

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS-CSOs and NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS-NGOs REQUIRE A TRANSFORMATION IN THE VISION OF THE ROMANIA'S STRATEGY 2020-2025

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Abstract. *The work aims to replace in the Civil Society Organizations in Romania the way that has been performed so far, as for them to acquire the transformation in order to achieve superior, modern, sustainable results and progress in their development*

Keywords: organization, civil, transformation, vision, country strategy

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1. Introduction

NGOs and Non-Governmental Associations are a sine qua non necessity.

This paper depicts a solution with maximal performance regarding the Romanian Country Strategy 2020-2025 – European Bank.

In order to establish the function of the nonprofit sector, it is good to start from the already accepted idea of the delimitation of society. In this respect, three sectors can be defined:

- the public sector
- the profit sector (the market, the economy)
- the non-profit sector.

The United Nations provides a definition of the non-profit sector, of the Civil Society it defines as the “third sector” of society, alongside government and business, which includes civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. The public sector – the state (the public administration), the profit sector – the market (the economy) and the non-profit sector – the Civil Society are three essential fields with the help of which the society can be described and on the basis of which it is organized [10].

The Civil Society is a whole system of structures that enable citizens to new roles and social relations through different ways of taking part into the in public life, a

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distinct field where people seek to influence government without hoping to obtain a commercial profit or official power [8].

The Civil society structures lie at the borders between private economy, entrepreneurship and formal political institutions of the society, which inevitably complement each other without replacing each other [6].

Dictionary.com's 21st Century Lexicon defines the Civil Society as follows: "the totality of organizations and NGOs (non-governmental institutions) that express the interests and will of citizens, the individuals and the organizations in society, independent of the government".

In fact, the Civil Society Organizations – CSOs, are those that represent civil society in the relations with the fundamental institutions of the state and with the business sector in the communities where it operates.

This means that CSOs represent THE WHOLE, the Civil Society mass, and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are COMPONENT PARTS of CSOs, respectively the structural and supporting basis of CSOs.

The term NGO – “Non-governmental organization” first appeared in 1945 and was used by the United Nations. The definition of non-governmental organization covers ALL non-governmental groups.

A non-governmental organization – NGO – is formed by a voluntary association of citizens who aim for a common purpose with a non-profit character. They are self-governing voluntary units established by the free manifestation of the will of the associated citizens on the basis of the community of professional and/or other interests, in order to jointly realize civil, economic, social and cultural rights [9].

NGOs are an integral component of the Civil Society and their action directly depends on the needs of the society and their ability to perceive them quickly and authentically, due to the specific social responsibility at individual or collective level.

Briefly, the role of NGOs is to contribute wherever there is a need within the society, there where the state and other institutions are resourceless [7].

The aim of this work is to replace in the Civil Society Organizations in Romania the way that has been performed so far, as for them to acquire the transformation to achieve superior, modern, sustainable results and progress in their development.

2. Materials and Methods

Sources of information from the specialized literature were used: authors such as Nicolae Manolescu, John M. Bryson, Lester M. Salamon, Andreia - Nicoleta Anton etc., books, magazines, media news, TV, information from internet, etc.

From a methodological point of view, there were utilized:

- Telephone call method
- Face-to-face discussions with NGOs presidents
- The email method
- The method of discussion with the citizens (in the field) on the paper topic
- The antithesis method is frequently used to overcome contradictory arguments and which uses the dialectical opposition between two judgments, ideas, solutions, etc., that are thus highlighted in order to attain the truth.

3. Results and Discussions

Within the system, the non-profit sector – the Civil Society has two main functions:

- the first function would be of prevention and correction that tries to prevent and correct potential problems, shortcomings in the functioning of the state and business sectors.
- the second function is of development that enables the development of the civil society, of the society in general by defending civil values, by strengthening collaboration and by creating the framework for joint activities.

If we accept the two functions then, according to the terminology used in the management of non-profit organizations, they can be considered the very purpose of the non-profit sector, and the results obtained by the civil sector can be evaluated accordingly [4].

