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## AN OVERVIEW OF TYPICAL AND ATYPICAL NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN ROMANIA

**Mihaela, PĂCEȘILĂ**

*PhD Professor, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

*mihaela.pacesila@man.ase.ro*

### Abstract:

This article provides information on the main characteristics of typical and atypical non-governmental organizations in Romania, as well as on the legal framework under which these entities operate. The paper is based on qualitative research, with data collected through document analysis methods to highlight the main trends in the civic sector's evolution. The research results show that, in addition to typical NGOs, Romania has a variety of atypical NGOs that operate under special laws and carry out activities and provide services in various fields.

**Keywords:** Romanian typical NGOs, Romanian atypical NGOs, legal framework, key characteristics.

**JEL:** L31, L33, L44

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### INTRODUCTION

NGOs are playing an increasingly important role in economic development and well-being, especially in poor countries (O'Dwyer and Unerman, 2007; Unerman and O'Dwyer, 2012). They contribute to community development, local and national disaster relief, sustainable social progress, and support social movements for equal rights (Dixon et al., 2006).

NGOs engage in cost-effective social activities such as microcredit programs (Hulme and Moore, 2007), promote the sustainable development of poor communities (O'Dwyer and Unerman, 2007), and have strong potential for organizing and representing civil society (Lehman, 2007). The rapid growth of these organizations is attributed to government failures in underdeveloped countries, including an inability to reduce poverty, excessive bureaucracy, increasing corruption, and the lack of social responsibility among the political class (Haque, 2004; Gauri and Galef, 2005).

Despite differences in size, purpose, and approach, NGOs are no longer perceived as small activist groups but rather as powerful, reputable brands that serve citizens and, in turn, receive more respect and admiration from them than large corporations, public institutions, and even the media (Wooltiff and Deri, 2001).

In this context, this paper has aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the role that typical and atypical NGOs play in Romania. Additionally, the article seeks to provide an overview of the current state of the nongovernmental sector and the key characteristics of its organizations today.

### 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

During the 19th century in the United States, it became increasingly necessary to clearly distinguish between the private and public sectors, as government influence often infringed upon the commercial interests of companies. In this context, the term non-profit emerged, referring to organizations that did not have financial goals but instead focused on activities of general interest, which could be carried out through donations or other sources of funding (Benedek et al., 2012).

Over time, the term non-profit has come to refer to organizations that do not aim to generate profit or maximize it, but instead concentrate on supporting public and community interests (Shier et al., 2014). These organizations mainly rely on donations, grants, and other non-commercial funding sources while focusing their efforts on achieving their mission and objectives rather than on making a profit (AbouAssi et al., 2017). These funding sources enable non-governmental organizations to operate independently and advocate for their missions without financial pressures from external entities (Jones and Mucha, 2024).

Currently, non-profit entities play a significant role in most developed and developing countries worldwide, covering a variety of fields and social issues (Păceșilă, 2015). They are independent of state authorities and often serve as an essential link between the community and the government, representing community interests and contributing to its development. These entities play an important role in improving the living conditions and well-being of citizens by implementing projects and programs addressing local needs and requirements (Vlăsceanu, 1996; Moldavanova and Goerdel, 2018).

Although they arise from a need in society or among citizens who join forces, they can be extremely diverse, covering a wide range of activities and causes. They include organizations working in diverse areas, such as charities, entities fighting for human rights and environmental protection, cultural and arts groups, development and humanitarian aid organizations, religious and educational institutions, among others (Reed and Howe, 1999).

As for their name, a variety of terms and expressions are used in different countries and cultures. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the term non-profit is the most commonly used. However, other terms vary from country to country, including charitable organizations, independent sector, philanthropic sector, community organizations, grassroots organizations, non-statutory organizations, and tax-exempt sector. In Romania and in Central and Eastern European countries with a civil law tradition, the term non-governmental organizations is widely recognized, referring to non-profit legal entities which provide development assistance and operate independently of state authorities (Benedek et al., 2012; Păceșilă, 2016).

