

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR NGOS**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims at giving a perspective of the role that NGOs play in the society and economy, the financing opportunities that Romanian NGOs have and the way they take advantage of these opportunities in order to grow and have impact in society. The studies on financial behavior in Romania reveal that the income sources of the non-governmental organizations became diversified during the last years, the most significant financial incomes for NGOs remaining grants or contracts from the European Union and from foreign or international foundations. But in the same time, the analyzed data reveal that the changing legislation has a significant influence on the financing trends of NGOs.*

**Keywords:** NGO, financial resources, funding

**JEL classification:** L31, G29

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### **1. Introduction**

The motivation of this paper is to underline the role that NGOs play in the Romanian economy, the various and specific forms of financing that NGOs may approach and their evolution during the period 2006-2015.

The NGO sector in Romania is on a growing path, being involved in several aspects of the economy, but in the same time having a direct connection and dependence with the legislation and the financing resources the organizations have access to, the partnerships established within the programmes and projects developed.

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The paper furnishes the information about the role of NGO sector in Romania, the financial resources used in order to develop their projects and programmes and the tendencies and important data on financial resources of the NGO sector in Romania.

First we approach some relevant articles and papers that overview the NGO sector in Romania, the financial opportunities NGOs have and may use and finally relevant statistics are extracted in order to underline the evolution of these data during the analysed period.

Financial resources of the NGO sector chapter is the core of this paper, giving complete information regarding all forms of resources that this sector may access in order to fulfill its mission in society.

The article completes with trends regarding the evolution of total assets and revenues of this sector, EU funding evolution, sponsorships, 2% mechanism, within the chapter “Relevant trends”.

The conclusions part reveals the way the financial resources of NGOs evolved for the analyzed period, what were the factors that influenced these results and what are the tendencies observed.

### **Methodology**

Quantitative empirical research was applied, namely documentation from credible secondary sources, statistics, previously performed analyzes, articles, books, sites recognized for credibility, professionalism and topical information. This research method is appropriate because in this case there is a real need for quantitative, with a high degree of diversity, details and relevant records, from which the desired information can be extracted.

Documentation from secondary sources is a method that will be applied to synthesize the existing information up to the date of the present research, with reference to the bibliography studied for the research. The information extracted from current and reference articles and research, were correlated with the data collected from these sources in order to be able to interpret and create links between different elements such as the link between the legislation and the level of financial sustainability of NGOs, thus being able to draw conclusions related to the investigation carried out. Existing studies conducted on the activity of NGOs in Romania are employed, questionnaires already applied to the managers of the main NGOs in Romania, sites with statistical data from which data on the activity of NGOs and financial information is extracted.

**Literature review:**

There are several papers and sites approached for relevant information and opinions about the role, the impact in economy, the financing resources available for NGOs and statistics about the way these opportunities are quantified.

Some of them are detailed below.

Analyzing several researches: „Romania 2010 and Romania 2017 Non-governmental Sector- Profile, Tendencies, Challenges” ,conducted by FDSC,” „The NGO Leaders’ Barometer National online survey among NGO representatives in Romania”, „The NGO Leaders’ Barometer National online survey among NGO representatives in Romania” we found up to date information from various mentioned sources, that analyzes the activity, the role, the results and the tendencies of NGOs sector for the period 2010-2016, compared with previous periods, the correlation between the legislation, the economical, the historical and political situation and the tendencies within the access to financial resources for NGOs. The analyzed data is collected directly from the NGO sector through interviews, questionnaires, barometers, and from the relevant sources such as national reports and official situations delivered by national entities.

These studies were part of a project funded with SEE Grants. Our opinion concerning these studies is that the information found is useful and complex in order to have a general picture of the NGO sector in Romania, financial aspects and tendencies, evolution and conclusions. As a feed-back, we found incomplete information about the beneficiaries of all the actions, programs and financial efforts involved around NGOs activities. All in all it is about the involvement that NGOs have in economy, society, from the economical, educational and social point of view, the most important aspect being the impact on beneficiaries.

