

NGOS ACROSS  
EUROPE:

A RESEARCH REPORT  
TO DIAGNOSE  
OPPORTUNITIES AND  
NEEDS



ACTIVE CITIZENS.  
THRIVING COMMUNITIES.



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## Introduction

The Erasmus+ NGEurope project arose from the need to promote community participation and active citizenship in the environmental and social fields in Europe and to demonstrate the importance and impact that the third sector can have on these issues both locally and globally. With five partner countries – Austria, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain - the main objective of the project is to train a new generation of community leaders and to support existing community movements and NGOs hoping to develop and strengthen the third sector across Europe.

In order to achieve this, it is important to first look at the reality in each country and analyse how the communities perceive the third sector. This report consists of an analysis of the public perception of the work and importance of NGOs and other civic movements in solving common problems in each of the five partner countries.

Hopefully this report will help to create a framework for NGEurope and a base from which all the outputs of the project will be created and adapted to each country reality.



## Methodology

In order to write this report, it was necessary to outline the research framework and the topics to be taken into account within the third sector. This resulted in ten questions that covered all the relevant topics for a complete analysis of each of the five partner countries.

Information was gathered through desk and field research. Desk research included finding hard data from different official sources like governmental reports, official statistics, scientific papers among others. The field research was conducted in each country by forming a Local Working Group(LWG) representing various stakeholders ( NGO's, voluntary groups, entrepreneurs, local government officials, experts in green & social business and individuals with a passion for the environment and social issues). Each LWG answered the same ten questions. Findings from the LWG allowed the integration of the public perception of the third sector and comparison of that to the hard data found.

The report is divided by country with a final summary in the end that presents the main conclusions of this analysis and compares the realities between the five countries.



In Austria there is no official register of existing NGO's nor is there a clear definition of what constitutes an NGO, this makes it difficult to say which organisations are officially regarded as NGO's. Nevertheless, there are a number of characteristics which can be used to define an NGO.

NGOs are:

- Public
- Concerned with the common good
- Independent
- Voluntary
- Serving a greater good (not an individual person's interests)

An NGO in Austria can have various juristic forms such as a Limited Liability Company, a trust or different forms of an association. The kind of juristic form that is the most suitable one for a specific organisation is determined by a number of factors, particularly by the purpose of the organisation, by the amount of money involved and by the organisation's goals. In Austria, NGOs frequently have the juristic form of an association. The purposes and goals of Austrian NGOs are extremely diverse, but they are frequently concerned with social, environmental, cultural, and conservation issues. Austrian NGOs tend to co-operate with international NGOs, which usually allows them to have a good, wide-spread network and some degree of international impact – of course this depends on the kind, size and goals of the individual NGOs.

There are many networks in Austria which form umbrella organisations for associations and NGOs sharing the same or similar goals and ideals. Examples for this are the ÖAR (Österreichische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Rehabilitation), an umbrella organisation for Austrian associations involved in working with and caring for people with disabilities and the Österreichischer Seniorenrat which unites various organisations for senior citizens.



## AUSTRIA

### How would you characterise the active citizenship in your country?

In general, the work of NGOs is regarded positively, but the degree to which people view it as necessary depends on the field: social work, animal welfare, nature conservation, migrant integration, and monument conservation seem to be priorities and people are aware of the work NGOs do in these areas. If public participation is required, people can express their opinions, but they are not typically part of any decision-making processes. Many organisations try to find new members or supporters by addressing people on the street, which frequently leaves the public with the impression that NGOs are only after money. It is common to be a supporting member of an NGO, but not many people are actively involved in their NGO's work.

### How important is the NGO sector in your local and national area?

NGOs play an important role in the Austrian society because they are a big employer and they offer services which might not be available otherwise. This is especially true for the social sector: senior citizen care, support for poor people (financial and otherwise), running homeless shelters, teaching German classes for refugees and more services like these are widely available thanks to the continuous work and effort of NGOs. There are also many volunteers in the NGO sector who contribute their personal time and their own resources to fight for things they are passionate about.

### Is the NGO sector active in your local and national area?

The NGO sector is very present in Austrian community life and the majority of people are aware of the good and important work NGOs do. The most active NGOs probably come from the social sector, where the co-operation between the various existing NGOs, the communities and the authorities works well. Even though the work of NGOs is regarded positively, the organisations are frequently limited by many legal regulations and by a lack of actual public participation. It is common that people are aware of an NGO's existence and of the good work it does, but that they are not willing to contribute to it themselves. Therefore, depending on the sector, it has to be said that the level of activity of NGOs could be higher if they had more support from authorities and from the public.



## Is the community active in the NGO sector in your country?

The level of community participation in NGOs depends on a number of factors, mainly on the sector in which an NGO works. In general, there are many people who are willing to participate in social sector NGOs, because they feel a desire to contribute or to give back and to do something good for the community that they are a part of. Other sectors such as historic landmark protection receive less attention and less practical support from the public. Volunteering is an important factor, as most NGOs depend on volunteer work. The city of Graz is a good practice example in the way it respects volunteers and their work by offering them an option for insurance for their volunteering work.

## How do key stakeholders (e.g. the government) perceive the role of the NGO sector in the community?

Local authorities (e.g. city governments) approve of the work NGOs do and usually appreciate their involvement in important issues. They understand that NGOs are crucial for society to work properly because many things could not be achieved or would not be available if it was not for NGOs. Frequently, NGOs are concerned with issues that the government does not have enough time, money and other resources for, which is why they understand the value of having many well functioning NGOs in the country.

## What are the main challenges when starting an NGO in your country?

Specific guidelines on starting an NGO in Austria are not easy to find – the main reason for this being that there are no official and legal definitions for Austrian NGOs. If a person intends to start an NGO, they have to resort to information about the actual legal form they want to establish and find information about that. One of the most common legal forms of NGOs in Austria is “Verein”, an association. As a “Verein” is an official legal entity, there are detailed explanations available and accessible online. There are several requirements for starting this kind of organisation:

- It has to be designed to be permanent and voluntary.
- It has to have a specific non-profit goal.
- It has to be based on its own articles of association.
- At least two people have to team up to form an association.

After paying a small fee and once the application has been submitted and then approved by the relevant authority, the association is officially a legal entity with all the rights and obligations that this entails. Generally speaking, choosing the right legal form for an NGO and especially getting through a rather large number of bureaucratic barriers is probably the biggest challenge people face when they want to start an NGO, but there are official authorities such as city governments which offer advice.



