

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN THE ROMANIAN SOCIETY

Abstract

The first part of the paper provides an overview of the Romanian non-governmental sector and its challenges faced after 1989. The legal basis for setting and maintaining this sector as well as the classification of non-governmental organizations and the structure of human resources are also explained. The second part of the paper performs a broad analysis covering the whole Romanian nongovernmental sector. In the end, some general recommendations on the Romanian NGO sector development are formulated.

Keywords:

NGOs governance structure, the role of NGOs in social service delivery, associative index

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ROLUL SECTORULUI NEGUVERNAMENTAL ÎN SOCIETATEA ROMÂNEASCĂ

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Rezumat

Prima parte a lucrării oferă o imagine de ansamblu asupra sectorului non-guvernamental românesc și asupra provocărilor cu care se confruntă după 1989. De asemenea, sunt oferite explicații despre temeiul juridic în baza căruia există și funcționează acest sector, clasificarea organizațiilor non-guvernamentale precum și a resurselor umane din cadrul acestora. Cea de a doua parte a lucrării realizează o analiză amplă a sectorului neguvernamental din România. În final sunt formulate câteva recomandări generale privind dezvoltarea sectorului neguvernamental românesc.

Cuvinte cheie: structura de guvernare a unui ONG, rolul ONG-urilor în furnizarea de servicii sociale, index de asociativitate.



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1. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. AN OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this paper is a survey on the Romanian nongovernmental sector in order to show its role and evolution after 1989, the legislative framework governing the sector as well as the governance and human resources structure. A broad analysis of the sector and some general recommendations for its development are offered.

The research has the following objectives:

- to present the legal framework under which the sector operates, the governance and human resources structure;
- to identify the size of the sector, the strengths and weaknesses, the main problems encountered by its members;
- to identify the support needed for the development of the sector;
- to identify challenges and future development of the sector.

The value of this paper is that it summarises recent trends and developments in the field and provides an analysis of the NGO sector in Romania as well as some practical solutions to its problems.

The qualitative data in this study was collected through the document analysis method. Therefore, the paper is focused on the study of a range of published materials (articles, reports, research studies, laws), which provide theoretical and practical researches on the Romanian nongovernmental sector and represent a basis for future researches.

Qualitative research represents a type of scientific research seeking answers to certain questions; it should be done in a systematic way and involves collecting evidence. Although it is considered subjective, qualitative research can produce findings which have been not determined in advance. Compared to quantitative research which focuses on counting and measuring things, qualitative research which is used especially by researchers working in the social sciences, focuses on understanding people's behaviour, namely their knowledge and attitudes. Qualitative research may give the respondents the possibility to provide much richer answers to the questions of the interviewer. It could provide essential information that could be lost by other research methods.

According to Robert Emerson (1983) qualitative research represents the analysis of people in their natural environment in everyday life. It aims at knowing how people live, speak and behave as well as knowing the things that excite and upset them. Denzin and Lincoln (1984) consider that quantitative research is concerned with the interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings in order to see the

meaning which people give to them. Qualitative research aims at collecting data and information about personal experiences, life stories, interactions and other important moments in people's lives. The same idea is expressed by Mays and Pope (1996) who believes that qualitative research focuses on analysing things in their natural settings in order to see the interpretations of those being studied which are considered more important than those given by the researcher.

As regards Patton (1996), qualitative research is an attempt to understand the interactions that occur between people in certain situations. In fact, the aim of the research is to understand the characteristics of the situations and the meanings given by the participants at the moment. According to Merriam (1998) the researcher has the main role in collecting and analysing data in qualitative research. He should have a clear research strategy and focus on *"understanding resulting in a richly descriptive product"*.

Qualitative research methods usually include interviews, observations, case studies and focus group but there are also other approaches used in order to conduct a qualitative research such as role-play and simulation, diary methods, document and artefact analysis, audio visual (photographs, art and film), phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory.

2. THE ROLE AND EVOLUTION OF THE NONGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN ROMANIA

The evolution of the non-profit sector in Romania is related to the state and voluntary sector development. In early modern society the Romanian state and philanthropic institutions were not well developed. After 1864 the state institutions and their involvement increased, while the third sector remained underdeveloped. During the interwar years, social protection and NGOs have developed strong, being stopped during the communist period by state institutions involvement in providing services that had been hitherto delivered by NGOs. Since 1989 the state abandoned its authoritarian pretensions and focused on NGO sector development (Hintea and Marton, 2003).

