MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

"Success Factors of Strategic Management in Non-Profit Organizations. A Case Study in Romania"

verfasst von / submitted by

Bc. Lisa-Marie Müller, B.A.

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna, 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / degree programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:	UA 066 914
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt / degree programme as it appears on the student record sheet:	Masterstudium Internationale Betriebswirtschaft
Betreut von / Supervisor:	ao. Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Michaela Schaffhauser-Linzatti
Mitbetreut von / Co-Supervisor:	Mag. Mag. Dr. Gabriela Csulich, PhD

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

AmCham Romania *American Chamber of Commerce to Romania*

Caritas Alba Iulia or Caritas *Charity Service of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia*

CESEE *Central, southeastern, and eastern Europe*

Concordia *Organizația Umanitară Concordia*

CSOs *Civil society organizations*

Elijah *Asociația Elijah Inițiativa Socială Ruth Zenkert*

FDSC *Foundation for the Development of Civil Society*

FICE *International Federation of Educated Communities*

GDP *Gross domestic product*

IC *Intellectual capital*

ICT *Information and communications technology*

IO *Industrial Organization*

Junior Achievement *Junior Achievement România*

KPIs *Key performance indicators*

NEET *Neither in employment, education or training*

NGOs *Non-governmental organizations*

NIS *National Institute of Statistics*

NPOs *Non-profit organizations*

OECD *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development*

RBV *Research-based view*

SDGs *Sustainable Development Goals*

UN *United Nations*

UNESCO *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*

United Way *United Way România*

VRIN *Valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable*

World Vision *World Vision România*

1 Introduction

The purpose of the thesis is to contribute to an understanding of success factors in the strategic management of Romanian humanitarian non-profit organizations (NPOs). This topic is explored by discussing perceptions of success or failure with non-profit managers and board members of Romanian NPOs, who considerably impact the performance of their NPOs (Cf. Harrison and Murray, 2012, pp. 411–437). Using a case study as a practical instigation method, various perceptions of NPO success were clarified and summarized in the thesis. The results are to a large extent supported by the findings presented in the literature review.

1.1 Research gap

Strategic management in for-profit business administration and its influence on an organization´s success has been thoroughly examined (Cf. Drucker, 1993; Cf. M. E. Porter, 1996; Cf. Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Cf. Powell, 2001; Cf. Wheelen *et al.*, 2014; Cf. Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Cf. Ketchen and Craighead, 2020). Less literature is available about the impact of strategic management on the work of NPOs. Despite four decades of research on this theme, the field of strategic management in NPOs is fragmentary (Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–283; Cf. Laurett and Ferreira, 2018, p. 894; Cf. Benevene, Kong, Lucchesi, *et al.*, 2019, pp. 17–30). However, it is of utmost importance to investigate strategic management practices in the environment of humanitarian NPOs, as it assists non-profit leaders to select a strategic management concept that is most appropriate to their organizations (Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–283).

Furthermore, measuring success in NPOs remains a major challenge. NPOs usually follow altruistic motivations and have an orientation toward social missions and values. They do not only consider efficiency and viability but also the social impact and effectiveness of the organization to evaluate its success. Besides that, they frequently do not define key success performance indicators which makes it difficult to report on efficiency and effectiveness in achieving goals to stakeholders (Cf. Costa, Ramus and Andreaus, 2011, pp. 470–493). The measurement of success therefore significantly differentiates from the for-profit organizations and companies, whose success is measured for instance by the annually generated profit. Above all, due to the focus on altruistic values, measuring success is difficult in this context. Thus, research about measuring the performance of non-profit organizations is still in the early stages of development and offers many opportunities to advance, for instance in the field of conceptual frameworks, models, and theories for performance measurement (Cf. Treinta *et al.*, 2020, p. 1). One reason why proper performance evaluation and measurement in NPOs is urgent is caused by the increasing competition for funding among NPOs. Having reliable information on successful management can improve an organization's chance of being granted funds and ensure their continued humanitarian work (Cf. Kaplan, 2001, pp. 353–370).

In the field of non-profit work, Romania is particularly interesting since it is one of the poorest countries in the European Union today (Cf. Eurostat, 2023 Measured in GDP per capita), despite the significant progress that has been made since the fall of communism in 1989. When the communist regime ended, NPOs started to settle in Romania to tackle the issues of poverty. In the beginning, the non-profit sector in Romania was the smallest in Eastern and Central Europe (Cf. Salamon and Sokolowski, 1999; Cf. Salamon, Sokolowski and Anheier, 2000). Yet, between 2000-2019 there was a significant increase in NPOs. Their number nearly quadrupled and the number of employees multiplied by five (Cf. Lambru and Dobre, 2020, p. 62.; Cf. Lambru and Petrescu, 2021, p. 159). Despite the high activity of NPOs in Romania, comparably few studies are available on the development of strategies for NPOs particularly for this country.

To summarize the research gap: Firstly, there is far more literature on strategic management in for-profit organizations and businesses than for non-profit organizations, despite the relevance of strategic management to NPOs. Secondly, less literature is available because success factors are difficult to define and measure due to the altruistic intentions of NPOs. Thirdly, in this area, the scientific investigation needs to be extended specifically to Romania, as it is one of the poorest EU countries but with a fast growth rate of NPOs.

To contribute to closing the research gap the thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

> *RQ 1: "Is strategic management established in humanitarian NPOs in Romania and if yes, in how far?"*
>
> *RQ 2: "Do leaders of humanitarian NPOs in Romania consider strategic management as a success factor?"*

For the first research question, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H 1: "The smaller the NPO in terms of projects, staff, or financial resources, the less established the organization´s strategic management."

For the second research question, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H 2: "The less established an organization´s strategic management, the less it´s considered as a success factor."

The research questions were answered in the thesis by a case study in this branch and complementary literature research. The present work identified best practices or key learnings from mistakes in strategic management in NPOs. These insights have been retrieved from interviews with experts. They are summarized in the 5th Chapter "Case study results".

The findings of the thesis are intended to be applied both in practice and in the field of scientific research. In practice, the results may be shared with peers in- and outside the NPO branch since they are meant to help organizations to increase the effectiveness of their work. For fellow scientific researchers, the results may be valuable as they assist in exploring the under-researched Romanian NPO sector. Furthermore, the results of the qualitative study may support the development of models, frameworks, and theories for the measurement of success in the NPO sector.

1.2 Structure

The thesis is composed of an introductory literature review, a detailed description of the methodology applied to investigate the topic, preliminaries of the case study, the actual case study, and finally, the results and the conclusions including limitations of the investigation on the subject. The following Figure 1 shows the structure of the thesis, which is described in detail below:

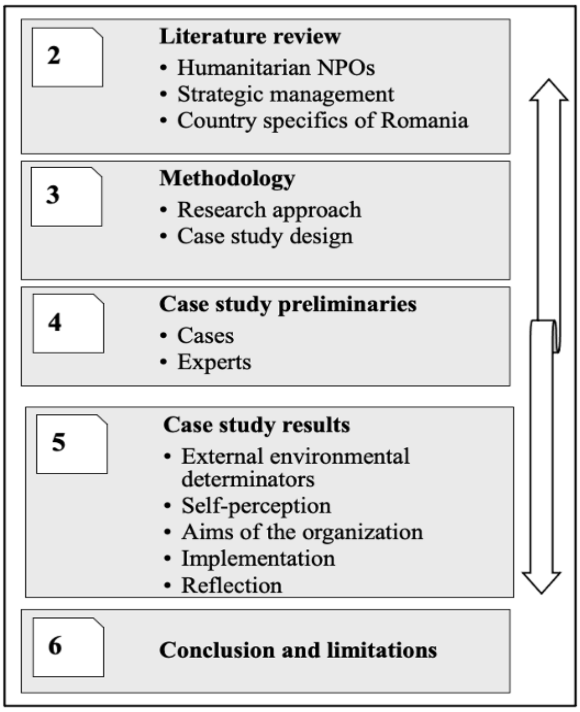


Figure 1: Structure of the thesis (own illustration).