## What are the most common funding mechanisms used by NGOs in your country?

Funding for NGOs is mostly available from the national, regional or local governments, but it also comes from the private sector and from sponsorships, membership fees and fundraising campaigns. Applying for government funding usually requires filling out applications and providing a lot of information about the NGO, as there are only limited funds available.

## What are the main challenges when managing an NGO in your country?

Finding new members, especially young people, is challenging for many NGOs as it is becoming increasingly difficult to get people to commit to volunteering work in a responsible, steady way. It can also be hard to actively involve already existing (volunteer) members, which is why usually there are only a small number of people who do all the work in an NGO while the vast majority of members are only “onlookers”. This is not always only the members’ fault, sometimes it might be hard for NGO leaders to delegate their work because they want to stay in control over what gets done. Naturally, this situation is different when an NGO has paid employees.

## In general, how does the NGO communication work in your country?

The determination of what is the best way for an NGO to reach its target audience depends on the type of organisation, different sectors work in different ways, which has to be taken into consideration. While social media is a good way to reach a large audience, it might not be an effective tool to communicate with seniors, for example. Newspapers are still a very common option for addressing a big target audience and the public in general, which is why good connections to journalists are important for an NGO. Effective tools for communicating with members include newsletters, social media, personal conversations, public events (especially if they raise the media’s attention), member events, and emails/letters. Co-operating with other organisations and with local authorities such as city governments are also effective, as are charity events. Between board members, e-mails, calls and meetings are popular communication tools. Communication can be both structured and unstructured – this depends on the individual NGO, the topic and the occasion. Websites, for example, have to be well-planned and well thought through. While there certainly are unplanned and unstructured events, a lot of unseen work is needed for events to take place. Speaking from NGO leaders’ experiences, this work organising events is often not appreciated or acknowledged.



## How would you characterise the NGO leadership in your country?

NGO leaders usually take the job as a leader because they are deeply and personally concerned with their NGO's topic. Frequently, that topic affects many people, but official authorities do not see the need or do not have the resources to help, which is why an NGO "takes over". In Austria, courses for NGO leaders are not common and it seems like, if any, only large organisations offer such classes. It takes a certain kind of person to be a leader in an NGO – not everyone can do it and usually, NGO leaders learn their work on the job or are tutored by their predecessors. This is one of the reasons why new leaders frequently take over old habits and tend to not be innovative in their leadership approach. New forms of leadership are frequently met with suspicion as people are often afraid of change, but sometimes change is necessary to find a fresh approach.



# AUSTRIA





## Appendix

# AUSTRIA

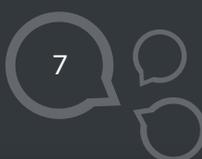
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### Local working group

To conduct our national report, we have used input from local stakeholders. More specifically, information was collected based on a structured template to capture the experience of active citizenship, various ways to benefit the specific project and the potential of individuals to mobilize the community. In Austria, six stakeholders gave feedback, namely one leader of an NGO with social, cultural and educational background, who has many years of experience as an NGO member and president; one who is a social worker and an adult educator who works with local youth; one who is a retired medical professional and has been a cultural heritage NGO president for almost 20 years; one who is an NGO employee who works in the health and fitness sector; one who wants to join or found an NGO in the environmentally friendly tourism field; and one who is an educator for an NGO with experience in European projects.





Until 2009 the State and the Orthodox Church played a dominant role in the provision of social services in Greece, whereas civic participation was limited. By 2009, a new situation had emerged. The severe social problems tied to the economic recession and the migration created the conditions for NGOs to flourish in Greece. Nowadays, Greeks have high hopes that NGOs will drive social change. Greece, unlike other European countries, is a latecomer in the development of the social economy. Recent evidence shows that Greece has just started to map the social sector in a formal way. In the absence of official data, Greece embraces approximately 4,000 NGOs. However, volunteering in Greece cannot be characterised as a concept widely practised as volunteers represent almost 0.5% of the adult population in Greece.

## GREECE

### How would you characterise the active citizenship in Greece?

Until 2009, active citizenship in Greece was limited, as local grassroots organisations (such as associations and civil non-profit companies) had been responsible for the retention of cultural heritage and the economic development of areas at a local level. Historically, the characteristics that dominated the Greek civil society were a) a strong intervention of the State and the Orthodox Church in the provision of social services, b) weak governmental support towards NGOs, and c) an individualist society. Greeks reasonably held the belief that both the State and the Orthodox Church were expected to solve social problems. For social issues of a more localised or individual nature, strong family ties and “philotimo” (the individual sense of honour and care for the others) made it easier for Greeks to find solutions. Traditionally, networks of relatives have always created the basic framework of mutual aid, solidarity and cooperation in Greece. Nevertheless, Greeks were aware of the vital contribution of a few NGOs (either established in Greece or operating internationally with branches in Greece) and were willing to provide support (in money or in kind) on a voluntary basis. These organisations were known for handling a wide range of social issues, such as the protection of human rights (e.g., ActionAid Hellas, The Smile of the Child), healthcare and social welfare (e.g., UNICEF, Medecins Sans Frontiers), environmental protection (e.g., Green Peace, WWF), and for multiplying their social, economic and environmental impact.

By 2009, a new situation had emerged. The severe social problems tied to the economic recession and the migration created the conditions for NGOs to flourish in Greece. Nowadays, NGOs are expected to address social needs, such as exclusion and inequality, which the state and the private sector are unwilling or unable to meet. Greeks have high hopes that NGOs will drive social change.

### How important is the NGO sector in the local and national area?

Greece, unlike other European countries, is a latecomer in the development of the social economy. Recent evidence shows that Greece has just started to map the social sector in a formal way. Before 2011, socially-oriented economic activities were placed somewhere between atypical and regrettably illegal (black) economy. After 2011, the Law on ‘Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship’ has changed twice (4019/2011 and 4430/2016) to better capture the plural field of the not-for-profit activity in Greece. As the country has recently introduced the concept of social economy, the formal mapping of the social sector in Greece is underway.

From its infancy, the NGO sector has suffered the consequences of the economic crisis. The demand for NGOs services has substantially increased despite limited financial resources. More and more, NGOs are asked to fill the gap that Greek's welfare state leaves behind and to offer an immediate response to threats of emerged and unmet social problems.

## Is the NGO sector active in your local and national area?

In the absence of official data, the National Agency for Volunteering estimates approximately 4,000 Greek NGOs. Over one-third of them are active in culture (37%), 18% in social solidarity, 12% in health and social protection, 12% in the environment while the rest 21% is active in the areas of people with disabilities, research and education, human rights, development actions and child protection. NGOs appear to be significant contributors to the Greek civil society.