After 1989 the political regime changed and the rediscovery of democracy provided a political context favourable to the development of the associative sector (NGO environment analysis, n.d.). On the one hand this development took place in the context of political, economic and social transformation of Romanian society and on the other hand in the context of European evolution. Therefore, different associative entities such as political parties, free trade unions, and non-governmental organizations began to develop in Romania. (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010). The fall of communism created the possibility of developing a pluralistic society and building the civil society. However, the legacy of dictatorial regime and the political ambiguities did not allow such changes at the beginning (Bădescu *et al.*, 2004).

The Romanians' trust in political and public life increased, but the idea of volunteering was compromised by the coercive policies instruments of the dictatorial regime. That is why for many people "liberalization" meant giving up civic activities (Bădescu *et al.*, 2004). This situation explains the development of small-scale and the marginal role of non-governmental sector at the beginning of the transition period, limited to a few people who took the initiative to fill the gap created by the loss of government social services. Over time, political leaders began to perceive NGOs as being important threats to government legitimacy. The expansion of state control over the third sector hindered any philanthropic activity outside the government sector.

The implementation of private international programs gave the Romanians the opportunity to work in a dynamic, competitive and economic field (Burada *et al.*, 2007). Although these programs did not get the success desired by the international partners and Romanian beneficiaries, they had a great contribution to the development of public activity concept. The desire of social protection coverage has increased, as well as the interest of Romanian citizens to participate in the third sector. The possibility of accession to the EU was an important factor of supporting NGO activities. Furthermore, foreign institutions lobbied for government policies in the field (Kosterink and Oostenbrink, 2006).

In fact, the development of the NGO sector in Romania and the creation of the policy framework had been set up in the context of the monitoring process made by international organizations (Council of Europe, European Union) which Romania wanted to join. The existence and consistency of the NGO sector represented a guarantee for *democracy* and the most appropriate approach for *strengthening good governance* (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010). In addition to the political process, the transition to a market economy was also important for the development of the NGO sector in Romania. Non-governmental organizations become agents of the free market, producing goods and services and offering jobs to many people (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010).

The development of public - private partnership, especially in the social field (Costachi, 2006) as well as public management formulas also led to improvements in the NGO sector. The adoption of different methods from private to public organizations in order to gain more efficiency, transparency and accountability in managing public policies influenced the public administration reform process (Lambru and Mărginean, 2004). Therefore, after 1998, NGO were being delegated more specific responsibilities by the Romanian government, especially in the field of social services, by using different ways: grants, subsidies, privatization of services, etc. Thus, the role of NGOs in providing services increased appreciably in Romania.

Currently, attention is focused on the role of NGOs in social service delivery, one of the most important

pillars for social inclusion of vulnerable groups (Guvernul României, 2011). However, the reform in this field is rather weak (public finance - private implementation), mostly due to lack of political vision. So far, positive results were recorded due to international pressure or advocacy campaigns initiated by NGOs, and not to a strategic planning process elaborated by the government for increasing the supply of services to the citizens (Lambriu and Vameșu, 2010).

3. LEGAL ISSUES REGARDING THE FUNCTION OF NONGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN ROMANIA

The first law on non-governmental sector was adopted in 1924. In that period, this law, also known as the law Marzescu, was considered one of the most modern laws in Europe, being in force until 2000. (Hîntea and Marton, 2003). During the communist regime the law was not repealed and it was reactivated after 1990. Until its repeal, this law represented the only legislative reference allowing legal establishment of NGOs. Although it sometimes made reference to institutions that were no longer current (High Commission of Legal Entities belonging to the Ministry of Justice), and procedures were cumbersome (the obligation to obtain a notice from the ministry in the field), in most cases, the law no 21/1924 was adapted to the requirements of the post-revolutionary period (Lambriu and Vameșu, 2010).

Ten years after 1990, the government adopted a new regulation. Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 restated the definitions of associations and foundations, while retaining the main characteristics already known, but also covering aspects unregulated by the previous law.