Involving the Civil society in decision-making offers a number of benefits, namely:

- acquires the right to influence decision-making
- provides a better understanding of the risks
- increases the citizens' awareness of the decision-making process (who makes decisions and on what basis, helps to develop democracy)
- increases community sense, social responsibility
- empowers the citizens and makes them feel they can have a positive effect and influence over the conditions [3].

NGOs are an integral component of the Civil Society and their action directly depends on the needs of the society and their ability to perceive them quickly and authentically, due to the specific social responsibility at individual or collective level [2].

In Romania, according to the Statistical Review of 2021, the types of non-governmental organizations were: Trade unions, Trade Union alliances, Parties, Professional and entrepreneurs' trade unions / associations, Funds, Cultural associations, Sports associations / Clubs, Religious organizations, Tenants / owners associations, Councils / Compossessorates, Mutual aid funds, Other organizations.

On analyzing the types of the organizations mentioned above, there are subsequently increasing rates from one year to another, to nine types of NGOs and decreasing rates for three other types of NGOs, namely: Funds, Councils / compossessorates and Mutual aid funds. We believe that the presidents of these three types of NGOs should apply the transformation following the vision of the Country Strategy of Romania 2020-2025.

With regard to strategic planning for public and non-profit organizations for 2020-2025, "How could CSO leaders cope with the obstacles they face now and in the years to come? How should they respond to the increasingly insecure environments, defined by countless connections, within which organizations operate? How should these leaders handle the increasingly lacking in resources or unpredictable a situation, how should they handle the new expectations of the population or formal mandates, the demographic change, the renunciation of constraints and their reintroduction, the revolution of the international, national, state and local economy, as well as new roles played by non-profit public organizations? What should be the mission of these organizations? How can their leaders settle something starting from the organization's strengths and take advantage of the possibilities while reducing the weaknesses and risks that endanger their very existence? How can they effectively draft and implement desirable strategies?" (John M. Bryson – "Planificarea strategică pentru organizații publice și nonprofit" – Ediție revăzută. Traducere de Diana Stanciu. Editura ARC – 2002) [1].

The strategy is a sustained effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that formulate and shape what an organization is, what it does and why it does.

In order to achieve the best results, the strategy involves obtaining broad information in an efficient way and focusing on the prospective implications of the present decisions.

Compliant with the Country Strategy of Romania for 2020-2025, "*there is a satisfactory legal framework for civil society organizations (CSOs). The National*

NGO Register includes more than 100,000 officially registered non-profit organizations, of which 80% of registered CSOs are associations, and the remaining 20% are foundations (which are relatively small). It is estimated that only half of the registered CSOs are active. Dozens of CSOs act as centers of resource and provide support for a wide range of topics. Most of them are located in the capital and other major cities; as a result, the organizations elsewhere within the country have limited options for access to their services. The functioning of CSOs is regulated by Ordinance no. 26/2000 (amended by Law 246/2005). The public consultation system is legally in force, although it is not always efficiently implemented.

The financial viability of CSOs has severely deteriorated in recent years because of their limited access to funding programs, in conjunction with limited funding from national and local governments and foreign sources. In addition, legal changes affecting part-time work tax, corporate sponsorships and incentives for purchases obtained from protected units have reduced the options of the CSOs to ensure financial sustainability. The legal assistance available to CSOs remains restricted compared to the needs of the sector, the most affected by this situation being the CSOs in rural communities. The right to establish unions and their liberties are guaranteed by law and met in practice.”

In this respect, will CSOs and NGOs be able to respond to the main messages from the Civil Society for the EBRD?

Civil Society organizations have highlighted low levels of competitiveness for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and weaknesses in entrepreneurial opportunities and skills for the future of work and digital transformation, as well as weak financial inclusion. These are considered by the Civil Society organizations to be the main barriers to creating a healthy business environment at national level. The Bank’s support for economic diversification, SMEs and entrepreneurship opportunities is welcome as it concentrates more on regional development and bridging the gap between regional differences. There is a significant dissatisfaction concerning the investments in fossil fuels in Romania. Green New Deal for Europe is on the agenda of the Civil Society Organizations and therefore it is important that EBRD investments in Romania be aligned with the broader sustainability agenda and to strengthen efforts geared toward the transition to greener and sustainable energy resources”.