## Is the community active in the NGO sector in Greece?

There are approx. 32000 volunteers in Greece, representing almost 0.5% of the adult population in Greece. More specifically, 14% of Greek citizens take part in a voluntary activity on a regular or occasional basis. Greeks consider volunteerism important for activities related to i) environment (50%), ii) solidarity and humanitarian aid (43%), iii) healthcare (36%), and iv) protection of human rights (27%). They also believe that volunteerism empowers social cohesion and solidarity in the European Union, while it boosts sustainable development and environmental protection.

The perception of volunteerism is evolving in parallel with people's beliefs about their involvement in social change. There is growing public interest to support sustainable citizens' initiatives. Individuals and communities of people have started to undertake the responsibility for successful implementation of social changes. As these changes occur, the role of volunteerism in Greece gains more value and appreciation.

According to the Board Chairman of a well-known NGO (Praksis, <https://www.praksis.gr/el/>) emphasising humanitarian, health and anti-poverty programmes, awareness is crucial for motivating people to deal with social issues and become volunteers. He also believes that citizens, more often than not, do not realise their potential to perform volunteering tasks. Organisations need to educate citizens to undertake specialised roles, deal with the other members of the organisations and develop partnerships. They need to help them express their talent and desire to help.

In the same direction, the co-founder of a volunteering NGO (Volunteer4Greece, <http://www.volunteer4greece.gr/en/>) highlights the need for non-profit organisations to act more professionally, use more structured tools and better organise their operations to recruit volunteers and develop their skills. She also believes that NGOs in Greece are keen on learning new methods and apply new techniques in daily operations to scale up and multiply their impact.



## How do key stakeholders perceive the role of the NGO sector in the community?

Both Greek citizens and stakeholders in the private sector tend to be suspicious when NGOs are supported by state funds. More often than not, they assume political corruption. On the contrary, NGOs, which receive support from different funding schemes (e.g., European programmes, sponsorships or donations), are not only neglected by the government, but they are sometimes treated with hostility.

## What are the main challenges when starting an NGO in Greece?

Individuals engaged in NGOs have to confront various challenges. A major challenge is how to increase trust in their ability to improve the life of their communities in terms of economic prosperity, social justice or/and environmental integrity. Another challenge is the absence of a cohesive regulatory framework. NGOs in Greece demonstrate extreme diversity in legal forms, missions and contexts. Legal forms include associations, civil non-profit companies, foundations, legal entities of public right, or even collection committees. This extreme diversity poses enormous bureaucratic barriers while limits access to funding.

## What are the most common funding mechanisms used by NGOs in Greece?

NGOs strive to follow a balanced approach towards the three pillars of impact (economic, social and environmental), as suggested by the Triple Bottom Line Approach. However, the diversity of Greek NGOs in legal forms and scope requires flexibility in funding requirements and sources. The majority of funds for NGOs come from private donations (~35%), state grants or subsidies (~25%) and co-funded European programmes (~15%). Overall, NGOs' fundraising strategies combine sponsorships from state organisations, local authorities and private companies, membership fees, social entrepreneurship schemes and some from income-generating activities.

## What are the main challenges when managing an NGO in Greece?

A crucial challenge is how NGOs' communication strategy will be effective to secure assistance. NGOs have to communicate a crystal-clear message of their scope along with transparent business models. Also, NGOs are challenged to find key stakeholders (i.e., for-profit companies practising CSR, chambers) and increase public awareness and civic participation.



## In general, how is the NGO communication in Greece?

Most Greek NGOs do not follow a well-structured or plan-based communication strategy for their key stakeholders. Some small-sized NGOs do not even have virtual presence or website. On the contrary, larger NGOs with nationwide operations strive to gain awareness through their website and use social media to communicate more effectively.

NGOs should start employing new technologies to increase public awareness and participation. In addition, networking with key stakeholders (i.e., for-profit companies practising CSR, chambers) would allow Greek NGOs to scale up and multiply impact.

## How would you characterise the NGO leadership in Greece?

Greek NGO leaders emerge from the traditional entrepreneurship ecosystem. Known for their great concern about social and green issues, some individuals have become key players in the NGO sector, especially from 2013 onwards. However, Greece lacks a formal long-term education policy specifically for the NGO sector. For people interested, the common practice is to attend short-term, ad hoc training initiatives, usually held by social entrepreneurship incubators. The best known training initiatives in Greece are the “Social Dynamo” by Bodossaki Foundation, the “Impact Series” by British Council, the “NGOs and Leadership” by HIGGS, the “capacity building and training” program of Impact Hub Athens, the “NGO capacity building” program of “We are all Citizens”, and the incubation program of Aephoria.net. These training schemes cover a wide range of interests, such as i) innovative ways of leading and managing social organisations, ii) effective and efficient collaborations (e.g., for fundraising or forming key partnerships), and iii) how to manage personal fears and become more resilient to failures.

As it appears, there is significant room for designing leadership training programmes to strengthen individual skills and give members of the civil society the opportunity of more active participation in the non-profit sector.



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### Local Working Group

To conduct our national report, we have used input from local stakeholders. More specifically, information was collected based on a structured template to capture the experience of active citizenship, various ways to benefit the specific project and the potential of individuals to mobilise the community. In Greece, six stakeholders gave feedback, namely one leader of an existing NGO dealing with food waste, one individual trying to establish an NGO to benefit elderly people, one NGO consultant, one paid employee working in an NGO dealing with microfinance, one volunteer of an NGO dealing with mental health issues and one individual involved in the third sector through foundations and political parties.



## Appendix

# GREECE

Non-profits constitute at least 10% of all organisations active in Ireland today. Despite their reach into every part of Irish life, very little is understood about the nonprofit sector at large. This is because of the sheer diversity of the organisations involved, and the voluntary nature of much of their work. Indeed, the word “sector” is a kind of a misnomer, because many nonprofits operate in sectors where there are also commercial providers - for example the arts, healthcare, education. Non-profit organisations play a crucial role in Ireland’s social and economic life. They are extremely diverse – ranging from small community groups like retirement associations and sports clubs to large national organisations working in areas such as healthcare, education, environmental, social housing and poverty relief. In the middle is a vast array of small and medium-sized groups – radical and conservative, single-issue and all-encompassing. The unifying tie that binds these groups together is that they all exist to change peoples’ lives for the better.