Nongovernmental organizations are formed through the voluntary association of citizens united by a common, non-profit mission (Moldavanova and Goerdel, 2018). They are widely recognized as vital components of civil society, contributing to its development through various activities and projects. They serve as powerful agents of change, promoting social and community well-being and supporting the most vulnerable populations. Although they are not profit-driven, these entities are subject to stringent requirements and regulations that ensure transparency and accountability in fund utilization and mission fulfilment (Păceșilă, 2016). Although positioned between the public and private sectors, these organizations are neither owned by the state nor by private companies; they are managed and operated by their members. This structure allows them to maintain independence and pursue their objectives without being subordinated to the interests of other entities (Werker and Ahmed, 2008).

The World Bank distinguishes between two categories of non-governmental organizations: operational organizations, focusing on developing and implementing development projects; advocacy organizations (also called support organizations), promoting or defending a particular cause while seeking to influence international policies and practices. These organizations aim to gain support, raise public awareness, and secure acceptance through events, media coverage, and advertising (Clark, 1993).

Nongovernmental organizations exhibit significant flexibility in terms of their methods and developmental directions. This adaptability stems from their need to survive, with their operations closely linked to accurately identifying beneficiaries' needs and mobilizing resources to address them (Kang'ethe and Manomano, 2014; Păceșilă, 2023). Moreover, they serve as 'a thermometer of

the community,' mobilizing resources that public authorities often lack because of budgetary constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, or limitations in available infrastructure and support (Păceșilă, 2015).

The role of these organizations in identifying problems that public authorities might easily overlook is essential. Furthermore, by leveraging the resources they have, the information they can access more quickly than public administration, and their organizational capabilities, they are able to monitor the activities of public institutions and assist them in achieving their objectives (Lisetchi, n.d.). Moreover, according to Jura (2003), non-governmental organizations are agents of human change. The outcomes or results driven by their objectives are always connected to transforming individuals, whether through enhancing their physical or mental well-being. This may involve providing care for physical or mental health, supporting the unemployed, protecting orphaned children or other disadvantaged groups, defending human rights in general, or advocating for the rights of minorities. The core aim of these organizations is always aligned with the social good, even if their beneficiaries represent only a segment of society rather than society as a whole.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this paper consists of document analysis with the aim of providing an overview of the role of typical and atypical nongovernmental organizations in Romania. In this regard, secondary data from various sources has been used and analyzed: books, scientific articles, web documents, review articles etc. With respect to the research method used, it involves the rigorous analysis and interpretation of the collected information, while the researcher's objectivity is essential in examining the available documents (Bowen, 2009).

The main objectives of this article refer to the following:

- To highlight the importance and role of typical and atypical NGOs in Romanian society;
- To describe the legal framework for the operation of nongovernmental organizations in Romania;
- To outline the main characteristics of typical and atypical Romanian NGOs.

## 3. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE OPERATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ROMANIA

The first general regulation regarding the status of nongovernmental organizations in Romania was established in 1924 through Law No. 21/1924 for legal entities (Associations and Foundations), known as the Mârzescu Law, named after the Minister of Justice at the time. The normative act, which introduced the prohibition of profit distribution to members as an essential characteristic of non-profit organizations, was considered one of the most modern and successful regulations in Europe at the time.

During the communist regime, the law lost its effect because both the free association of individuals and the regulation itself were prohibited. After 1990, with the transition to a democratic society and the promotion of the right to associate, Law No. 21/1924 was reactivated, more than 65 years after its adoption, becoming the legal framework for the establishment of non-governmental organizations

With outdated terminology in certain aspects, referring to institutions that no longer existed (such as the Superior Commission of Legal Entities under the Ministry of Justice), cumbersome procedures (like the obligation to obtain a prior opinion on the organization's field of competence), and multiple loopholes, Law No. 21/1924 was largely adapted to meet the international standards of the 1990s (Dimitriu et al., 2000; Păceșilă, 2016).