The distinction between Law no. 21/1924 and Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 consists in a larger freedom regarding the association, the acquisition of legal personality and the internal structure of relationships between NGOs founders. This ordinance also seeks to enshrine the role of the state as a partner and, to some extent, as a promoter of nongovernmental organizations. It focuses both on the public and private sector's issues and on various types of supports for NGOs.

The Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations was subsequently amended and supplemented by Government Ordinance no. 37/2003 and Law 246/2005. The legislative framework governing associations and foundations was also modified in 2012 by Law no. 145/2012, which imposed a stricter regime for public utility associations and foundations. They were obliged to meet several conditions in order to get this status, namely to be entitled to free use of public property. In 2014 another law amending and supplementing the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 has been adopted. The law 22/2014 has introduced several provisions relating to the words that could be used to name an NGO.

4. TYPOLOGY OF THE NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ROMANIA

In Romania, non-governmental organizations work in different areas such as human rights, professional organizations, day care centers, environmental groups, sports clubs, training centers, universities, etc. (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010). According to Government Ordinance no 26 (2000), NGOs are legal entities established by individuals or legal entities pursuing certain activities in the public interest, in the interest of local communities or in their own non-patrimonial interest. The most common entities for non-governmental sector are associations, foundations and federations.

The association is composed of three or more persons pooling financial and human resources, as well as knowledge, without right to claim a refund. The association represents a way to exercise freedom of expression as well as freedom of association. It allows members to speak out about issues in the public interest, in the community interest or in its members' interest (Romanian law, 2005).

The Foundation is founded by one or more persons who constitute a patrimony designed permanently and irrevocably to the realization of a public interest or a community interest. Initially, the assets of the Foundation shall include in kind or cash goods, totalling at least 100 times the gross minimum wage (Romanian law, 2005).

The fundamental difference between two entities consists in the fact that the association represents a series of wills for achieving a goal, while the foundation represents a patrimony and it is set up for charitable purposes. The two entities are also different in other aspects: legal requirements for setting up, board structure, conditions of dissolution and liquidation.

The federation represents the association of two or more associations or foundations. They acquire legal personality and works in the same way as non-profit associations. The associations or foundations that make up a federation keep their own legal personality and own patrimony.

According to Hînțea and Marton (2003), there are other organizations along with associations and foundations. The fact that they are considered as *belonging to the non-governmental sector* is however questionable. The lack of clear criteria for determining the organizations of the governmental sector leads to inclusion in this sector of the following organizations:

- *The cooperatives* - are the economic associations based on the freely expressed consent of the members. They carry out activities using means of production which are rented or in collective ownership. The cooperatives have the possibility of dividing the profits among employees. This feature raises questions about their inclusion in non-governmental and non-profit sector.

- *The mutual support organizations* - are non-profit associations, organized with the free consent of the economic units' employees. They aim to provide financial support to members. The incomes received are not shared between members, but they are included in a social fund in order to support loans.
- *The state business organizations* - were set up in 1991 in order to maintain dialogue with trade unions and to serve as partners for wage bargaining.
- *The trade unions* - are non-political organizations, set up in order to defend and promote the professional, economic, social, and cultural as well as sports interests of their members. They are independent from the state, political parties or any other governmental organization. They do not operate under Government Ordinance no. 26/2000, but their organization justifies their inclusion in the NGO sector.
- *The National Red Cross Society* - operates as a legal entity of public law, also being non-governmental, non-political, independent and non-profit. It receives financial support from the state budget in order to carry out some of its activities.
- *The sporting clubs* - are funded from extra budgetary funds as well as subsidies from the state budget. They are under different auspices and their relations with state institutions and private sector justify their inclusion in the non-governmental sector.
- *The youth foundations* - are autonomous, even if most of their programs are funded through state grants.
- *The Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Romania* - are autonomous non-governmental organizations, with public utility. They have legal personality and are set up by the free association of traders. They derive their income from provision of specialized services and do not carry out commercial activities.
- *The political parties* - are free and voluntary associations of Romanian citizens having the right of voting and exercising their political will. They are legal persons governed by public law, financed from contributions, donations or income from their own business activities. **However**, although some authors in the literature (Saulean and Epure, 1998; Lambu and Vameșu, 2010) consider that political parties represent a form of free association of citizens, the post-communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe are not convinced and do not share this opinion which generates controversial debates.