Charities are facing major and unprecedented challenges at present, and the economic downturn which commenced in 2008 has created a survival culture to which every nonprofit organisation has had to adapt, often radically. Nearly two-thirds of charities saw their income fall between 2009 and 2012, and many have had to reduce their staff numbers, cut pay or take other tough decisions, including dropping some services. But Irish charities do have staying power, and 70% of them have been around for 10 years or more.

The establishment of the new Charities Regulatory Authority, combined with the new Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for charities, is already creating a fresh environment for Irish non-profits in which greater openness, transparency and accountability are core elements of the way they operate and interact with their service users, funders, staff and the general public in Ireland. And alongside the new regulatory environment, charities are having to make significant changes to the way they engage with statutory funders and stakeholders.



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## IRELAND

### How would you characterise the active citizenship in your country?

Non-profits constitute at least 10% of all organisations active in Ireland today. Despite their reach into every part of Irish life, very little is understood about the non-profit sector at large. This is because of the sheer diversity of the organisations involved, and the voluntary nature of much of their work. Indeed, the word “sector” is a kind of a misnomer, because many non-profits operate in sectors where there are also commercial providers - for example the arts, healthcare, education. The community and voluntary sector clearly make a big contribution to sustaining what is often referred to as ‘civil society’ in Ireland - those parts of our society that are neither the state nor the private sector. “Policymakers acknowledge that that contribution is going to increase as Ireland wrestles with the challenge of dealing with the social and economic crisis coupled with the depressing realities of inadequate social provision.” Participant 1

### How important is the NGO sector in your local and national area?

Non-profit organisations play a crucial role in Ireland’s social and economic life. They are extremely diverse – ranging from small community groups like retirement associations and sports clubs to large national organisations working in areas such as healthcare, education, environmental, social housing and poverty relief. In the middle is a vast array of small and medium-sized groups – radical and conservative, single-issue and all-encompassing. The unifying tie that binds these groups together is that they all exist to change peoples’ lives for the better.

“Collectively, these organisations are often referred to as the community and voluntary sector, or the non-profit sector in Ireland. Yet, for all their significance in providing essential services and supporting communities, we know relatively little about the day-to-day challenges faced by these organisations.” Participant 6



## Is the NGO sector active in your local and national area?

Of the 8,097 non-profit companies for which financial statements are available from a regulatory source 4,321 disclose details of payroll numbers and costs. These disclosures indicate that this is a sector with at least 149,360 paid employees. 66,031 of these work in the 310 quasi-public bodies for which employment data is available. Employment terms in these nonprofits provide for salaries and other benefits that are equivalent to public sector grades. Some of these employees (in the higher education, health and social care sectors) are counted as public sector employees in government statistics. 83,329 work in the 4,011 other nonprofit organisations that report having paid staff. According to mandatory disclosures in the financial statements, the numbers employed in the sector at large have increased by 5.5% from 2013 to 2015. Employment in quasi-public bodies has increased by 3.6%, and in the rest of the sector, employment has increased by 7%.

## Is the community active in the NGO sector in your country?

Non-profit organisations employ at least 149,360 people in Ireland and they have a combined annual turnover of over €10 billion

- Over 560,000 people volunteer every year, and 50,000 people help run charities as voluntary trustees.
- Over €750 million is fundraised every year to support this work

## How do key stakeholders perceive the role of the NGO sector in the community?

We have outlined some of the feedback from our stakeholder's meeting below:

"This sector is the heart and conscience of a nation. It's the driver of positive values and transformative actions. It accelerates social progress and puts the breaks on excesses of greed and individualism. It rebalances the tensions between the influential and the marginalised; the insiders and the outsiders, the powerful and the weak" Participant 4

"Ireland recently welcomed the appointment of Minister Michael Ring as the first-ever Minister appointed to oversee Community Affairs in Ireland. The community and voluntary sector make a massive contribution to national life providing services for people and communities up and down the country. It supports young people, older people, people with disabilities and people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, amongst many other things - but it has experienced very challenging times in recent years. We are delighted that this new department with Minister Michael Ring at the helm will be focusing on supporting the sector to increase the positive difference that community and voluntary organisations can make in people's lives" Participant



## What are the main challenges when starting an NGO in your country?

Charities are facing major and unprecedented challenges at present, and the economic downturn which commenced in 2008 has created a survival culture to which every nonprofit organisation has had to adapt, often radically. Nearly two-thirds of charities saw their income fall between 2009 and 2012, and many have had to reduce their staff numbers, cut pay or take other tough decisions, including dropping some services. But Irish charities do have staying power, and 70% of them have been around for 10 years or more.

The establishment of the new Charities Regulatory Authority, combined with the new Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for charities, is already creating a fresh environment for Irish non-profits in which greater openness, transparency and accountability are core elements of the way they operate and interact with their service users, funders, staff and the general public in Ireland. And alongside the new regulatory environment, charities are having to make significant changes to the way they engage with statutory funders and stakeholders.

## What are the most common funding mechanisms used by NGOs in your country?

In 2015, according to the reported receipts of 5,879 non-profit companies, the government committed €5.3b in current expenditure to the sector, which equated to 8% of current Exchequer spending in that year. Most non-profit companies receive no government funding at all. Of the 2,692 that reported government funding, 66% rely on this for more than half of their income.

### Giving to Irish non-profits

Non-profits - including charities - derive 7% (€725m) of their income from fundraising and donations. This includes gifts from individuals, philanthropies and private companies. Between 2013-15, reported income from fundraising and donations increased by 15% on average year-on-year.

### Philanthropic giving accounts for at least €83.4m annually

Institutional philanthropy takes various forms in Ireland, including professionally-staffed organisations, groups of individuals operating without professional staff, and endowed funds that distribute the legacy of an individual or family, with or without the benefit of professional advice. Using published financial reports where available, Three of these (The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Ireland Funds and the Community Foundation for Ireland) made philanthropic gifts annually of €5m or more, totalling €66.15m in 2015 • Four spent more than €1m but less than €5m annually in donations, totalling €9.8m in aggregate in 2015 • 25 spent less than €1m, totalling €7.4m in aggregate in 2015

### Grant income

Grants, whether from State or private philanthropic sources, are by far the single largest source of income. Grants are reported as a source of income by 2,886 non-profit companies at a combined level of €2bn



## What are the main challenges when managing an NGO in your country?

The following summarises the key challenges participant's felt were in managing an NGO:

### Not enough Strategic Planning

If voluntary organisations are to innovate services then they must be able to plan and this in turn means there must be the reasonable security of income. No one – neither profit making company nor voluntary organisation - can plan for the future if they have no security of income.