„Non-governmental organizations’ involvement in the accession and absorption of structural funds” (2010), is a well-structured and complex paper developed by FDSC having as major objectives the evaluation of the participation of NGOs to the structural funds developed by the European Union from the point of view of the applicant organizations, as well as of the organizations that already contracted the European grants. The methodology applied reveal access to a wide number of connections with NGO representatives, the information processed within the analyzes of the research made being rather complex and relevant for the targeted objectives. The conclusion are applicable for the NGO sector, the main conclusions

underlining the necessity of personnel qualification in order for the NGOs to apply with complex and qualitative projects, but in the same time the EU authority to develop user friendly interfaces and to help applicants with guidance in order to have easier access to information and the appropriate instruments for easier success in gaining and implementing EU funds.

„ A beginners guide to EU Funding -An Overview of EU Funding Opportunities 2014-2020” is a detailed guide for the applicants with information regarding the eligibility criteria, objectives, key programs and directions targeted by the European union for the mentioned period.

Arustei C.C., Manolescu I.T., *Apostoaie C.M, The Role of NGOs as a Change Promoter within European Policies*, is a research that underlines the major importance of NGO sector as a strategic partner for the European Union in implementing EU policies. It analyses the role that NGOs had along the history, the cooperation with the European Union, the funds involved, the challenges this sector encountered in Romania and the way it adapted along the way.

We consider the researches and papers consulted in order to develop this article being various and relevant and providing the information desired in order to have a general and specific picture of the way NGOs finance their activity in order to develop their specific projects and programs for the targeted beneficiaries.

## **1. NGOs role in society**

NGO stands for Non-Governmental Organization that defines a wide range of organizations with the same main characteristics. They do not distribute profits to members, because they are not created to generate profit, they are voluntary citizen’s groups, but they have a formal statute that sets out their mission, scope and objectives, in order to be liable for the stakeholders. They are independent of political parties, government, public authorities and commercial organizations. NGOs’ size may vary significantly, from a small number of people to hundreds of professional staff or even thousands of members. NGOs may have an operational core, providing specific services, or may focus on advocacy activities when they influence the policies of public authorities and public opinion in general.

According to the Government Ordinance no. 26/2033, approved by Law no.246/2005 in Romania there are three forms of NGOs: associations, foundations and federations. Due to legal procedures and to a concentration of

human and capital resources in the urban areas, in Romania NGOs remain a mainly urban phenomena (87% of NGOs are registered and operate in the urban environment), even though the urban-rural development gap remains one of the major issues of the countries. (A beginner's guide to EU Funding- An Overview of EU Funding Opportunities in 2014–2020, 2014 edition, p. 20-25).

NGOs role in society underlines the important part played by the non-governmental sector in Romania, the main fields of action of the NGOs activity and each percentage in the total amount.

The non-governmental organizations remain rather less visible and known in the domestic public landscape. Despite an impressive dynamics of the non-governmental sector in Romania – there are registered nowadays in Romania more than 80.000 organizations (according to data available on <http://www.just.ro>), more than 40% are still active. During the last 10 years this sector registered a significant growth, but it still remains less organized, thus having limited power in a society so dynamic and under major political influence. In the same time, after 1989, non-governmental organizations have re-entered the public arena under various forms. Many of the Romanian citizens attend professional training courses organized by non-governmental organizations; they go to universities which operate as non-governmental organizations, use social services provided or managed by such organizations, spend their spare time in cultural or sports events organized by profile associations.

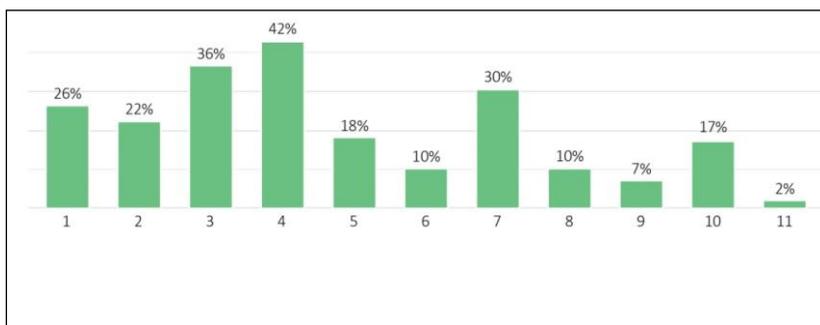
NGOs are grouped under various names, such as the “non-governmental”, “non-profit” sector or “civil society”, or more recently, “social entrepreneurship” and “social economy”. The non-governmental organizations use a variety of objectives and instruments in order to perform their mission. They form an irregular assembly of entities – organizations with very diverse preoccupations – day care centres, groups for the environment protection, human rights, professional organizations, professional training centres, sports clubs, universities, and many others. (FDSC, 2010)