Given the extensive development of the non-governmental sector, both in terms of number and

types of organizations, a period emerged in which judicial practice regarding the establishment of these organizations was outlined. At the same time, aspects that hindered the associative initiative of many people were identified. Ten years after 1990, a new normative act was adopted, namely Government Ordinance No. 26/2000 on associations and foundations. This ordinance incorporated part of the provisions of the Mârzescu Law and currently regulates the organization and functioning of nongovernmental entities.

Through this government ordinance, a series of legislative amendments were made, bringing beneficial effects to the organization and functioning of the NGO sector (Păceșilă, 2023):

Reformulating the definitions of associations and foundations while preserving their essential characteristics.

Modifying the procedure for acquiring legal personality (removing the opinion from the relevant ministry, establishing a minimum threshold for the initial assets of NGOs, reducing the minimum number of founders for associations from 20 to 3, and introducing the Register of Associations and Foundations).

- Redefining how control is organized and exercised (establishing mandatory duties for each body, setting a maximum threshold for individuals who are not members of the NGO but are part of the board of directors, and requiring a certified accountant or accounting expert).
- Specifying that NGOs may create subsidiaries and branches.
- Mentioning the possibility for NGOs to carry out economic activities, provided that these activities are closely related to their main purpose.
- Introducing the concept of public utility. Recognition of public utility is granted for an indefinite period by a Government decision, following a request submitted to the General Secretariat of the Government, which forwards it within 15 days to the central administration body responsible for the field. If the NGO no longer meets the conditions, the Government can withdraw the recognition. A federation acquires public utility status if at least two-thirds of its member associations and foundations have public utility status.
- Establishing the National NGO Register (Index of legal entities without patrimonial purpose, published on the Ministry of Justice website, which includes the following sections: associations, foundations, federations, foreign legal entities, unions, and unspecified).
- Regulating the relationship between nongovernmental entities and public authorities, without specifying explicit obligations or sanctions.

The shortcomings in the drafting of the ordinance and the dynamics of the sector led to the revision of the legal framework. Significant changes were made through Law no. 22/2014, which prohibited the use of terms that could cause confusion in the name of an association (such as commissariat, inspectorate, guard, authority, police, gendarmerie, consumer protection, or their derivatives). Further changes were introduced by Law No. 276/2020, which established: modifications to the general regulations applicable to associations and foundations (including the regulation of the status of entities belonging to national minorities, a distinct category of associations, and the definition of their purpose); the removal of the mandatory requirement to include the word "association" or "foundation" in the name of NGOs; changes to the procedure for establishing associations and foundations; and the possibility of holding meetings of the management bodies through electronic means of direct remote communication.

In Romania, nongovernmental organizations are considered legal entities under private law, which can be established by natural and/or legal persons. Their activities may be carried out in the general interest, in the interest of local communities, or in the personal non-patrimonial interest of their members (Păceșilă, 2016; 2023).

The typical forms of NGOs in Romania are associations, foundations, and federations. These entities are established and operate based on O.G. No. 26/2000, with subsequent amendments and completions. They meet a series of criteria, including non-distribution of profit, private nature, self-governance, functioning as structured entities, and voluntary management. In addition to typical NGOs, Romania also has other categories, referred to as atypical NGOs, whose membership in this sector may be questionable. While their legal regime sometimes overlaps with that of associations and foundations, their organization and operation are regulated by special laws.

According to the aforementioned normative act, an association is a private law entity established by three or more persons who, by mutual agreement, pool their material contributions, knowledge, or work, without the right to reimbursement, for the purpose of carrying out activities in the general interest, in the interest of specific communities, or, as the case may be, in the personal non-patrimonial interest of its members. It may create subsidiaries, which are territorial structures with at least two members, their own management bodies, and a patrimony distinct from that of the association. Subsidiaries benefit from legal personality and may enter into legal agreements only based on a prior decision by the association's board of directors.