### Reliance on State Funding

Community and voluntary organisations raise funds from diverse sources, but many rely on a proportion of funding from the State. For those organisations that depend on statutory funding, many encounter difficulties in securing funds that allow for the full cost (including overheads for example) of the work that they do.

### Regulation

Secondly, community and voluntary organisations have been urging the Government to regulate charities for many years now, arguing that charities have nothing to fear from regulation and much to gain. Benefits will include greater transparency by charities to the public and to their clients, streamlining of the many authorities that regulate a charity's work and clarification of the duties attaching to directors and trustees.

Recently, Ireland appointed the first The Minister to oversee Community and Rural Affairs which acknowledged the importance of the work being done by charities to protect vulnerable people and paid tribute to the thousands of volunteers who participate in this work.

### Infrastructure of Support

There is now a need to provide a similar, integrated, nationwide, infrastructure-of-support to enable the voluntary sector to strengthen Irish society and make Ireland a better place to live in. This infrastructure-of-support for the voluntary sector should be targeted at the needs of voluntary organisations and provide training, advice, and supports in the areas of board development, governance, leadership, general management and financial management.

If we want to develop and support the sustainable communities of place and interest that underpin an equal and just Ireland, then we must support and enable voluntary activity in a purposeful and strategic manner. This will be achieved when community and voluntary organisations are funded appropriately, regulated sensitively and supported comprehensively.

## In general, how is the NGO communication in your country?

“It has never been more important for social purpose organisations to focus their limited resources on maximising positive social change. “

“Over the past 10 years, there has been a growing focus within the Irish community and voluntary sector on the need for good governance, planning, quality assurance and evaluation. For organisations in receipt of statutory, foundation, corporate, and especially of European Union funding, undertaking evaluations has been the norm for many years. However, such evaluations have been largely focused on outputs and processes and have tended to be retrospective.”

“Attempting to measure the actual difference made by programmes is a much more recent phenomenon, which commenced approximately 10 years ago, but which has only gained wider recognition in the past few years “

‘Embryonic’, ‘poor’, ‘behind’, ‘sporadic’, ‘fragmented’ and ‘patchy’ were some of the words used by interviewees to describe the underdeveloped nature of social impact measurement in Ireland today. The majority of organisations is not yet speaking the language of impact measurement and does not yet recognise that this is an area that deserves consideration. This appears to be the case for both social enterprises and for community and voluntary organisations.

The not-for-profit and social enterprise sectors have also been influenced by the corporate world. Increasingly, there have been calls for them to adopt ‘business ways of thinking’.

## How would you characterise the NGO leadership in your country?

Many people who are working within the ranks of non-profit organisations can become great senior non-profit leaders. However, in part because of budget constraints, few organisations in the sector have formal professional development programs to prepare mid-level managers for senior roles. As a result, most mid-level non-profit professionals must take responsibility for their own career development.

One way to begin the process is to tap the experience of senior leaders who already have worked their way up within the sector. To that end, we spoke with six senior non-profit leaders—all of whom have spent much if not all of their careers working in the non-profit sector—about their career paths and the lessons they learned along the way.

Participants gave advice they would give to mid-level managers looking to move into senior non-profit leadership roles:

- “Volunteer, inside or outside of your organisation”
- “Seek out both formal and informal professional development opportunities”
- “Move up by moving on”

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### Local Working Group

To conduct our national report, we have used input from local stakeholders. More specifically, information was collected based on a structured template to capture the experience of active citizenship, various ways to benefit the specific project and the potential of individuals to mobilize the community. In Ireland, seven stakeholders gave feedback, namely one leader of an existing NGO dealing with environmental education in communities, one individual trying to establish an NGO to protect local biodiversity, one NGO consultant, one paid employee working in an NGO dealing with protection of waterways, one volunteer of an NGO dealing with food security solutions, and two individuals involved in the third sector through social issues and local environmental issues



## Appendix

# IRELAND

It is possible to track organised charities as far back as the Medieval period in Portugal. These first movements were mainly linked to the Church and acted in the social, health and even education sectors. Despite the Church being the driving force for the development of the Portuguese civil society, other solidarity and self-help movements were created by groups of people in need that saw a chance in organising themselves to address their own problems.

History tells us that there were several ups and downs in the setting of the Portuguese civil society and it wasn't until 1974, after the end of a 40-year dictatorship, that citizen movements and public participation gained a strong momentum. Due to the social and cultural backwardness Portugal faced at that time, the most expressive movements were related to the improvement of working conditions, women's rights, solidarity and humanitarian issues and cultural, sports and recreational expression. With the priorities focused on social life issues, environmental movements struggled to rise until the mid-1980's when they started to gain some relevance.

Today, even though the third sector is quite expressive in Portugal, there is a lack of information and data about its importance in the society, mainly when talking about environmental organisations. It was only in 2013 that the first satellite account for the social economy sector using data from 2010 was completed. In 2016 it was updated with data from 2013 which shows the growing interest in the potential of this sector in the Portuguese economy. However, in both statistical studies there is virtually no information about environmental organisations with them being included in the "Development, housing and environment" category.



## PORTUGAL

### How would you characterise the active citizenship in your country?

Even though, the third sector in Portugal has assumed a growing importance in the country's economy, there is still a general lack of perception regarding this reality, which can partly explain the relative underdevelopment of the sector when compared with other countries.

Many people do not realise the potential of community action for solving common issues and civic participation depends a lot on how educated people are about those issues. They recognise the importance of taking action if they are informed about the cause and empathise with it. As environmental issues in Portugal are 'recent', this lack of awareness is an issue.

Overall, and due to historical and cultural reasons, the Portuguese population is not used to solving problems within the community, putting the responsibility to the government and dismissing individual action. Also, in recent years, several examples of corruption within some organisations have been revealed which also leads to a general lack of trust in the sector.

### How important is the NGO sector in your local and national area?

In 2013, the third sector represented 2.8% of the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) and 5.2% of total employment so it is clearly a significant sector of the Portuguese economy. The "Social Action and Social Security" alone generated 44.7% of this sector's GVA and 54.6% of the total sector's employment, making this economic activity within the sector having the most impact on the economy. However, data on the impact of the operation of this sector and its multiplier effects in Portuguese society is still non-existent.

There are some organisations within the third sector that have a national scope and are focused on national problems, but it is at a local level that its importance is more deeply felt. Due to the strong links with the communities and their capacity to resolve issues, the government relies on these organisations and this is evident by the financial support as it is proven by the number of government grants given. Regarding environmental issues, for instance, these entities are also of extreme importance due to governmental lack of response to environmental problems and environmental education.

