

NATIONAL REPORT – ROMANIA

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN ROMANIA

1.1 History and contextual background

Literature indicates that Romanian civil society emerged during the early 20th century when cultural and sport associations started to develop alongside the Catholic Church, which has been historically involved in helping disadvantaged groups through its monastic orders and church associations (Association for Community Relations-ACR, 2003)¹. However, during the communist regime, many of the civil society structures were destroyed and those remaining were placed under the control of the totalitarian administration. Following the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, the voluntary sector re-emerged in Romania. External factors also helped to promote voluntary activities and organisations: after 1990, a large number of foreign volunteers arrived in Romania, many of whom took part in social assistance activities or contributed to social services (such as, through 'Médecins Sans Frontières'). More recently, the 2001 International Year of Volunteering helped to launch the Romanian Volunteering Law.

Whilst progress has been made in the development of a Romanian civil society in line with those seen in Western Europe, further development is still needed. Statistics have shown that the rate of volunteering in Romania has remained persistently constant (Badescu et al., 2007)². Furthermore, in 1990, around 300 NGOs were founded every month. However, on a comparative basis, at that time Romania continued to have the lowest number of NGOs amongst the ex-communist countries.

This is in part due to low levels of social trust in Romania and a lack of tradition in forming associations (whether formal or informal). According to Voicu & Voicu (2003), the low levels of volunteering and negative prejudices associated with it stem from the communist period in Romania, during which "voluntary work" meant unpaid and mandatory activities, imposed by the communist public administration on its citizens³. "Voluntary" patriotic activities would include agricultural activities (harvesting for state companies), cleaning public places, and gathering recyclables⁴. Penalties could be applied in case a person refused to participate into these activities. Moreover, during the communist period, non-governmental associations could not be established and operate without state control. The law also prohibited the civil right of individuals to free association. As a result, there were very few non-governmental associations in existence at that time (such as, the Women's National Association) and they would normally be controlled by the state. Furthermore, such organisations often had strong political ties, with the central or local authorities naming the heads of local and national associations. As such, it can be argued that the communist regime disempowered the civil society in Romania (Voicu & Voicu, 2003). In addition to the legacies of the communist regime, there are a number of other factors, which have impacted on the slow development of the NGO sector in Romania. These include: the traditional character of the Romania society in which social connectedness is exclusively confined to family ties; and the lack of social trust in other reference social groups, outside of the family circle. Studies undertaken by the John Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Projects also suggest that the voluntary sector in Romania may be affected by the national

¹ Association for Community Relations (Allavida) (2003). 'Trends in Romanian Philanthropy: Individual and business giving'. Available at Internet:

http://www.arcromania.ro/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=62

² Badescu, G., Comsa, M., Sandu, D., M. Stanculescu (2007). Barometer of Public Opinion 1998-2007.

Published by the Soros Foundation. Available at: <http://www.osf.ro/ro/publicatii.php?pag=3>.

³ Voicu, Mălina, and Bogdan Voicu. (2003) *Volunteering in România: a rara avis*. In Loek Halman, Paul Dekker (eds.). *The Values of Volunteering: Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers.

⁴ It is worth mentioning that some stakeholders argue that these activities imposed by the authorities were actually agreeable and enhanced social cohesion at that time.

economic situation (Epure et al., 2001)⁵. For instance, the decreasing trend in volunteering between 1996 and 1997 – a period marked by economic downturn– may indicate that volunteerism in Romania does not have the character of “economic complementarity”, but of “superposition”. Results have shown that periods of economic hardship tend to correlate with lower rates of volunteering.

1.2 Definitions

The Romanian Law on Volunteering (*Legea Voluntariatului*) was adopted in 2001 and amended in 2006. It defines volunteering as:

- a) Volunteering is an activity of public interest, undertaken out of free will by a person aiming at helping others, without being motivated by financial or material gains.
- b) The public interest activity is carried out in various domains such as social assistance and services; environmental protection; culture, education, arts etc.
- c) The organisation hosting the volunteers or carrying out the voluntary activities may be a non-profit private or a public organisation, run in the public benefit. Once the nature of voluntary activities, their complexity, risks and impacts are taken into account, the two parties - the volunteer and the host organisation - *can* sign a volunteering contract.
- d) If the contract is signed, the volunteer is obliged to carry out an activity in the public interest without gaining any financial remuneration.
- e) The beneficiary can be an individual or an organisation; the organisation recruiting and signing the contract with the volunteer does not have to be identical with the beneficiary of the voluntary activities.⁶

In practice, however, certain observers believe that the concepts of volunteering and volunteer require further clarification for a number of reasons. First, there are categories of paid professionals who are also grouped under the same umbrella-concept of “volunteer”. For example, the law on the “voluntary military service” stipulates that the “volunteer soldiers will receive a monthly payment” for their contracted services⁷. In that sense, the Romanian Dictionary defines the concept of “volunteer” as pertaining not only to actions out of one’s free will (i.e., without constraint) but also to persons “joining the army out of free will or performing a service willingly and unselfishly”. Furthermore, fire brigades can also be included in the category of “volunteers” although they are not subject to the Romanian Law on Volunteering.

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

The following section provides further details on the number and profile of volunteers active in Romania.

Total number of volunteers

There is no definitive data available on the total number of volunteers in Romania. The lack of data on this matter is determined by two key factors: firstly, not all volunteers sign a volunteering contract with the host organisation; and secondly there is no national register of volunteering contracts. The Law on Volunteering only stipulates that NGOs are required “to keep evidence” of their volunteers but there is no information regarding the implementation of this provision in practice.

⁵ Epure, C., Tigianescu, O. And A. Vamesu (2001). ‘Romanian Civil Society: An agenda for Progress. A preliminary report on the civic index on civil society project in Romania’. Civicus Index on Civil Society Occasional Paper Series, volume 1, issue 9.

⁶ The Law no.339 of 17 July 2006, for the amendment and completion of the Law of Volunteerism no.195/2001. Available at Internet: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm_act_text?id=74382

⁷ Information provided by representative of Pro Vobis, the national agency for volunteering in Romania.

In the absence of complete figures, there are several other useful sources of secondary data, notably survey data: the European Values Survey; the Public Opinion Barometer of the Open Society Foundation; a database collected by the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF); data collected by the Association for Governmental Strategies and the Association for Community Relations. Needless to say, the total number of volunteers in Romania's adult population can be roughly estimated from the percentages of volunteers included in the survey results.

When calculating the percentage of volunteers in Romania's adult population, it is important to pay particular attention to the different research methodologies utilised by the different surveys (for example, different questionnaire items, sampling methods, etc). Furthermore, there are several shortcomings with these data sources: first they are based on auto-evaluation and no other objective measurements of volunteering are provided; and second the samples often include the adult population aged over 18 (e.g., sampling in the Public Opinion Barometer), which ignores a significant pool of volunteers amongst high school pupils aged under 18.

The following percentages are presented:

- 2008: 12.8% (approx. 1.7 million)⁸ (source: 2008 European Values Survey)⁹ ;
- 2007: 5.8%¹⁰ (approx. 810,000) (Source: Barometer of Public Opinion, CFDS)¹¹;
- 2002: 8% (approx. 1.1 mil) (source: ARC and Allavida)¹² ;
- 1999: 9.5% (approx. 1.3 mil) (source: 1999 European Values Survey)¹³.

The study "Opinions and Perceptions about NGOs in Romania" conducted by the Institute of Marketing and Surveys in Romania (IMAS) in November 2000 (CSDF, 2005) also provided results in line with the above figures. Only 8.3% of those interviewed reported that they had ever considered taking up volunteering in the past (Giurgiu 2001)¹⁴.

In Romania there seems to be a large discrepancy between the percentage of "voluntary members of associations" (estimated between 9.2% in 2000 and 7.2% in 2007) and the actual proportion of active volunteers ("who do voluntary work on a regular monthly basis"), which is estimated to be much lower; under 2% of the adult population (Badescu et al. 2007)¹⁵.

According to the 2008 European Values Study, more than half of Romanian volunteers (54% of volunteers) undertake unpaid work for only one organisation and a significantly

⁸ The estimation is based on the total adult population (15-65), which was roughly 14,029,837 (approx. 65% of the total population in Romania).

⁹ The Research Institute for Quality of Life (2009). *'European Values Survey 2008'*. Preliminary data provided by The Research Institute for Quality of Life (ICCV). Romania, Bucharest.

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that in this survey, 72% of the respondents who were members of associations and foundations declared that they did voluntary work few times a year. Only 12% of the NGO members do unpaid voluntary work on a regular weekly basis (which amounts to less than 1% of the total sample).

¹¹ Soros Foundation Romania (2007). *Public Opinion Barometer*. May 2007. Available online at: http://www.osf.ro/ro/program_articol.php?articol=107

¹² Associations for Community Relations (2003). *'Trends in Romanian Philanthropy: individual and business giving'*. Available at Internet: http://www.arcromania.ro/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=62

¹³ Voicu & Voicu, 2003.

¹⁴ Giurgiu, Anca (2001) *Volunteer Activity and the Volunteers in Romania*, in Social Economy and Law Journal (SEAL), Autumn 2001. Summary available at Internet: <http://www.efc.be/cgi-bin/articlepublisher.pl?filename=AG-SE-10-01-2.html>

¹⁵ Badescu, G., Comsa, M., Sandu, D., M. Stanculescu (2007). *Barometer of Public Opinion 1998-2007*. Published by the Soros Foundation. Available at Internet: <http://www.osf.ro/ro/publicatii.php?pag=3>

lower proportion (23%) volunteer for more than one non-profit organisation at the same time.