Main activities performed by organizations according to a survey conducted by FDSC in 2016, are:

1. Community and local development (including inter-community associations and local authorities or where they are members or founders)
2. Promoting and representing the common interest of members
3. Providing authorized public services

4. Providing services of public interest that do not require accreditation - youth, cultural, etc.
5. Sports and Leisure Activities
6. Providing other services
7. Information, awareness, research, advocacy and public policy monitoring
8. Developing the capacity of the NGO sector (e.g. resource center or umbrella organization)
9. Financing organization - providing other types of financial aid (scholarships, microcredit, etc.)
10. Facilitating citizens' access to services or other benefits, charity, humanitarian aid
11. "I don't know" and "No" response

**Fig.1.** The main activities carried out by organizations.



Source: NGOs Leaders Barometer, FDSC 2016, processed by FDSC

## **2. Financial resources for NGOs**

The financial sources of NGO's can be classified into two big categories according to the level of the restriction applied to those financial resources and their level of continuity (see the figure below).

Therefore, four big sources of funding can be distinguished:

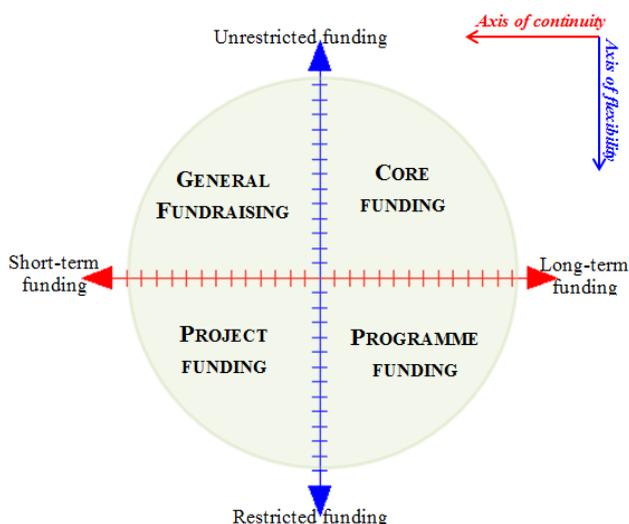
a) general fundraising (funds that are available for a short period of time and are of unrestricted nature, such as: fundraising events, grants, general donations and others);

b) core funding (financial resources that are used for the NGO's core operations and can be relied upon on the long term, such as: membership fees, regular sponsorships and others);

c) project funding (incomes that are relatively restricted and available on a short period, up to 3 years, posing difficulties in assuring project continuity);

d) program funding (incomes that presume some restrictions and are available for a longer period of time, up to 5 years and longer, and come from strong working partnerships that have been established in time).

**Fig. 2.** NGOs funding Tipology



Source: Arustei, Manolescu, Apostoaie, Eurint 2014, The Role of NGOs as a Change Promoter within European Policies

We encounter the self-financing way which demand rather great effort and special skills and in the same time is quite limited, and on the other hand the external funding that is not that limited but it has more restrictions.

This paper presents the most important forms of financial resources available for NGOs, each of it having percentage of income attracted to the organization.

The tool kit „Financing Mechanisms, resources that may be accessed by Romanian NGOs” gives us detailed information of possible opportunities of financing the activity of non-governmental organizations:

- ✓ **Membership fees and subscriptions.** Lots of the organizations in order to recognize the membership of its participants, require members a regular fee, whether monthly or annually.
  
