

Report by Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca (Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Centre)

1. SHORT INTRODUCTION ABOUT ROLE AND SITUATION OF VOLUNTEERING IN ROMANIA

Legal context of volunteering in Romania

The previous law of volunteering in Romania (Law 195/2001) defined volunteering as “the public interest activity carried out of free will by any individual, for the benefits of others, without any financial benefit .” The law only referred to the volunteering activities carried out in an organised setting, namely in the frame of a legal non-profit entity or public institution. This was very limiting since informal volunteering activities were left out. However many people reported that they have been volunteering outside the coverage of the law. In the other hand the usual misuse of the term volunteer in the public discourse of various state actors increased the confusion. As an example in this direction, laws on the “voluntary military service” state that the “volunteer soldiers will receive monthly payment” for their contractual services, thus contradicting the definition cited above and increasing the confusion as the soldiers are actually employed under a work contract and only the decision to join the army as an employee is voluntary (free will). In 2014, the law of volunteering was modified and readopted in the new form. There was one essential element that was modified: this time the law recognised volunteering as professional experience with the condition that volunteering activities were realized within the field of the person’s acquired studies. Comparable with the previous law, the law 78/2014 focuses on the positive outcomes of the youth involvement in volunteering activities and offers the necessary support to integrate the young volunteers in the work field. Another important aspect of the new law is that any volunteer activity is taking place only on the base of a mandatory contract in a written form. Before the contract is signed between the two parts involved – the hosting organisation and the volunteer, the two must agree on a collaboration. One of the reasons why the law is now more focused on the contractual part, is due to the large use (in the last years) of instruments used to facilitate the volunteer’s activity and other materials that have the aim to train the volunteers in order to be prepared for certain activities. Introducing the volunteering contract is an important step in the Romanian volunteering law especially because there is a set of concrete right and responsibilities on both involved parts – volunteer and hosting organization.

Once the new law of volunteering was adopted, a set of documents are also mandatory in the field of volunteering. These instruments and tools include: the volunteering contract, job description, activity file, program evaluation file.

Concerning the ethics and quality standards in working with volunteers, until more recent years (from 2011 and more recently 2014 once the new law of volunteering was adopted), these have not been a top priority of the volunteering sector in Romania, although in recent NGO meetings, such as conferences or round tables, questions about ensuring the quality of volunteering experiences for volunteers and avoiding volunteers’ disappointment, were raised. In 2011 a new ethical code was drafted with the following aims: contributing to the creation of an accepted and unified vision on what ethical principles should govern volunteer involvement; raise the quality of the services provided by volunteer involving organisations to both volunteers and beneficiaries; to improve communication and collaboration among volunteer involving organisations; to increase the degree of

transparency and responsibility of volunteer involving organisations. The code was structured according to six principles: transparency, responsibility, legality, equity, dignity and confidentiality. The code includes recommendations for volunteer involving organisations, structured according to the main phases of the volunteer management process, practical suggestions such as useful tools that can be used in volunteer management in order to ensure fair and ethical treatment for all parties – volunteers, hosting organisation and beneficiaries.

Definition of volunteering

The Romanian Language Dictionary explains the term volunteer as it follows: about people – acting out of own free will; about actions – without constraint, based on free will, conscious; person joining the army out of free will or performing a service willingly and unselfishly. Only the first definition somehow touches the meaning of volunteering but it refers exclusively to the free will component of volunteering, leaving out other defining features such as the public benefit or the absence of remuneration. In a way the communist legacy of the former compulsory “patriotic work” is still shading the true meaning of the term volunteer. Also the terms volunteer and member in an association have an unclear relationship, varying from mutual exclusion to complete overlapping, making it difficult to clarify what exactly means „volunteer” in Romania. The terminological tangle surrounding the terms volunteer/voluntary is far from being solved despite this however, the movement continues to benefit from constant development.