As for the foundation, under Government Ordinance no. 26/2000, it represents a legal entity created by one or more persons who, through a legal act between the living or upon death, establish a patrimony destined, permanently and irrevocably, to fulfil a purpose of general interest or, as the case may be, in the interest of specific communities. It may establish subsidiaries as territorial structures, based on the decision of the board of directors.

According to Government Ordinance no. 26/2000, a federation can be established by merging two or more associations or foundations, each retaining its legal personality. The federation, in turn, acquires its own legal personality. Unlike associations and foundations, where the application for registration is resolved by the court in the district where the organization is headquartered, in the case of a federation, the application is resolved by the tribunal. Federations do not entail the merger of component NGOs, which retain their legal personality and financial-accounting autonomy. The establishment of a federation involves a limitation of the independence of the component NGOs, which will have both their own objectives and common goals. Federations, like associations, may charge membership fees to members who are legal entities under private law.

#### 4. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ATYPICAL NGOS IN ROMANIA

As previously mentioned, typical nongovernmental organizations in Romania are regulated by the Government Ordinance (G.O.) no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations. Atypical nongovernmental organizations are not regulated by G.O. no. 26/2000, but rather by special laws, which may or may not be supplemented by the aforementioned ordinance.

✓ **Regional Development Agencies** are public utility nongovernmental organizations with legal personality operating in the field of regional development. They were established under the first regional development law no. 151/1998, repealed by law no. 315/2004 as subsequently amended and supplemented. It operates in the 8 development regions of Romania: North-East, South-East Dobrogea, South-Muntenia, South-West Oltenia, West, North-West, Centre, Bucharest-Ilfov. These agencies develop and implement regional development strategies and policies to improve living conditions and reduce regional imbalances. Their organizational and operational expenses are covered by the county budget and the programs they implement (Profiroiu și Popescu, 2003; Profiroiu et al, 2008).

✓ **Intercommunity development associations** are cooperative structures governed by private law and recognized as entities of public utility, with legal personality. They are established by administrative-territorial units to jointly implement development projects of zonal or regional interest

or to jointly provide public services (Law no. 51/2006; Păceșilă, 2016). They currently operate under Government Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2009 regarding the Administrative Code.

They are financed from local budgets and other sources. These entities are led by a general assembly composed of representatives from all associated administrative-territorial units. The general assembly elects the association's president from among its members. According to the aforementioned ordinance, the board of directors, which is the executive governing body of the association, consists of the president and at least four other members elected from among the members of the general assembly (Soare, 2020).

✓ **Trade unions** are established under the Social Dialogue Law No. 367/2022, based on the right of free association for employees and workers to promote their professional, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and sports interests, as well as to defend their individual and collective rights. They are independent legal entities without a profit-making (or patrimonial) purpose, prohibited from engaging in political activities and remaining independent of public authorities, political parties, and employers.

According to the aforementioned law, the establishment of a trade union requires at least 10 employees from the same unit or at least 20 employees from different units within a collective bargaining sector. No person may be forced to join, affiliate with, or refrain from withdrawing from a trade union. Furthermore, an individual may not belong to more than one trade union within the same employer at the same time. Minor employees may become members of a trade union from the age of 16 without the consent of their legal representatives.

Persons with individual employment contracts, civil servants (including those with special status), cooperative members, and employed farmers have the right to form or join a trade union. Persons holding public positions, magistrates, and military personnel from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Protection and Guard Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, and the Special Telecommunications Service cannot form or join a trade union (Păceșilă, 2016). Members pay a monthly contribution of up to 1% of their gross income. Persons who are at least 18 years old can be elected to the management bodies of a trade union. The period during which they serve is counted as work seniority, and their individual employment contract is suspended during this period. Trade unions may form trade union federations, and two or more trade union federations can form trade union confederations.