The central government institutions use different definitions and uncertain criteria in relation to the non-governmental sector. For example, taking into account the form of organization, the National Institute of Statistics classifies enterprises into commercial or non-commercial. The non-commercial organizations include budgetary institutions, central and local public administration and non-governmental organizations. Thus, the enterprises - in the broad sense of the word - include non-governmental organizations such as associations and foundations, trade unions, political parties, religious organizations. According to the National Institute of Statistics, NGOs are called private administration.

However, the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 states that political parties, trade unions and churches are not covered by its provisions. Although all these organizations have special regulations on the setting up and operations, they are supplemented by Government Ordinance no. 26/2000, which justifies their relation to the NGO sector (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010). Moreover, religious denominations can set up associations or religious organizations operating under Government Ordinance no. 26/2000. (Hințea and Marton, 2003).

In the National Register of NGOs, the Ministry of Justice uses the classification from the framework law, which is different from the classification used by the National Institute of Statistics. Thus, some categories are merged and professional organizations are included in the associations section. The Ministry of Finance, in some records and balance sheets or other evidence of financial control bodies, uses a generic category, namely other legal forms.

5. THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCES OF NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The NGOs governance structure consists of the following organs: the General Assembly, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director (Government Ordinance, 2000). The General Assembly consists of all members of nongovernmental organizations (having or not having the right of voting) and has several key responsibilities: approval of the organization's strategy, approval of the annual budget, election of the governing bodies. The General Assembly is usually convened each year or in special sessions (Extraordinary General Assembly). During the period between two General Assemblies the management functions are delegated to the Board of Directors. This structure (the General Assembly) does not exist in the foundations and its functions are taken over by the Board of Directors (Romanian Association for Community Development, 2004).

The Board of Directors sets the goals, objectives and philosophy of the organization. It takes the organizational decisions, based on the expertise and experience of its members ensuring that the

organization meets the needs of beneficiaries, members and community. A Board of Directors that works well is the cornerstone of a successful NGO, providing direction, vision and, to some extent, protection to the organization. It is responsible for the governance of the organization. The way in which the Board of Directors and the members perform tasks is different from one organization to another depending on: the type of organization (association or foundation), the budget, the age of the organization, etc (Romanian Association for Community Development, 2004).

There is no universal model regarding the size, the structure of the organization or the Board of Directors that have been proven to work in all situations. In addition, all organizations suffer transformations over time that requires periodic review and adjustments. The executive management is provided by the executive director. This will monitor the current operation of the organization, the implementation of projects and programs and will continuously monitor the external environment (Hințea and Marton, 2003). The Board of Directors focuses on ideas while the executive director focuses on results. The executive management organizes resources in order to achieve the objectives set by the board. A trust relationship could be maintained between the two entities if they operate according to their responsibilities.

In nongovernmental organizations human resources is the set of individuals who contribute to achieving organizational goals and are involved in the organization's activities. These individuals dedicate part of their time, expertise, energy and enthusiasm to the organization. Human resources could be numerically evaluated (number of individuals, hours or days dedicated to working in the organization) as well as in term of quality (experience and training). There are also other elements very difficult to quantify such as involvement, energy, intervention, creativity and dedication (Romanian Association for Community Development, 2004).

From this point of view, compared to the business or public sector, NGOs are favoured because their objectives and target group allow them to attract more enthusiastic and creative people who are also more committed to the mission of the organization.

However, human resources management in the NGO sector is often weaker than business or public sector and could lead to lower performance when it assumes that the energy, enthusiasm and creativity could compensate for the lack of organization. Furthermore, human resource management is also complicated by the fact that some members become employees, another work as volunteers or some of them are members in the Board of Directors etc. Basically, in an organization (association), the human resource structure might look something like this:

- Members who are either founders or members of the organization. In Romania there are no

active policies for attracting members in the nongovernmental organizations. Typically, organizations are limited to the number of founder members. Thus, most organizations have less than 10 members (49.6%). There are also a number of organizations having more than 10 members. These organizations getting a large number of members are called professional organizations (Foundation for Civil Society Development, 2010).