On a more positive note, the results of the national survey carried out by the Association for Community Relations showed that 40% of the respondents were willing to take up volunteering in the following 12 months (ARC, 2003). However, it is difficult to judge if this high score is determined by a high proportion of socially-desirable answers in the survey or by an increasingly-positive attitude towards volunteerism in general.

Trend

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions regarding trends in the number of volunteers in Romania because of the lack of definitive data on this issue. A comparative glance at the numbers of volunteers between 1999 and 2008 would suggest that the rate of volunteering has increased slightly from 9.5% to 12.8% (see above). The accounts of the main stakeholders in the NGOs sector (such as Pro Vobis National Agency) similarly suggest that the number of volunteers has grown, albeit from low rates. There is however a concern that the social surveys measuring the percentage of volunteers in the Romanian population (see the Public Opinion Barometer and the European Values Survey) might underestimate the total number of volunteers because their samples do not include the majority of pupils in secondary school (aged under 18).

Bearing in mind data shortcomings, the available data demonstrates that progress is rather slow in this area. There are several factors accounting for this phenomenon. Some have already been mentioned (for example, an under-developed civil society, the impact of precarious economic conditions, etc.). In addition research suggests that the lack of interest in NGOs as well as ignorance about their role in society also impacts negatively on volunteering rates in Romania. For example, in 2007, 23.9% of the respondents to the Barometer of Public Services (aged over 18) did not know the concept of “non-governmental organisation”. Furthermore, almost a third of respondents (29.85%) failed to see a link between participation in voluntary organisations and active citizenship (Badescu et al., 2007).

Gender

The profile of the Romanian volunteer is in general similar to the typical volunteer seen in the rest of Europe. In that sense, Romanian volunteers tend to be younger, well educated, wealthier, and displaying higher levels of trust (Voicu & Voicu, 2003). There does not appear to be a clear relationship between gender and volunteerism. This might be explained by the fact that Romanian women, who, in principle, are thought to be more likely to volunteer, generally do as much paid work as men do. Furthermore, Romanian women also carry out the greatest amount of domestic work, implying a higher rate of “time poverty” - which can deter them from engaging in unpaid work. The 2008 European Values Survey finds that the number of volunteers is almost equally distributed among men (13.5%) and women (12.2%) (The Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2009).

Age groups

Research confirms that the age group most committed to volunteering are young people aged under 30 (ARC, 2003, Rigman, 2009)¹⁶. More precisely, approximately 14.6% of young people under 30 do voluntary work (2008 European Values Survey). Surprisingly, table 1 (below) shows an increase in the rate of volunteerism towards the upper end of the age spectrum, in particular those aged between 60 and 69 years (15.3% do voluntary work within that age group). However, a breakdown of the data into types of voluntary activities reveals that most of the elderly volunteers do voluntary work predominantly for religious organisations, including the church.

¹⁶Rigman, C. (2009). ‘*Volunteers in Romania: A Profile*’ (draft paper provided by the author). Center for the Study of Democracy, Faculty of Political Science, University of Babes-Bolyai. Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Table 1: Age groups of volunteers per domain of voluntary activity

Domain of voluntary activity	Age Groups							Total
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+	
Social services for elderly, disabled, poor people	3%	4%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%	3%
Voluntary work for religious organisations, including church	4%	4%	5%	5%	9%	9%	4%	6%
Education, art, music	4%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Trade unions	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	0%	2%
Political parties and associations	1%	4%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Community initiatives tackling unemployment, poverty, housing and ethnic segregation	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Human rights and developing countries	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Environment and animal rights	5%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%
Professional associations	1%	2%	0%	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%
Youth organisations	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Sport and leisure	3%	4%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Women's organisations	0%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	3%	1%
Peace initiatives	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	3%	0%
Health	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%
Other	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	1%
Total proportion of volunteers per age group	14.6%	12%	11.6%	12.7%	15.3%	10.2%	10.6%	12.8%

Source: Adapted from 2008 European Values Survey (Institute for the Research of Life Quality, 2009).

When the effect of religious volunteerism (predominantly amongst older people) is taken out of the equation, the empirical evidence unequivocally demonstrates that volunteering decreases with age - the age of 30 being the threshold, above which volunteering remains consistently low. Even amongst the youngest, the rate of volunteering is considered low. In 2008, only 2.4% of young people were members of NGOs; in 2007 the figure was 4%, which represents a drop of 1.6 percentage points. More than half of young people acknowledged that they are not willing to take up volunteering (Dalu et al., 2008)¹⁷.

Geographical spread of volunteering in the country

In geographical terms, the greatest numbers of volunteers tend to come from either larger cities or from very small communities. More specifically, the results of the 2008 European Values Survey illustrate that 18% of the local adult population in the smallest towns and 17% of the inhabitants living in larger cities (with a population between 100,000 and 199,000 inhabitants) are involved in volunteering. Inhabitants in medium-size cities are less

¹⁷ Dalu, A., Plaesu, A., and G. Angheliescu (2008). *The Social Situation and Expectations of Young People. Barometer of Public Opinion-Youth 2008*. Published by the National Agency for Supporting Youth Initiative (ANSIT). Available at: http://www.ansitromania.ro/upload/BOP_2008.pdf

likely to undertake voluntary work (approx. 8%). According to the same survey source, a total of 12.2% of the urban population and 13.4% of the rural population are involved in voluntary activities.

It also acknowledged that living standards and the local economy play an important role in volunteering. Hence, people living in the poorer parts of Romania (South of Muntenia and South-East) are least likely to volunteer (Dalu et al., 2008). The majority of volunteers are concentrated in the most developed parts of Romania in the south, south-west and western part of Romania (Bucharest, Banat and Transylvania, respectively).

Education levels

As table 2 illustrates, most Romanian volunteers are educated to secondary and tertiary level. In a survey of volunteering practices in 12 cities in Romania, Rigman (2009) finds that over half of the volunteers have already completed high school; 21.5% have acquired a university diploma; and 5.4% a post graduate diploma. A further 14.4% are still students at various educational levels; and 4.2% have not graduated from high school.

Table 2: Education level of volunteers

		Proportion of volunteers
Education	No education or pre-primary	7,3%
	Primary education	11,6%
	Lower secondary	9,0%
	Upper secondary - academic	17,5%
	Upper secondary - vocational	9,5%
	Post-secondary non-tertiary education	12,3%
	Tertiary	17,0%

Source: Adapted from 2008 European Values Survey (Institute for the Research of Life Quality, 2009).

Volunteer involvement by sectors

There is no precise data available on the levels of volunteering in each sector of activity. Table 1 shows that the main fields of activity in which Romanians perform voluntary work are the following (in descending order)¹⁸:

- Religion: 6% of Romania's adult population (the study run by ARC, 2003 found a much higher percentage for this category: 16%);
- Social services for disadvantaged groups (elderly, poor and disabled): 3%;
- Environment, ecology and animal rights: 3%;
- Education, music and culture: 2%;
- Sport and leisure activities: 2%;
- Trade unions: 2%;

¹⁸ Source: 2008 European Values Survey (Institute for the Research of Life Quality, 2009).

- Politics: 2%;
- Community actions (targeting poverty, unemployment, housing, inequality): 1%;
- Human rights and developing countries: 1%;
- Professional associations: 1%;
- Youth: 1%;
- Women's associations: 1%;
- Health: 1%.

Research suggests that most volunteer activities are carried out in informal settings such as, in church groups (for 16.7% of volunteers), neighbourhood groups, parents' committees or other groups/informal associations organised around school institutions. It is worth mentioning that religious organisations and religious NGOs (particularly Greek-Catholic and Roman-Catholic), often work with volunteers. Very few volunteers are involved in the sport domain. Furthermore, very few Romanians (and Romanian companies) are involved in corporate volunteering. Despite this, good practice in corporate volunteering was reported at Vodafone and Sensiblue. However, more research and better data is needed in this area.

Profile of volunteers by employment status

Volunteers tend to be employed: only 8.2% of the volunteers who perform unpaid work on a regular basis are unemployed (compared to 18.3% of non-volunteers who are unemployed) (ARC, 2003). Volunteers are also more likely to be employed by private companies than individuals who do not volunteer (37.7% of volunteers versus 22.8% of non-volunteers).

Time dedicated to volunteering

There is limited data available on the average amount of time allocated to voluntary activities. An early study carried out by the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) in 1997 revealed that the average number of hours dedicated to volunteering by Romanian volunteers amounted to seven hours per month¹⁹. This average varies according the field of voluntary activity. A later survey of 144 NGOs carried out by the same institution in 2005 shows that roughly half of the volunteers work between 10 and 20 hours per month: 25 % of volunteers work between 25 and 40 hours; and 14% between 80 and 120 hours per month²⁰. Once again, it seems that the average time dedicated to volunteering can vary across sectors - volunteers in culture, education, youth and environment sectors dedicate on average more time than volunteers active in other sectors.

However, the empirical evidence is far from consensual. A recent study drawing upon a volunteering survey in 12 cities in Romania (Rigman, 2009) suggests that the time allocated by volunteers on a monthly basis varies and may be significantly lower: from "less than an hour" (3,5% of volunteers); between 1-4 hours (27,6%); 5-10 hours (24,4%); 11-20 hours (25,2%); to more than 20 hours per month (17.8%). Differences may be explained by the characteristics of the survey samples.

There is also a lack of data on the time invested by volunteers in the private sector. In the past 2-3 years, companies have started to be involved in corporate volunteering²¹. The duration of voluntary activities carried out by employees varies between companies: from one-day activities up to a whole week-voluntary programme. The duration is highly dependent on internal company policy. Very few companies allow their employees to take up volunteering during normal working hours and most volunteering takes place outside

¹⁹ Civil Society Development Foundation (2005). 'Dialogue for Civil Society. Report on the state of civil society in Romania'. Available at Internet: <http://www.fdsc.ro/documente/13.pdf>

²⁰ Civil Society Development Foundation (2005). 'Dialogue for Civil Society. Report on the state of civil society in Romania'. Available at Internet: <http://www.fdsc.ro/documente/13.pdf>

²¹ Information provided by the representative of ARC, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

normal working hours, in the evenings, weekends or during lunchtime breaks. Voluntary activities can also be recorded as part of annual leave.