- ✓ **Community fundraising.** Among the most commonly used community fundraising methods / techniques are:
  - Direct debits -the bank is authorized to automatically make payments from the client's account to the organization at a time predetermined and with pre-set amounts of money.
  - SMS donations. It is a popular method of attracting funds, both because of the easy system by which one the donor can direct money to a cause in which he believes, as well as reduced costs for organizations that organizes fundraising campaigns via SMS.
  - Fundraising events that can expand the donors' network, recruit new volunteers, and may take various forms, from events, prizes, sports competitions, auctions, concerts, festivals, gastronomic events, theater plays, etc.
  - Peer to peer fundraising implies that donors and supporters and are involved in raising funds on behalf of the organization, having as major advantage the extending the donors network.
  - Sponsorship from companies. It is a method of attracting funds from companies through sponsorship contracts under Law no. 32/1994.
  - Street collections have greater success when benefiting from media promotion. This can be a good method of fundraising for organizations that enjoy visibility in community and that can have a large number of people to participate in the street collection.
  - Salary donations are made by employees directly from their salary to the non-governmental organization through a system implemented by the company they work for, which usually has its contribution in donating in addition to the employees' contribution.

✓ **Government funding can be of two types: direct or indirect.**

**Direct funding** consists of financial support allocated from the public budget at central level and managed through government agencies, such as ministries. These can be:

- Grants offered by the state under Law no. 34/1998 regarding the granting of associations and of Romanian foundations with legal personality that establishes and manages social assistance units. These are granted by the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly.
- Non-reimbursable financing from public funds under Law no. 350/2005 on non-reimbursable financing from public funds allocated to non-profit activities of general interest. These are granted through City Halls.
- Programs of national interest administered by government ministries or agencies.

**Indirect funding** may take the form of tax advantages, such as, for example, not collecting the tax on income for non-governmental organizations.

✓ **Grants from foreign foundations and international organizations**

There are a number of international organizations and foundations that opened grants to Romanian NGOs health projects. For better information on current funding, NGOs need to access periodically their Internet pages to identify active calls.

Norwegian Funds finance projects to reduce economic and social disparities in poorer EU countries. The main beneficiary countries are Poland, Romania and Hungary, which will receive € 800 million, € 500 million and € 200 million during 2014-2021. Part of these amounts go to NGOs and the condition imposed by the Norwegian Government is that money be administered by independent bodies, unrelated to national governments.

The Open Society Foundations is an international finance network that financially supports the society's groups civilians around the world, fighting for the consolidation of the pursuit of law, respect for human rights and minorities and diversity of opinions; supporting the democratic election of governments and a strong civil society that would help governments to become more accountable to citizens. The targeted organizations are approached directly by the OSF and invited to submit applications for funding

or funding proposals. However, there are fewer grants available to organizations through open calls. (Marian Ursan, Catalina Oprea, „Financing Mechanisms, resources that may be accessed by Romanian NGOs)

✓ **Grants offered by Romanian private companies - Corporate Social Responsibility**

An example is Raiffeisen Communities, a program with a total budget of 100.000 euros, that encourages organizations and institutions in Romania to develop and to implement social responsibility programs for the benefit of the community, which will lead to improved living standards in Romania. [www.raiffeisencomunitati.ro](http://www.raiffeisencomunitati.ro).

Another example is Vodafone Foundation which carries out the "The Fund for Good Deeds" funding campaign every year projects carried out by non - governmental organizations in the fields of education, health and social services, in the benefit of socially, economically or physically disadvantaged children, young people and the elderly. [www.fundatia-vodafone.ro](http://www.fundatia-vodafone.ro) In 2016 the value of the funding round was 300,000 euros, but the projects submitted were funded in with 50.000 euros.

✓ **EU funding opportunities**

According to the European Commission official website, approximately 80% of EU funding sources for NGOs are managed by EU countries themselves. Each country gives complete details about funding and application procedures on the websites of the managing authorities. The rest are managed by the Commission or other EU bodies.

An NGO can receive two types of funding grants: action grants, and operating grants. Action grants reimburse NGOs for costs incurred while carrying out the activities in question. Under some programmes the EU can directly relate with an NGO through an operating grant.

For the period 2014-2020 there are several major areas in which the European Union through its granting politics aims to achieve its objectives in developing countries.

- **Culture and media:** The Creative Europe programme supports initiatives related to the European audiovisual, cultural and creative sector. The programme consists of two sub-programmes: Culture and MEDIA.

