents show a good level of networking. Their organisations work with other organisations for developing specific projects and for exchanges. And sometimes networking includes collaboration with local authorities.

*"There is an average level of networking which varies a lot according to the partner and the type of partnership, what it involves etc."*

*"I work with other NGOs because I believe in partnership in order to reach our prime goal: helping the most vulnerable and alleviating human suffering."*

*"We are trying to set up several partnerships with different NGOs for developing specific youth related issues."*

*"We have over 300 partners in the communities we work in; these partnerships include NGO, churches, and schools."*

*"I have worked within various organisations for the past 12 years in various positions. We have partnered with other organisations for specific projects or for exchanging experiences. Our organisation works in close collaboration also with local authorities that provide the land for construction in most of our projects."*

## Support bodies

### 1 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRES

In terms of volunteer support centres, Romania had the first local volunteer centre in 2007 as a department of Pro Vobis. In 2002 Pro Vobis gave up its social services activities and dedicated itself exclusively to the promotion and development of volunteering in Romania, becoming the National Volunteer Centre. Pro Vobis works on 4 main lines of action:

promotion of the concept and practice of volunteering in Romania; the development of volunteering infrastructure in Romania; professionalization of the volunteer management processes; development of innovative pilot volunteering projects. Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre works closely with the National Network of Volunteer Centres and other volunteer involving organisations active at the national, regional, and local levels.

# Focus on support bodies

(Questionnaires)

## **Pro Vobis – National Resource Centre for Volunteering**

### **[CONTACT]**

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Pro Vobis is currently the National Resource Centre for Volunteering in Romania, acting as a resource centre on volunteering. Pro Vobis was established in 1992 as a social services organisation involving volunteers in social service provision. In 1997 the organisation established the first volunteer centre in Romania, as a department of the organisation. Since 2002 the organisation changed its mission and became the first professional volunteer centre in Romania, acting to promote the concept of volunteering and develop volunteering through consultancy, training, research, and networking facilitation.

The mission of Pro Vobis is to promote and develop volunteering as a viable and irreplaceable resource for solving the problems Romanian society is now facing. The main goals of Pro Vobis are: 1) to promote the concept and develop the practice of volunteering; 2) to develop the infrastructure for volunteering in Romania; 3) to professionalise the volunteer management process.

The main activities of Pro Vobis are: training, consultancy, networking, national events and conferences, public campaigns, research, advocacy and publications.

Pro Vobis' activity during 2008 proudly counts 579 volunteer involving organisations benefiting of the networking facilitation services (seminars, conferences, events), 160 individuals benefiting from tailored training in volunteer management, and over 66,700 people informed about volunteering through web sites, newsletters, events, and press coverage of Pro Vobis activities.

### Member of

- Federation of Not for Profit Associations Active in International Development in Romania (representative body for organisations in Romania carrying out development activity in the underdeveloped countries)
- CEV - European Volunteer Centre (European umbrella organisation for national and regional volunteer centres and volunteering)
- VOLUM – The Federation of Organisations Supporting the Development of Volunteering in Romania (the umbrella organisation for volunteering involving organisations in Romania)

## QUESTIONNAIRES

**Pro Vobis – National Resource Centre for Volunteering**

- 
- **Territory covered** Romania

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  - **Staff** 3 full time for volunteer support and development  
2 full time and 1 part-time for other activities

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  - **Volunteering support activities** TRAINING

# Development policies

## 1 PUBLIC INCENTIVES

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

There are very few public incentives for valuing and promoting volunteering. One of the major problems is the limited recognition volunteering has within the wider society, volunteers not being properly recognised for their contributions and facing severe prejudices for their volunteer involvement. The coverage in the national media is not very good and thus news about volunteering and its positive impact rarely reach the wider population.

The 2006 changes in the Law on Volunteering introduced one of the few public incentives for valuing volunteering: in the selection for employment in public institution the volunteering experience in related fields/activities may be considered to differentiate among several candidates with similar scores in the written examinations. There is no formal recognition of volunteer activity or of skills and competences gained through volunteering by the education system. Some private employers take into consideration volunteering when selecting candidates for available positions; however this is an individual and sporadic decision of particular employers and is not the result of a formal regulation of any sort.