Trends in the percentage of the voluntary engaged people in Romania

“How many volunteers are in Romania?” and the answer is far from being straightforward. The simplest answer would be 20% of the population as indicated by the Eurobarometer no 73 from November 2010. According to this survey approximately 4 million Romanians declared they had volunteered during the previous twelve months. Despite the trust in the methodology of the Romanian volunteers. There are slightly more female volunteers than male volunteers. They are mostly young, 71,4% being aged between 19 and 25, 8,1% between 26 and 35, and less than 4% in the other age groups, except for the teenage group with 9,3%. Volunteers are either highly educated or still in the educational system. Over half have already completed high school and 21,5% have already completed university studies, and 5,4% have obtained their post graduate diplomas. Another 14,4% are still in school at various levels, while only 4,2 have not graduated high school. 34% of the volunteers are employed either full time or part time, while 58,8% are currently pupils or students, and only 3,7% are retirees.

The Ministry of Education reported that in 2009 a number of 56,541 volunteers (students enrolled in the formal education system) and 14,654 beneficiaries from 650 schools and 350 special schools (for children with special needs).

References to the volunteer activity in Romania are based on a separate research conducted by the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) in 1996, reporting that 33,5% of the Romanian volunteer. The fact that, according to the research, there were approximately 5,7 million volunteers at the time, raises questions about the validity of the tools used for measuring the volunteer activity and the appropriateness of the populations’ understanding of volunteering. All following research indicates at

mist half of the amount of volunteering in Romania. The European Values Survey indicates in 1999 that only 10% of the Romanian population was engaged in volunteer activities. A national survey conducted in 2001 in the frame of the Civil Society Development on the Black Sea Project indicates that 13% of the Romanian population took part in volunteer activities. Another research on philanthropic behaviour in Romania conducted by Allavida and the Association for Community Relations in 2002 indicated only 8% of Romanian reporting volunteer activities. Other figures show 14,4% of population reporting volunteering in the past 12 months, as the spring 2007 Public Opinion Barometer conducted by the Open Society Foundation reports. The most recent figure remains the 20%, according to the data provided by the Eurobarometer form November 2010.

Volunteering in selected population groups

Some of the studies that were described above indicated that: there are slightly more female volunteers than male volunteers in Romania. These volunteers are mostly young, 71,4% being aged between 19 and 25, 8,1% between 26 and 35, and less than 4% in the other age groups, except for the teenage group with 9,3%. One important aspect regarding the split into population groups, concerning volunteer activities is the fact that the overwhelming majority of volunteering opportunities are suitable for dynamic people; most of the times require computer literacy or foreign language skills which are mostly found in the younger cohorts. Also another important aspect that can explain the large involvement of youth in volunteering is the fact that most of the involving organisations are located mostly in the urban area. The most active associative life can be found in large university cities, making thus volunteering opportunities available to a given category of individuals most probably young and educated. Organisations make efforts to increase the rate of adult and elderly involvement, but the overwhelming majority goes for the skilled young volunteers, easily accessible and very dynamic. Last but not least another potential explanatory factor for the high percentage of young and highly educated volunteers is the fact that the communist legacy still influences the way people who experienced the compulsory work look at volunteering, while younger people have limited or no memory at all regarding the compulsory work, so they are more opened to volunteering.

However, more recent data from 2010 provided by the Civil Society Development Foundation shows that the most active age group in volunteering starts to slowly shift from the 15 to 25 years olds towards 25 to 35 year olds, while volunteering among the elderly starts to grow especially around church. In terms of types of activities volunteers get involved in, the top activity performed by volunteers is the direct work with beneficiaries of various kinds (29,7%) followed by the organisation of events (15,9%), management or coordination of activities (12%), communications/public relations activities (11,8%), public awareness campaigns (7,62%), office management (6,15%), and document drafting (5,16%).

Regarding the period of time that the volunteers spent, being active in volunteering activities these aren't very clear and depend mostly on the type of projects available or proposed activities on which they have access. Usually local volunteers tend to be more involved into activities that are short-term designed and more frequent. At the same time many organisations that are developing volunteering activities through Erasmus+ programme, tend to involve international volunteers for longer periods of time, usually the maximum of time approved by Erasmus+ service,

which is one year. A long-term involvement of volunteers means more resources and capacity of the hosting organisation but also long-term sustainability. Some organisations in Romania have focused in the last years, on the opportunities that are brought by a long-term involvement of volunteers in the local community, implementing projects with the support of the European Commission. For example, Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center has involved 19 international volunteers only in 2013.