However, the confusing legal framework surrounding the third sector along with the perception that employment connected to social / environmental causes is synonymous with amateurism, makes it difficult for the sector to evolve and be more impactful.

## Is the NGO sector active in your local and national area?

According to the satellite account for the social economy, the third sector is composed of 61268 organisations of which 50.7% belong to the category “Culture, Sports and Recreation”; 15.6% to “Social Action and Social Security”; and 4.8% to “Development, Housing and Environment”.

Despite the number of existing organisations, this does not mean that they are very active in community life. Many only do a few activities during the year and repeat them every year, not being very innovative, and others don't have clear missions and values so there's little understanding of their role in the community. Despite being very important in bringing people together “Culture, Sports and Recreation” organisations don't focus on solving community issues and instead engage the community just for leisure. Social organisations may be the ones that engage the community more successfully, unlike environmental organisations that are still very scarce, low profile and employ very few people in comparison with other kinds of organisations.

## Is the community active in the NGO sector in your country?

With such a diverse third sector, acting in multiple areas of activity, it is possible to see a pattern: people participate in associative organisations for common interests (culture, sports, recreation) but not so much in organisations for causes, towards a common good. The volunteer rate in Portugal is 12%, half the European average, and is one of the lowest rates in Europe. Volunteering in Portugal is still seen as something secondary, people don't recognise the gratification that can come from helping a cause and thus many people that volunteer don't commit to the job.

Usually people volunteer when they can gain something from it and they expect immediate gratification, this can be easily achieved in a social volunteering setting but not so much with environmental volunteering, where it takes longer to see change happen. Thus, it is possible to see several volunteering opportunities within different areas of action, but the group of participants is usually the same.

## How do key stakeholders perceive the role of the NGO sector in the community?

The third sector is still a recent concept in Portugal, so people still don't recognise it as a single, cohesive sector looking instead to the organisations individually which can limit the sectors ability to attract support. Besides, many organisations are reluctant to create partnerships and there are also many stakeholders that don't fully understand these organisations' role and importance and therefore are not interested in engaging with them.

However, since this sector is growing and being more relevant in the economy many stakeholders start to interact more often with these organisations. Local governments, for instance, can't respond to some community issues (for legal or bureaucratic limitations) and partner with non-profit organisations, working together with them to tackle those problems. Businesses also are starting to see advantages in these partnerships many times to meet their social and environmental responsibility goals, but it is still not very common to see the third sector and the private sector working together because they “speak” in different languages and it may be a bit difficult to find some common ground.



## What are the main challenges when starting an NGO in your country?

The main challenge when starting an NGO in Portugal is the lack of standard information about the process and an official step-by-step guide to help people that want to do it. Both online and in public institutions the information available is in many cases contradictory and/or incomplete. There is also a lack of support on how to write the statutes and regulations, how to constitute the governing bodies and on financial advice.

With the development of the third sector in the last few decades, the number and complexity of the body of laws regulating the formation and operation of the different types of organisation have increased. This causes some confusion and little understanding about the legal framework of this sector.

## What are the most common funding mechanisms used by NGOs in your country?

The funding system for organisations within the third sector in Portugal is still underdeveloped. There is little innovation on how to fund these organisations and the majority depend on public funding and government grants with some of them reaching 85% dependence on these grants. Even so, this is not a stable source of funding for most entities because it depends on the existence or not of funding programs to which they have to apply. There is also a lack of knowledge and the ability to look for other options like European funds.

Providing services is also a common way to generate some revenues mainly for social, health or education organisations as well as donations by individuals. Funding through sponsorships and private institutional donations is not very significant because organisations don't use these mechanisms much and businesses reduced their donations as a way to reduce costs.

Membership fees represent a residual amount of total funding. Organisations may even have many associates, but it is difficult to get them to have the fees up to date.

Crowdfunding, fundraisings, workspace sharing, or exchange of services and goods are newly used forms of funding (or reducing costs) but still not widespread.

## What are the main challenges when managing an NGO in your country?

There are several challenges associated with managing an NGO in Portugal. First of all, employees are still perceived as "professional volunteers", not recognising their merit and justifying long hours and low wages. This perception makes it harder to attract qualified staff and consequently professionalise the organisation's management.



For smaller organisations where almost all the staff are voluntary there's not much subdivision of tasks, everyone does a bit of everything which can be exhausting, and it may be a struggle to keep the motivation among both staff and volunteers. It is also difficult to get legal support, which is usually very expensive, and to diversify the funding options because it's something that requires planning, time and knowledge, mainly when it comes to European funds, and most people are not trained for it. Many funding programs also prefer bigger projects which omit these smaller organisations that have more local and community focused projects.

Finally, another main challenge, is to engage people either for the management structure, as volunteers or even as participants in events or activities and get volunteers to attend regularly and commit.

## In general, how is the NGO communication in your country?

Overall NGO's in Portugal are aware that a good, structured and varied communication plan is very important for its success. Smaller organisations struggle in reaching their target audience and promoting their work to the community because they don't have the resources, the time or the people to put into action those plans. Even if they have paid staff, usually they don't have the financial means to have one person exclusively to deal with branding and external communication, marketing or fundraising campaigns. Thus, the communication strategies are a bit disorganised, many times their websites are outdated and not designed in the best way to attracting volunteers, members or donations and frequently, they promote the projects, events and activities but not the results afterwards. There is also little dissemination within the media (tv, newspapers, online news, etc).

## How would you characterise the NGO leadership in your country?

Today it is possible to see a change in the approach to associative leadership which historically was mostly focused on one person (usually the president), decisions were taken unilaterally and there was little collaboration with members and volunteers. Many of these organisations would be supported through the same funding mechanisms and would do the same activities every year. Even though there are some examples that still work like this, the new NGO's are more focused on creating co-leadership experiences where the participation of its members is supported and encouraged, as a way to keep up with the motivation and recognise their value. The new leaders give a lot more importance to issues like diversification of funding mechanisms, training volunteers, investment on professionalisation and communication and management strategies or performance and result evaluation systems.

Most associative leaders don't go through any training for that position, one reason being that leadership training in Portugal is not specifically directed to voluntary organisations. They learn through experience, by watching others and through informal mentorship mainly.

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### Local working group

To conduct our national report, we have used input from local stakeholders. More specifically, information was collected based on a structured template to capture the experience with active citizenship, various ways to benefit the specific project and the potential of individuals to mobilise the community. In Portugal, six stakeholders gave feedback, namely one leader of an NGO with environmental, scientific, educational and political background; one politician that works as an environmental advisor for a city council; a social worker who works with local children, youth and their families; one university professor that has also been involved for several years in many civic movements mainly related to sustainable urban mobility; one university student that is very active in her community and has been volunteering for NGOs for several years; and a second university student that has volunteering background in environmental, political and sportive NGOs and is very interested in learning new approaches to NGO leadership.



