



## Positive Influence on Democracy in Relations Between Nongovernmental Organizations and Public Institutions

### KEYWORDS

nongovernmental organisations, democracy.

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**ABSTRACT** *Democracy is a theme which will always have a new approach, because each event in the life of a state will aim to develop political dialogue between the state institutions and its citizens, those who govern and enforce rules and regulations and those who accept them running.*

*In order to maintain a balance between those who govern and those who are governed, civil society issues dialogue instruments. Consequently democracy is established following this dialogue.*

### INTRODUCTION

In Romania, the term generally used to nongovernmental organizations (or NGO) comes to place the organizations, which are subject for discussion in the text below, in relation with public institutions. Regard to this, it should be noted that most often, organizations operate as separate legal entities, but in relation to the legal framework and practice in Romania, as in most countries of the world, their operation is possible without having a legal personality, in which case the legal responsibility of their actions falls personally on its members.

With rare exceptions, NGOs are acting in a non-partisan political point of view. Even if this organizational behavior is not required by law, it is recommended that the principles of good practice.

This does not mean, however, that at some point, one or more organizations can adopt a certain position in a particular situation or related to a certain specific problem.

Such a behavior is visibly manifested especially when concerning the development and implementation of public policies. As long as the taken position is temporary, „political” orientation of the organization (if it exists) can alternate depending on the dynamics of changes in the community and, therefore, it is not a long-term feature, it can be considered that in general, its non-partisan approach from the political point of view.

In fact, the attribute of „nongovernmental”, although expresses an important feature of the associative sector, it is not enough in order to separate the organizations referred to in the set of institutions which account this feature.

### STATUTE OF NGOs IN RELATION TO CIVIL SOCIETY

NGOs are characterized by high mobility and directions of their action. This mobility is their condition of survival, as long as their operation is dependent on accurate identification of needs within the community and attracting resources needed to address these needs. NGOs are a „barometer” of the community (Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards, 2006)

Their dynamism is relevant in terms of the community's capacity to respond rapidly to its own needs, catalysing resources that government has not. At the same time, the

analysis of action directions of organizations could give relevant signals to public administration related to problems which it will have to face in the near future. NGOs can play a key role in identifying problems that could be overlooked by public authorities and using their human resources, local data and their organizational capacity, they can monitor the work of public agencies and can support them in achieving their goals.

Community development can be achieved by nongovernmental sector as follows:

- Encouraging public institutions to adopt solutions developed and successfully used in the sphere;
- Educating and raising awareness on the rights provided by law;
- Participating in government programs adaptation to the needs of the public, expressing the public view and highlighting local experiences;
- Collaborating with public institutions;
- Influencing local development policies of national and international institutions;
- Helping the public administration and financiers to develop a more effective development strategy by strengthening the institutions, improving the staff skills, their training and its management capacity.

In a democratic society, nongovernmental organizations serve:

- To meet some of needs of the community that are not fully covered by other types of institutions (public administration, business environment)
- To enable the widest possible participation of citizens in public decision.

As a value of the organization, participation represents its expression as an actor of community and its opening to public, reception of signals, criticism and suggestions from the community. She also works as internal value, a democratic organization is characterized by the participation of

members, volunteers, executive and management board in development of strategy and drafting, implementation and evaluation activities of the organization.

The alienation of citizens from political processes is one of the major concerns of modern democracies. In this context, as in many others, civil society constitutes an important element of the democratic process. This gives citizens an alternative way, alongside those of political parties and lobbies of channeling different views and ensuring variety of interests in the decision making process.

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recognized in CM / Recommendation (2007) 14 October 2007 „the essential contribution made by NGOs in the development and realization of democracy and human rights, in particular by promoting public awareness, participation in public life and ensuring transparency and accountability of public authorities „.

NGOs and organized civil society are essentially involved in the development and realization of democracy and human rights.

A Council of Europe definition of NGOs can be found in the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2007) 14 which states that „NGOs are organizations or voluntary self-governing organization established in order to pursue the objectives of the founders or their members, which are essentially non-profit. „

The core activities of NGOs are focused on values of social justice, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In these areas, the purpose of NGOs is to promote causes and improve people's lives.

NGOs are an essential component of participation in an open and democratic society through engaging large numbers of individuals. The fact that many of these people are voters underlines the complementary relationship with representative democracy.