Companies usually run such voluntary programmes once per year, although there are exceptional cases such as, Petrom that frequently runs its green volunteering activities under the programme “Romania puts down roots”.

1.4 **Number and type of voluntary organisations**

The following section provides further information on the number and type of organisations engaging volunteers in Romania.

Definition of voluntary organisations in Romania

Non-governmental organisations are differentiated from other types of organisations on the basis of their non-profit/non-commercial objective of activity (“fara scop patrimonial”). However, it is important to note that Romanian legislation does not make use of the term “non-governmental” as such. The closest equivalent term is “juridical person of private law statute without a commercial objective” (*persoana juridica de drept privat fara scop patrimonial*). Under this legal category, associations and foundations can be established on the basis of the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 regarding associations and foundations. It is worth mentioning that both practitioners and academics in this field recommend the exclusion of political parties from the taxonomy of civil society organisations because political parties constitute interest groups of certain individuals exercising political power.

Literature also suggests that non-profit organisations may constitute the broadest term in this area, grouping all organisations that are not profit-making and are (at least) partly autonomous from the state (ARC, 2003). This would cover formal or informal community groups, NGOs, religious organisations and institutions and public institutions, as well as political parties and partisan organisations. Community groups can be either formally registered or informal groups organised in the interest of the local community. Public institutions usually pertain to non-profit public institutions, which belong to various state authorities but preserve a certain level of autonomy. Schools, universities, hospitals, museums, churches etc are grouped under the same category.

Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector

Various NGOs in Romania attempted to provide information on the share of voluntary organisations in each sector but there is still a lack of comprehensive statistics on this matter. Examining a database of 6,936 NGOs, CSDF concludes that 28% of NGOs operate in the domain of social and medical services, 25% in sport and culture and approximately 15% in education and training.

Another source of information constitutes the data collected by Centras (2006). Drawing upon data from 934 NGOs, it finds that NGOs are mainly active in the following sectors or fields of activity:

- business (14.6%);
- education and research (13.5%);
- culture and education (11.5%);
- sport and leisure: (11%);
- health: (8%);
- social services: (7.6%);
- protection of human rights and citizenship rights: (6.3%);
- international cooperation: (5.3%);

- philanthropy and volunteering: (2.6%);
- religion: (2.2%).
- economic and social development and housing: (4%);
- environmental protection: (3.2%).

Trend

Associations and foundations in Romania must register in the Registry of Associations and Foundations and in the national registry of non-profit organisations (“Registrul national al persoanelor juridice fără scop patrimonial”), which is held by the Ministry of Justice²². National statistics show that the total number of registered associations and foundations was 54,054 as of January 2008 (36,593 associations, 16,154 foundations, 671 federations, 619 trade unions and 17 foreign legal persons). The information shown in Table 3 also suggests that the number of voluntary organisations (i.e., associations and foundations) has rapidly grown, having increased four times in the past 10 years. Other types of non-governmental organisations have also followed an upward trend.

Table 3: Trends in the number of voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisation	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
Foundations and associations	11579	19416	22152	33052	32595	57350
Trade unions	2615	3947	5042	6065	6852	8034
Employer organisations	535	1031	883	1533	1816	3724
Religious non-profit organisations	6591	10302	11673	14384	16201	18377
Total	23516	34766	39838	55152	57518	87539

Source: Romanian Statistics Yearbook 2007²³.

However, according to the Civil Society Development Foundation (currently in the process of undertaking a study on this particular issue) there were only 17,500 *active* NGOs (i.e., that submitted their balance accounts to the Ministry of Finance) in 2007.²⁴ By 2009, the FDSC estimates that the number of active NGOs decreased further to around 10,000-12,000 NGOs.

Types of organisations engaging volunteers

With regard to NGOs, CSDF estimates that the greatest majority of their activities are non-profit activities carried out in the public interest. More specifically, 72% of their activities are non-profit, whilst only 15% are of a commercial nature. The small percentage of economic for-profit activities of NGOs can be explained by the legislation in place: according to the Art. 48 of the Government ordinance 26/2000, NGOs can only carry out economic activities that can fit into their main objective of activity.

²² Available at Internet: <http://www.just.ro/MeniuStanga/PersonnelInformation/tabid/91/Default.aspx>

²³ National Institute of Statistics (2007). ‘Enterprise Activity’. Available at Internet: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/ro/cap15.pdf> [cited 12/10/2009].

²⁴ Interview with representative of the Civil Society Development Foundation, Bucharest, Romania.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

There is a lack of statistical data available on this issue. Anecdotal evidence suggests that working directly with beneficiaries (of social services and similar) constitutes the main activity of volunteers, followed by administrative/clerical tasks and activities in marketing and arts/crafts. Very few voluntary activities entail campaigning or lobbying.

Drawing upon the data from a sample of 12 cities in Romania, Pro Vobis reports that volunteers spend a great proportion of their volunteering time on working directly with beneficiaries (29.7%), as well as organising events (15.9%), managing or coordinating activities (12%), and being involved in communication or public relations activities (11.8%). Fund-raising activities occupy a good proportion of their time too. Such activities usually require volunteers to go out in the streets in order to circulate information about the activities of a certain NGO or to promote a specific social cause whilst motivating people to make financial contributions (ARC, 2003).

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

Main public body responsible for volunteering

There is a general consensus that there is no main public body currently responsible for the monitoring and regulation of voluntary activities and institutions in Romania.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

A number of public bodies are involved in the voluntary sector. However, it is important to note that this is often on an ad-hoc basis: the Ministry of Environment; the Ministry of Work, Family and Social Protection; the Governmental Department of Relations with the Associative Domain (*Directia Relatii cu Mediul Asociativ*); the Agency for Governmental Strategies; and the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (*Agentia Nationala pentru Programe Comunitare in Domeniul Educatiei si Formarii Profesionale - ANPCDEFP*), which works under the tutelage of the Minister of Education, Research and Innovation. According to some observers, the Agency for Governmental Strategies was allegedly recently charged with the responsibility of acting as a formal mediator between the Romanian government and the NGO sector - however, this has not been confirmed by the parties involved.

The public bodies involved in the voluntary sector (albeit on an occasional basis) have different roles to fulfil. For example, the different ministries have a regulatory role, whilst the Agency for Governmental Strategies has a predominantly consultative/cooperative role. The Department of Relations with the Associative Domain ensures constructive dialogue between the prime-minister and NGOs (i.e., associations and foundations).

The National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (ANPCDEFP) is responsible for volunteer exchanges under the Youth in Action programme as part of its wider mission to develop cooperation in the education field and to enhance the participation of Romanians in various European VET programmes. According to the data provided by the Agency, there were 169 foreign volunteers entering Romania in 2007 and 186 in 2008. A further 37 Romanian volunteers participated in the scheme in 2008.

Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information

In Romania, very few structures aimed at promoting volunteering have been created. Those that do exist include the national network of volunteer centres coordinated by the National

Volunteer Centre *Pro Vobis*, as well as its online platform dedicated to volunteering (www.voluntariat.ro).

The concept of a national network of volunteering centres emerged in 2001 when several volunteering centres from Bucharest, Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca and Timisoara decided to collaborate and develop a unified vision of volunteering in Romania. The initiative to establish a national network benefitted from the support of the Soros Foundation, and later from international funding structures such as USAID and the EU Phare Programme. The network was created in 2001 and a National Council of Volunteering was established with the aim to: promote and develop the volunteering in Romania; support organisations working with volunteers; promote a unified vision of volunteering at national level; and to disseminate and implement good practice in the voluntary sector. Between 2001 and 2003, the number of centres increased significantly from 5 to 11. The Centres have been involved in the National Week of Volunteering, organising events related to the International Day of the Volunteer, and introducing a specific award for individuals and organisations involved in voluntary activities as an acknowledgement of their contribution to the voluntary sector.

In addition, the National Forum for NGOs also forms another important structure. The Forum was established in 1992 to provide NGOs with an institutionalised setting for consultations. Every year hundreds of NGO representatives, local and national public authorities, and the media come together at the Forum. In 2009, the National Forum brought together around 100 representatives of NGOs and relevant funding bodies to discuss the highly topical issue of the "Sustainability of the non-governmental sector". The Forum set up an executive group, the Group for the Implementation of the NGO Forum Resolutions (GIR), to undertake lobbying activities to promote and implement the resolutions adopted at the NGO Forums.

Other key institutions regularly involved in the voluntary sector include CSDF, Centras, ARC, and various student organisations such as, AIESEC and BEST.

Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks

There is very limited information available on affiliations with European umbrella organisations/networks. The National Volunteer Centre Pro Vobis is affiliated to European Volunteer Centre and certain other voluntary sector organisations are affiliated to the United Nations Volunteers. In general however, affiliation tends to be sector-specific.

2.2 Policies

Currently, there appears to be little evidence that volunteering in general is seen as a priority on the political agenda. However, two key developments are worth mentioning. Firstly, one of the directions of action stipulated in the Government Programme for the period 2009-2012 (the 9th Chapter on Family, Child Protection and Equal Opportunity) states that the Government supports the active participation of the civil society in the provision of social services, as well as the stimulation of volunteering²⁵. Furthermore, the Law on Volunteering no. 195/2001 is considered to be a step forward, although it is acknowledged that its provisions 'lack teeth'.