- **Social inclusion, gender equality and equal opportunities:** NGOs working in these fields may benefit from European Social Fund (ESF) support. These funds are conducted by the managing authorities in an EU region or country

- **Foster citizenship and civic participation:** The Europe for Citizens programme has two main goals: to help the public understand the EU, its history and diversity, and to foster European citizenship and improve conditions for democratic and civic participation at EU level. The programme is also managed by EACEA.

- **Research and innovation:** Societal Challenges, a component of the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, provides funding for projects covering areas such as health, demographic change, food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry and marine, maritime and inland water research. It is managed by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME).

- **Development and humanitarian aid:** NGOs can get funding under most of the thematic or regional programmes managed by the Commission's department dealing with international cooperation and development (DEVCO). NGOs are also eligible for funding for humanitarian aid and civil protection activities through the Commission's department dealing with humanitarian aid and civil protection (ECHO).

- **Transport, energy and ICT:** Some funding areas of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) are open to NGOs. The CEF programme is managed by the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA).

([https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/who-eligible-funding/funding-opportunities-ngos\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/who-eligible-funding/funding-opportunities-ngos_en), consulted 12.02.2019)

### **3. Relevant statistics**

According to „Romania 2010- Non-Governmental Sector- Profile, Tendencies, Challenges”, the basis of financial resources of the non-governmental sector remains fragile. The financial resources of 2/3 of the non-

governmental organizations are low, which has direct impact on their capacity of action. Below there are some numbers

In 2008, NGOs had total assets of RON 8,0 billion and in the same fiscal year, they registered incomes of RON 5,40 billion (that is, about EUR 1.25 billion)

For the period 2006-2008, one can find a constant increase of the assets and incomes of the non-governmental sector – the increase of assets being more accentuated than of other incomes.

In the year 2008, 26.66% of the organizations had no income registered for that fiscal year.

66.58% of the organizations either had no income, or had incomes lower than 40,000 RON.

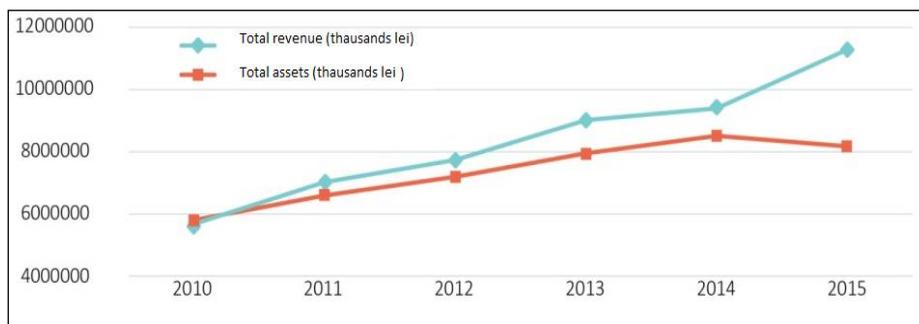
For 5.5% of the organizations the economic activities are the most important income source.

In 2015, the total assets of NGO sector are RON 16.7 billion. The overall patrimony of NGOs has been constantly rising each year, during the period 2000 - 2015, over the last 3 years (2012-2015), increasing by 11.33%.

According to „**Romania 2017** - Non-Governmental Sector - Profile, Tendencies, Challenges”, the income from economic activities has increased over the period 2010 - 2015. In 2015, the revenues from economic activities increased by more than 3 times compared to 2010. Due to the growing trend of total sector revenue and similar pace growth, one can notice that the share of income from economic activities had an oscillating evolution for the entire period, with growth peaks in 2011 and 2012, with a stabilization around 29% starting 2013.

Comparing with previous data, it is worth mentioning the increase in the share of income from economic activities in total revenues compared to the period 2006-2008, when it oscillated around 17%. Income from economic activities have therefore resulted as an important source of funding for the non-governmental sector.