To elaborate on this topic, key information has been gained through semi-structured interviews and a literature review. The interviews are the major source for the cases together with the annual reports and websites of the NPOs. As shown in Figure 1, the literature review is found in the second chapter of the thesis. It serves to build a common understanding of strategic management, humanitarian non-profit organizations, and country specifics in Romania. Thus, the literature review contains three sections:

The first section elaborates on humanitarian non-profit organizations in general and in Romania. The second one is a concise overview of the current state of research on strategic management theory. The current literature is based on traditional management concepts, which are briefly outlined as well. The third and last part provides an understanding of the country specifics of Romania, including political, economic, and demographic particularities among other external influences. Besides that, the third part of the literature review also includes an investigation of the current situation of social needs such as poverty, education, and health care.

The major content of the literature review was retrieved from peer-reviewed academic publications and journal articles such as the Strategic Management Journal, the International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, and the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector

Quarterly. In addition to that official reports of international and national institutions were used. Among the international sources are reports published by the United Nations (UN), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Commission among others. Among the national Romanian sources are reports for instance published by the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society (FDSC) and the Romanian government. Lastly, the literature review also includes material found in scientific books for strategic management and non-profit organizations.

The literature review is essential to understand the work environment of the NPOs examined in the case study. Furthermore, it provides a sound basis to properly interpret the information processed within the context of the case study. To understand the case study, it is essential to know the background information stated in the literature review. It is also highly relevant to comprehend the theoretical foundations that build the groundwork of the investigative approach, the case study methodology. Those theoretical foundations are based on scientific rules which are outlined in Chapter 3 “Methodology”. This chapter elaborates not only on the qualitative research approach but also gives detailed insights into the case study design. Therefore, Chapter 3 “Methodology” is the theoretical basis for the practical application of the case study conducted in Chapters 4 “Case study preliminaries”, and 5 “Case study results”.

The case study itself is subdivided into five sections. It starts with an illustration of the work environment of the NPOs shown as PESTLE-analysis (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental), followed by an internal examination of the organization´s self-perception depicted as SOAR-analysis (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results). After the current state has been described both from an external and an internal view, the aims of strategic management for the organizations are outlined. The fourth part of the case study examines the actions the strategic management of the organizations undertook to achieve its before-named aims. The fifth and last section reflects on best practices in the past and learnings retrieved from mistakes. This five-step approach was designed to thereby draw the bow from the actual current situation to the desired situation of NPOs and to examine the activities undertaken to achieve their set goals. The present work concludes with an extensive summary of its results in chapter 5 and an outlook for further research in chapter 6.

2 Strategic management of NPOs in Romania

2.1 Humanitarian non-profit organizations

The focus of the research is on humanitarian non-profit organizations which is why non-profit organizations dedicated to animal welfare, environmental protection or other non-humanitarian subjects were not part of the research. Humanitarian non-profit organizations are oriented towards fulfilling a social task and their emphasis on the social objective is part of their mission. They respond to the collective needs of specifically disadvantaged groups of persons in society (Cf. Salamon and Anheier, 1997, pp. 29–50; Cf. Brown and Slivinski, 2006, pp. 140–156). The majority of persons included in the concept of disadvantaged groups are children, the elderly, and persons with severe physical or emotional disabilities who are prevented from fully participating in social, political, or economic systems. Furthermore, people who become targets of discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, language, physical appearance, sexual orientation, social class, or caste may be part of disadvantaged groups (Cf. Estes, 2014, pp. 1654–1658). Thus, the work of NPOs is an alternative approach to governmental intervention aiming to address the challenges of social issues.

The United Nations counts NPOs as civil society organizations (CSOs). This umbrella term also includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group organized at the local, national, or international level. In literature, a variety of terms emerge as major themes, reflecting different types of non-profit organizations, such as: “third sector organization”, “non-governmental organization”, “civil society organization”, “public organization”, “social enterprise”, or “social entrepreneurship”, among others. All of them have the social aspect as their common goal.

NPOs appear in a variety of forms. These can include universities, schools, local, state, and national governments, hospitals, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, political associations, and others, this being a non-exhaustive list (Cf. Frumkin, 2005; Cf. Moxham, 2009, pp. 740–763; Cf. Valentinov, 2011, pp. 901–916). The four basic functions of non-profit work according to Frumkin are (1) service delivery, (2) civic and political engagement, (3) social entrepreneurship, and (4) values and faith (Cf. Frumkin, 2005). The organizations which took part in the case study of the thesis cover all functions except political engagement.

NPOs possess characteristics that differentiate them from profit-making organizations or companies. Among those characteristics are income sources steering from donations, private partnerships, and public investments. In terms of human resources NPOs distinguish themselves from for-profit firms or organizations by potentially having volunteers as part of their workforce. Furthermore, NPOs are required to keep the transparency of financial accounts towards their donors and regulatory agencies (Cf. Moxham, 2009).

In 1989 Romania experienced a transition from a communist dictatorship to a democracy and from a command to a market economy which brought major economic and social security reforms (Cf. Lambru, 2017, pp. 158–159). At the beginning of the 1990s, the non-profit sector in Romania was one of the *"smallest not-for-profit sectors in Eastern and Central Europe"* according to the John Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Project (Cf. Salamon and Sokolowski, 1999, pp. 14–15). NPOs experienced a renaissance in both quantitative and qualitative terms during the neo-liberal 1990s. They took their role in offering a welfare mix system as social service providers, policy entrepreneurs, and governed public service reforms. The status of civic involvement and volunteering of locals has grown in recent decades, although it is not comparable to the levels reached in Western countries (Cf. Lambru, 2017, pp. 158–159). In the last decades, the number of associations and foundations grew rapidly. In 2015 the National Institute of Statistics indicated that there were 10,494 active associations and foundations in the year 2000 and 42,707 in 2015. Also, the number of employees increased significantly from 19,173 in 2000 to 99,774 persons in 2015 (Cf. Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile (FDSC), 2017, pp. 25–39).

Each type of NPO is governed by its legislation in Romania. Most of the organizations are associations and foundations and thus regulated under Governmental Ordinance (GO) 26/2000. According to this register, the distribution of non-governmental organizations is as shown in Figure 2:

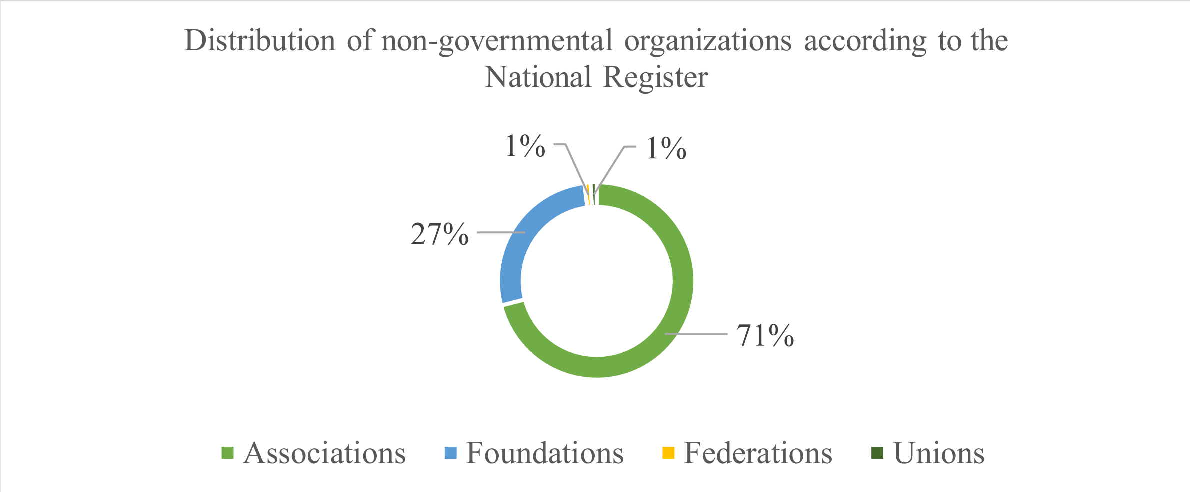


Figure 2: Distribution of non-governmental organizations according to the National Register (own illustration based on Erste Stiftung, 2017).