✓ **Employers' organizations** are legal entities under private law, autonomous, apolitical, and without profit-making purposes. They were established in 1991 through the association of several employers at the territorial or national level and operate under the Social Dialogue Law No. 367/2022. They cannot engage in political activities and are independent of public authorities, political parties, and trade unions. These organizations support and defend the interests of their members in relations with public authorities, trade unions, and other legal and natural persons. Two or more employers' organizations may form an employers' federation, and two or more employers' federations may form an employers' confederation. Employers' federations and confederations may form territorial employers' unions from affiliated organizations. National organizations must have structures in at least half plus one of the counties, including Bucharest.

According to Constantinescu (2024), trade unions and employers' associations, although forms of association and part of civil society, are subject to special laws based not only on Article 40 but also on Article 9 of the Romanian Constitution. They are registered in separate registers from those of associations and foundations. Furthermore, the aforementioned author argues that their dialogue with state institutions distinguishes them from NGOs: while the former are social partners, the latter are partners in civic dialogue.

✓ **Chambers of Commerce in Romania** are private legal entities without profit-making purposes,

created through the free association of traders. Their purpose is to support and defend the interests of their members and the business community with regard to public authorities and bodies both in the country and abroad. These organizations serve as one of the most important forums representing the interests of business people in Romania for the past 160 years. Currently, the chamber system includes a series of entities such as the county chambers of commerce, the Bucharest municipality chamber, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania (known as the National Chamber), as well as bilateral chambers of commerce. This system is regulated by Law No. 335/2007 on the Chambers of Commerce in Romania, with subsequent amendments and supplements.

✓ **Unions** are established under Law No. 21/1924 for legal entities (Associations and Foundations), which was repealed by G.O. No. 26/2000. Currently, the provisions regarding federations included in the aforementioned ordinance apply to them. They bring together individuals in the field of liberal professions while promoting the image of the respective profession.

✓ **Romanian Red Cross** is a legal entity under public law, as well as an autonomous, nongovernmental, apolitical organization with no profit-making purpose. It is a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, providing humanitarian assistance in case of disasters and supporting vulnerable people. It operates as the only organization in the field, both in peacetime and wartime, based on Law No. 139/1995 and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to which Romania is a party. It has county branches as well as branches in Bucharest's sectors. This entity carries out its activities in its own buildings or in those provided by local or county councils, benefiting from the same protection measures as public institutions. Its financing comes from the state budget due to its public utility nature, but it also collects funds from members' contributions, donations and bequests, sponsorships, income from public events, raffles, etc. (Păceșilă, 2016; 2023).

✓ **Sports structures** are private legal entities established by law on physical education and sports no. 69/2000 with subsequent amendments and supplements. They organize sports activities, promote sports disciplines, and facilitate members' participation in sports competitions. They can be financed from both state and local budgets.

✓ **The Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee** is a private legal entity, an association of national interest belonging to the Olympic movement. Its status is established according to the Olympic Charter and the Law on Physical Education and Sports No. 69/2000. It holds exclusive competence in representing the country at the Olympic Games and other programs organized under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee. It is funded by the state budget, its own revenues, as well as other sources (Cosr.ro, n.d.).

✓ **Owners' associations** are private legal entities without a patrimonial purpose, regulated by Law no. 196/2018 on the establishment, organization, and operation of owners' associations and the administration of condominiums (buildings consisting of land with one or more structures that contain at least three individual properties, such as dwellings or spaces with other purposes).

The application for acquiring legal personality, along with the statute, association agreement, and minutes of the general meeting of incorporation, is submitted and registered with the court in whose territorial jurisdiction the condominium is located. After obtaining legal personality, the association is registered with the local tax authority in the same jurisdiction. For its establishment, the written consent of at least half plus one of the total number of owners in the condominium is required.

The loss of ownership in the condominium results in the termination of membership in the owners' association. Members have the right to participate and vote in the general assembly, submit applications, run for office, elect, and be elected. They appoint an executive committee consisting of the president and other members, as well as a censor or a committee of censors. The committee

manages the association between general assemblies, while the administrator, appointed by the committee, is responsible for the association's daily operations. For special tasks such as cleaning or repairs, external personnel are hired. Any amendment or supplementation of the statute requires the consent of at least half plus one of the total number of owners in the condominium.