Policies in some other sectors also impact on volunteering. Further information on social assistance and youth policies with relevant impacts is detailed below:

- *Social assistance policies impacting on volunteering*

The National Strategy for the Development of Social Services (passed through the Government ordinance 1826/2005) mentions that the following actions will be undertaken

²⁵ English version available at Internet: http://www.gov.ro/chapter-9-family-child-protection-and-equal-opportunities_l2a1053.html

as part of the strategy in order to develop a proactive and participative culture across the beneficiaries of social services and the wider Romanian population:

- the encouragement of volunteerism in the domain of social services (through the revision of legislation, the promotion of volunteer flexibility and adaptability to the needs of local communities, recognition of volunteers' contribution, and incentives for citizens to take up volunteering, etc.);
 - the introduction of classes into the primary and secondary school curricula to promote the voluntary sector/voluntary activities and organisations and to enhance social solidarity with disadvantaged people.
- *Youth policies impacting on volunteering:*

The Youth Law no. 350/2006 published in the Official Monitor of 27 July 2006 stipulates in Article 4 (chapter 1) that the encouragement of volunteering is a principle that will underpin the youth policies in Romania. Article 20 also specifies that the government will not only support non-governmental organisations operating in the youth field, but will also enforce a legal framework that recognises and facilitates voluntary activities carried out both by young Romanians abroad and by volunteers in the Romanian territory.

National strategy/framework for volunteering

It has been widely acknowledged that there is currently no national strategy for volunteering in place in Romania.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

As there is currently no national strategy/framework on volunteering in Romania, there are no national targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering in the country. This state of affairs is in line with the popular belief that volunteering does not form an important part of the Romanian political agenda.

International policies

According to interviewees, international policies/programmes have not yet influenced or driven any national strategies or frameworks relating to the voluntary sector. However, it is worth mentioning that the national strategy for the development of social services was developed in line with European objectives. In addition, Article 14 of the Revised European Social Charter ratified by Romania through the Law no. 74/1999 refers to the formal obligation "to encourage the participation of benevolent/voluntary individuals and organisations to the set up and provision of such services".

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

Research has consistently highlighted the lack of specific national programmes designed to stimulate volunteering in Romania. In general however, the voluntary sector benefits indirectly from more generic programmes aimed at building the capacity of civil society. For example, between December 2007 and September 2008, a PHARE project was run with the view "to establish a national network of NGOs²⁶ with the aim of monitoring the integrity of the use of ESF funds in Romania". Furthermore, it is assumed that certain fiscal policies ("The Law of 2 percent"), youth policies (The Youth Law no.350/2006)²⁷ and policies on social assistance (Government Ordinance 68/2003 regarding the provision of social services) will indirectly impact the voluntary sector in a positive manner.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level

²⁶ NGOs.

²⁷ Information available at Internet: http://www.mts.gov.ro/files/file/legislatie_L_350_2006.pdf

There is currently no information on programmes, which promote or support volunteering at regional and/or local level in Romania.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level

Over the past few years a number of different programmes, which promote and support volunteering at transnational level, have been introduced in Romania.

a) Stay active! Be volunteer!

The programme "Stay active! Be volunteer!" is a 2 year-project (2008-2009) funded by the European Commission, as part of the ENEA action focused on the promotion of active ageing and the mobility of elderly people. Pro Vobis, the National Volunteer Centre, is responsible for implementing the programme in Romania. The rationale of the project is that elderly people can be better integrated into society by giving them the opportunity to contribute to the development of local communities through voluntary activities. As such, volunteering is seen as supporting active ageing.

The programme's target group is formed of people over the age of 55 years. Five partner countries are currently participating in the project: Hungary, Romania, Italy, Slovenia and Slovakia. The specific aim of the programme is to facilitate the exchange of elderly volunteers in order to stimulate social involvement and active ageing through voluntary activities for local communities. The programme will consist of a total of 32 exchanges of volunteers, involving 100 over 55 year olds. The 100 volunteers will visit a host country on a short-term basis where, together with local volunteers, they will engage in benevolent activities organised by NGOs. Upon their return, the volunteers are then given the opportunity to implement their own voluntary projects back in their country with funding from the programme budget.

The first exchange of volunteers took place during June 2008 when Pro Vobis hosted four Slovenian volunteers for two weeks, during which they visited local NGOs and took part in voluntary activities alongside young and older Romanian volunteers. During the same period, four elderly Romanian volunteers participated in similar activities organised by local NGOs in Slovenia. In another volunteer exchange, a group of four Hungarian and four Slovakian elderly volunteers visited 15 local NGOs in Romania and took up various voluntary activities. Furthermore, the Romanian volunteers who benefitted from this programme are now currently involved in various micro-projects, which are focused on cultural and ecological aspects within the local community.²⁸

b) MOVISIE Programme

During 2007-2008 a two-year twinning project was run by Pro Vobis in collaboration with the former National Volunteer Centre from the Netherlands. CIVIQ (currently part of the larger MOVISIE - The Centre for Social Development) was funded by the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs and aimed to strengthen and promote voluntary activities in Romania. This was done through capacity-building and the development of the infrastructure available to the non-governmental sector in Romania. The project helped to:

- Improve the organisation of the National Volunteer Centre "Pro Vobis" and to improve the skills of its staff;
- Improve and better diversify the service package offered by Pro Vobis to support local volunteer centres, which form part of the national network;
- Establish a network of adequately-trained and equipped volunteer centres at the local level;

²⁸ Pro Vobis (2009). "The Informative Bulletin of the National Agency for Volunteering". Pro Vobis.

Moreover, during the project a set of tools was created for the Local Volunteer Centres in order to stimulate volunteering at the local level in Romania.

c) *The VALUE Network*

The Value Network is a Grundtvig programme implemented by the University of Liverpool and 20 other partners, including Pro Vobis in Romania. It promotes the recognition and validation of learning acquired through volunteering in the university system across the partner countries.

d) ANPCDEFP through the Youth in Action programme runs 3-day training on the management of volunteers. According to the information provided by ANPCDEFP as of 2009, 13 training sessions had already been run with 236 participants, mainly from NGOs who work with volunteers.

e) *Other transnational initiatives*

SCI-Romania has been involved in organising international work-camps for volunteers, which are usually held during the summer. In addition, Pro Vobis organised an international training session on "the management of volunteers", held in Romania between 21 and 28 July 2008. The session was supported by the European Commission through ANPCDEFP (under the programme Youth in Action). Pro Vobis also benefitted from the support of NGOs from Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Latvia and Greece. The training programme was open to representatives of organisations working with volunteers, in particular those working within the HR departments of such institutions.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 General legal framework

The legal provisions that regulate the activity of non-governmental organisations are included in the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 regarding associations and foundations and in the Law of Volunteering no. 195/2001. Laws that regulate the fiscal aspects of volunteering include the Law 571/2003 regarding the Fiscal Code and various laws on social contributions – including, the Law 19/2000 regarding the public system of pensions; Law 76/2002 regarding the insurance system for unemployed people; and Law 95/2006 on the reform of the health system²⁹.

Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering

The Law on Volunteering (no. 95/2001) was passed in 2001 and modified in July 2006³⁰. The law covers: the definition of volunteering; the basic principles related to volunteers; the volunteer agreement or contract, rights and obligations; the termination of a contract; the reimbursement of expenses; and the social protection of volunteers and foreign volunteers in Romania.

Interviewees commented that the law establishes a regulatory framework for voluntary activities, undertaken by Romanian citizens (and residents) in Romania and abroad.

The initial law passed in 2001 suffered from a number of important shortcomings. Most notably, the 2001 law stated that voluntary work could only be carried out on the basis of a written contract between the volunteer and the host organisation. However, non-profit

²⁹ Information provided by the National Agency of Fiscal Administration (ANAF) of the Romanian Ministry of Public Finances.

³⁰ "LEGE nr.339 din 17 iulie 2006 pentru modificarea și completarea Legii voluntariatului nr. 195/2001" (Law nr.339/2006 for modifying and completing the Law of the Voluntary activities). Published in Official Monitor 651/27 July 2006

organisations argued the mandatory character of a contract could act as a barrier to volunteering – this is particularly relevant for volunteers, who are only taking part in voluntary activities for a very short period of time, sometimes even for a few hours to help out on a specific task (i.e. litter picking). Furthermore, some types of voluntary activities may not require any initial training or insurance. As such, signing a contract may be by the volunteer as unnecessarily time-consuming and bureaucratic – this in turn could put volunteers of participating in voluntary activities and voluntary organisations from engaging volunteers. The mandatory character of the contract also raised another contentious issue: an employee working as a paid member of staff could not volunteer for the same (host) organisation. According to the law, the extra hours would be considered unpaid over-time rather than volunteering per se.

As a result of these concerns the law was modified in 2006 and the use of a volunteering contract is now left to the discretion of the two parties (volunteer and beneficiary). However, the new amendment received a mixed reaction from stakeholders because some elements of the amended version can discourage volunteers (because the volunteering contract and the medical insurance were made optional and are now left at the discretion of the host organisations working with volunteers). Employers are also not encouraged to support their employees participating in voluntary work, even when the employee is a voluntary member of an emergency service staffed by volunteers.