NGOs can contribute with knowledge and independent expertise in making decisions. This has led governments at all levels, from local and regional to national and international institutions to seek relevant experience and expertise of NGOs to assist in policy development and implementation. NGOs enjoy a unique trust from their members and society to express concerns, to represent their interests and get involved in causes, thereby providing crucial input into policy development.

This text highlights the contribution of organized civil society in the democratic process and it is not related to civic participation, i.e. individuals. In this case, it is understood that the act of developing associations and community organizations constitutes an act of independent social organization and it is not purely centered on individual action. It is understood that organized groups exist to meet the needs of their members and for the benefit of entire society; therefore, they act as a mean of increasing participation and citizen engagement. (CONF/PLE(2009)CODE1)

In conditions of democratic transition, asserting civil society marks the democratic organization of society. Civil society is an important element of any democratization process, so democracy remains without its real foundation.

Democracy needs civil society as it provides it not only

with citizens, but also with the organizational structure of group, class or general citizens interests or social and political pluralism, one of the indispensable prerequisites and institutional forms of contemporary democracy. (Nemtoi Gabriela, Ungureanu Ciprian, 2013)

Through its organizational structure and forms, civil society is able to provide a gradual transition of the society to a new level of forming the democratic state. Civil society represents all the structures of interests which have the citizen in foreground. As a field of achieving of private interests, civil society is formed mainly by foot. Activity in civil society structures creates the possibility of self-determination, human self-development.

Civil society is formed in the private sector, where an individual affirms itself as a personality and at the same time in public sector, where civic qualities are formed in association activities - organizations, movements, and institutions. In this context developing civil society structures consists of the development of these two areas.

### **FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION - EFFECT OF THE EMERGENCE OF NGOs IN POLITICAL LIFE PLAN**

Democracy is a model of government based on popular sovereignty, on participation of citizens in public affairs as responsible members of the social organism. The phenomenon of political participation is an integral and complex recruitment of citizens in politics. It includes an overwhelming variety of participatory forms - from simple, elementary ones to some upper characteristic of political leaders.

The political role of NGOs was that they, being elements of civil society, actively interacted with political parties, make the link between society and the state, indirectly participated in the legislative process, achieving in any way influence and pressure on political class by organizing mass actions (meetings, events and other measures of protest).

Thus, they opted for their favorable policy decisions without direct participation in the process of adopting them and without wearing political responsibility for the consequences and effects arising from taking such decisions (Fruntașu P., Rusnac G, 2002)

In a democratic society, governance is just one of the elements that coexist in the texture of society which includes various institutions, political parties, civil society organizations and associations. This diversity is called pluralism, and it assumes the existence of organized independent of the government groups and institutions, which have their own legitimacy and authority. In other words, we can say that democracy is present and thrives when people and organized civil society groups:

- engage and use their right to participate in social and political life, making their voice heard in public debate,
- perceive elect people as being responsible to the citizens of their actions,
- accept the need for tolerance, recognize minority rights and equal opportunities.

Along with freedom of expression, freedom of association is a fundamental characteristic of democratic systems. If they do not have the right of association and the means to form organized groups, citizens are isolated and vulnerable and can become victims of tyranny of authority or private

sector.

Forms of association of civil society are meant to balance the exercise of power by state institutions. In societies with a history of freedom of association, freedom of expression and information, citizens are running independent from government activities, often reaching even in conflict situations with those who hold political or economic power. They are both educated and informed about the rights they have and the responsibilities of power that have chosen to govern them, and are aware that public policy exceeds the scope of political parties and state institutions.

Democracy has brought freedom to express ideas and differences, freedom of individual development, fostering creativity and competition, which means conflicts and differences.

### CONCLUSIONS

The democratization of society involves the creation of social and legal conditions for expressing critical attitude towards power and provides the mechanism that social attitudes turn into a political institution.

Sector of non-governmental organizations is diversified. The activity fields of these organizations vary, there are organizations that focus on politics, environment protection, health, education, culture, etc. Their mission is linked to strengthening democracy and the way it tries to do this is to encourage citizens to participate in civic life of the community.

One of the long-term effects of NGOs is the expansion of participatory democracy.

Participatory democracy is one of the first issues that appeared on the agenda of the NGO sector.

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