Actors that support the development of volunteering in Romania

In order to identify the actors that support and develop volunteering in Romania we must return to the volunteering infrastructure in general in Romania. Volunteering infrastructure includes a set of resources and a combination of mobilising actors and networks that provide a particular sense of empowerment of volunteers and volunteering organisations and function according to voluntarily assumed self-regulatory principles. The resources included refer to enabling legal frameworks, appropriate financial support mechanisms at all levels, access to appropriate logistics (such as office space, communication facilities etc) and proper media coverage of volunteering as a social movement. Now the mobilisation actors and networks include the volunteer involving organisations and institutions that provide organised volunteering opportunities for all the people interested in getting involved as volunteers and their respective networks that facilitate cooperation and exchange of good practices. The sense of empowerment that the resources and mobilisation actors provide together refers to a shared understanding of volunteering within society and the appropriate public recognition of the value of volunteering for the individual and the society, alongside a positive social valorisation of volunteers and volunteering and a reasonable level of social responsibility at both individual and corporate levels. In Romania the mobilisation actors are: volunteer centres (local, regional and national), affiliation with networks of volunteer centres (regional, national and international), volunteer involving organisations and/or volunteering public institutions and established recruitment and/or recognition events.

A study conducted in 2010 by the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF), shows that in January 2010 Romania had an official number of 62,680 registered non-profit entities, as follows: 44,271 associations, 16,785 foundations, 758 federations, 633 unions and 213 other type of non-profit entities. However it is difficult to assess how many of these registered entities are actually active.

The same study conducted by CSDF in 2010 contains a special section on non-profit sector leaders, their responses show that 90% of the non-profits in Romania involve volunteers in their activities, while 68% of them function exclusively based on volunteering, not having an employment staff. Findings in this section also show that the supply and demand of volunteers are not well balanced, the number of people willing to engage overtaking the number of available organised opportunities. Thus, 63,3% of non-profit leaders declare that volunteers address to organisations personally, 50% state that their organisations have enough volunteers and do not find difficulty in attracting volunteers, while 3,3% declare they have more volunteers than they need or have the capacity to involve.

Within the registered non-profit entities, there are organisations, such as Pro Vobis – National Resource Centre for Volunteering, the National Network of Local Volunteer Centres and VOLUM Federation, which represent the core of volunteering infrastructure. The first volunteer centre in Romania became active in 1997 and it was set up as department of the Humanitarian Association Pro Vobis based in Cluj-

Napoca. Pro Vobis expanded its activity at the national level and since 2004 became a resource centre for volunteering, volunteering promotion, training and consultancy for volunteering development, pilot projects in volunteering and advocacy for volunteering. Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center was established in 2004, initially as a separate initiative of Pro Vobis. Since 2004, Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center developed independently and it became one of the largest volunteer centers in Romania.

Also Pro Vobis was the one that initiated in 2010 the set-up of VOLUM Federation – The Federation of Organisations Supporting the Development of Volunteering in Romania, after a year long consultation process, having 25 founding members and other 13 organisations joining immediately after its registration. Some of Romania’s largest volunteer involving organisations are branches of well-known international organisations such as the Red Cross, Save the Children, Caritas Federation, World Vision, Habitat for Humanity, Hospices of Hope but also national organisations such as the Foundation for Community Support (Fundatia de Sprijin Comunitar), More Green Association (Asociatia Mai Mult Verde) or New Horizons Foundation (Fundatia Noi Orizonturi). Most of these organisations are VOLUM members.

Apart from non-profit organisations which remain the major vehicle for citizens’ volunteer involvement, there are other stakeholders involved in providing voluntary activities and promoting volunteering. Public institutions, such as social assistance providers, public hospitals, public cultural institutions such as museums, botanical and zoological gardens and education institutions organise volunteering activities and promote volunteering.

