There is no National Programme for Youth Volunteering developed in Romania.

A law on volunteering was adopted in 2014 (Law no. 78/2014 regulating the volunteering activity in Romania [1]). The law is replacing an older law from 2001 (amended in 2006). No stand-alone law on youth volunteering or other regulation dedication to youth volunteering is in force in Romania. The law was published in the Official Journal, but the text of the law is not available online.

The new legislative act, which replaced Volunteering Law no. 195 /2001 (republished) is providing consistent and harmonized solutions at European level to problems of organizations working with volunteers and thus creating a modern legal framework, appropriately adapted to the national and European context in the field of volunteering.

The volunteering law governs the unpaid participation of physical entities, based on their coerced decision, to volunteering activities organized in Romania by legal persons of public or private law, non-profit organizations.

In the contents of the first article of the new law we can notice that volunteering is an important factor in creating a competitive European labour market and also in the development of education
and training, and to increase social solidarity, so that it can be drawn the obvious conclusion that the Romanian legislator wanted to highlight the important role that this activity has to have, as well as the recognition of its value ‘as an expression of active citizenship, solidarity and social responsibility, and also professional value as an expression of personal, professional, intercultural and language development of persons performing these activities.’

Moreover, the whole article 2, which has no counterpart in the old law, emphasizes the state's role in sustaining and supporting voluntary movement at all levels (local, national and international) through all its institutions working in areas where voluntary activities are required.

Total new elements compared to the old law are the groups as organizational form of volunteering activity, the existence of a volunteer coordinator (who may be an employee or a volunteer), and last but not least, the compulsoriness of concluding a volunteering contract.

In this regard, Law no. 78/2014 on the regulation of volunteering activity in Romania, in the content of article 3 letter a, defines volunteering as being the activity of public interest, non-obligatory, unpaid, fulfilled by the voluntary decision, supported and promoted by the Romanian state, based on a volunteering contract, according to which the volunteer undertakes to perform the activity, and the host organization offers an activity proper to the person’s application and preparation, ensuring the expenses incurred. In the same article there are defined other terms with which the law operates i.e. activity of public interest, the host organization, volunteering contract, the volunteer, beneficiaries of volunteering activity and volunteers’ coordinator.

Regarding the definition of volunteer we can say that the new law brings a radical change compared to the previous situation, as it introduces as requirement for the volunteer the acquisition of labour capacity, according to the laws in force. According to the Labour Code in Romania a person becomes able to work at the age of 16, being able to start working from the age of 15, but only with the consent of parents or legal representative.

The two new principles introduced by Law no. 78/2014 i.e. the principle according to which the volunteering activity does not substitute paid work and also the public interest feature of volunteering activity are meant to help clarifying the types of actions that are voluntary or not, especially when the public benefit is indirect or extremely difficult to identify.

The new law introduces new elements also on the functioning of organizations working with volunteers. Thus, they are obliged to include explicit provisions regarding the involvement of volunteers and how their activity is being administered in the contents of its status or the internal rules of organization and operation, including the conditions under which the organization may refuse with reasons the cooperation with a volunteer.

Law no 78/2014 contains important new elements on the demand of the fact that supporting volunteering by local public administration should not represent a means of reducing costs, indicating the annual meetings of local public administration authorities with representatives of local host organizations of volunteers in order to organize effective cooperation and the involvement of local public administration in promoting and supporting the International Day of Volunteers on 5th December.

If in accordance with previous legislation, the volunteers were entitled to a ‘nominal certificate recognizing the volunteering activity and the acquired experience and skills’, a provision which has been applied very different in the absence of detailed methodological rules or a model as good practice accepted and promoted by organizations working with volunteers, Law no. 78/2014 makes real progress towards the recognition of the experience acquired through volunteering. This quality
leap is stipulated in article 10, paragraph 2 of the law, namely that volunteering can be considered as 'professional and / or specialty experience, if it is achieved in the field of study', stipulation that will determine a more strategic choice of the involvement opportunities by young people starting out in different professions.

Also, another provision of the analysed legislative act refers to competitions organized by public institutions, i.e. employers, physical or legal entities, from the private sector, where two or more candidates obtain equal scores and they can decide between the two by granting additional scoring for fulfilling volunteering activities.

Moreover, Law no 78/2014 defines more specifically the content of the certificate that is now called volunteering certificate provided to include unique identifiers (such as the identification number of the certificate and its correspondence with number of volunteering contract), transforming such a volunteering certificate into a tool that can play a more important role for the recognition of volunteering activity as professional and / or specialized experience, the procedure for issuing it has become more important in this context.

In turn, the voluntary contract, beyond the fact that its conclusion becomes mandatory, has a much more clearly defined content in the new law, with clearly defined rights and duties for both the volunteer and the host organization. The law requires for the volunteering contract to be accompanied by two other new instruments the volunteering sheet and the volunteer protection sheet. The Volunteer sheet is a document that inserts details on the duties and responsibilities of the volunteer and the volunteer protection sheet is a document that should provide aspects of health and safety during working.

The new law extends the categories of personnel who cannot have applied the provisions including the staff of the voluntary emergency services established by law, and the persons to whom there are applied the legal provisions relating to military service based on volunteering.

Funding

There is no specific budget allocated at the central level for youth volunteering. If budget allocations are made at local level, there are isolated initiatives of municipal councils and they are not integrated in a volunteering programme.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

According to Eurobarometer data from the spring of 2010, Romania had approximately 4.4 million volunteers i.e. about 20% of the population being involved in such activities specific mainly to people under 35 years, and those involved or included in the educational system. According to a study of the European Parliament in 2011 [2] the level of participation to volunteering activity in Romania was 14%. 27% of the volunteers were working for religious organisation, that being one of the greatest proportions of volunteers for religious organisation in Europe.

According to the Youth Barometer commissioned by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2016 [3] and 2014 [4], 30% of young people have been participating in volunteering activities, compared to only 13% in 2012 [5].
Support to young volunteers

According to the law on volunteering, host organisations have to cover all incurring expenses of the volunteers. No public programme or support is available for this, the host organisations being fully responsible.

Volunteers are entitled to work protection training just as paid employees. Insurances for health and accidents is optional and it is fully the responsibility of the host organisations. The state or other public bodies are not supporting volunteering through social security provisions, for example volunteers are not eligible for unemployment insurance.

Quality Assurance (QA)

Host organisations are responsible for establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assure the quality of volunteering programmes and activities for young people, and their functioning.

One public authority is monitoring volunteering. It is focused on the compliance of working conditions and on the simulation of labour contracts as volunteering contracts. The Labour Inspection [6] is the institution mainly responsible for ensuring minimum criteria for volunteers.

There is no mechanism in place for collecting young volunteers' feedback on their experiences.

As a result of the lack of the QA mechanism, no outcomes are published on the youth volunteering in general, the social inclusion of volunteering programmes, in terms of fostering inclusiveness, diversity and accessibility.

Central authorities do not monitor the degree of social inclusion of volunteering programmes at local level - where these programmes exist - or of programmes implemented by private organisations.

Target groups

There are no official documents identifying specific target groups within the youth population whose participation in voluntary activities shall be fostered, excepting the Youth Strategy [7]

The target groups for policy measures on youth volunteering, as identified by the Youth Strategy are:

- young people involved in the NGO,
- volunteers and young people who developed skills outside recognised forms of education and need a recognition of their skills.