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

There is currently no code of conduct relating to self-regulation, which is endorsed by the whole non-profit sector or all voluntary organisations in Romania. The 'NGO Code of Conduct' was launched and was adopted by the National Volunteer Centre Pro Vobis – however, there is no further information available on the initiative. Several reasons have been put forward for the lack of a code of conduct: firstly the NGO sector in Romania is competitive and fragmented; secondly, the sector still lacks legitimacy in the eyes of the public; and thirdly, NGOs are not represented by one generally-accepted body.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

Volunteers in Romania have a legal status. If the volunteer and the host organisation agree to sign a contract (no longer mandatory), then the agreement must specify the following individual rights of the volunteer person:

- a) to carry out the activity only according to his/her abilities and availability;
- b) to be insured by the host voluntary organisation according to the legal provisions on the protection of workers, taking into account the nature, complexity, risks and impact of the activity;
- c) to be insured by the host organisation against the risks of accident and illness associated with the very nature of the activity - in case that this provision is not complied with, the costs of medical care must be borne entirely by the host organisation. The individual volunteer can renounce his right to insurance but such decision needs to be expressed in written form.
- d) to receive a certificate from the host organisation at the end of the voluntary period attesting the acquired skills;
- e) to be reimbursed by the host organisation, in accordance with the provisions of the contract, for all the expenses during voluntary activities. The individual volunteer can renounce his right to reimbursement but this decision is left at his or her discretion.

The contract should also stipulate the following legal obligations of the volunteer:

- a) to perform the duties assigned by the host organisation;

- b) to comply with the rules regarding confidentiality of information to which s/he has access during the voluntary activities;
- c) to participate in the training courses organised or proposed by the host organisation;
- d) to take proper care of any resources that the host organisation makes available for voluntary activities.

Provisions for specific categories

There are no special rules in place regarding different categories of volunteers (for example, employees, self-employed individuals, or individuals receiving unemployment benefits or social welfare). Generally speaking a volunteer is a person who engages in voluntary activities of their own free will and without remuneration, under the terms and conditions specified in the Law of Volunteering.

Individuals are not required to ask for permission to become volunteers – asylum seekers and refugees are also allowed to take part in voluntary activities, as long as they have a valid residence permit³¹.

Likewise, there are no specific restrictions in place regarding categories of volunteers (for example, requiring unemployed individuals to undertake reasonable step to find employment in parallel to taking part in volunteering activities or time limitations on the number of hours spent volunteering per week).

Support schemes and incentives

A review of literature and interviews suggests that there is an apparent lack of specific incentive schemes for volunteers.

However, Article 19 of the Law on Volunteering stipulates that during the recruitment and selection of volunteers, if two or more candidates obtain equal scores, public authorities and private institutions are allowed to award extra points to the individual with certificates of volunteering, which recognise the skills and knowledge they have acquired through voluntary activities. According to article 7d, a volunteer has also the right to obtain a certificate from the voluntary organisation attesting to the skills acquired by volunteers.

Another incentive targets school teachers³². The Regulation on Organisation of School Inspection (RODIS) stipulates that the "relationship with the local community" is considered to be one of the evaluation criteria for both private and public schools across the country. This dimension specifically refers to (inter alia) forming positive attitudes towards the local community and environment amongst pupils, as well as to using local community resources in a responsible way. Related to this, the Methodology and Criteria of Allocating Merit Awards and Merit Salary to Teachers in Secondary School Education (Ministry Order no. 2575/2007) specifies that the evaluation grid for teachers nominated for merit awards, includes a section on voluntary activities as part of teachers' activities in the educational and formal instruction domain³³.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers

In principle, the Law on Volunteering allows for the reimbursement of volunteers' expenses. However, the amended version of the law leaves the reimbursement of expenses to the discretion of the host organisation - according to the volunteer contract between the two parties (if in existence), the expenses can be claimed back by volunteers. In reality though,

³¹ AVSO & CEV, 2005 AVSO & CEV Project: Legal Status of Volunteers. Country Report: Romania. Available at: http://www.cev.be/data/File/Romania_legalstatus.pdf

³² Interview with representative of Centras, Bucharest, Romania.

³³ "Metodologia si criteriile de acordare a gradatiei de merit si a salariului de merit in invatamanetul pre-universitar". The Government Decree is available at Internet: <http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/9036> [cited 12/10/2009].

it is common for volunteers to bear the expenses arising from their voluntary activities. Depending on their internal policies and budgetary allowances, voluntary organisations can cover some or all expenses – this can be problematic for smaller voluntary organisations who do not have a large amount of funds. Volunteers cannot receive daily allowances as they do not have a regular work contract.

There are no formal arrangements in place in current legislation concerning tax exemptions for volunteers.

Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

As mentioned previously, there are no formal arrangements in place in current legislation concerning tax exemptions for volunteers. In addition, there is no legal basis for rewarding or providing volunteers with fees or any other type of financial support. In principle, these rewards or fees would contradict the legal (and practical) definition of volunteering and voluntary work – notably that voluntary activity should be undertaken by one's own free will, without seeking any material or financial gain.

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

There is no legal obligation for voluntary organisations to provide public authorities (i.e. departments for taxation) with the details of each volunteer they have engaged. However, the Law on Volunteering states that voluntary organisations are required to keep a registry of their own volunteers. As yet though there is no public body that formally collects and monitor these records.

Non-profit organisations must pay taxes according to their main field of activity. These include: tax on profit; tax on corporate income generated from activities carried out in Romania by non-residents; VAT; local taxes; and the relevant social contributions. Furthermore, non-profit organisations that employ individuals formally must also pay income tax and social contributions (health, unemployment and pension funds).

However, Art.15 of the Law no. 571/2003 regarding the Fiscal Code (including its further amendments) stipulates that Romanian foundations are exempted from paying tax on profit (under paragraph 1). The article also states that non-profit organisations, trade unions and employer organisations are exempted from paying taxes on the following categories of revenues:

- membership fees and registration fees from members;
- cash and in-kind donations from members or benefactors;
- registration taxes;
- revenues generated from visas, taxes or sportive penalties or sanctions as well as income generated from the participation in sport competitions and events;
- monetary and non-monetary donations obtained through sponsorship;
- interest and dividends on deposited funds originating from the income sources above-mentioned;
- revenues generated from events/performances that are usually taxed (the so-called tax on shows);
- income from public funds and non-reimbursable funding (from state);
- revenues generated from occasional events: fund-raising events; lotteries; conferences with a social objective and scope, in line with NGO's status;
- revenues obtained from yielding their own assets (e.g., buildings, land etc.), with the exception of those used in an economic activity;

- revenues generated through publicity and advertising, carried out by non-profit organisations of public interest in the domains of culture, research, sport, education, as well as commerce chambers, trade unions and employer organisations.
- the sums of money resulted from not complying with the legal conditions of sponsorship and donations, only if these funds are to be used by the non-profit organisations in the current year or the following years according to their legal status, activity objectives and scope.
- compensation provided by insurance companies for damages of the assets, used in non-commercial activities; and
- sums received from the income tax owed by individuals, as stipulated in the provisions of Title III.

In terms of the revenues generated through commercial economic activities, article 15 (paragraph 3) of the Law no. 571/2003 states that non-profit organisations, trade unions and employer organisations are exempted from paying taxes on profit and revenues worth up to EUR 15 000 per fiscal year, which have been obtained from commercial activities which are not more than the equivalent of 10% of the total revenues exempted from taxes on profit (the sources of income mentioned above). Non-profit organisations, trade unions and employer organisations must pay taxes on revenues generated from other sources or those exceeding the set threshold.

It is worth mentioning that article 47 of the Government ordinance 21/2000 states that associations, foundations and sports federations can set up commercial companies. Any dividends obtained by non-profit associations, foundations and federations must be reinvested into the commercial societies or used according to the scope of the non-profit organisation. Art. 141 (1) also stipulates that the following services and goods of "general interest" (i.e. in the public interest) are exempted from taxes:

- goods or services provided in relation to the protection of young people and children by public institutions or other institutions that are recognised as having "social character";
- goods or services provided in the collective interest of members of non-profit organisations, which are of a political, union, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, civic, professional or philosophical nature, as long as the tax exemption does not distort competition; and
- services related to sport and physical education provided by non-profit organisations for the benefit of people who practice sport and physical education. According to the Methodological Norms for article 141 (1), this provision applies to all non-profit sports organisations such as clubs, leagues, sport facilities and hostels for the benefit of sportspeople. The tax exemption does not apply to revenues from publicity, broadcasting rights through TV and radio for sport events, or to revenues generated by charging admittance fees for sport events³⁴ through ensuring someone's right to attend a sport event.

According to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration non-profit organisations do not pay VAT³⁵. Voluntary organisations are also exempted from paying any taxes associated with processing a volunteer contract.

Furthermore, article 46 of the Government Ordinance 26/2000 states that non-profit organisations can obtain funding from state or local budgets to help establish their voluntary

³⁴ See further: Official Monitor of Romania Nr. 1044d/2006. Available at Internet: http://www.dscllex.ro/top/1044/1044_4.htm

³⁵ National Agency for Fiscal Administration, 2008.

organisation. Article 57 (paragraph 4) of the Fiscal Code, allows tax-paying individuals to allocate up to 2% of their income tax to support non-profit organisations.

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

There are currently no special legal provisions in place for profit-making/commercial organisations in relation to volunteering. There is also a common understanding that companies do not have clear legal responsibilities (or benefits) when it comes to working with external volunteers or encouraging volunteering amongst employees. The volunteer contract is no longer a compulsory requirement for voluntary organisation and it is not common practice among private companies to sign contracts with volunteers. This is particularly difficult in terms of employees, who already have an employment contract with the company. In cases where the voluntary programme is the result of a joint effort between a company and an NGO(s), the two parties sign a partnership contract.

There are currently no benefits or national support schemes for private companies to accept volunteers or to allow employees to participate in voluntary activities. Companies may choose to finance voluntary activities in line with the Law on Sponsorship no. 32/1994, which stipulates that sponsoring companies benefit from a proportional reduction in their corporate income tax.