In the vision of the Country Strategy of Romania for the years 2020-2025, the ECOFOREST Association of Neamț aims to make an approach that highlights the importance of producing actions that shape an organization, starting from a strategy. But in order to draw up a strategy, it is necessary for both the presidents of NGOs and their members to be involved with their full intellectual capacity to

make research, innovate and act and afterwards apply the results obtained. Local NGOs were targeted by the ECOFOREST Association of Neamț and sent a questionnaire out of which to arise solutions / proposals for improvement, through transformation, the value of non-profit organizations and their sustainability:

- What do you think about the need for non-governmental Associations in our country?
- Do you think that non-governmental Associations should have their own annual strategies / programs?
- Have you thought that we should meet, at least annually, all the non-governmental Associations to make reports on the activity carried out during that year?
- Do you know non-governmental Associations that collaborate or become partners in developing activities, actions?
- What do you think about the title of the paper: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS – CSOs and NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS – NGOs require a transformation in the vision of the Country Strategy of Romania for 2020-2025?

AUTONOM Foundation of Piatra Neamț appreciates the initiative and joins the approach of ECOFOREST Association of Neamț.

The AUTONOM Foundation acts in education and is linked to AUTONOM Company, thus it has not faced the issues mentioned above by the ECOFOREST Association of Neamț. Nevertheless the company is solidary with the NGOs being ATYPICAL and proactive in the results achieved.

CICIA Association of Roznov

”We are well aware that the Civil Society should play an increasingly important role in the local or national economic and social development.

There is a requirement for the involvement of the Civil Society in all segments of the decision-making process implying legal regulations, policy development and strategies, amplification and functional simplification of the administrative bodies by introducing IT&C, etc.

Our idea is to set up a mechanism for financing NGOs based on clear criteria, management plan and / or for financing projects of local interest related to the following areas: studies and research, team-buildings for promoting citizenship and solidarity, dissemination of experience, argumentation of coherence of the topics addressed throughout projects”

„Ștefan cel Mare” Foundation of Bălțătești

It appreciates the involvement in the urgent problems that small NGOs undergo especially those in rural areas. The idea of the Foundation is that “CSDF should resume its old concerns, organize courses for initiation, access European, governmental funds, etc., organize meetings with the representatives of the existing NGOs, exchanging experience, creating partnerships between the existing NGOs so that to collaborate on sustainable term”.

ADL-Progres Association

It is a non-governmental organization, established in April 2005, with over 17 years of experience, which implemented numerous projects as applicant or partner being funded by The World Bank, PHARE, the operational programs POSDRU 2007 - 2013 and POCU 2014 – 2020.

“With regard to the funds NGOs have at disposal to support themselves, our opinion is that difficulties could be improved by providing more government and local grants to organizations and in addition certain types of goods and services through which developing organizations can be helped to progress”.

Granting access to action expanses, reducing administrative operating costs or simplifying mechanisms to the target of 2% of income to NGOs (in terms of duration and transparency of contributions) are a few suggestions.

ORDINANCE no. 26 of the 30th of January 2000 on associations and foundations in force / Ordonanta nr. 26 din 30 ianuarie 2000 cu privire la asociatii si fundatii:

Art. 49, alin. 1 - The local public administration authorities will support the legal entities established under this ordinance by:

- a) granting them some expanses for headquarters, depending on the possibilities and according to the law;
- b) allotting them, depending on the possibilities, land to build the necessary constructions where to perform their activities.

The fact that, in legal terms, “the local public administration authorities will support the entities legally established under Ordinance 26/2000” represents a great benefit for the development of associations and foundations, the collaboration with the state authorities generating mutual progress.

Romania's Mountain Forum- Neamț Branch

It is a professional non-governmental association, national public interest, non-patrimonial purpose, with legal personality, having as main purpose the protection and sustainable and inclusive development of the mountain area, by pinpointing natural and human resources, maintaining cultural identity, keeping the mountain

population in place by locally increasing the economic power and living standards, on maintaining the ecological balance and the protection of the natural environment.