According to Constantinescu (2024), although their special law provides a clear establishment procedure without references to G.O. 26/2000, the Romanian National Register of Legal Entities without a Patrimonial Purpose includes owners' associations. The aforementioned author concludes that this is most likely the result of an error in the application of the law.

✓ **Mutual aid houses** are private legal entities without a patrimonial purpose, functioning as non-bank financial institutions. They are established by employees within economic units to provide financial assistance. The income obtained is not distributed to members but is used to support loans (Păceșilă, 2016; 2023). In Romania, there are two categories of such organizations:

✓ **Employees' Mutual Aid Houses** are non-profit associations, organized based on the free consent of employees, with the aim of supporting and providing financial assistance to their members. They are classified as non-banking financial institutions, fall under the supervision of the National Bank, and have a purpose predefined by law. They operate under competitive market conditions, offering exclusively financial products and services to their members (Constantinescu, 2024). Furthermore, they are established under law no. 122/1996 on the legal regime of employees' mutual aid houses. They grant interest-free loans to members and employees, while their operations are exempt from taxes.

✓ **Pensioners' Mutual Aid Houses** are civic organizations, private legal entities of a non-patrimonial nature, nongovernmental, apolitical, and with charitable, mutual aid, and social assistance purposes (Constantinescu, 2024). They are established under law no. 540/2002 on pensioners' mutual aid houses. They support members by granting loans, providing repayable aid, and offering assistance for the funeral expenses of former members. They can also provide other services, such as organizing cultural, artistic, tourist, and leisure activities, running rest and treatment houses, and offering funeral services for deceased members, among others. (Păceșilă, 2016; 2024).

According to Constantinescu (2024), there are other types of legal entities that resemble, in various ways, the associations and foundations regulated by G.O. 26/2000. These entities are governed by special laws that either refer to or are supplemented by the provisions of G.O. no. 26/2000, or are directly registered in the Romanian National Register of Legal Entities without a Patrimonial Purpose established under G.O. no. 26/2000. These organizations include the following:

✓ **Pensioners' associations** benefit from a special law, namely law no. 502/2004, but they generally follow the legal framework established by Government Ordinance no. 26/2000. A pensioners' association is a legal entity formed by at least 25 pensioners who, based on an agreement, contribute their material and intellectual resources to carry out activities in their interest. It acquires legal personality upon registration in the Register of Associations and Foundations, maintained by the registry of the court with territorial jurisdiction over its headquarters, in accordance with the provisions of Government Ordinance No. 26/2000, as subsequently amended and supplemented.

As per the law previously mentioned, pensioners' associations are established in accordance with administrative-territorial units: county, city, or commune. A county-level pensioners' association may establish branches with territorial structures, provided they have at least 20 members, their own management bodies, and a patrimony distinct from that of the association. Several pensioners' associations, no fewer than ten, which have legal personality, may form a federation. The associations' committees can adopt the decision to establish a federation or to affiliate with an

existing federation.

✓ **Regime forest districts** are forms of associative ownership regulated by law no. 331/2024 on the Forestry Code. Compared to the state forest districts, the regime forest districts are private entities that can be established by landowners from the national forest fund or by associations of owners formed by them. They serve the public interest and may administer or provide forestry services. They are authorized through registration in the National Register of Forest Administrators and Forest Districts.

✓ **Private educational institutions** are regulated by law no. 198/2023 on pre-university education as well as law no. 199/2023 on university education. They are organized according to the non-profit principle, and in the case of pre-university education, the law specifies that legal personality is obtained through a ministerial order for provisional authorization. These entities are funded by taxes, which means, in principle, that they are related to an economic activity. In the event of dissolution or liquidation, the assets revert to the founders, which is not the case for the organizations established under O.G. 26/2000.

