

NGOs in Poland – young, active and not transparent

In 2018 there were 117 000 associations and 26 000 foundations. In total approximately 143 000 registered Polish organisations. Not all registered organisations are actually active. About 65 % of them have active operations. There is a clear legal situation for acting as a NGO.

Experience:

An average organisation has operated for about 10 years. In 2018, the number of youngest organisations with a history shorter than 5 years was close to the number of organisations with the longest history of over 15 years.

Locations:

The NGOs are mostly located in big cities and in rural areas. Although the differences in percentages are not significant. The organisations are mostly active in municipal and regional activities and they are nationwide. Only 9 percent is active also abroad.

Goals:

Every third NGO is focused on sport, tourism and hobby (28 000). The smallest number deals with social issues, welfare (5 000) and local development (4 000).

Key target groups:

NGOs have a wide variety of target groups. They include:

Children and youth – 73 %

Local residence & community – 62 %

Seniors – 39%

People with medical conditions, disability – 25 %

NGOs and institutions – 20 %

Financial situation:

The annual budget of an average organisation in 2017 was 28 000 Zloty (about EUR 6,500). The dominated annual revenues were 10 000-100 000 Zloty (2 500-25 000 Euro). Every ten revenue was over 1 million Zloty (250 000 Euro).

NGOs fund their operations using a variety of different sources. The majority (65 %) comes from national public funding, followed by personal and institutional philanthropy (63 %). 25 % comes from the 1 % rule in Polish tax law. Commercial and business operations make 23 %, support from other NGOs – 15 % and foreign public funding – 11 %.

Working for NGOs:

At least one permanent employee or a team is found in 37% of all organisations (employees working at least once a week). On average, organisations employ 3 persons. At least one person has an employment contract in 19% of organisations, and other 18% of organisations has one or more people working on a regular basis but none is employed on an employment contract basis.

In percentages it looks like below :

37 % of organisations employ at least one person (on a long term/regular basis)

36 % of organisations solely rely on volunteers in their operations

27 % of organisations contract a variety of work irregularly, rarely or on a oneoff basis

On average, associations will have 30 members, 15 women and 15 men. Ten out of thirty members will actually be active, i.e. will actually engage in the organisation's affairs.

63% of organisations hire volunteers, 6 persons per year on average. Half of them, i.e. 3 persons, volunteer their time regularly, at least once a month.

Challenges:

Challenges to financial sustainability have been the single biggest concern for organisations for years. However, there is a growing challenge of ensuring human capital. Non-governmental organisations have suffered from not enough people committed to engage (68%), staff retention issues (52%) and leadership burnout (47%). 70 % claim to face challenges raising funds and acquiring equipment.

NGOs identify funding to cover their matching contributions to projects as their most urgent need (39%). Other NGOs (31%) would first like to be able to buy equipment to support their operations or launch new products or services. Almost every organisation says that training is essential, mostly in fund-raising.

Values:

43 % of organisations point to these values as their core. Other highly ranked values include 'the sense of mission' (38%) and 'enthusiasm and engagement' (36%). 'Financial performance' is found important by the least proportion of organisations (2%).

Problems:

- lack of transparency
- without good practices, certificates etc.
- cases of misusing the public trust
- low criticism of some donors
- NGOs act sometimes instead of a regular company (because of public contracts)

Source: Klön/Jawor