It is worth mentioning however, that the third sector in Romania has started to develop corporate volunteerism programmes. Pro Vobis, the National Volunteer Centre, has taken a lead on this and has launched several programmes focusing on promoting the concept of corporate volunteering and on developing the necessary infrastructure for its effective implementation.

The “Win-Win Corporate Volunteerism Program” is one of the Centre’s programmes and incorporates three main actions:

- training of a team of brokers to engage local companies in addressing local community problems;
- developing resources to be used to promote the concept and practice of corporate volunteering - information packages and a programme website were created.
- developing a framework for community projects on corporate volunteering using the expertise acquired by trainees and the resources created.

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

According to the Law on Volunteering, the host organisation has the responsibility of insuring the volunteer against the risks of accident and illness associated with the voluntary activity – naturally if an accident or illness occurs outside of the remit of the voluntary activity the individual volunteer must bear the costs of any medical care. The individual volunteer can waive his right to insurance but this must be done in writing.

In reality, things are not clear-cut. This is particularly true when a volunteer contract is not signed between the two parties. Social insurance can also be expensive for non-profit organisations, which can often have a low annual budget. Furthermore, there tends to be a high turnover rate among volunteers, which makes it difficult for NGOs to provide insurance companies with a definite or a small list of the volunteers to be insured. As a result, reports suggest that many volunteers in Romania remain uninsured. For the time being, there are no specific arrangements in place between NGOs and insurance companies from which volunteers could benefit (for example subsidised insurance rates).

In addition, private organisations are not subject to any special legal provisions relating to the insurance and protection of volunteers.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

4.1 Funding arrangement for volunteering

National budget allocated to volunteering

There is no national budget in place in Romania for volunteering. However, there are certain public funds available from the EU, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Finance. There is no information available concerning any tensions between the rules on state aid and the allocation of grants, subsidies and other donations (such as, land or real estate) to volunteering activities.

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations are able to obtain funds from a number of different sources. The Ordinance no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations has a special chapter outlining sources of revenue for associations, foundations and federations. These include:

- membership fees - paid by individuals or by juristic persons to be a member of an association or a federation; the amount is determined annually by the general assembly and the obligation of payment is laid down in the statute of the association.
- interest and dividends resulting from investments - interest can be generated through legal loans, bank deposits or state bonds. Associations and foundations are entitled to dividends as part of their cash contribution to capital made when setting up the organisation.
- dividends from commercial companies set up by associations or foundations.
- income from direct economic activities - according to legislation, associations and foundations can have revenues from direct economic activities, as long as they are related to the main activity scope.
- funding from state budget and/or local budget - subsidies (according to general laws such as, Annual Budget Law and the Law 273/2006 regarding Local Public Finances and special laws such as the Law no.34/1998 regarding granting certain subsidies for Romanian associations and foundations with legal personality that set up and manage social assistance units; Ordinance 54/2000 regarding funding from Social and Health Security Fund and from the local budgets in the public health sector).
- donations provided by various donors, which can include³⁶:
 - public donors such as bilateral donors from countries that have a bilateral agreement with Romania (e.g., USAID, MATRA programme from NL) and multilateral donors (e.g., EU Phare programmes; World Bank funds etc.);
 - private donors (usually in the form of endowments or trusts such as the, CS Mott Foundation and the Open Society); individuals can also be private donors, for instance between May 2001 and May 2002, 35% of the Romanian adult population made cash and/or in-kind donations to NGOs. Private sector companies also represent a good source of donations - as of 2003, 18.4% of businesses financially supported NGOs.
 - mixed funds (form a variety of sources such as the German Marshall Fund); and

³⁶ Porumb et.al, 2000, quoted in ARC 2003.

- development agencies (that can run operational programmes) – such as, the Regional Environmental Centre and the Foundation of Princess Margaret of Romania);
- sponsorship - a legal deed provided to support non-lucrative activities in the following fields - culture, arts, education, science, research, humanitarian aid, religion, philanthropy, sport, human rights, medical assistance, social services, environmental protection, representation of professional associations, restoration and conservation of historical monuments.
- legacies – these can only come from individuals (testator) and can only take effect at the time of their death.
- special sources of income - according to article 60 of ordinance 26/2000 "in case of liquidation, remaining goods would be transmitted to legal persons of private or public law with an identical or similar aim". (p. 19, ARC, 2003). Associations and foundations can also receive income from contracts of sale, exchange or rent.
- EU funding (e.g, Youth in Action and Grundtvig Senior Volunteering Projects)

The allocation of funding provided through the national subsidies and non-reimbursable grants is, in principle, transparent as there are clear laws regulating this domain. There is however, a lack of evidence in this area and more research is needed to provide a better picture.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

There are no statistics available on the current share of non-profit organisations that have successfully tendered for the provision of public contracts to provide SSGIs. However, research has highlighted relevant information.

As stated in previous sections, public procurement (known as 'social contracting' in Romania, *contractare sociala*) is regulated by various governmental ordinances and laws. Primarily:

- the Government ordinance no. 68/2003 (OG nr.68/2003) regarding the provision of social services, which covers services and partnership contracts;
- the Law no. 34/1998 on the provision of subsidies to associations and foundations (with juridical personality) that set up and manage social care centres;
- the Law no. 350/2005 "regarding the allocation of non-reimbursable funds from public money for non-profit activities in the public interest" carried out by a legal person or institution. The law specifies that non-reimbursable funds are allocated on the basis of the co-financing principle (the beneficiary of the non-reimbursable funds needs to contribute a minimum of 10% of the total budget of the project).
- The Government ordinance related to public procurement contracts, public works concessions and services concessions.

The Government Ordinance 68/2003 regarding the provision of social services stipulates that private and public providers of social services must be accredited. Most importantly, private providers can only be associations, foundations, religious organisations, or authorised "legal persons"³⁷.

According to the National Social Services Register, there were over 2,000 accredited providers of social services providers in Romania as of April 2009³⁸. Over 50% of these

³⁷ Ministry of Work, Family and Social Protection, 2009.

³⁸ Vicol, 2009. "Social services in Romania. Behind free choice" Paper presented at Peer Review "Combining choice, quality and equity in social services". Denmark.

were "private providers", mostly made up of NGOs. The other 50% of social services providers are public providers.

In 2006, there were 1164 accredited providers of social services, out of which 742 were private – the majority of them were again NGOs.³⁹ According to 2006 statistics, in the majority of districts in Romania, the number of private providers exceeded the number of public providers with only a few exceptions such as Braila, Caras Severin, Calarasi, Galati, Gorj, Iasi, Mehedinti, Salaj si Teleorman (out of a total of 41 districts). However, it is very important to mention that no firm conclusions can be drawn from these statistics as the providers of social services that had been operating before the implementation of the Government Ordinance 68/2003 in 2004 were able to function without accreditation up until to 31 December 2006.

The national subsidies programme run on the basis of the Law no. 34/1998 ("related to the subsidies allocated to associations and foundations that establish and manage centres of social assistance" provides an insight into the current share of non-profit organisations successfully tendering for the provision of social services. Subsidies consist of funds given on a monthly basis to partly cover the expenses borne by each social assistance centre (calculated on the basis of costs of care per beneficiary of the social service). Subsidies are currently seen as the main financing tool for non-profit organisations which provide such services for the public benefit.⁴⁰ As shown in table 4, the national budget for subsidies has increased from EUR 1 million in 2006 to EUR 3 million in 2008. The subsidies are only offered on a competitive basis to accredited social service providers. As a rule, the subsidies do not cover all expenses borne by providers (e.g., associations, foundations) but are only provided to cover social assistance costs. As such, they do not fund the overall functioning of the NGOs per se.

Table 4: The evolution of the subsidies programme over the last 10 years

Year	Number of subsidised centres of social services	Number of beneficiaries	Sums in EUR
1998	60	2,087	21,884.07 EUR
1999	76	3,107	135,828.77 EUR
2000	120	5,471	473,167.71 EUR
2001	148	7,377	586,992.42 EUR
2002	130	6,560	729,061.02 EUR
2003	155	7016	850,239.73 EUR
2004	184	8,550	932,453.07 EUR
2005	227	10,150	997,707.24 EUR
2006	206	9,455	1,045,115.36 EUR
2007	267	12,378	2,268,133.93 EUR
2008	327	15,830	3,208,393.14 EUR

³⁹ Rusu, O., Vilcu, I., Petrescu, C. (2009) The place and the role of NGOs on the market of social services in Romania. Report elaborated under the Programme for the Development of Civil Society in Romania, funded by USAID. Available at Internet: <http://www.fdsc.ro/documente/14.doc> [cited 12/10/2009].

⁴⁰ Rusu et al., 2007.

Source: Ministry of Work, Family and Social Protection, 2009⁴¹

As of April 2009, the total budget for this programme amounted to EUR 4 650 000.

These statistics have shown that the number of NGOs providing social services has increased over the past 10 years. This is due to various reasons and would require further investigation to provide a detailed overview of a complex situation. The increase may be due to the clearer legal context in which the non-governmental providers of social services currently operate as well as the support provided through the national programme of subsidies.

Table 5: Example of past success rate in applying for subsidies (for the provision of social services)

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of NGOs that applied for subsidies	40	46	56	70	84	82	N/A	75	88
Number of NGOs that received subsidies	32	36	53	60	63	70	69	75	68
Number of subsidised centres of social assistance administered by NGOs	59	77	117	148	130	155	185	228	206

Source: Rusu et al., 2007

Data displayed in table 5 highlights that the success rate of NGOs applying for subsidies for the provision of social services is rather high - between 75% and 100%. The table also illustrates that the number of subsidised social assistance centres is larger than the actual number of NGOs managing them, suggesting that NGOs can set up and administer several social assistance centres at the same time.