As Figure 2 illustrates, the major proportion (71%) of Romanian NPOs are registered as associations, in Romania also known as “NGOs” or “non-governmental organizations”. Under Romanian law, the foundation of an association requires at least three people who pursue a common interest. Membership implies that members contribute knowledge, skills, and activities without compensation (Cf. Lambru, 2017, p. 159).

Although the recognition of NPOs has increased in the last 30 years, Romanian NPOs face challenges to attract new members and mobilize volunteers. This reduces the effectiveness and perceptibility of the sector. The political history of the past three decades explains this phenomenon. The communist regime had imposed a so-called “compulsory-volunteerism”, which during that time referred to forced labor to support economic growth (Cf. Tufis, 2014, pp. 281–306).

2.2 Strategic management

The following section is composed of two parts. The first part contains a definition of strategy, management, and strategic management, as well as a very brief overview of the most relevant strategic concepts and why they are relevant to the thesis. The second part is more detailed. It summarizes the most recent literature about strategic management in the field of NPOs.

The word strategy has its origin in military history. It has its origins in Greek where “Strategia” translates to “office” or “command of a general”. It is nowadays frequently used in business and management literature (Cf. Mackay and Zundel, 2017). One of the most famous definitions was given by Porter (Cf. Porter, 1996, pp. 61–78), who stated that strategy refers to choosing to perform differently from rivals, creating a unique and valuable position, and making trade-offs in competing. Thus, the essence of strategy is choosing what not to do. Regarding the activities of a company (or organization), Porter stated that strategy is about creating the right fit and integration among activities to create distinction and sustainability (Cf. Porter, 1996, pp. 61–78). On the contrary, Drucker (Cf. Drucker, 1993) defines strategy in his works as a system of values and beliefs that shape the direction of an organization. Such values are based on what the responsible strategists consider to be meaningful and relevant.

Peter Drucker was also the first researcher to codify the discipline of management. He argued that the objective of management is systematic innovation, which means endowing resources with the capacity to create new wealth. Responsible for systematic innovation are executives who, according to Drucker, must acquire a core competency in entrepreneurship (Cf. Drucker, 2006, p. 30). Executives can also be referred to as "managers". A manager can be *"anyone above a certain level, roughly above foreman whether (...) in control of staff or not"*.[1] According to Hamel (Cf. Hamel, 2006, p. 3), the work of a manager includes eight activities, illustrated in Figure 3 below:

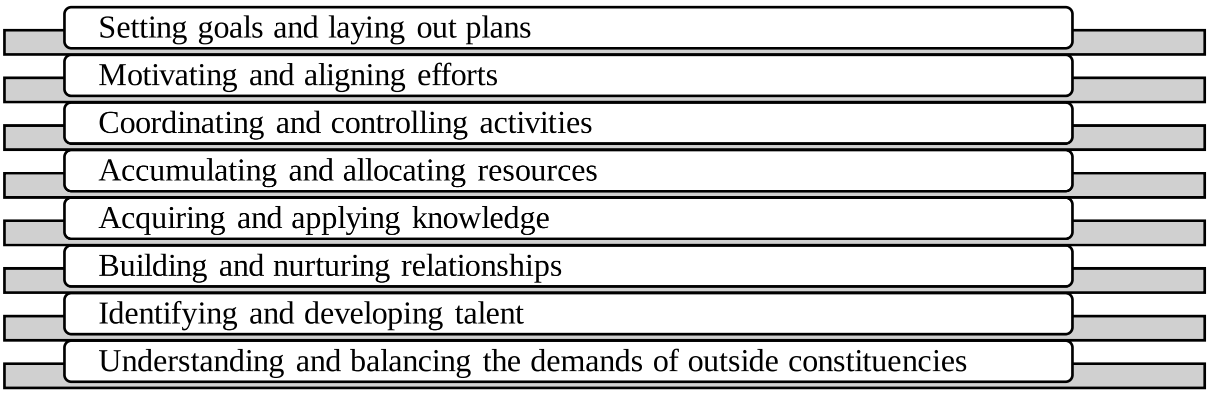


Figure 3: Tasks of managerial work (own illustration based on Hamel, 2006).

From the list shown in Figure 3, one can retrieve that management is about turning principles into everyday practices. The processes in an organization for which those principles are

[1] (Stewart, 1976, p. 4)

necessary are among others strategic planning, capital budgeting, project management, internal communication, and knowledge management (Cf. Hamel, 2006, p. 3).

Aside from their use as individual terms, strategy and management are used as the composite term "strategic management". Among the most prominent definitions of strategic management and competitive advantages are the ones by Teece (Cf. Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997, p. 509) and Barney (Cf. Barney, 1991, pp. 99–120). Teece stated that the fundamental question in the field of strategic management was how firms achieved and sustained competitive advantage. According to Barney, this competitive advantage is achieved by *"implementing strategies that exploit their internal strengths through responding to environmental opportunities [,] while neutralizing external threats and avoiding internal weaknesses."(Barney, 1991, p. 99)*. Powell, Wheelen, and Hunger (Cf. Powell, 2001, pp. 875–888; Cf. Wheelen *et al.*, 2014) find similar definitions saying that strategic management is a set of managerial decisions that may secure a competitive advantage in the long run over other organizations. Sammut-Bonnici (Cf. Sammut-Bonnici, 2015, p. 1) agrees with this understanding, stating that strategic management refers to activities that serve to secure a strategic advantage. These activities include the internal and external evaluation process, business model planning, alignment and tactics, and implementation design. Ketchen and Craighead (Cf. Ketchen and Craighead, 2020, p. 1330) state that in practice, examples of strategic management can be finding new opportunities and shifting business models to new sources of potential competitive advantage. Also, Miller (Cf. Miller, 2019, p. 25) says that in NPO strategic management is thought to help achieve the organization´s goals, improve its projects, and prosper in dynamic environments as well as build organizational capacity and achieve long-term superior performance.

2.2.1 General concepts of strategic management

Scientific research about strategic management has been shaped by several major concepts. Among them are the industrial organization, the research-based view, the knowledge-based view, and intellectual capital. Below, each concept is described in brief and a linkage to their relevance for the thesis is made.

The industrial organization (IO), also called industry economics, emphasizes the external environmental factors of a firm. In this view, all firms are identical in terms of strategically relevant resources which flow freely on the market. Thus, when looking at a firm through the lens of IO theory, the firm must either follow the strategy of generic product differentiation or produce at a low cost to achieve an advantage over its competitors. (Cf. Porter, 1996, pp. 61–78). In the case study, it has been observed how far the NPOs differentiate from each other, and which external environmental factors influence their management. The concept of IO laid the foundation for the approach applied in this case study.

For several decades, research in the field of organizational strategy was dominated by the research-based view (RBV). The RBV was created by the economist Penrose (Cf. Penrose, 2009). She argued that a firm is more than an administrative unit and performance is driven by its internal resources and knowledge, which are a source of competitive advantage. Later this concept was developed further by Barney, who added that the heterogeneity and inimitability of resource characteristics are a firm´s specificity (Cf. Barney, 1991, pp. 99–120; Cf. Penrose, 2009). This view is relevant to the thesis since the NPOs observed in the case study are subject to increasing competition for financial resources and human capital.

Opposed to that, the RBV argues that performance is driven by the resources of a firm as is core competencies. Thus, the strategy aims to build strategically advantageous resources. Barney (Cf. Barney, 1991, pp. 99–120) stated that those resources should be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable, also referred to in the acronym “VRIN”. At the core of the theory is the belief that resources that are VRIN will be a long-term competitive advantage that will lead to superior performance and leverage across markets (Cf. Barney, 1991, pp. 99–120; Cf. Amit and Schoemaker, 1993, pp. 33–46; Cf. Furr and Eisenhardt, 2021, pp. 1915–1935).