## Appendix

# PORTUGAL

The third sector is a key player in the social and economic development of our country, an increasingly important channel for structuring and solving the growing demands and initiatives of civil society. Its relevance is reflected in dimensions such as the number of organisations that are involved, the multiplicity of social demands that it satisfies, the dimensions of the social investment it channels, the number of beneficiaries and associates it serves, the employment it generates and the volunteer work it mobilises.

The changes that have taken place in recent years have created an increasingly demanding environment, with a decrease in available resources and public funding while increasing social needs and the number of beneficiaries. Together with the changes driven by the crisis, those driven by the technological transformation, the digital economy and new business models, social entities cannot ignore these.

This new environment implies a necessary transformation of the sector in its multiple dimensions: changes in financing models, the need to improve efficiency and impact, development of new models and services, focus on results, improvement of transparency and good governance, digital transformation and innovation, all developed in collaboration and with alliances with entities inside and outside the sector

## SPAIN

### How would you characterise the active citizenship in your country?

Based on a study carried out on 222 Spanish NGOs, this is the overall situation of the NGO sector in Spain:

74% of the NGOs work mainly in social action programmes in Spain, which benefit an average of 44,819 people. 24% have as their main area of action development cooperation and humanitarian action in developing countries, benefiting with their projects an average of 1,388,649 people (both direct and indirect beneficiaries, i.e. the family or community where they work) and 2% of organisations have the environment as their main area of activity. In total, the 222 organizations analysed serve more than 82 million people in Spain and in developing countries.

The NGOs in this study employ 25,986 people and have the support of 67,680 volunteers and 1,403,614 members-collaborators. It is necessary to emphasise the concentration of the number of members: 7 organisations have 1,216,236 associates, that is to say that 3% of the organisations concentrate 87% of the members, and most of the organisations of the sample (80%) have less than 1,000 members.

The community sees NGO's work as more necessary in the areas of Social work, aid for the disabled and the elderly, environmental volunteering, support for immigrants, the unemployed and disadvantaged groups

In general, the role of the third sector, which is perceived to be closely linked to the social sector and assistance, is not well understood.

### How important is the NGO sector in your local and national area?

The importance of the third sector is fundamental both at a local and national level for the achievement of social and nature conservation improvements that are not achieved statutory bodies.

An October 2015 survey asks for some possible reasons for the existence of NGOs. One reason is the need to complement the State in addressing emerging problems and needs; but it can also be the fruit of a more solidary society, a fashion, or that people feel good collaborating with them.

Regarding the first issue, a majority of people, almost seven in 10, believe that NGOs are necessary to meet the new needs and problems of increasingly complex societies and States are not the only ones that have responsibility for them.

The interest in the activity carried out by NGOs is not widespread and the population is divided between those who show a lot or a lot of interest (50.9%) and those who show little interest (45.9%).



## Is the NGO sector active in your local and national area?

Locally, the third sector is active in multiple areas, mainly in work of reporting incidence and assistance to disadvantaged groups. Through the associative fabric multiple activities are developed in an individual and coordinated way in networks.

The activity that is developing in the third sector in terms of the environment, sustainability, entrepreneurship and local development is also relevant.

At the national level, the approach has a greater weight for activities of social interest in the field of environmental scientific and technical research, in addition to the improvement of the natural environment (habitats and species) and training for responsible and sustainable use of natural resources.

The main organisations that benefit from volunteer work are Cruz Roja and Cáritas:

## Is the community active in the NGO sector in your country?

At local level, participation in the third sector is very common and active at different levels: voluntary and contracted personnel. However, participation has suffered a lot in the last 10 years due to the financing crisis of the sector, always very dependent on funds and public subsidies, which have reduced drastically.

36.1% of the Spanish population over 14 years of age collaborates in some way with NGOs and 7.9% volunteer.

In general, in the north and centre of Spain there is a lower percentage of people who collaborate with volunteering, while Andalusia and the Canary Islands are the areas with the highest ratio.

In Castile and Leon Region, 38.2% of the population collaborates with NGOs, mostly with economic collaboration (31.6%) with only a 6.6% of the population participating as volunteers.

### Obstacles to volunteers:

There is a diverse range of reasons people have for not getting involved in a voluntary capacity. The main one is the lack of time (the same for men as by women), but neglect or laziness is also cited (more by men than by women), and the lack of compatibility with working life or with family life (more women).

## How do key stakeholders perceive the role of the NGO sector in the community?

Definitely, the role of the third sector is perceived as a fundamental actor. With regard to certain environmental projects, the governments of the autonomous communities are part of these as partners as well as other public companies.

The NGO sector is seen as a key partner for benefitting the communities. It is seen as a crucial element in addressing social problems for the integral development of communities.

The creation of public-private development alliances in which social, business entities and local and national governments coordinate to achieve development objectives is essential. There are plenty of examples of successful partnerships between NGOs and other entities, such as European LIFE Projects. Companies such as Gas Natural Fenosa, Acciona, Endesa, as well as Banco Santander Foundation, Biodiversity Foundation, BBVA Foundation or the Ministry of Universities and Research, Environment and Social Policies of the Government of Cantabria, have been supporting various projects for some time

## What are the main challenges when starting an NGO in your country?

The main barriers that you face when starting an NGO are that you have to follow many procedures, and a lot of money is required to start working.

It is relatively easy to find information on how to start an NGO. In each region, there is online information to learn about the procedures, and if not, the corresponding offices provide everything necessary to know how to carry it out.

There are many forums and spaces that have free guidance to take the correct steps: setting objectives, defining a more appropriate legal figure, developing bylaws, etc.

## What are the most common funding mechanisms used by NGOs in your country?

Regarding its sources of financing, on average for the group of entities analysed, there is parity between public and private financing at 50%. From the total expenditure of the entities, on average, 84.9% goes to carry out projects related to the mission, 6.3% goes to fundraising activities, both public and private, and the 8.8% are administrative expenses for the direction and management of the entity.

The most powerful and financially stable organisations consolidate their financing by attracting private partners, using a significant amount of resources. Entities with less capacity and structure rely more on public subsidies, such as local, community, state, European entities, development cooperation agencies, etc.