## 2 CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

There are several initiatives, events and tools used by not for profits to properly recognise volunteering activity. Since 2001 the National Volunteer Week every spring, the National Conference on Volunteering, aimed at facilitating the exchange of experiences and good practices among volunteer involving organisations, the celebration of the International Volunteer day with the publication of the Volunteer Portrait Booklet have been organised and the information portal [www.voluntariat.ro](http://www.voluntariat.ro) existing since 2001 and having an average of over 100 visitors per day in the past 3 years and also specific events and recognition tools have been employed by the volunteer involving organisations. In 2008 a National Campaign to promote volunteering was organised in order to raise the profile of volunteering and stimulate proper recognition and valorisation of volunteering in society. To stimulate organisations to reflect on the contributions of volunteers in their annual reports, Pro Vobis National Volunteer Centre awards a prize every year for the best reflection of the volunteering activity in an annual report, as part of a wider competition for the best annual report of not for profits organised by the Romanian Donors Forum.

The funding of the volunteer organisations is mostly international, includes EU funding (pre-accession and structural funds), private funds from EU and US and governmental funds other than the EU funds (from embassies or international aid schemes of several countries). Other sources of funding, rather limited though, are donations, sponsorships, and in-

come generating activities. There is little financial support from the Romanian government for volunteering activities at all levels (national, regional, local) and the funds are distributed on the basis of project proposal competitions for not for profits in general, with no particular funding stream for or emphasis on volunteering. Several corporate foundations emerged in the past 5 years in Romania. They are also a source of funding for the Romanian volunteering movement depending on compatibility with their overall funding principles and priorities.

Currently there is no development strategy targeting volunteering in Romania. Developing a strategy for volunteering in Romania is one of the priorities of the VOLUM Federation of Volunteer Involving Organisations.

### 3 ON INFRASTRUCTURE FOR VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

The most important statement of respondents is that in Romania support to volunteering is never enough and fundamental needs are not covered. One of the most important associations putting pressure to place volunteering on the forefront is Pro Vobis – the National Resource Centre for Volunteering.

*“There are never enough initiatives supporting volunteering.”*

*“(the infrastructure) is poorly implemented and not covering the most important needs.”*

*“Pro Vobis Association is the only main actor that tackles this issue – and sometimes such a pressure is really hard on the organisation.”*

The most important and recent initiative to support volunteering in Romania is VOLUM, an initiative currently underway establishing the national umbrella organisation of volunteer involving organisations.

*“I believe there have been some major steps forward in putting volunteering more at the forefront through the VOLUM initiative which is getting the government more involved in the volunteer sector.”*

What is important to underline is that initiatives for support to volunteering come from NGOs; they propose law on volunteering, volunteer management training and so on.

*“NGOs initiatives are the ones that can support most appropriately*

*the development of volunteering in Romania.”*

*“With the initiative of several NGOs, things started to go on the right track – law on volunteering, volunteer management training etc. Due to several political circumstances, the authorities show a growing interest that we hope will last and will end in a real development of volunteering”*

Volunteering should be supported at different levels. First is the economic level through financial activities but also by campaigns, administrative activities and incentives. It is believed that volunteering should be recognised as work experience.

*“Recognised by the state as work experience. . . . To be appreciated on large scale. Just a “Thank you” is sometimes more valuable for a volunteer than anything else.”*

*“Laws, campaigns, motivation and retention of volunteers.”*

*“Creating supportive and flexible approaches for both administrative, financial activities, creating representative structures for a better lobbying of the sector.”*

*“At the lobbying and advocacy level. That is the stage we think are at.”*

*“I would like the state to support volunteering through benefits for companies to encourage staff to get involved. I don’t think the state should create bureaucracy for the sake of it, but should introduce incentives which will have a trickle down effect.”*

*“More communities and NGOs where volunteering is active and part of annual work plan”*

### 4 EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE (INTERVIEWS)

There is a common belief among respondents that volunteering in other European countries has a stronger tradition and history so it is more developed, recognised and supported.

*“..(It) has a long positive tradition who leads to recognition and support.”*

*“It is a concept with a better tradition and more sound history than in Romania (especially if talking about Western and Northern countries).”*

*“I think volunteering in other European countries is an excellent way for people to better understand and experience cultures and bring about a volunteering culture also in Romania.”*

At European level programmes for exchanging experiences are possible and bring about intercultural dialogue and tolerance and produce new ideas and projects.

