



# CELEBRATING IMPACT AND RESULTS



## NGO Fund in Romania

### April 2013 - April 2017

### Achievements

*30<sup>th</sup> of March 2017*

With a financial allocation of 36.33 million euro the NGO Fund in Romania has contributed to the overall objectives of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 to reduce economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between Romania and the donor states Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The overall objective of the NGO Fund in Romania was *to strengthen civil society development and enhance contribution to social justice, democracy and sustainable development.*

The NGO Fund in Romania programme has been implemented by **Civil Society Development Foundation**, in partnership with the **Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation** and the **Resource Center for Roma Communities**.

As a follow up of two rounds of calls for proposals, **390 projects** were financed in **core areas of concern** related to democracy, human rights, combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination, social inequalities, poverty and exclusion (including in rural areas), gender-based violence, hate speech. The Programme has contributed to improving governance in Romania by encouraging citizens' active participation, NGOs effective and extensive involvement in policy debates, monitoring their implementation and specific measures such as those looking at corruption and rule of law. A special attention was paid to addressing the particular needs of minority groups with a special focus on Roma by fighting social exclusion and promoting community engagement that generates solutions to community problems. Citizens' involvement in environment protection and climate change issues has represented an important part of the Programme.

30 projects have developed interventions at county level, 104 projects at national level, while 256 projects have intervened in 105 cities and 425 rural localities. Activities were implemented in communities from all 41 counties and Bucharest.

The financed projects proved their highly relevance for the national trends and policy context: 21 projects fighting corruption and promoting transparency were acknowledged<sup>1</sup> as contributing to the implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy 2012-2015; over 60 projects developed interventions which supported the implementation of the national policies in the education field; while 160 projects were found<sup>2</sup> relevant in contributing to the measures of the National Anti-Poverty package launched by the Romanian Government in February 2016.

The projects and activities financed within the NGO Fund were **awarded 27 times** in different galas and awards special events, recognizing their innovative approach, efficiency, replicability, etc. – National Volunteering Gala, Civil Society Gala, Civic Engagement Gala, Romanian Youth Gala, Clean environment special awards gala, European Excellence Awards in PR and Communication and various Romanian awards in communication.

**Over 3 million citizens were involved in activities performed within the financed projects.** The programme challenged the limited involvement of

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<sup>1</sup> Impact evaluation of the National Anticorruption Strategy 2012-2015, Ministry of Justice, available at <http://www.just.ro/strategii-si-politici/strategii-nationale/>

<sup>2</sup> NGO Fund results on combating poverty, [Infographic](#), 2016



citizens in the decision making process as well as in the life of the communities, generated by the lack of information, limited opportunities, and the reluctance generated by the so called “volunteer work” that was imposed during the communist period. The financed projects focused on increasing citizens’ adherence to a non-governmental association, supporting informal civic groups willing to contribute to positive changes in their communities, volunteering, donations and mobilization in campaigns supporting different causes.

A great variety of tools and mechanisms of civic engagement were developed, such as: debates and consultations with public authorities, requests for public information and formulation of complaints, advocacy campaigns, signing petitions, etc. All these actions managed to involve over 123,000 people in decision making process, and over 24,500 in volunteering all over the country. Participation of vulnerable people was a real concern, 18,000 persons from vulnerable groups being involved in the decision making process and in community life.

More than half of the projects involved volunteers in their programmes, reaching 250,000 hours of volunteering – equivalent of 125 years of full time work. The diversity of the activities and domains in which volunteers have been involved demonstrates the necessity of the direct peoples’ contribution for the benefit of the communities and reveals the potential of this under-explored resource in Romania: youth, non-formal education, education of adults/remedial/inclusive, culture, environment protection, health, community actions, social services, etc.

**Over 100 civic groups** were supported/constituted and responded to local concerns, such as extending and protecting green spaces, infrastructure works, protecting historical monuments buildings and historical areas from cities, better living conditions and access to drinking water, facilities in schools (ex. libraries) etc.