Of the 222 entities analysed, 22% are micro-organisations (with an annual budget of less than 300,000 euros), 24% are small entities (between 300,000 and 1 million euros), 36% are medium-sized entities (between 1 and 5 million euros), 14% large entities (between 5 and 25 million euros) and 4% are very large (more than 25 million euros).

In the micro entities, private financing dominates (71% of total financing) as well as between small (59%) and very large (65%) organisations. However, in medium-sized organisations (with budgets between 1 and 5 million) the percentage of public funding is high (64% of total revenues), as well as among large organisations, i.e. those with budgets between 5 and 25 million of euros, whose percentage of public financing is 66%. Public funds mostly come from Regional Governments and National Government

## What are the main challenges when managing an NGO in your country?

The main obstacle is financing. The constant lack of financial resources complicates the recruitment and establishment of human resources with good skills, always requiring an important level of personal motivation in the personnel involved in the activities carried out.

Obtaining a broad social base that brings legitimacy and funding is another important challenge.

Communicating effectively the impacts of the work done, so that there is a relationship between the resources and efforts deployed with the perception and information by the partners of the entities and the general public.

Obtaining public resources under a competitive regime in an increasingly restricted context requires the establishment of alliances and synergies.

## In general, how is the NGO communication in your country?

Communication is often one of the most difficult tasks of NGOs, often due to lack of time and personnel dedicated to it. Due to the limitations of the sector in terms of financial resources and human resources, getting structured campaigns and communication plans in a manner consistent with the entire functioning of the entity is a major challenge.

The execution of short-term campaigns is due in many cases to the funding allocated to the short-term projects, which causes an uneven functioning in terms of the projection or dissemination of the results. However, the public and private media give space to third sector organisations to disseminate their work, as they still maintain an important degree of social recognition. The presence in social networks is increasingly important in maintaining recognition and raising the profile of the third sector.

The main effective tools for communication are: communication with local and regional governments, meetings and personal approaches with partners, open dialogue with the local population where the actions will be executed, a presence in social networks and attendance at sectorial events where ideas and projects are shared with other actors

## How would you characterise the NGO leadership in your country?

The leaders are people with an interest in some topic, usually social, cultural, and environmental. Due to the nature of these issues, community leaders are required to highlight and take action and also source finance.

In general, training comes from practice and commitment and not much from education. However, education is fundamental to be able to develop an effective work and is a factor that must be strengthened in the training plans that are always scarce in the entities of the third sector.

Essentially, successful leadership approaches do not need to be innovative. They need to be coherent, credible and based on personal example. Perhaps innovative in the methods to be used, taking into account the new technologies and opportunities offered by the development of new tools.

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### Local working group

To conduct our national report, we have used input from local stakeholders. More specifically, information was collected based on a structured template to capture the experience of active citizenship, various ways to benefit the specific project and the potential of individuals to mobilize the community. In Spain, four stakeholders gave feedback, namely one leader of an existing Foundation dealing with endangered species, one member of an environmental Foundation, one technician of a Foundation dealing with wood fair trade and one member of a Cooperation NGO.



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Across Europe there are several types of non-profit institutions that differentiate from both the private and the public sectors. These can be non-profits, associations, cooperatives, mutual, social enterprises or any other type of entity that is an organisation, private, self-governing, voluntary, limited from distributing any surplus to its members and exists to produce benefits for others. These institutions are combined in one single sector, called the third sector (also often called NGO sector).

According to EU findings, this sector is a major contributor to Europe's workforce and has a big impact on the European Communities. Through the research carried out for this report, it is unanimously believed that the role of NGOs in the community is fundamental, not only for employing people but also because the third sector provides services that wouldn't be provided or easily accessible otherwise. This is especially true for the area of social issues which is the more expressive area of intervention in all five countries, but also in the environmental area it is very important work due to governmental' lack of response to environmental problems and environmental education.

However, the awareness of this importance is not the same in all European countries and in the five countries analysed in this document, it is possible to identify some struggles related to the sector, mainly linked to:

- Legal and bureaucratic issues
- Funding and financial issues
- Lack of awareness
- Internal management issues

## Legal and bureaucratic issues

At legal and juridical levels there are still a lot of barriers whether it is because the countries have a complex and confusing body of laws or because they lack a legal definition for fundamental concepts like "NGO" (Non-Governmental Organisation). This makes it a lot harder to understand the basics of the third sector as a whole and how to work within it and it increases the level of bureaucracy needed. Ireland, on the other hand, is a good example since recently it has approved legislation that regulates and reformulates the sector and will make it more open, transparent and accountable.

## Funding and financial issues

The lack of funding is a common issue in the majority of NGOs in the five countries analysed and it may well be one of the reasons why the third sector it's struggling to reach its full potential. The 2008 economic crisis in Europe worsened the access to funding and NGOs across Europe saw their budget drop significantly which meant the end for many of them. Others had to lay people off and cut several services. On the contrary, in Greece, the economic recession tied with the severe social problems that they were facing, created the conditions for NGOs to flourish and the population looked at NGOs as a social change driver.



# FINAL SUMMARY



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## Lack of awareness

Despite the importance of the third sector being considered fundamental for the several sectors of society, for cultural reasons, it is still looked at differently in the different countries. In countries like Portugal and Greece where cases of corruption have been exposed in many organisations within and outside the third sector, people tend to develop a general disbelief in the sector. This can partially explain why levels of participation and volunteering in these countries are lower than the European average. Also, many people still look at the NGOs as individual entities acting on their own and don't recognize that these NGOs are part of a broader sector.

## Internal Management issues

Across the five countries it is possible to conclude that many struggles that NGOs face are the same. From the beginning steps for creating an NGO, there is a problem of lack of structured information, lack of a support system and a bureaucratic and sometimes expensive process. Finding new members to support the organisations, volunteers that are dedicated and willing to commit to the work and hiring qualified people is also a big concern. Not having staff qualified to write more complex applications for funding means that either the NGOs don't know of their existence or that they can't access to those funding mechanisms.

## Communicating and Future Planning

However, the main problem that seems to affect the sector in all five countries – the ability to define a communication strategy plan. The vast majority of NGOs doesn't have the resources (human or financial) to be able to plan a communication strategy since it requires staff qualified in that area dedicated exclusively to it. Thus, it becomes more difficult to reach the target audience, promoting themselves within the community and to communicate their results and achievements.

Even though there are still several obstacles to overcome within the third sector, it is possible to feel a climate of change in Europe in the way people, governments and other stakeholders look at the potential of the third sector and all the benefits for our society from a strong, well-set third sector.

NGEurope sets out to be a platform through which NGOs can learn how to overcome some struggles they face on a daily basis.



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