*"It helps the exchange of knowledge and good practices, it motivates volunteers and brings about inter cultural communication and tolerance."*

*"There is a programme called European Voluntary Service that makes volunteering available and affordable. Other programs that I am aware of involve a lot of costs on the volunteer side and this is very problematic for Romanians."*

Respondents recognise the importance of an economic support at European level and other structural measures as laws and research. What is important, they say, is that initiatives have concrete benefits for their target groups. So that policies or White Papers are not enough to have output.

*"Any initiatives, including European ones, needs to have concrete benefits for their target group. I mean a policy or a White Paper is not enough. Structures, laws and allocated resources are what is needed."*

Laws, campaigns, networking and research are some of the European support but respondents are expecting financial support or financial opportunities.

*"Laws, campaigns, motivation and retention of volunteers."*

*"Networking, exchange of expertise, promoting international volunteering and last but not least, financial support."*

*"More in terms of funding opportunities and helping with best practices from States that have as part of their history communist regimes."*

*"I believe on a European level, things again can be trickled down to the local level. However there needs to be 'buy in' from the local level."*

*"Research, funders, a monitoring body."*

The most important motivations that stimulate to engage in projects with volunteer involving organisations in other European countries are three: to learn, to exchange good practices, to pass know how. Sometimes the collaboration at European level can be useful to gain resources.

*"We have a lot to learn from them and this is enough motivation to start."*

*"The exchange of good practices, know how and the certainty of organisational and personal development"*

*"If other NGOs would be interested in our service learning model – a program developing volunteering mentality."*

*"Our organisation has a well defined structure on how we use volunteers from within Romania and from abroad. We could host volunteers but they need to come through our organisation's international network. One of the biggest stimulants would be 'funds' as by raising more funds we are not only able to help more families in need, but also to engage more volunteers in our work to eliminate poor housing conditions."*

*"Resources allocated"*

**LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED****Alexandru Moldovan**

President of the Romanian National Scouts Organisation (ONCR), affiliated to the international scouts movement.

**Andreea Furtuna**

In charge of the coordination of the youth and volunteers activities at national level, identifying new activities and new funding sources for the Romanian Red Cross. Initially a social worker within the UNHCR Assistance Programme in Romania. She worked as a social counsellor in the Reception / Accommodation centres for refugees in Bucharest and she provided social and psychological counselling, health education, cultural orientation to asylum – seekers and refugees.

Throughout all her activities, Andreea cooperated with a large number of volunteers, and coordinated internships for social work students.

**Andrei Popescu**

Manager of the Youth in Action section of the National Agency for Educational and Professional Formation Programmes in Romania (AN-PCDEFP). He is responsible for managing the 5 actions under the Youth in Action programme, including the European Voluntary Service.

**Diana Certan**

Working with New Horizons Foundation for over 7 years, she has seen the organisation grow from a local organisation into a national one with many operational sites. Her work involves management of a network of local community volunteer clubs the aim of which is to educate youth for participation. Their work involves both young and adult volunteers and is very closely related to complementing the formal education with non formal education based on community action.

**Jeremy North**

National Volunteer Program Manager, he has been working with Habitat for Humanity in various roles since 1997. Originally from the UK, arrived in Romania as a volunteer with Habitat and decided to stay.

**Ramona Gotteszman**

Significant experience of working in NGOs, she has seen the sector grow in the past 20 years and her work as a community impact manager for United Way Romania makes her think in very specific terms and look for very specific experiences, being very community driven in her work.

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**INTERNET RESOURCES****Civil Society Development Foundation**

Organisation dedicated to supporting organisations of the not for profit sector.

[www.fdsc.ro](http://www.fdsc.ro)

[Romanian][English]

**Agentia Nationale pentru Ocuparea Fortei de Munca**

National Agency for Employment, whose main objective is to increase employment and lower unemployment.

[www.anofm.ro](http://www.anofm.ro)

[Romanian]

**Institutul National de Statistica**

National Institute of Statistics of Romania.

[www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)

[Romanian] [English]

**National portal on Volunteering**

[www.voluntariat.ro](http://www.voluntariat.ro)

[Romanian]

**Open Society Foundation Romania**

Soros Foundation in Romania

[www.soros.ro](http://www.soros.ro)

[Romanian][English]

**Romanian Language Dictionary**

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