**Fig. 3. The evolution of assets and total revenue of active NGOs during 2010-2015**



Source: The Atlas of Social Economy 2010-2012, The National Institute of Statistics 2013-2015, FDSC 2010-2012, processed by FDSC

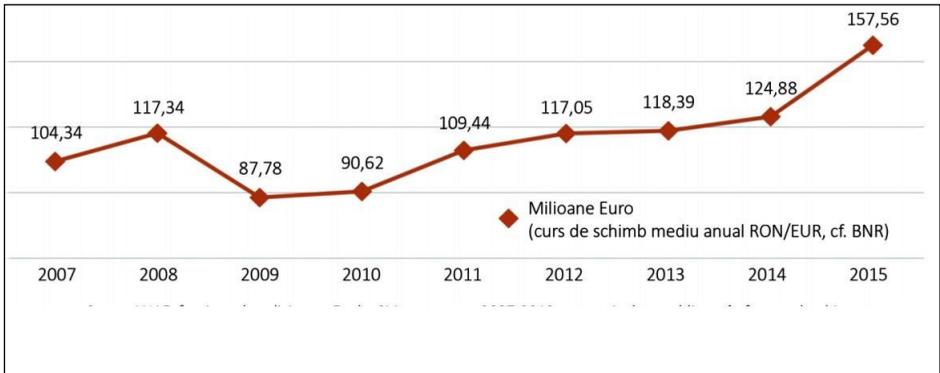
**The mechanism 2%.** Despite the implementation difficulties reported in the first years of the introduction of the 2% in 2003, recent years have proven the potential of this alternative funding source to stimulate the philanthropic behavior of the citizen and its accountability in support of some social causes. The mechanism 2% determined the transfer of EUR 57,480,987 (calculated at the average exchange rate of the National Bank of Romania for the year when the transfer was performed) for the tax years 2004 – 2008, the amount significantly increasing every year. Out of the total tax on income owed to the state budget, for the year 2008 the taxpayers transferred 0.84%, almost half of the amount available to be transferred by the mechanism 2%. (FDSC, Romania 2010)

In 2015 (by analyzing data on revenue-targeted amounts recorded in 2014), 1.82 million citizens (29% of total taxpayers) have allocated 143.4 million Lei through this mechanism. Growth potential, however, remains significant, given the level of revenue registered in 2014, the total amount to be targeted was about 482 million Lei. (FDSC, Romania 2017)

**Sponsorships.** The increase in sponsorship volume during the period 2010-2015 is remarkable, although the potential of the companies able to offer sponsorships is much more significant. In 2015, the sponsorship tax facility was used by 23% of the companies that registered profit. In the absence of detailed data on the categories of sponsors, we appreciate that a consistent volume (relative to the total funding sources of the sector) reaches non-governmental organizations.

**CSR.** According to FDSC, The Sustainability Index 2018, Romania Kaufland, OMV Petrom, Lidl Romania, Raiffeisen Bank, MOL Romania, IKEARomania and Vodafone have continued their support for NGOs through national funding programs. According to a report issued in 2018 by CSR Media and Valoria Business Solutions, corporate budgets for (CSR) either stagnated (30% of respondents) or slightly increased (between 30 and 59% of respondents). The main areas of interest for CSR programs are education, the social and the environment, and most of them it operates at national level, rather than at local or community level.

**Fig. 2. Total expenses with sponsorships, private scholarships 2007-2015**



Source: ANAF for Funky Citizens 2007-2013, and available data from the Ministry for Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue at <http://data.gov.ro/dataset/ong-situatie-deducere-sponsorizari-ale-companiilor> 2016, processed by FDSC

**The social / charity sector** represents in 2015, 21% of the ONG sector in Romania, and has the highest income from the NGO sector, more than 20% of total attracted revenue. Quantitative research data ( ONG Leaders Barometer, FDSC 2016) shows that social NGOs use any source of funding available, public or private, most important being: targeting the 2% tax (78% of organizations have earned revenue from this source in 2015), individual donations (72%) or sponsorship from companies (57%), 38% of all organizations received European grants.

### **EU funding trends:**

Being involved in various areas covered by EU policies, NGOs have become a natural target group eligible for a vast part of EU funding instruments. Or, putting it in other words, “it is difficult to find an EU programme which would not, in one way or another, include a funding opportunity for NGOs” (EC, 2012, p. 10).