- Employees with permanent contract as well as fixed term contract (the latter are also called collaborators, experts, consultants, being employed during the implementation of projects). The employees represent the administrative team within an organization and report to the Executive Director.
- Volunteers represent individuals who work and assist employees in an organization without receiving wages.
- Currently, NGOs have to face two major challenges: decreased funding and increased demands on services. In this context, the professionalization of members and employees as well as the communication with volunteers should be one of the strategic activities of the NGO sector.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN ROMANIA

The nongovernmental sector in Romania has evolved and continues to evolve into a complex and challenging context, into a country with little tradition of trust, self-determination and community responsibility (Dakova et al, 2000). Therefore, the NGO sector is often characterized as unreliable, fragmented, replacing *collective responsibility* with individualized working relationships. Moreover, the economic and social difficulties caused by the economic crisis affecting all aspects of daily life, also have a negative impact on the NGO sector. However, despite the problematic experiences generated by the Romanian democratization process and the difficulties caused by the crisis, the NGO sector has registered significant achievements, responding to acute needs.

6.1. The size of the NGO sector in Romania, territorial distribution and types of activities performed

The NGO sector in Romania is characterized by many organisations varying in their scale of operations, the mix and type of services they deliver and the locations in which they deliver. All NGOs with legal personality registered in Romania are included in the NGO National Registry (Ministry of Justice, 2014). The consultation of this registry highlights the fact that most of them are associations. Such evidence is also kept by the National Institute of Statistics (2014). The analysis of the National Institute of Statistics

evidence and the NGO National Registry points out that in Romania the associative index is high due to the large number of associations and foundations. Thus, there are over 61000 associations and foundations (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010) in our country with a population of 19.6 million (Demograf, 2014), namely an NGO per 320 inhabitants.

According to the NGO National Registry, the associations have the most dynamic registration which is explained by the more simple setting conditions: the association requires at least three founding members and one gross minimum wage, while the foundation may be set up by one founding member, but the initial patrimony should consist of at least 100 gross minimum wages.

According to Lambru and Vameșu (2010), most NGOs are located in three regions, București-Ilfov, Center and Northwest, which are considered the wealthiest regions in Romania. The same authors mention that the majority of NGOs (87%) are located in urban areas. This situation could be explained by the complex process of setting up an NGO which involves a notary or a lawyer as well as going to the Ministry of Justice or sending and receiving documents from this institution. The operation of these organizations also requires an accountant and qualified human resources in various fields, especially in writing projects. Even if their number is small in rural areas, these organizations operate at all geographical levels in our country: national, regional and local level. (Foundation for Civil Society Development, 2010).

Taking into account the number of registered juridical persons, the most important areas of NGOs activities are: sports and recreational activities (18.8%), education (7.5%) and social (7.3%). Taking into account the staff, the most important area is education (19.03%), followed by sports and recreational activities (11.56%), and social with 9.4% of the workforce employed in NGOs. Taking into account the annual revenue, education is by far the most important, 22.27% of the total revenue coming from the NGO sector. (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010).

6.2. Economic perspective on the Romanian NGO sector

In recent years there has been a steady increase of NGOs revenue, the share of revenue sources being the same. However, the financial resources of many organizations (66.6%) are small and very small, limiting their ability to operate. Thus, most of them have no income or an income less than 40,000 lei per year (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010).

The NGO sector in Romania is a major employer, providing a large number of jobs (Foundation for Civil Society Development, 2010). Although the economic performance of the sector grows, the number of full-time employment decreases (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010), showing that the sector searches

efficiency and productivity and, perhaps, a preference for more flexible forms of employment.

The NGO sector in Romania operates in almost all social and economic areas, having various functions of representation, self-help or service delivery. Despite nongovernmental sector's debates about the need for finding viable and independent alternatives for financing the activities, the organizations do not show an obvious tendency to adopt entrepreneurial strategies. The revenues from economic activities of NGOs grow slowly and their *share has remained fairly constant in recent years*. Moreover, according to Foundation for Civil Society Development (2010), the most important sources of revenue for NGOs are grants - with funds from the European Union, foreign or international foundations, membership fees, 2%, sponsorships and individual donations. The economic activities have a fairly low success rate, their percentage being 5.5%.

6.3. The relationship between NGO and the public sphere

Up to now, there was no governance systematically and pragmatically interested in the development of the NGO sector. The different periods of governance were characterized by fragmentation, combined with plenty of rhetoric about supporting this sector. The lack of interest in this sector reflects, to some extent, the lack of reflection on the general issue of the relation state - market and on the promotion of good governance (Lambru and Vameșu, 2010).