✓ **Land improvement organizations and federations of organizations** are public utility legal entities with no patrimonial purpose. They are regulated by law no. 138/2004 as amended and supplemented, under which they are established and operate. They acquire legal personality upon registration in the National Register of Land Improvement Organizations and are also partially listed in the National Register of Legal Entities with no patrimonial purpose.

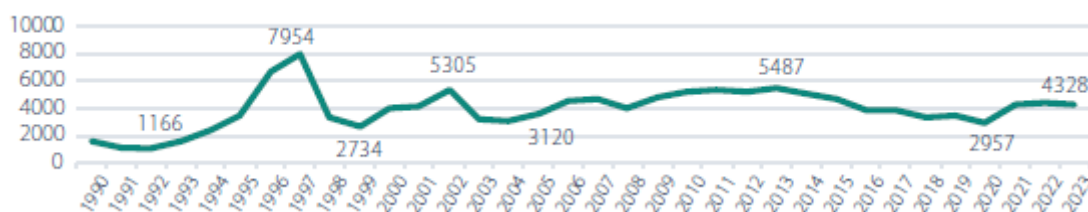
According to the aforementioned author (Constantinescu, 2024), some of the types of legal entities mentioned above possess all the characteristics of non-profit legal entities. Thus, there are special registers for them, although at different stages of development and public accessibility. However, they are only partially represented or not at all in the Romanian National Register of Legal Entities without a Patrimonial Purpose.

## 5. STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF TYPICAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ROMANIA

According to the National NGO Register, in January 2024 there were 127008 NGOs registered in Romania, not including an additional 8003 that had been dissolved, liquidated, or removed. Among the still-operational NGOs, 106433 were associations, while the remaining included 19046 foundations and 1529 federations. Additionally, there were 759 unions and 37 branches of entities from outside Romania. Their geographical distribution, relative to the population size of the county where they are registered, reveals several disparities. The counties with the lowest number of NGOs per 1000 inhabitants are Vaslui (2.1), Ialomița (2.4), Călărași and Olt (2.6 each). At the opposite end, counties with the highest NGO density include Harghita (10.6), Cluj (10.4), Bucharest (10.0), Sibiu (9.6), Maramureș (7.6), Bihor (7.2), and Arad (6.9) (Voicu, 2024).

The previously mentioned author also provides an analysis of the dynamics of annual NGO registrations, noting a significant increase in the second half of the 1990s. This trend is attributed to more relaxed legislation and to a society that was gradually beginning to free itself from the legacy of totalitarian organization in the 1980s. After the year 2000, the growth of the NGO sector became more linear, with relatively minor fluctuations. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the registration of new associations, in the past three years there has been a return to a steady pace of approximately 4200–4300 new registrations annually.

**Figure 1. The rate of establishment of new typical non-governmental organizations according to data from the National NGO Register of Romania**



Source: Voicu, 2024

Out of the approximately 127000 NGOs registered in the Romanian National NGO Register, nearly 82000 have submitted at least one financial statement to the tax authorities between 2013 and 2022, while almost 58000 filed their financial statements in 2022. However, based on data from the National Agency for Fiscal Administration and the National NGO Register, it is estimated that only 63–66% of these organizations are active, meaning they carry out on-going activities, fulfil their missions, and implement various projects. On the other hand, around 33% do not carry out any activities, yet remain officially registered and retain their NGO status. These are considered to be in a state of "dormancy", in other words, they are currently inactive, but have not been officially dissolved or removed from the register (Voicu, 2024).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article is to highlight the main findings related to nongovernmental organizations in Romania and, therefore, to provide a solid foundation for guiding the agenda of future research in this field.

The main contribution of this paper lies in providing an overview of the typical and atypical organizations within the nongovernmental sector. By synthesizing the findings of the analyzed publications, this article has shed light on a rather important field for Romanian society, highlighting the key characteristics of these organizations as well as the services they provide to beneficiaries.

## AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

The author listed has made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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