**More than half of the projects addressed children and youth**, starting from their vulnerabilities, and acknowledging the unique windows of opportunity

for developing critical thinking and assimilating and integrating civic values and principles in everyday life. Support services were also developed for vulnerable children and youth (from poor families, with disabilities, Roma, leaving state care, left behind by migrant parents, with parents in detention, etc.) concerning their (pre)school integration and retention, increasing the employability, medical health, participation to cultural and educational activities, etc.

Remarkable results were achieved concerning the **involvement of citizens - especially youth and children - in environment protection actions**. Innovative and creative ecological education tools were developed and over 42,000 teachers and students were educated in the spirit of environment-protective lifestyle. Beside the interactive environmental educational programmes, over 28,000 citizens were involved in practical activities, such as planting of 34,250 saplings; fighting climate change through reducing carbon footprint; showing examples of construction of passive building; conservation and protection of endangered species (pollinating insects, eel, amphibians, bats, 11 species of birds, 64 traditional variety of fruits and vegetables), collecting used cooking oil from citizens; rehabilitation of erosion caused by deforestation, etc.

Involvement of nongovernmental organizations and communities generated significant changes in developing eco-touristic destinations – Pădurea Craiului, Mara-Cosău- Creasta Cocoşului, Ținutul Zimbrului, Băile Tuşnad and the surroundings - as alternative to hunting and forest exploitation. To stop illegal and environment harming activities (mining, illegal forest exploitation, green space destruction) watchdog and advocacy activities were implemented that led to 81 lawsuits (55 won) and visible campaigns.

The NGO Fund in Romania was one of the few programmes at national level that has financed **human rights projects**. All financed projects tackled human rights issues in different extents, from service provision supporting enjoyment of the rights to education, health, employment, etc., till lawsuits in national and international courts. The main themes addressed within the projects are: minority groups, combating gender based violence, trafficking, discrimination,



racism, xenophobia, hate speech and hate crime, as well as promoting tolerance, understanding and inclusion.

A special attention was given to activities fighting hate speech. Considering recent development in Romania and in other European countries, these activities are increasing in relevance. 40,000 citizens and 90 NGOs were involved in activities and community based projects connected to the **NO Hate Speech theme**. Besides countering hate speech per se, activities addressed discrimination in general, bias motivated speech, bullying, Roma and other ethnic minorities, LGBTIQA, gender issues, elderly, disability, drug users, sex workers.

Over 300 NGOs whose work is focused on minority groups were involved in projects. A number of 130 projects included activities to combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination, while 163 NGOs worked to combat sexual harassment, violence against women and human trafficking. The activities in the projects vary from specialized training courses and experience exchanges with donor countries with tradition in defending human rights: Norway and Iceland, to online instruments to report the violation of human rights, educational activities with pupils, materials about discrimination and hate speech, relevant publications, advocacy campaigns, networks and coalitions development.

18 projects directly addressed the issue of **gender equality and gender based violence** involving 3,700 people. Women surviving sexual, domestic, street violence have received tailored services. Women (Roma and non-Roma) from interethnic rural communities have increased their capacity and participation to community actions. Information and raise awareness campaigns were carried out on specific gender issues, highly sensitive but most needed in Romania, such as preventing the sexual abuse among teenagers and preventing domestic violence. Through the funded projects, three NGOs networks/coalitions on gender aspects had significant contributions in the process of ratifying the Istanbul Convention and shaping a plan to harmonize the internal legislation with the provisions of the Convention, bringing on the

public agenda the concept of sexual education in schools and engaging the dialogue with the public authorities regarding the establishment of the emergency integrated centres for the victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Through a consistent financial allocation for the provision of basic and welfare social services and for social justice issues, the Programme created opportunities for NGOs to increase their outreach towards new target groups and areas, create new services, grow and professionalize existing ones, sustainable develop partnership relations and constantly empower vulnerable groups.

Over 28,000 new beneficiaries have received services in education, health, social services, employment, culture/recreation areas. Through an integrated approach, funded NGOs have worked with vulnerable people, as well as with families, communities and institutions. Over 21,500 vulnerable persons have accessed basic services in disadvantaged areas - interethnic, Roma, poor, rural, isolated, etc. - in many cases for the first time.