In the past 25 years, the approach of the relation state - market has been limited, the governments focusing almost exclusively on the privatization of state-owned enterprises or on the promotion of low variants of public - private partnerships or hybrid arrangements. In other words, the different governments have limited the Romanian society to the public sector and to the business one. The nongovernmental sector was almost absent from the political vision of the past 25 years. This could explain the lack of political commitment on this sector's involvement in the public policy process.

The visibility of the NGO sector among politicians has always been low. Although it follows an increasing trend, the awareness and recognition of non-governmental sector in the Romanian society is reduced. In these circumstances, the political leaders as well as the public administration leaders do not demonstrate a good knowledge of the characteristics, usefulness and opportunities regarding this sector development.

However, in recent years the media has reported that some NGOs have been used by political parties to cover the costs of election campaigns (sociological surveys, election events). According to a study elaborated in 2008 (Moraru, Ercuș, Miron, 2008), the financing of political parties by foundations is "*widespread, some foundations publically assuming this relationship*." In most cases, the NGOs are

used to make payments for the electoral campaign events, to collect donations, to organize the activity of the so-called volunteers, in fact people paid to deal with the electoral campaigns.

Over the past few years, NGOs have shown a growing interest in the public policy making process by participating in public consultation and submitting comments to the normative acts submitted to public debate. However, the authorities have preferred consultations with certain stakeholders such as employers and trade unions (social partners). NGOs and citizens have been much harder to fit into the public agenda, their approach in public consultation processes being less formal. (Foundation for Civil Society Development, 2010). In other words, NGOs and citizens involvement in public consultation is more difficult to manage by public authorities. Moreover, the public consultation in Romania is formal and limited, focusing on discussing the alternative proposed by the public administration, and not on setting goals and possible strategies. (Lambriu, 2006).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Romanian nongovernmental sector and its role in the society was investigated in this paper by studying different researches in the field. The paper attempted a qualitative research in order to provide an overview of the Romanian non-governmental sector by presenting the political, economic and social context of its evolution, the challenges faced after 1989, the legal basis for setting and maintaining this sector, the classification of non-governmental organizations and the structure of human resources.

The data analyzed in this paper highlights the following aspects:

- The need to improve the public image and the credibility of the sector

Therefore it is recommended to highlight the impact of NGOs' activities upon society and increase their transparency, to maintain a constant dialogue with the public, to submit petitions of protest to the authorities complaining about not having been consulted on NGOs involvement in the financing of political parties.

- The need to transform NGOs into major players in the economy, providing jobs and reviving different sectors (rural development, agriculture, forestry, etc.).

Therefore, it is recommended to create a legislative framework in order to stimulate social entrepreneurship among NGOs which could become an essential source of finance for them. In this way, Romanian NGOs will give more importance to economic activities than donations and sponsorships. Social entrepreneurship, applying business principles to solve social problems, will help create jobs and thus decrease unemployment. At the same time, the government should pay special

attention to poorer regions of the country where the number of registered NGOs is lower than in the rich ones.

- The need for strengthening cooperation within the sector in order to best serve the needs and interests of the community.

This need could be satisfied through different means such as dissemination of information, complementing the services provided by NGOs, forming *coalitions* and *networks* around a common interest or problem, organizing national meetings on increasing communication between NGOs and educating the public about the role of NGOs.

- The need to improve NGOs' capacity to plan, organize and manage as well as to strengthen the capacity for strategic support and development of the sector, especially in rural areas.

This involves developing a national network of NGO resource centers with capacities and resources for sector representation at the national level as well as for assuming the formulation of the sector's needs, interests and achievements, providing internet access to rural NGOs, continuing the Romanian publications that are relevant to the sector.

- The need to strengthen relationships among public and nongovernmental organizations in order to effectively engage in solving socio-economic issues.

The partnership between NGOs and government structures could create an effective remedy for overcoming the crisis and for *bringing the individual* to the *forefront* as an essential factor for cooperation and development in the Romanian society. Moreover, this partnership could find the best solutions to the society problems that finally satisfy the citizens. Working with public institutions that have authority in a community and *enjoys the highest confidence* rating of *citizens*, will increase the recognition and appreciation of non-governmental organizations activities. Moreover, the achievement of objectives will increase the credibility of NGOs, further contributing to attract a large number of donors.

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