As an extension of the RBV, the additional concept of the knowledge-based view (KBV) has evolved (Cf. Bontis, 2002, pp. 621–642), putting its emphasis on knowledge as a resource for strategic advantage. While explicit knowledge can be captured verbally for instance through notes, computer programs, and patents, the KBV focuses on tacit knowledge which is non-verbalizable, intuitive, and unarticulated (Cf. Hedlund, 1994, pp. 73–90). Because valuable, rare, and inimitable resources are often intangible, value creation is increasingly dependent on tacit knowledge (Cf. Kaplan *et al.*, 2001). In strategic management, the strategic concept of KBV and tacit knowledge plays a central role because it is a valuable resource for companies and holds a long-term and sustainable strategic advantage (Cf. Conner and Prahalad, 2002, pp. 103–131).

For the thesis, the KBV is a particularly interesting area because of a potential conflict in management priorities. On the one hand, NPOs are in competition with each other for funding, they may want to keep their tacit knowledge for themselves. On the other hand, NPOs want to serve as many people and their communities as possible, which can be achieved by sharing their valuable tacit knowledge with other competing NPOs to maximize positive impact. In the thesis, the focus was on gaining insights into tacit knowledge. It was assumed that different than the private sector actors, NPOs provide insights into their strategic business since the goal is to serve as many people in need as possible.

The classical concepts of strategic management such as the RBV, IO, and KBV help to explain the performance of NPOs. Nevertheless, they are not the perfect fit to describe NPOs. This is because they are conceived for companies in the private sector and neglect the social aspect of NPOs (Cf. Backman, Grossman and Rangan, 2000, pp. 2–8). For NPOs, the social aspect is not only the central task but also often the raison d'être. This is the reason why Kong (Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–299) argues that the additional concept of "intellectual capital" (IC) is the best fit to describe an NPO´s success.

The concept of IC is an extended version of the RBV and KBV and concentrates on intangible resources (Cf. Peppard and Rylander, 2001, pp. 510–525). IC consists of three components: human capital, structural capital, and relational capital (Cf. Bontis, 1998, pp. 63–76; Cf. Stewart, 2010). Human capital includes behavior, competencies, experience, skills, tacit knowledge, innovativeness, and talents (Cf. Bontis and Choo, 2002). It is the source of innovation and strategic renewal and is often associated with greater productivity and income (Cf. Bontis, 2002, pp. 621–642; Cf. Wilson and Larson, 2002, pp. 259–270). Structural capital includes all non-human means of preserving knowledge. This includes databases, manuals, strategies, routines, organizational culture, publications, and copyrights. These factors contribute to increasing the material value of the organization (Cf. Bontis, Chua Chong Keow and Richardson, 2000, pp. 85–100; Cf. Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004, pp. 431–400). The third component is relational capital, which describes formal and informal relationships with external stakeholders. Relational capital is the bridge between human capital and structural capital with external stakeholders. It enables a knowledge exchange in which multiplying value creation can be expected (Cf. Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004, pp. 431–440). The ultimate purpose and aim of the IC concept are to transfer, exchange, and convert knowledge both internally and externally (Cf. Kong, 2008, p. 291).

Resources of an organization have either decreasing or increasing value over their lifetime. Whilst tangible assets decrease in value over time, intangible assets like human capital, structural capital, and relational capital do not decrease in value when being used. Rather, intellectual capital often increases in value over time. By exchanging experience, resources of intellectual capital can be used by many users at the same time in different places, so they are not competitive. The non-competitive nature of IC can encourage NPOs to share their resources rather than compete. Knowledge sharing enables a learning culture, organizational change, better management of challenges, and the creation of new knowledge. Thus, intellectual capital yields increasing returns which means that value is generated with each incremental unit of investment (Cf. Peppard and Rylander, 2001, pp. 510–525).

The view of the IC is highly relevant to the thesis because it largely overlaps with the intent of the thesis, which is to enable knowledge sharing that is beneficial to all participants. At the core of the IC view is the conviction that competitive behavior does not fit social NPOs. Instead, knowledge exchange should take place to help each other to improve. The thesis is intended to make its contribution to that end.

2.2.2 Strategic Management in NPOs

Critiques said that the management of NPOs was esoteric and irrelevant, and non-profit organizational structures are trivial. Nevertheless, today NPOs are paying more attention to aspects of management models and styles appropriate for non-profit organizations as well as questions of governance, accountability, and impact (Cf. Anheier, 2005, p. 12).

One of the first comprehensive literature reviews on strategic management in NPOs was created by Stone et al (Cf. Stone, Bigelow and Crittenden, 1999, pp. 378–423) and included 66 articles from the 18 most prominent management journals. The empirically based research on strategic management in non-profit organizations was focused on a time frame from 1977 to 1999. The article remains of relevance today since it has had a major impact on further research studies having an above-average field-weighted citation impact of 1.9 and a citation count in the 85th percentile for similar articles (Cf. Elsevier, 2023).

Stone et al found that significant knowledge gaps in strategic management existed in NPOs. Findings included that most NPOs had not adapted a form of strategic planning. Furthermore, strategic management in NPOs was rather dictated by resource requirements than shaped by customer demand and preferences. NPO strategic management outcomes were largely dependent on structures, leaders, and networks (Cf. Stone, Bigelow and Crittenden, 1999, pp. 378–423). The case study of the thesis found similar results for some NPOs. Some organizations are refraining from major strategic planning activities. However, they abstain from investing in major strategic planning activities not because of a knowledge gap but due to the rapidly changing environment which hinders them to implement what has been planned before.

The literature review of Stone et al (Cf. Stone, Bigelow and Crittenden, 1999, pp. 378–423) has become starting point for research about strategic management in the NPO sector since it was published in 1999. However, updated empirical research on strategic management in NPOs is required since over 20 years have passed, and major changes happened in the environment of NPO work. Among the events that had a significant impact on their work are the economic crisis in the first decade of the 21st century, environmental challenges, and changes in demographic, social, and economic relationships. Digitalization and the possibility of accessing public data also caused a drastic change. As a result, NPOs had to constantly improve their transparency, accountability, and effectiveness (Cf. Chadwick-Coule, 2011, pp. 33–56). Furthermore, NPOs are operating in an increasingly competitive and complex environment. From a financial point of view, competition increased because of a growth in non-profit organizations and a downturn in government support. This is because government funding sources are tighter, growing competition with the public and for-profit sectors, declining volunteer support, and increasing demand for social services from the community (Cf. Alexander, 2000, pp. 287–303; Cf. Papadimitriou, 2007, pp. 571–587; Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–282).

Due to the challenges and changes, such as increasing competition, reduction of donations, and growing demand of stakeholders, NPOs have been encouraged to adopt strategic management theories which had been developed for and applied to profit-making companies (Cf. Barman, 2002, pp. 1191–1222; Cf. Tucker and Parker, 2013, pp. 87–107; Cf. Khieng, 2014, pp. 1441–1464). In the first two decades of the 21st century, little research about how traditional strategy theories apply to non-profit organizations has been examined (Cf. Hume and Leonard, 2014, pp. 294–394). However, Kong conducted systematic research on the applicability of strategy theories on social service NPOs in 2008 (Cf. Kong, 2008). He confirmed what Stone et al (Cf. Stone, Bigelow and Crittenden, 1999, pp. 378–423) had found in the late 1990s, saying that the development of strategic management in the non-profit context remains yet a fragmented field in 2008. He, therefore, evaluated to what extent the major strategy theories, outlined in the initial section of this chapter, fit non-profit organizations. Kong (Cf. Kong, 2008) argued that neither the IO nor the RBV are well-fitting theories to explain the performance of NPOs. The school of IO ignores the significance of unique characteristics such as the manager´s capabilities to contribute to the organization´s performance. Opposed, according to Barney(Cf. Barney, 1991, pp. 99–120), the RBV stresses only the internal capabilities of the organization. By only focusing on the organization´s resources it does not provide a full picture of the environment, this way neglecting to consider additional opportunities and threats to the organization.