Funding opportunities available in Romania

One of the biases surrounding volunteering in Romania is the perception that money is not needed if volunteers are involved. Somehow the fact that supporting volunteering is not cost-free is not so widely understood in Romania. This public perception might be one of the reasons why volunteering regulations and funding programmes are almost non-existent in Romania. In general the funding disbursed from public budgets at national or local levels are directed toward the non-profit sector without mentioning volunteering specifically. There are two pieces of legislation regulating public funding for civil society, none of them containing the word “volunteer/volunteering” not even as accepted in kind contribution. The laws included refer to funding from public budgets of non-profit activities of general interest (Law 350/2005) and funding from public budgets of activities of organised Romanian communities abroad (Law 321/2006). All funding dispersed under the regulations of these two laws are project based, no core funding provisions being available. Every Ministry has funds which can fund NGO activities with their specific area according to Law 350/2005, but volunteering is not one of the priorities of such funds, given that volunteering is not formally included in the competence portfolio of any ministry. Public funding for volunteering activities can be obtained if NGOs include a volunteering component in their project proposals. Projects have to correspond to the field of activity of the particular ministry disbursing funds, thus volunteering is secondary and no specific, core funding is available to support volunteer involving organisations or volunteer infrastructure organisations.

Funding for volunteering in Romania is available from external sources. One of the donor organisations active for a long time and investing significant amounts in

supporting volunteering development is the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation of the United States of America (USA). For the past 20 years donors such as Soros Foundation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Embassies of Netherlands, United Kingdom, France or the USA have been providing financial support for volunteering development both as core funding and on project funding.

Another significant source of support has been the European Union (UE) programmes, such as the pre-accession Programme of Community aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (PHARE) and the current European Social Fund. More recently, the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area, including funding provided by the governments of Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway, has been supporting the development of volunteering in Romania, as has the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkan Trust for Democracy, private funding initiatives of several trusts and foundations.

An important source of funding that focuses on volunteering is the Youth in Action programme (now Erasmus+) managed in Romania by 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).

Relevant about Youth in Action programme is that it has specific funding dedicated to the promotion of volunteering and support for developing training and mentoring programmes for volunteers included in the European Voluntary Service (international exchange programme for volunteers below the age of 30).

There is also a trend in Romania to organise fund-raising campaigns supported by public figures and/or TV stations through television shows aimed at raising funds via telephone calls during the show. More recently this trend somehow expanded or moved in the internet sector, many successful fund-raising campaigns being coordinated through online sources only (social media like Facebook or different websites). Some examples of successful shows are campaigns organised by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), raising funds for children, or the campaign "You are better in Reality" held by Realitatea TV, as well as websites like crestemidei.ro.

Unfortunately funding for volunteering is neither stable nor reliable in Romania, as it depends on the funding priorities and programmes of international donors and on project funds with very few opportunities for core funding being available. In some situations funds are also difficult to access for some NGOs, as project grant applications are most of the time very demanding to complete and the implementation and reporting requirements very specialised.

2. NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR IMPROVING PROFESSIONALISM IN VOLUNTEERING

- a) Description of existing training programmes offered by your organization (goals of the training, themes of the working sessions, duration of the training, main results of training implemented in the past, etc.)

- For volunteers

Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center organized teambuilding sessions for all the EVS (European Voluntary Service) volunteers hosted during the last years. Teambuilding sessions usually last for 3 days. The teambuilding session is taking place before the volunteers are engaging into the on-arrival training. The objectives of an teambuilding session are: building up a cohesion within the team of EVS volunteers, developing an activity plan within the projects, focusing on the volunteers learning process (identifying own learning style), informing volunteers about the YouthPass opportunities.

Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center was also involved, during the last years of activity, into having pre-departure trainings for the local volunteers who are engaging in EVS programs. Pre-departure trainings are dedicated to the selected EVS volunteers who are getting ready for their departure to the hosting country. Pre-departure trainings usually last between 1 and 3 days, depending on the number of volunteers who are preparing for their departure. The pre-departure training is aiming to prepare the future volunteers for their first encounter with the hosting organization and the cultural context in which they are engaging. During the pre-departure training several topics are approached: the concept of volunteering, Youth in Action Program (now Erasmus+), rights and responsibilities of the volunteers, key actors involved in EVS projects, volunteers' learning objectives, intercultural learning and cultural shock, personal project planning.

- For volunteer coordinators

“Volunteers management from A to Z” is a project that is taking place for a year, during 1st of April 2014 until 31st of March 2015. Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Center together with partner organizations ProVobis – National Center of Resources for Volunteering and IOGT Tippetue from Norway implemented the project that aimed to raise the organizational capacity of 16 NGO's from Romania. The project included training activities, consultancy and jobshadowing within the NGO's that have some experience in the volunteer management process.

Within the project, a training course on volunteer management was held during July 2014, for 16 volunteer coordinators, members of 16 different NGO's at the national level. The training was held over a period of 4 days. The training included topics specific to the process of volunteer management: recruitment, selection, instruction, supervision, motivation and evaluation of the volunteers.

b) Description of the existing training programmes/opportunities provided by other organizations or public institutions in your country (goals of the training, themes of the working sessions, duration of the training, main results of training implemented in the past, etc. and providers)

- For volunteers

One of the major section of trainings that are taking place each year in Romania is related with the now Erasmus+ program (Youth in Action program). National training courses for international volunteers are organized regularly through the National Agency in Romania. These trainings include: on-arrival trainings and mid-term evaluation courses. The international volunteers also benefit from pre-departure trainings that are taking place into their home country before their departure in Romania. The on-arrival training is an event dedicated to the EVS (European Voluntary Service) volunteers, which main objective is to introduce the volunteers in the host country, preparing them for the service period and the EVS experience. The on-arrival training intends to help the volunteers adapt to personal and cultural challenges, get to know each other and build a network. It includes topics such as: the volunteer learning process, expectations, motivation, risk management, insurance etc. Usually the on-arrival training duration is 5 days.

The mid-term evaluation meeting is another EVS meeting that it normally taking place at about half of the volunteers' EVS period spent in the host country. The meeting allows volunteers to assess their experience so far and to reflect on the activities, role and support of the hosting organization and on their own contribution. The mid-term evaluation is essential for risk prevention and crisis management and it thus facilitate conflict resolution, if necessary. In addition volunteers have the opportunity to share experiences and increase their motivation. The evaluation should also raise awareness of the personal learning cycle, linking it to the key competences of Youthpass.

Some hosting organization organize a teambuilding session for the international volunteers, once they arrive.

Depending on the type of the project the international volunteers can also benefit from further instruction and trainings that are taking place during their hosting.

The local volunteers instead benefit from direct informing about the EVS opportunities or other volunteering opportunities at the local level. Informing sessions about EVS opportunities are part of SNV (National Volunteer Week), an annual event developed with the aim of mobilizing volunteers and organizations, to celebrate together volunteering and to drag the attention of the local community. About 150 partner organizations are involved each year in this event with ProVobis as the coordinator.

- For volunteer coordinators

“Volunteer Management” trainings that are offered by some NGO’s in Romania. For example ProVobis delivered in 2008 an international training on volunteer management for volunteer coordinators from countries like Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Latvia and Greece.

3. OTHER SOURCES/ FURTHER READING/RESEARCH RELEVANT IN THE FIELD

- www.tinapse.ro
- www.tinact.ro
- develawp.ro/legeavoluntariatului
- legestart.ro
- www.provobis.ro
- www.centruldevoluntariat.ro
- www.stirionq.ro
- www.erasmusplus.ro
- www.volunteertolearn.eu - Volunteering structure in Romania Annual report 2013 - Centrul de Voluntariat Cluj-Napoca Annual report 2007 - ProVobis European Year of Volunteering 2011: About Volunteering Infrastructure and its challenges - ProVobis