The diversity of the provided services (over 150 new social and basic services), the development of intervention methodologies tailored to a direct need that is also enabling the complementarity of the available support, the quality of service, the direct involvement of more than 17,000 beneficiaries in evaluating these services and the changes of attitude are some of the results of the identifiable communities where the funded NGOs directly intervened.

Supported NGOs achieved results on empowering vulnerable beneficiaries in the process of social services provision, as well as within the projects focused on community development or increasing citizens' participation. Empowerment of vulnerable groups reached areas that make them stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights. Interventions included obtaining identity documents and support in the relationship with various institutions in order to access basic services, support in completing formal education, personal development, developing coping mechanisms in difficult situations, developing social skills, facilitation relations





within families / communities, developing basic qualifications and adaptive skills for work environment, etc.

100 projects have contributed to **Roma integration**. More than half of them targeted development of rural interethnic communities with significant Roma population affected by marginalization, poverty and social exclusion. Considering the young Roma population, more than half of these projects were in the area of education and participation of children, while the other projects targeted community development, income generating activities, enhancing women participation and empowerment and health issues. Besides encouraging citizens' involvement, the Programme has contributed to improve governance in Romania through an increased and effective NGO's involvement in drafting and monitoring public policies and in decision-making with local, regional and national governments. Over 1,500 NGOs were involved in such actions, and over 4,000 interactions between public authorities and NGOs on public policy issues were reported (consultation meetings, interviews, surveys, public hearings, public debates, round tables, focus groups, consultations with network/coalition/federation members, consultative thematic groups, information online and offline campaigns, social media groups, etc.). The results achieved by the NGOs participating to drafting and monitoring public policies are diverse, in accordance to the multitude of mechanisms and approaches used/developed within the projects.

The NGO Fund Programme was an opportunity for associations and foundations to diversify funding sources, professionalize over 3,800 employees by attending courses and specialized trainings, by establishing fundraising mechanisms and organizing fundraising events, strategic planning meetings, increasing visibility, organizing exchanges with organizations from Romania and other countries with expertise in areas covered by the projects.

Through the funded projects, a total of 55 coalition and thematic networks of NGOs (including 29 newly established) have strengthened by increasing their ability to attract and work with members and volunteers, and became more visible to the general public. Significant contributions were registered related

to new or improved legislation, local public policies/regulations, rules/funding procedures, developed dialogue and advocacy capacity of the civil society sector, bringing issues of public interest on public authorities agenda (subjects such as sexual education in schools, antidiscrimination legislation, social reuse of goods, programmes for children with cancer, etc.)

One of the main dimensions of the Programme was to facilitate the experience exchange among organisations and institutions involved in civil society dedicated programmes in all 16 EEA Grants beneficiary countries. More than 1,200 Romanian specialists benefited of trainings and international events, and more than 350 foreign participants representing 18 countries attended the events organised by Operator of NGO Fund in Romania. 7 international conferences (including 2 editions of the Civil Society Forum in Central and Eastern Europe), 3 international editions of the Associations and Foundations Fair – ONGFest, trainings and workshops as well as debates with journalists were organised. Also 6 research reports were drafted, one of them representing a premiere for our country: „Hate speech in Romania”.

NGO Fund had a relevant contribution in strengthening the bilateral relations between donor countries and Romania. 44 projects were implemented, from the planning stage, in partnership with organizations from Norway and Iceland, including knowledge exchange and transfer, joint events (study visits, workshops and seminars) and working together over community problems in Romania. Diverse thematic areas were approached, showing high potential of cooperation between countries: human rights, active citizenship, good governance, social services and assistance for vulnerable groups, sustainable development. Over 180 organizations from Norway and Iceland were involved in bilateral projects and activities and over 250 people participated in direct mobility actions. 84 representatives of NGOs from Romania attended study visits and training sessions in Norway and Iceland that contributed to the development of organizational capacity, promoting the implemented projects and identifying new opportunities for bilateral cooperation

Details on the programme and financed projects are available on [www.fondong.fdsc.ro](http://www.fondong.fdsc.ro) and <http://eeagrants.org/Where-we-work/Romania>