Also, the KBV is not a suitable alternative to explain the success of an NPO. This is because explicit and tacit knowledge are seen as exchangeable and storable resources that can be controlled, exploited, and traded, argues Styhre (Cf. Styhre, 2003). Nevertheless, Cook and Yanow (Cf. Cook and Yanow, 1993, pp. 373–390), and Peppard and Rylander (Cf. Peppard and Rylander, 2001, pp. 510–525) stated that it is not the accumulation and storage of tacit knowledge that is relevant. What matters for the success of an organization is how tacit knowledge is used for example by transforming it into a process, a business plan, a good reputation, or a culture. A sustainable advantage can only be achieved if there is a continuous exchange between the organization and the external stakeholders (Cf. Fahey and Prusak, 1998, pp. 265–276; Cf. Sveiby, 2001, pp. 344–358).

Finally, Kong (Cf. Kong, 2008) argues that the IC view is the strategic management concept that fits social service NPOs best. This is because IC is capable to adapt to challenges in the NPO environment and helps organizations to shift their strategic focus on intellectual resources such as knowledge, skills, and experience. Furthermore, this view encourages NPOs to think about questions about identity such as who they are and what they want to be. Therefore, the IC view incentivizes NPOs to rethink their mission and social raison d'être rather than focusing on cost-driven and value-based performance like in for-profit strategic management techniques (Cf. Mouritsen, Larsen and Bukh, 2005, pp. 8–27; Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 291–292).

Indeed, more recent literature by Dal Corso et al. (Cf. Dal Corso *et al.*, 2019, pp. 561–572) also found that intangible assets and the IC concept have emerged as relevant for NPOs. The IC concept is important for NPOs when looking at what they do in practice: they deliver intangible services relying on intangible assets such as volunteer loyalty, a good name, and relationships with other organizations (Cf. Dal Corso *et al.*, 2019, pp. 561–572). Overall, the IC concept allows organizations to break down their intangible resources into meaningful entities. This classification of human, relational, and structural capital helps them to better allocate resources and accomplish their mission (Cf. Young, 2012, pp. 81–90; Cf. Benevene, Kong, Lucchesi, *et al.*, 2019, pp. 17–30).

A recent systematic literature review published by Benevene et al. (Cf. Benevene, Kong, Lucchesi, *et al.*, 2019, pp. 17–30) in 2019 shows that IC dimensions have an impact on NPO performance. In particular, human capital and relational capital are strongly associated with NPO performance. They influence the internal and external effectiveness, the quality of work as well as the financial and mission-based outcomes (Cf. Mohd Noor, Hajar and Idris, 2015, pp. 459–474; Cf. Bontis *et al.*, 2018, pp. 712–731; Cf. Benevene, Kong, De Carlo, *et al.*, 2019, pp. 161–171). For instance, cooperating with other NPOs with similar missions leads to higher financial and human resources which, in turn, increases innovation and performance using external knowledge (Cf. Misener and Doherty, 2013, pp. 135–147; Cf. Wemmer, Emrich and Koenigstorfer, 2016, pp. 241–363). This theoretical insight has been confirmed by a participant in the case study who stated that partnering with smaller organizations increased their geographical coverage.

In 2018, Miller (Cf. Miller, 2019) published another updated literature review work about strategic management in NPOs. The review and analysis of the empirically based research included 58 articles published in 20 peer-reviewed journals between 1998 and 2015. The result of Miller's research was that the strategic management of NPOs has evolved under the pressure of its external environment. This evolution occurred in the areas of efficiency, effectiveness, professionalization of staff, and meeting customer demands. Strategic management holds many opportunities and benefits for NPOs, in addition to some risks. However, not all organizations can apply strategic management because it requires high resources and human capital that not all have. In addition, Miller found that NPOs have adopted practices and content from for-profit organizations. This statement was confirmed in this case study. For instance, several managers outlined the benefits of establishing a non-executive board as it is common in for-profit organizations.

In 2018, another systematic literature review about strategies put into practice in non-profit organizations was published by Laurett et al (Cf. Laurett and Ferreira, 2018, pp. 881–897). They made use of the platform "ISI Web of Knowledge" and based their research on 62 scientific articles published between 1981 and 2016. Comparing the work of Laurett et al´s study to Miller et al (Cf. Miller, 2019, pp. 23–40) and Kong (Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–299) shows that they found similar results. Laurett et al (Cf. Laurett and Ferreira, 2018, pp. 881–897) also found that NPOs have undergone significant changes since the 1980s. Those changes have been driven mainly by the need to adapt to greater competition and resource scarcity. This led them to adopt management styles from profit-making companies (Cf. Maier, Meyer and Steinbereithner, 2016, pp. 64–86; Cf. Ogliastri, Jäger and M. Prado, 2016, pp. 222–248). McHatton et al. (Cf. McHatton *et al.*, 2011, pp. 233–249) and Wallman Lundåsen (Cf. Wallman Lundåsen, 2014, pp. 263–283) emphasized that professionalizing organizational management and making it more transparent was necessary to meet the demands of the stakeholders. This includes that NPOs must emphasize the importance of strategic planning to achieve their missions in the best possible way. Similar to Kong (Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–299), Laurett et al found (Cf. Laurett and Ferreira, 2018, pp. 881–897) that before applying classic management practices to the NPO sector, those concepts needed to be adapted to the non-profit sectors. Concerning fellow researchers, Laurett et al stated that the challenges of the last two decades include increasing effectiveness and efficiency regarding their financing to be more attractive, which confirms the research result of Miller et al (Cf. Miller, 2019, pp. 23–40).

Among the most prevailing themes in a scientific literature review in the research period from 2011 to 2016 are the importance of taking stakeholders into account, non-profit collaboration, and the relevance of defining growth strategies for non-profit organizations (Cf. Yanyan, 2011, pp. 39–56; Cf. Swanson, 2013, pp. 303–323; Cf. AL-Tabbaa, Leach and March, 2014, pp. 657–678; Cf. Jeong and Kearns, 2015, pp. 1975–2001). These three topics are highly relevant for the thesis as the practical applications in the case study in Chapter 5 will show.

2.3 Current situation in Romania

The country specifics describing this case study's target country Romania outline the most important political, economic, and demographic facts in short in the following Chapter. More details are provided regarding the current situation of social needs such as poverty, education, and health care. The literature review targets these aspects since these are the topics the NPOs who participated in the case study focus on. Due to the limitation of the master thesis, the literature research must be narrowed to what is essential for the case study.

2.3.1 Politics, economics, demographics

Romania is in the southeast of Europe and is a former totalitarian country that began its gradual transition to democracy in December 1989 (Cf. Tismaneanu, 1993, pp. 309–348). The characteristics of the communist regime and its impact on society are essential elements in understanding how civil society works today. When the regime changed, there were few committed citizens and civil society organizations since they were prohibited under the communist regime. The civil society in post-communist Romania had to be re-established, as Romania's totalitarian communist regime has brought about a significant collapse not only in terms of organized civil society but also in terms of the social structure of the country (Cf. Badescu, Sum and Uslaner, 2004, pp. 316–341). The period from 1992 to 1996 is also known as the major phase in the resurrection of the Romanian civil society with numerous NPOs, civil bodies, and private initiatives contributing to the development of a culture of democracy (Cf. Georgescu and Palade, 2003, pp. 9–10). Today, the institutional context of civil society in Romania remains challenging and uncertain. Despite the EU's influence on policymaking and civil society policy, a rather paternalistic national legacy can be seen in the country, including poor relations between the state and its civil society organizations, high levels of bureaucracy, and over-regulation, thus imposing major challenges on NPOs (Cf. Bežovan, Matančević and Baturina, 2017, pp. 111–125).

Romania has been an EU member since January 1st, 2007. The country is currently in the process of joining the Schengen and has committed to introducing the Euro as currency once it fulfills the criteria. The semi-presidential republic is led by Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă, who has been in office since 2021, and President Klaus Iohannis, since 2014. The government and the president both hold executive functions. The country is divided into 41 counties and the municipality of Bucharest. Romania is represented by 33 politicians in the European Parliament and held the presidency from January to June 2019. The current Commissioner nominated by Romania to the European Commission is Adina-Ioana Vălean, responsible for transport (Cf. European Union, Directorate-General for Communication, 2023).