The data also shows that the number of NGO providers of social services applying for subsidies doubled between 1998 (44 NGOs) and 2003 (88 NGOs). Furthermore, the proportion of successful applicants (out of the total number of NGOs applying for subsidies) has also improved, suggesting that NGOs are better "equipped" to meet the eligibility requirements. It has also been noticed that the number of social assistance centres managed by NGOs has increased even more than the number of subsidised NGOs implying that NGOs often administer more than one care centres. It is also acknowledged that NGOs are now covering even the (hard-to-reach) small rural communities (Rusu et al., 2007)

There is a lack of data on the share of volunteer labour in SSGIs. In 1999, 35% of Romanian NGOs used voluntary work on a frequent base, 18% on an occasional basis and 26% only used volunteers⁴². In 2006, a research study on a sample of 934 NGOs found that a total of 156,682 paid employees and 656,664 volunteers were working in the organisations⁴³. This means that more than 80% of the human capital used by NGOs consisted of volunteers. More than half of the NGOs (52%) worked exclusively with volunteers. Only 26% did not engage volunteers. The proportion of paid staff employed by NGOs did not usually exceed more than 50 employees; only 3% of the NGOs surveyed had a total paid staff of more than 50 employees.

⁴¹ Statistics provided by the representative of the Ministry of Work, Family and Social Protection (Department Social Assistance).

⁴² Stoiciu 2001, cited in CSDF, 2005.

⁴³ Centras, 2006.

Although the number of NGOs providing accredited social services and receiving subsidies has increased over the last years, progress in this area has been rather slow. For example, there are roughly 10,000-12,000 active NGOs⁴⁴ but relatively few are accredited social services providers. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that many of these private providers have small or medium capacity and sustainability in providing services⁴⁵. It is also known that the number of subsidised providers of social services still represents a small proportion of the total number of NGOs providing such services.

Other obstacles to the participation of NGOs to public procurement are the following: firstly, legal obstacles (unclear and redundant legislation, problems in the application of legislation at the local level; and secondly, administrative obstacles (bureaucracy, lack of clear and objective evaluation criteria; lack of impact assessment; the inflexible implementation of the competition principle even when it is considered detrimental to the provision of quality and prompt services to special target groups that can be better reached by local NGOs; lack of staff skilled in tendering related issues in NGOs); cultural obstacles (a lack of communication between public local authorities and third sector and lack of communication between NGOs).

According to the Law no. 34 of 20 January 1998, the subsidies provided to non-profit associations and foundations that establish and manage social assistance centres are only provided to cover the costs of assistance per beneficiary; the subsidies do not cover organisational and personnel costs (with the exception of the specialised staff that is directly involved in taking care of beneficiaries). Hence, this implies that the subsidies programme might not have necessarily enhanced the number of volunteers working for the non-profit organisations providing social services.

There is no information available on the particular contribution of non-profit organisations based on volunteering principles in the delivery of SSGIs.

There are a few special provisions that apply to the contracting of SSGI. For example, the private providers of SSGI can only be non-profit associations, foundations, religious cult organisations, and authorised "legal persons".

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

Income generated through volunteering

There is no information available on the income generated through volunteering or its proportion in relation to the overall annual budget of NGOs.

Economic value of volunteering

There is no information available on the economic value of volunteering.

Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP

There is insufficient information available on value of volunteering work as a share of GDP. According to the findings of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, the Romanian non-profit sector is a small but developing economic force. In 1995, operating expenditures reached \$90.3 million, which represents only 0.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product⁴⁶.

Issues of service substitution and job substitution

According to some stakeholders, there is a certain level of risk regarding the possibility of volunteering replacing services that would be otherwise provided by the state. However, this is not back by any empirical evidence. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this risk is

⁴⁴ CSDF, 2009.

⁴⁵ Vicol, 2009.

⁴⁶ Epure et al., 2001.

higher in the social services provided for disadvantaged social groups (i.e. people with disabilities).

Furthermore, taking into account the fact that only 12.8% of the Romanian adult population are involved in voluntary activities and almost half of these volunteers do unpaid work for religious organisations and churches, it can be argued that the risk of job substitution in Romania is rather low.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Volunteering enables Romanian citizens to become more active in society and to become better informed about the world around them. Participation in voluntary activities also gives individuals the opportunity to help local authorities to develop innovative and timely solutions to problems encountered by local communities – solutions, which can then be transferred to regional and national level where appropriate. As such, volunteers can actively contribute to and foster civil society.

Volunteers

A recent survey of 427 volunteers in Romania⁴⁷) shows that volunteers reported that they benefited from a variety of benefits by taking part in voluntary activities.

Table 6: Benefits reported by volunteers of taking part in voluntary activities

Benefit	Percentage of volunteers
Professional experience	51.1%
Helping others	51.1%
Making friends	49.4%
Implementing ideas	40.7%
Making the individual's CV more attractive	38.2%
Trying out a potential career	32.3%
Travelling abroad and discovering new cultures	8.2%

Source: Rigman, 2009.

In general, benefiting from professional experience was seen as one of the key benefits of engaging in voluntary activities. The desire to gain professional/career experience can be explained by the fact that education alone cannot provide individuals (especially students or those just starting out in their careers) with sound practical experience of the professional world. This explanation is strengthened by the fact that the number of students has steadily grown in Romania and nowadays employers expect potential employees to have more than a university diploma.

Volunteers also reported that they benefited emotionally and personally from volunteering – helping others was seen as equally important as professional experience (51.1%), closely followed by the opportunity to make new friends (49.4%) and implement ideas (40.7%). This is reinforced by in the following section concerning the factors which motivate individuals to take part in voluntary activities.

⁴⁷ Rigman, 2009.

The Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation considers that pupils and students who engage in voluntary activities can: become more active and better informed Romanian citizens; learn how to interact positively with people with disabilities; develop their language skills; become more self-aware and self-confident; and be valued by their local communities. They also receive a certificate detailing their voluntary activities, which is seen as an important contribution to their lifelong learning portfolio.

Community

Communities can benefit from volunteering in a number of different ways, depending on the community itself and the voluntary activities taking place – for example, an area, which suffers heavily from flooding will benefit from help from volunteers to build flood defences or repair the damage caused. Likewise communities with a high proportion of elderly inhabitants may benefit from voluntary activities, which provide companionship, transportation or other important social services.

The Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation asserts that volunteering contributes to the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups within a local community. Volunteering also helps young people to better integrate into their community, thereby reducing the risk of social isolation and its impact (such as, poverty, health issues, crime, or violence).

Beneficiaries of voluntary services

The beneficiaries of voluntary services naturally also benefit from volunteering. NGOs, which provide social services offer: better time resources; specific expertise; experience in engaging with hard-to-reach groups in society; and a better knowledge of the needs of the local community and greater adaptability⁴⁸.

There is currently no information available on the contribution of volunteering to economic and social policy goals at national level.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

Volunteers in Romania are motivated to engage in voluntary activities for a number of different factors – often these are related to a desire to help other people or a particular cause; religious reasons; humanitarian and charitable interests; or material benefits.

Motivating factors	Percentage of volunteers
Contribute to a worthy cause	88.4%
Take part in an enjoyable activity	68.9%
Following a request for voluntary work from an 'important person	59.8%
Friends and neighbours taking part in similar activities	41.8%
Clear benefit to the volunteer's family	40.7%
To receive a 'letter of gratitude'	28.2%

Source: ARC, 2003.

Moreover, individuals can be motivated to volunteer out of curiosity, or because they have experienced a similar situation (for example, a member of their family may have disabilities), or because they wish to use their free-time more productively.

⁴⁸ Rusu et al., 2007.

It is also interesting to note that Romanian volunteers share several similar characteristics⁴⁹. They display a higher level of interest in local and national politics relative to the total adult population of Romania - more specifically, 18.1 % of volunteers report a keen interest in local politics whilst only 4% of the rest of the adult population shows the same interest. Volunteers are also more likely to use the internet than the rest of population; more than 80% of volunteers use the internet on a regular basis. In addition, Romanian volunteers have been found to engage more often in various forms of civic participation, such as, signing petitions and being politically active.

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system

According to the Ministry of Education, volunteers' competences are recognised in the national education system. More specifically, the Ministry Ordinance OMECT no. 1734/2007 regulates voluntary activities under the National Strategy for Community Action ("Strategia Nationala de Actiune Comunitara). National Strategy for Community Action has broad objectives such as to integrate children from disadvantaged families, with special needs or placed in special schools into the local communities; to involve children with social difficulties alongside teachers, students and other volunteers in collaborative projects; to engage students in promoting the educational development of disadvantaged children.⁵⁰ Under this strategy, volunteers from high schools can initiate new programmes of community action in collaboration with children placed in special schools or centres and NGOs. Volunteers can organise a wide range of activities for children such as sports activities, involving art, drama, crafts and dance. The National Strategy for Community Action is organised at the national, regional and local level. There is a National Coordinator for the National Strategy for Community Action as well as Regional, County-level Coordinators as well as Local Coordinators for each high school or beneficiary institution involved. Most importantly, the National Action for Community Action has been recognized in Europe as an example of good practice.

As part of the strategy, pupils who engage in voluntary activities can receive certificates acknowledging their contribution. Teaching staff can also obtain certificates recognising their role as coordinators of voluntary activities.

It is worth mentioning that the Law on Volunteering was modified in 2006 to make it compulsory for voluntary organisations which sign a contract with volunteers to issue a competence certificate at the end of the voluntary work period.

Some national policies have recognised the role of volunteering– for example the Ministry Ordinance OMECT 1734/2007 allows for voluntary activities during school hours. Voluntary activities have also been made part of the high school curriculum as an optional subject.

However, with regard to other policies, there does not appear to be a formal link between the LLL strategy and volunteering in Romania as the LLL strategy and the national qualifications framework) are only now being developed.