“The financial viability of NGOs has become progressively worse over the recent years, as a consequence of their reduced access to funding programs, in conjunction with limited granting from national governments and external sources;

We believe there is an adequate legal framework for civil society organizations.

Commerce and Industry Chamber Neamț

“The establishment and operation of an NGO should be based on an identified need of the society and the purpose of the association/foundation be to solve this problem. Depending on this purpose, the association may be one of local, regional, national or international interest.

There is currently no notion of bankruptcy of an NGO even though there are many NGOs facing lack of activity (do not develop any activity) or income (do not have sources of sustainable financing) over a period of several consecutive years.

Apart from the legislation that should be amended, our idea is that NGOs should join federations in areas of interest so as to gain greater power in attracting funds, granting programs and represent a voice to be heard at political and legislative level.

For the ECOFOREST Association of Neamț, the idea of introducing research, inventions and innovation in the status of NGOs occurred as a sparkle, correlating from the paper to the Country Strategy of Romania 2020-2025 which reveals that there is a capacity of 50 thousand brains to make facts work, namely, the transformation of CSOs into profit-generating units, of increasing productivity, efficiency and profit, with an impact on the high standard of living, through scientific research.

In order to be able to make research, invent or innovate, we provide to the CSOs and NGOs the education level data according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCE), as follows:

PhD. Studies and programs;

Master’s degree and/or postgraduate courses (excluding PhD. studies and postdoctoral programs);

Short term academic studies, before the implementation of Bologna system;

Other type of education (post-secondary school and foremen’s vocational education, high school, professional and apprenticeship studies).

The introduction of scientific and technical research of innovations and inventions within the activities of CSOs is recommended because it brings in progress, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, with an impact on the standard of living.

To achieve the goal, the Presidents and the Boards of Directors will have to draw up a program of actions and activities to be applied in practice by its members and programs for the development of research, inventions and innovations among the 50.000 CSOs during 2020-2025.

The introduction of scientific research – inventions and innovations - in the Articles of Association of NGOs is the main source of progress and sustainability for the future; – this is the **ORIGINAL** idea of the ECOFOREST Association of Neamț, experienced and implemented during the 25 years of uninterrupted activity.

Conclusions

(1). ECOFOREST Association of Neamț has sent 18 e-mail addresses to different local NGOs but received only 6 responses. This undesirable situation means that the NGOs to which we have sent detailed e-mails about our requirements to propose new progress solutions for transforming NGOs according to the country Strategy 2020-2025 are not interested in coming up with solutions and proposals to participate in the progress of NGOs.

(2). The six non-governmental organizations exposed o multitude of solutions and suggestions in the vision of the Country Strategy of Romania 2020-2025, **strategy that reveals the result of a capacity of over 50.000 brains to get to the facts, namely the transformation of CSOs into profit-making units, of increasing productivity, efficiency, effectiveness with a positive impact on the high standard of living.**

(3). **The result of this paper is the multitude of new proposals, ideas and solutions** that, although they seem insignificant, can be the first elements of a stepping stone toward the transformation of civil society organizations in the vision of the Country Strategy of Romania 2020-2025.

(4). During the debates with the NGOs, new ideas have been issued which ensure the increase in their sustainability perspective, of which, original and main, is the legislative amendment for associations to group in federations by areas of interest, so that they gain greater power in attracting grants, training programs and in representing a voice to be heard at political and legislative level.

(5). In addition to the exchange of information, the communication involves sincere, open, systematic dialogue and, in particular, the interaction, implementation of the above established by both parties.

(6). A good communication between the civil society and the authorities leads to the change of mentalities and attitudes, to the solving of problems of both parties' interest, in terms of mutual trust [5].

(7).As the Romanian proverb says: “United we stand, divided we fall”, and the profit grows!

(8)It is obvious that CSOs and NGOs are a self-qua-non necessity. Non-governmental organizations already have a history from which new ideas and methods of development/growth have been promoted altogether with the development of the society.

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