Romania’s GDP per capita is the second lowest in the European Union and less than 40% of the EU average (Cf. Eurostat, 2022b). Like other countries in central, southeastern, and eastern Europe (CESEE), the capital region of Bucharest is pulling ahead of the rest of the country’s economy. Regional disparities of GDP per capita, primary income per capita, and disposable income per capita remain among the highest in the EU, though they flattened out notably since Romania joined the EU (Cf. European Commission, 2020, pp. 9–10). The price level is 51% below the EU average at relatively stable exchange rates between Romanian Leu and Euro (Cf. Eurostat, 2022b). The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 34.4% of the total population according to Eurostat and thus the highest in the EU, where the average was 21.7% in 2021 (Cf. EUROSTAT, 2022).[2] This means that Romania had the highest rate of children at risk of social exclusion across all EU member states in 2016 (Cf. Lőrincz *et al.*, 2018, p. 23). Also, the Gini coefficient, which measures the degree of inequality in income distribution according to domestic per capita income, ranks in the upper range of the EU countries standing at 35 in 2019. In comparison to 2000, when the Gini coefficient was 29, inequality in Romania is significantly higher now. One of the reasons for this development can be the interlocution of a flat income tax in 2005 (Cf. International Monetary Fund European, 2022, pp. 18–19).

In 2020, the most important economic sectors for the Romanian economy were industry (21.7%), wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation, and food services (19.7%), and public administration, defense, education, human health, and social work activities (16.5%). A total amount of 74% of Romania’s exports remains Intra-EU trade, mostly to Germany (23%, Italy 11%, and France 7%). The most important non-EU trade partners are Turkey and the United Kingdom with each 3%. In 2020 the imports from EU member states amounted to 74%, identical to the share exported by Romania for intra-trade in the EU. The imports were mainly received from Germany (21%), Italy (9%), and Hungary (7%). The most important non-EU import partners were China (6%) and Turkey (4%) (Cf. European Union, Directorate-General for Communication, 2023).

[2] At risk of poverty or social exclusion corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk of poverty or severely materially and socially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. People are included only once even if they are in more than one of these situations.

At the beginning of 2023, Romania had 19.96 million inhabitants. Romania reached a population peak in 1990 with 24.49 million people and is experiencing a decline due to negative net migration and a fertility rate below the population replacement rate of 1.62 births per woman (Cf. World Population Review, 2023), The main ethnic group in Romania is Romanian (88.9%), followed by Hungarians (6.5%), and Roma (3.3%), according to the European Commission. Further communities include Germans, Ukrainians, Lippovans, and Turks, among other groups. The majority of the population is Christian Orthodox (86.45%) (Cf. European Commission, 2022; Cf. Council of Europe, 2023).

The figures of the main ethnic groups in Romania are from the official websites of the European Union (Cf. European Commission, 2022; Cf. Council of Europe, 2023). However, they refer to a census from 2011, which may not reflect the actual situation. Unofficial figures suggest that Roma people frequently do not declare themselves as being of Roma descent due to discrimination, and estimate the actual size of the group at 5-8% or even 10% of the total population (Cf. Apelblat, 2005; Cf. Marin and Csonta, 2013; Cf. Marinescu, 2019; Cf. Friberg, 2020, p. 228). Reuters (Cf. Ciobanu, 2017) reported that Romania is home to 2.5 million Roma, which corresponds to 12.5% of the country´s population, with 90% of them living in extreme poverty. These numbers are significantly higher than the official figure of 3.3% Roma in Romania. This is not only because of the fear of discrimination but also because many Roma simply do not have an identity card and are thus stateless. The Council of Europe (Cf. Council of Europe Portal, 2023) estimates a total number of 680,000 stateless persons residing in Europe, with a relatively large number of them being Roma without basic documents such as a birth certificate, an identity card, or a passport. Therefore, they cannot prove their identity, legal status, and citizenship and become administratively invisible, they are essentially non-existent before the law. This causes obstacles for Roma when accessing education, healthcare, employment, housing, legal justice, and many other basic rights or services. Since the unofficial figures suggest that there are three times as many Roma living in Romania (up to 12.5%) than officially confirmed (3.3%), it can be assumed that the number of stateless persons is also significantly higher than the official estimate of 680,000 persons across Europe.

2.3.2 Social, ecological, and economic aspects

One way to measure a country´s progress in social, ecological, and economic aspects is by evaluating the implementation of the United Nation´s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Romanian Government adopted Romania´s "Sustainable Development Strategy 2030" on November 9th, 2018. Thereby the country aims to implement the Agenda for Sustainable Development of the UN General Assembly of New York in 2015. This UN Agenda defines 17 SDGs to tackle crucial fields of action, such as poverty or world hunger, as a joint international effort. The SDGs are meant to measure status and progress regarding inequalities and are thus fit to reflect on the current socio-economic situation in Romania. Consequently, the Romanian strategy covers all 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2018, the Romanian Government published a report listing all 17 SDGs, their current status of implementation, and the 2030 target. This report was the first voluntary national review of Romania and includes data up to the year 2017. Romania plans to submit an updated review in 2023 (Cf. European Sustainable Development Network, 2023).[3]

The following section does not summarize all 17 SDGs, but only those related to the work of the NPOs participating in the Case Study which work in the field of humanitarian aid. The eight SDGs identified as highly relevant to the thesis are: (1) "No Poverty", (2) "Zero Hunger", (3) "Good Health and Well-being", (4) "Quality Education", (5) "Gender Equality", (6) "Clean Water and Sanitation", (7) "Decent Work and Economic Growth", and (8) "Peace, Justice, and Strong institutions" (Cf. United Nations, 2023h). The following Figure 4 shows the sustainable development goals relevant to the thesis:

Figure 4: Overview of the 8 relevant SDGs for the thesis (own illustration based on European Sustainable Development Network 2023).

[3] The review has not been published yet at this point of time (April 11th, 2023).

The above-shown Figure 4 displays the eight sustainable development goals which are relevant to the operating field of the NPOs in the case study. In the following section, it will be described how far these goals have already been achieved and what remains to be done.

Goal 1: No poverty

The first SDG is labeled "No Poverty" and aims at abolishing all forms of poverty globally (Cf. United Nations, 2023a). In Romania, the percentage of people suffering from severe material deprivation was 15.2% in 2020, compared to 5.6% on the EU average. Whilst the rate of relative poverty[4] was 16-17% in the EU, it was significantly higher in Romania amounting to 24-25% between 2007 and 2016 (Cf. Lőrincz *et al.*, 2018, p. 23). Many of the people living in poverty in Romania belong to the Roma ethnicity. A survey among Roma in 10 European countries carried out by The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 25) found that 80% of Roma were at risk of poverty[5] in 2021. They found that the gap between the general population and Roma of people living in poverty was the smallest in Romania (53%) and Bulgaria (47%) in comparison to the other eight countries.

The before-named survey among Roma in 10 European countries found that among Romanian Roma children, 79% are at risk of poverty, compared to 30% of children of the general population in the country. Whilst they did not find significant differences in the poverty of Roma boys and girls in any other investigated country, in Romania more Roma girls (83%) are at risk of poverty than Roma boys (75%) (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 26).

The estimated percentage of the population living under the poverty threshold of US $5.50 a day[6] was 1.6% on the EU average, but significantly higher in Romania, amounting to 10.6%. All the before-named indicators result in a score that measures how far this SDG has been

---

[4] Several ways to measure poverty exist. In this case, relative poverty is defined as the income being below 60% of the median equivalized disposable income.
[5] People at risk of poverty are all those with an equivalized current monthly disposable household income less than the twelfth of Eurostat's national at-risk-of-poverty threshold (below 60 % of median equivalized income).
[6] In purchasing power parity (PPP) at constant 2011 prices.

achieved. On this score, Romania ranks lowest compared to all other EU countries according to the Europe Sustainable Development Report 2022 (Cf. SDSN and IEEP, 2023).