There is some recognition of volunteering at the different levels of the education system; however, this formal recognition does not always translate into a coherent and consistent practice of supporting pupils and students who wish to take part in voluntary activities.

⁴⁹ Rigman, 2009.

⁵⁰ Information provided by representative of Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, October 2009.

There is a common understanding that schools should encourage more students to take up volunteering.

According to the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, educational institutions support volunteers and volunteering through ESF-funded projects and the National Strategy for Community Action. Both the Ministry and school inspectorates have signed cooperation agreements with various NGOs who support education through voluntary activities.

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

There is no national training programme for volunteers and in general, NGOs train volunteers. Volunteers usually receive an induction session and on-going training throughout their voluntary activities, although the mentoring of volunteers is not a common practice.

There are very few general training courses that cater to all volunteers (i.e. that are not specific to the volunteers in one particular NGO). A number are run by Pro Vobis and Centras. Furthermore, ANPCDEFP through the Youth in Action programme trains EVS volunteers. According to the information provided by ANPCDEFP, 306 EVS volunteers had already benefitted from training.

Pro Vobis also ran a formal training programme for all volunteers during 21 – 28 July 2008 to provide international training on 'the management' of volunteers. The programme was supported by the European Commission (ANPCDEFP, as part of Youth in Action) and NGOs from Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Latvia and Greece. The training programme was open to members of organisations working with volunteers, in particular those members in Human Resources.

7 IMPACT OF EU POLICIES

There is very little information on the impact of EU policies on volunteering in Romania. According to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration there is no information available on the impact of the EU policies on employment and social affairs, active citizenship, internal market, competition or taxation on volunteering.

Certain EU education policies have had the most identifiable impact – in particular, Europass (which includes a section on volunteering/informal/non-formal skills); the Youth in Action programme; the European Year on Volunteering 2011; the Phare-funded project on the 'Institutional development of organisations involving volunteers' (launched this year); the Socrates and Leonardo programmes; and the White Paper on Sport.

According to the Ministry of Education, EU policies are implemented in the national education policies in Romania. The number of students and pupils who volunteer is also growing. However, the progress in this area is slowed down by the fact that the teachers coordinating the voluntary activities have not been able to attract ESF funding for the activities undertaken in their local communities. As a result, the role of NGOs is therefore essential in this domain.

Skills and competences acquired through volunteering are becoming increasingly valued in Romania due to the legitimacy they have gained through the Europass Mobility initiative. Voluntary and gap-year organisations are now able record in the Europass Mobility document, the skills that an individual obtains during his/her experience. This document also records any skills and competences that individuals have acquired whilst abroad. Furthermore, in the current Europass format, individuals need to specify the context in which they have acquired their organisational and social competences. As such, individuals are encouraged to designate voluntary or leisure activities as learning contexts. Programmes under the LLL agenda (e.g., Erasmus, Socrates and Grundtvig) have also

impacted indirectly on volunteering in a positive manner by supporting lifelong learning and increased mobility.

However, stakeholders agree that there are not many EU policies and programmes in place, which support volunteering in Romania, in terms of capacity building and policy-shaping. The Youth in Action programme does support volunteering in terms of funding and in increasing the number of volunteers, but it is only targeted at young people; other age groups are, in the main, ignored. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of the voluntary sector should first be made by internal actors at national level in Romania. However, even this is unlikely to have a tangible impact as long as the sector does not have a nationally representative body for volunteers and NGOs.

Stakeholders consulted as part of the report support common projects, learning exchange and international conferences with the view to disseminate good practices of volunteering across the EU.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Research has highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities, which are likely to impact on volunteering and the voluntary sector in Romania.

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

A key challenge for volunteering concerns the perception by the general public of voluntary activities.

Evidence suggests that Romanians have a number of prejudices against volunteering (ARC, 2003). Survey data collected reveals that 73% of the adult population think that 'volunteers would not be needed if the state was doing a better job'; 52% believe that volunteers undertake unpaid work to gain material benefits; 47% stated that in general, 'people only work seriously when they get paid'; 31.7% declared that 'volunteering was invented by the communists and should be replaced with paid work' (ARC & Allavida Survey, 2003). Clearly, these negative perceptions need to be changed if volunteering in Romania is to gain the full support of the general public.

According to the same source, individuals are also deterred from volunteering by a number of different barriers, including: insufficient time (36.3%); work-related duties (17.5%); poor health (14.3%); old age (7.2%); family obligations (4.8%); lack of NGO's trustworthiness (4.4%); the individual was not specifically asked to participate in voluntary activities (3.6%); and a poor financial situation (3.2%). However, almost half of the Romanians interviewed (43%) would like to have more time to engage in voluntary activities.

There are also problems at organisational level. These stem notably from, a fragmented non-profit sector and a lack of consolidation. Most importantly, there are no collaborative structures in place between NGOs and central and local administration. Historically, there has been no consistent dialogue between public authorities and NGOs regarding matters of public interest, although public authorities are now required to engage with NGOs on such matters as stipulated by the Law 52/2003 on decision transparency in public administration. However, the new legislation on issues of public interest was drafted without any meaningful advance consultation with the civil society and with few cases mentioned in the legal text.

Another important impediment is the lack dissemination of good practices related to working with volunteers (such as, examples of how to manage volunteers effectively). Indeed, there is still relatively little experience in working with volunteers effectively.

Furthermore, there is a growing concern that there are significant conflicts of interest within the third sector, particularly in the case of "politics" supporting NGOs. In 2003, the Law

43/2003 on the financing of the activities of political parties and electoral campaigns was modified to allow non-profit organisations, such as NGOs, to fund political parties. A few observers expressed their concern on this issue and suggested that NGOs should be banned from providing political parties with funding, as this might interfere with their purpose of serving the good of the public.

According to the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, another impediment stems from the lack of information on volunteering available to young people, particularly those from small towns and rural areas. With the exception of the few volunteering initiatives (such as, the National Strategy for Community Action, mentioned earlier in the report), very few towns and cities can take advantage of effectively organised voluntary activities.

- In addition, problems with the current regulatory and legal framework, the information and data available; funding; and public opinion also create obstacles for NGOs and voluntary activities. Legal and regulatory environment - the law on volunteering 'lacks teeth' (signing a volunteering contract is no longer compulsory) and there are no clear provisions regarding expenses reimbursement and insurance for volunteers;
- Rules on procurement - obstacles which act as a barrier to NGOs in public procurement include:
 - legal obstacles – specifically, unclear and redundant legislation and difficulties in the application of the Law 350/2005 regarding non-reimbursable funds from public funds for non-profit activities at the local level;
 - administrative obstacles – specifically, bureaucracy; lack of clear and objective evaluation criteria; lack of impact assessment; the inflexible implementation of the competition principle even when it is considered detrimental to the provision of good quality and prompt services to special target groups that can be better reached by local NGOs; lack of staff skilled in tendering -related issues in NGOs
 - cultural obstacles – specifically, a lack of communication between public local authorities and the third sector and a lack of communication between NGOs).
- Information and data - no national registry of volunteers and voluntary organisations; no monitoring of volunteering and no statistics on volunteering.
- Sustainable funding - no sustainable funding for voluntary organisations. The number of active NGOs is believed to have dropped significantly between 2007 and 2009 as many are struggling due to the lack of sustainable funding. Most NGOs have a very low annual budget.
- Insurance and protection - there tends to be a high turnover level among volunteers, which means that it can prove difficult for NGOs to provide an insurance company with a nominal list of the volunteers to be insured. As a result, research suggests that many volunteers in Romania remain uninsured. For the time being, there are no specific arrangements in place between NGOs and insurance companies from which volunteers could benefit. Social insurance might also be expensive for NGOs that are already in financial hardship.
- Prejudices – prejudices about voluntary activities among the general public (as a result of social and cultural norms) do not facilitate the development of civil society.

Observers have identified the lack of a national body representing all voluntary organisations as being the main challenge for the voluntary sector. A representative body would be involved in drafting a national strategy, setting targets and monitoring voluntary activities and the number of active volunteers, as well as mediating dialogue between voluntary organisations and public authorities at the local and national level.

Currently, there are very few measures in place, which aim to tackle the barriers. Some measures have been implemented by the non-profit sector itself (usually with external funding and expertise) to help to raise awareness about the benefits and opportunities of volunteering. Other measures have aimed to strengthen the infrastructure of voluntary organisations in Romania (the programme MOVISIE); creating platforms (the programme MOVISIE); creating a representative body or federation that could stand for the non-profit sector in negotiations with the Romanian government (2009-2010 Pro Vobis project funded by Charles Stuart Mott organisation); the launch of "the week of volunteering" and "portrait of volunteer" series by Pro Vobis.

The Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation has reported that fundraising campaigns are often organised with the view to overcome the financial impediments to volunteering. Campaigns to promote volunteering often seek to address the negative attitudes and the lack of accurate information about volunteering amongst students and teachers – however, schools and pupils are rarely involved in fundraising campaigns.

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

Stakeholders have mentioned very few opportunities in relation to volunteering in Romania. Those identified include: the European Year of Volunteering 2011 and the new Phare project, 'the institutional development of organisations working with volunteers' (launched in 2009). The Phare project will involve 15 voluntary organisations that will benefit from consultancy and customised training on how to work more effectively and professionally with volunteers⁵¹.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation has identified ESF-funded projects as an important opportunity to develop volunteering in Romania.

⁵¹ For more details see Internet: http://www.avj.ro/node/193592/comnews/item?item_id=411423

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Ministry of Youth and Sport

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The Research Institute for Quality of Life - Romanian Academy of Science

Association for Community Relations

Centras

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National Institute for Sport Research

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