The European Commission has allocated in 2000 to NGO funding more than 1% of the EU budget, representing over 1 billion euros. The most significant sums reached humanitarian aid NGOs (400 mil euros). The volume of EU funding for NGOs continued to rise, reaching: 1.92 billion EUR in 2004, 2.20 billion EUR in 2005, 2.51 billion EUR in 2006 and again in 2007, 2.78 billion EUR in 2008 and 3.17 billion EUR in 2009.

According to EP 2010, the main funds came from four main directions: European aid, education and culture, humanitarian aid and environment aid departments.

After 2010, the EU funding for NGOs maintained its increasing trend: 3.51 billion EUR in 2010, 3.75 billion EUR in 2011, 3.96 billion EUR in 2012 and 4.49 billion EUR in 2013, the number of beneficiary NGOs reaching 2000.

According to a quantitative and qualitative research conducted in Romania by FDSC, in 2010, applied to 480 respondents, the results show that the funding programs from structural funds have a relatively high degree of knowledge within the non-governmental sector (NGO) Sectorial Operational Program -Human Resource Development (POS DRU), Regional Operational Program (POR), National Rural Development Program (PNDRP) and the Sectorial Operational Environment Program (POSMEDIU) have the greatest notoriety within the NGO sector, each of these programs being known by more than two-thirds of all investigated NGOs.

The most popular programs are also the programs that recorded the highest level of participation in consultations in the programming phase of the NGO sector. The least known operational programs are the Operational Development Administrative Capacity Program (PODCA), only 48% of organizations have heard of such operational program, PO Fisheries and Sectorial Operational Growth Program Economic Competitiveness (POSCCE). (Involvement of non-governmental organizations in access and absorption structural funds, 2010 FDSC)

**Table 1. The distribution of beneficiary NGOs contracted projects within the main operational projects at 31.08.2010**

Number of contracted projects	NGO Projects	Total projects	% NGO Projects
POSDRU	341	1139	29,9%
POSMEDIU	9	118	7,6%
POSDCA	12	201	6,0%
OSCCE	30	1252	2,4%
POS	6	719	0,8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>3429</b>	<b>11,6%</b>

Source: the list of beneficiaries on site of the Management Authority at 31.10.2010.

**Table 2. Distribution of the value of projects contracted by the NGOs-beneficiaries within the main operational programs on 31st of August 2010**

Name	Value of NGO projects RON	Total value of projects ron	% value of NGO projects
POSDRU	2750000	8500000	39.35%
PODCA	13500	265000	5.09%
POSMEDIU	11800	9700000	0.12%
POR	9900	9230000	0.10%
POSCCE	2136	4544000	0,05%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2787336</b>	<b>32239000</b>	<b>8,64%</b>

Source: data on site of the Management Authority 2010

#### **4. Conclusions**

- Over the past 20 years, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increased their number and activity and in the same time its programs and projects, being able to reach a wide range of different categories of beneficiaries, the main fields of action being providing services of public interest that do not require accreditation - youth, cultural and providing authorized public services. Social/charity sector reached the highest income in 2015, through 2%, donations and sponsorships, becoming essential actors in the social field, particularly in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

- Regarding the financial resources of NGOs, the result of the analysis of the NGO sector trends, even if over the past 10 years the assets and the revenues of NGOs have increased, the reality is that this sector is rather insignificant in terms of the capacity it has, through its number and variety of activities developed reported to the income realized and number of beneficiaries.
- The European Commission is one of the most significant suppliers of EU funding for NGOs. Reported to the financial needs of the NGO sector, these sums are not that significant, but the overall funds involved in this sector remain relevant. If we would refer to the proportion of these sums within the financial needs of an entire NGO sector probably it would seem very little, but the overall funds surely remain significant when compared with the other financial resources such as national governments, local authorities and others)
- One major tendency within the NGO sector seems to be the necessity of diversification of the financial resources, with accent on core funding, economic activities and the appropriate external funding. In order to increase the access to external funding (EU funding, Norwegian funding and others), NGOs need to invest know-how in training its members in order to apply, write, develop, implement, follow and report during the implementation of the project or program, to have the expected results.

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