Goal 2: Zero hunger

The second SDG, “zero Hunger”, defines the goal of abolishing hunger, reaching food security, and improving nutrition while furthering sustainable agriculture (Cf. United Nations, 2023a). The report “Romania´s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030” stated that Romania has largely overcome the challenges of hunger with 3,000 children per year aged below 14 years suffering from malnutrition. Nevertheless, there is some doubt that this indicator, as well as all other indicators of this chapter, accurately reflects the actual development in Romania. Likely, numerous families and entire communities do not appear in the statistics. This assumption is based on the indication of NPOs, that their beneficiaries are frequently stateless persons that do not count in official state assessments. This argument is strengthened by the OECD reporting that, for instance, 11% of the Romanian population was without insurance in 2017. On the one hand, this may be caused by Romanians living abroad but still being counted as residents, long-term unemployed, and people who voluntarily chose not to pay health care premiums. On the other hand, those may be people who do not have a valid identity card, which is a prerequisite for health care services. This issue particularly affects the Roma population (Cf. OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2021, p. 15).

The fact that a part of the population is not tracked in the health care system, a major part being Roma, allows to doubt that Romania has largely overcome the challenges of hunger and children suffering from malnutrition as stated in the report “Romania´s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030”. Therefore, the indicators measuring the achievement of these SDGs are a guide, but not definitive information, and it may be assumed that the actual situation is somewhat worse than presented. The opposite of malnutrition, obesity, is not a significant problem in Romania. In Romania, the rate of 10% is the lowest among all EU countries, where the average is almost 16% and almost 36% are considered pre-obese (Cf. Lőrincz *et al.*, 2018, p. 27).

Goal 3: Good health and well-being

The third SDG refers to healthy lives and it promotes well-being for all at all ages (Cf. United Nations, 2023b). The life expectancy was only 72.9 years in Romania compared to 80.1 years on average in other EU countries in 2021. However, life expectancy had been slightly higher pre-COVID-19 with 75.3 years in Romania and 81 years on the EU average in 2018. Whilst life expectancy estimates at birth in 2017 was 78.8 years for Romanian women, it was only 70.2 years for Romanian Roma women. For Romanian men, it was 71.6 years, compared to 66.3 years for Romanian Roma men. This shows that life expectancy is lower among Roma people (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 48).

The incidences of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes are although on the rise in Romania, comparable to those in developed countries. They are comparable to figures in developed countries. However, regarding infectious diseases, tuberculosis, and diseases of poverty specific to disadvantaged social groups, the figures are close to developing countries (Cf. Lőrincz *et al.*, 2018, p. 32). In 2019, Romania reported 66 new cases of tuberculosis, ranking first in the EU (EU average: 11 new reported cases). The standardized preventable and treatable mortality rate in Romania was the highest in the EU with 516.9 deaths (EU average: 250.5 deaths) and the age-standardized death rate attributable to household air pollution and ambient air pollution was 59 in Romania in 2016 (EU average: 20) (Cf. Lafortune *et al.*, 2021, pp. 141, 163).[7]

While other EU countries invested 8.3% of GDP on average, the Romanian government spent only 5.7% on health in 2019 (Cf. OECD and European Union, 2020, p. 161). In addition, only about 35% of public money is spent on social aid, compared to an average of 49% in the EU (Cf. Lőrincz *et al.*, 2018, p. 31). The share of GDP dedicated to health increased in 2020 due to COVID-19, both on the EU average and in Romania, to about 11% (EU average) and 6% (Romania). However, at least in the EU, the rise in health expenditure as a share of GDP has been caused by the fact that the average health expenditure per capita grew by 5,5% whilst the

[7] All indicators per 100,000 population.

GDP per capita fell nearly by 5% between 2019 and 2020 due to COVID-19 (Cf. OECD and European Union, 2022, pp. 130–131).

The basic requirement of access to the health care system is health insurance coverage. In Romania, only 58% of Roma were aware of having health insurance coverage in 2021. In comparison to that, in a survey among 10 European countries with Roma minorities, a total amount of 72% of Roma people was aware of having health insurance (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 50).

Goal 4: Quality education

The fourth SDG aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Cf. United Nations, 2023c). The latest PISA results (Program for International Student Assessment), which assesses the knowledge of 15-year-old students, show that Romanian students achieved the lowest results in the last nine years in mathematics, reading, and sciences. In Romania, 5,075 pupils participated in the survey representing 73% of the total population of 15-year-olds. The PISA report also stated that the relationship between socioeconomic status and the performance of students is particularly strong in Romania. For instance, disadvantaged students are less likely to attain the minimum level of reading compared to their peers. Advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students by 109 points in Romania, whilst this amounted only to 89 score points on OECD-average (Cf. Schleicher, 2019, p. 17) socioeconomic status was also a strong predictor for the results in mathematics and science, where it explained 19% of the variation in performance in Romania (14% on average across OECD countries). The ambitions toward academic achievement also vary among advantaged and disadvantaged students. One in four disadvantaged students but only one in thirty advantaged students do not expect to finish tertiary education (Cf. Avvisati *et al.*, 2019, pp. 1–10). There are also significant differences between the general population and Roma who completed at least upper secondary school. Whilst 83% of Romanians aged 20-24 of the general population finished upper secondary school, only 22% of young Roma did so. This shows that 17% of young Romanians of the general population leave the educational system early compared to 78% of young Roma in Romania (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 38).

Goal 5: Gender equality

The fifth SDG refers to gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Cf. United Nations, 2023d). Romania performs relatively well compared to the EU average in terms of income disparities between males and females. The unadjusted gender pay gap was just 3.3% of gross male earnings for females, compared to 12.9% on the EU average. This is due to strict legislation on equal pay and also because Romania also has a significantly higher proportion of female ICT (information and communications technology) specialists, measuring 26.2% compared to an EU average of 18.6% in 2020. However, in Romania, only 12.8% of the positions in senior management were held by women whilst this indicator amounted to 32.1% on the EU average in 2020 (Cf. Lafortune *et al.*, 2021, pp. 141, 163). Despite the great progress in terms of the low gender pay gap and the high share of women in ICT, many issues concerning gender equality remain unsolved. The fifth SDG on gender equality includes indicators to measure women´s professional success but it does not include indicators to measure the number of adolescent women forced to marry and cases of domestic violence, and other abuse (Cf. SDSN and IEEP, 2023).

Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation

The sixth SDG is clean water and sanitation, meaning it ensures the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation (Cf. United Nations, 2023e). This goal is measured by several indicators such as access to safely managed drinking water services and the population having neither a bath, nor a shower, nor an indoor flushing toilet in their household, and the share of the population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment. Romania lacks behind in all indicators when compared to the EU average. In 2020, 82% of Romanians had access to safely managed drinking water services. However, the gap between the urban and rural areas is high, with 95% of the urban population having access to safe water compared to 67% of the inhabitants of rural areas (Cf. United Nations, 2023i). The population in the EU having neither a bath, a shower, nor an indoor flushing toilet in their household is 1.5% compared to 21.2% in Romania in 2020. Whilst 80% of EU citizens were connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment, this value was only 48.1% in Romania in 2018. The population using safely managed water services was 97.7% in the EU and 82% in Romania in 2020. Lastly, the population using safely managed sanitation services in Romania was only 83.1% compared to 90.3% in the EU in 2020 (Cf. Lafortune *et al.*, 2021, pp. 141, 163).

Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth

The 8th SDG promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Cf. United Nations, 2023f). In Romania, 71% of people aged 20-64 declared their main activity status as paid work in 2021. However, there was a significant gap between the general population (75%) and Roma people (41%). There is also a gap between the employment of Roma men and women. Whilst 59% of men reported that they did paid work, only 23% of women stated the same (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 43).

The unemployment rate was lower in Romania (5%) than the EU average (7.2%) in 2020 (Cf. Lafortune *et al.*, 2021, pp. 141, 163). However, it is important to keep in mind that these figures do not include stateless people without access to the job market. A large majority of those people without the ability to show their identity are assumed to be Roma, and Romania has the largest share of Roma in Europe (Cf. Council of Europe Portal, 2023).

The rate of young people aged 16-24 whose current main activity was neither in employment, education, or training (NEET) was 15% among the general Romanian population and 59% among young Roma in 2021, which is an increase of 7% since the previous survey in 2016 (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, pp. 43–45). Whilst the Romanian figures of young people NEET (15%) correspond mainly to the EU average (13.9%) (Cf. Lafortune *et al.*, 2021, p. 163), this amount of young Roma neither employed nor in education is extremely high.[8]

Romania has advantageous agricultural conditions with fertile soil and good climatic conditions. However, the contribution of agriculture to GDP fell by 10% between 1995 and 2016, from 14% to 4%, while the number of workers remained almost the same. In fact, in 2015, the share of workers employed in agriculture was the highest in Romania, at almost 26%, compared to the other EU countries, where the average was only 4%. In this sector, 84% of the workforce does not have a salary, compared to 72% on the EU average and the gross added value per worker is approximately 50% lower in Romania than in the EU, as stated in the report

[8] Measured in percent of the population aged 15-29 years old.

concerning Eurostat. Although Romania is a world leader in maize and wheat exports, the country suffers from extremely low productivity in this sector (Cf. Lőrincz *et al.*, 2018, pp. 27–28).

Goal 16: Peace justice and strong institutions

The 16th SDG promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice, and accountable institutions (Cf. United Nations, 2023g). The population reporting crime, vandalism, or violence in their area was 10.7% of the EU average in 2020, which is a decrease of 2 percentage points since 2010. This figure was lower in Romania, amounting to 8.8% in 2020. Romania has made significant progress in this field, achieving a decrease of 6.6% since 2010 (Cf. Eurostat, 2020). However, in Romania, as well as in other countries with Roma minorities, only a few Roma report incidents of harassment because of being Roma. In Romania, 84% did not report the most recent incident of harassment they experienced because of being Roma in 2021 (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 30).

The share of Roma who trust the police was 47% in 2021. However, trust in the police is also low among the general population in Romania (54%). Similar results hold for trust in the legal system (Cf. Lafortune *et al.*, 2021, pp. 141, 163). In 2021, 40% of Roma reported that they trust the legal system. The number of people among the general population positively responding to this question was 51% and therefore like the trust in police (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 32).

3 Methodology

To answer the research questions, a literature review and a multiple-case study was carried out. This way, the research problem was explored both in theory and practice. A mechanism-based explanatory strategy and thus a qualitative method. It was preferred over a statistical investigation for the following reasons: It was possible to derive causal mechanisms from a small number of cases. At the same time, enough cases could be fully analyzed to allow important features to vary. Lastly, the phenomenon could be described by the aggregation of the single case (Cf. Gläser and Laudel, 2010, pp. 70–73). According to Lee (Cf. Lee, 1999, p. 163), the qualitative research approach has four major characteristics, which will be described below. The following paragraphs also give reasons why this method fits best to study the research problem and why it was preferred against other approaches.

3.1 Qualitative research approach

1. First, qualitative research is non-standardized, allowing more flexibility in data collection and the analysis process. Unlike quantitative research, where the setting and research questions influence the data collection process. Because of these differences, researchers must be aware of the methods available and decide which one suits them best (Cf. Bluhm *et al.*, 2011, p. 1871). For the present thesis, a case study was most suitable since it constitutes an all-encompassing method that covers the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis. (Cf. Hollweck, 2015, pp. 2–3). Also, the way the research questions were formulated argued in favor of using a case study method. Another argument for this approach is the focus on contemporary events which can be explored well by applying a practical case study. Lastly, this method was favored because no control of researchers over behavioral events was necessary. In contrast, other research methods like archival analysis, an experiment, or a survey are less suited to study the research questions. The archival analysis would have hindered studying contemporary events and would have produced a state-of-the-art report. An experiment would have caused a manipulation of the behavior. Lastly, a survey would not have enabled exploring the context around the research questions (Cf. Yin, 2018, pp. 9–15).

Much more, an overlap with Schramm´s definition of case studies was identified, who stated that:

> *"The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result." (Schramm, 1973, p. 6)*

It is the central characteristic of case studies to explore what decision has been taken and why, according to Schramm. This method suits the research aim well because it aims to comprehend how strategic management is developed and practiced in NPOs and because strategic management is about taking good decisions. To prepare the case study, the guideline provided by Yin (Cf. Yin, 2018, pp. 3–137) has been systematically followed. The procedure is described in detail in Chapter 3.2.

2. The second characteristic of qualitative research is to carry out research in the environment of the relevant subjects, according to Lee (Cf. Lee, 1999, pp. 163–164). For the present research, individual interviews with six experts have been conducted in their environment. The number of cases and the need for an in-depth investigation presupposes a qualitative methodology, as mentioned above. Besides the expert interviews, further materials such as the organizations' activity reports, articles in print, and online media, statistics, and journal articles have been analyzed. The triangulation ensured that the weaknesses of the primarily chosen expert interviews are balanced with the strengths of the other methods. The approaches used independently of one another served to validate the results empirically (Cf. Gläser and Laudel, 2010, pp. 103–107).

3. Thirdly, attention has been paid to not reflecting the researchers' perspectives. The major content of the thesis was derived from the interviews with the experts who participated in the case study (Cf. Lee, 1999, p. 163). Then, key passages from the interviews were extracted, systematically following the approach of qualitative content analysis proposed by Mayring (Cf. Mayring, 2022, pp. 60–107). As a prerequisite, the interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed.

There is a variety of transcription rules which are mainly distinguished by the degree of non-verbal communication included in the transcription (Cf. Kuckartz, 2018, p. 166). However, no prevailing and commonly accepted rules for the transcription of interviews exist, according to Gläser et al (Cf. Gläser and Laudel, 2010, p. 193) thus, researchers are encouraged to develop and document their approach. In the thesis, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The reader should keep in mind that filler words were deleted, and syntax corrections were necessary. Furthermore, single passages which have been stated in languages other than English were translated to the lingua franca using the online tool "DeepL"[9] for automatized translation.

4. Lastly, qualitative research must be flexible, according to Lee (Cf. Lee, 1999, p. 163). This implies, that the data collection process follows a predefined guideline but is not fully rigid. Much more, reevaluation and adaption take place as the research situation unfolds, to match the research demand. This is the sharpest differentiation between experiments and surveys. This flexible approach was applied to three aspects of the thesis: the preparation of the semi-structured interview guideline[10], the literature review, and the categorization and coding process.

    a. A semi-structured interview guideline was prepared before collecting data and after receiving feedback reviews from peers. After a pre-test, it has been further adapted to the scientific needs to enhance its quality.

    b. A similar scheme was applied to the literature review. After reviewing a wide pool of scientific work at the first level single key scientific works were identified. Those formed the basis for the further literature review. Departing from this basis the Ponzi scheme was applied, going through the citations of these key scientific works. This procedure ensured that the literature review was systematically broadened.

    c. The categorization and coding process of the transcribed interviews was accompanied by several feedback loops. This ensured the accuracy of categories

[9] See https://www.deepl.com/translator
[10] The semi-structured interview guideline can be found in the attachments.

and coding entities continuously. The five categories can be found on the left-hand side in Table 2 in Chapter 3.2.2. A full list of codes and the frequency of their appearance per case is included in the Appendix.

To summarize, several modifications took place regarding the initial interview guideline, the introductory literature, and the pre-defined coding system. This way the methods were continuously reevaluated and adapted during the research process in a flexible manner, as suggested by Lee (Cf. Lee, 1999, p. 163).

3.2 Case study design

As mentioned above, a case study design as described by Yin (Cf. Yin, 2018) to explore the topic was used. Yin stated that a case study research design needs (1) questions, (2) propositions, (3) case(s), (4) logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) criteria for interpreting the findings (Cf. Yin, 2018, pp. 27–34). The following Table 1 shows the guideline proposed by Yin on the left side. The right column shows cross-references to the relevant chapter in the thesis:

Table 1: Structure and cross-references (own illustration based on Yin 2018).

	Structure	**Details in chapter**
1	Question	1.1 Research gap & research questions
2	Propositions	3.2.1 Central questions, hypotheses, and propositions
3	Cases	4.1 Cases 4.2 Experts
4	Data link to propositions	3.2.2 Linking data to propositions Appendix: Interview guideline
5	Interpretation criteria	5 Case study results

To follow the logical procedure proposed by Yin, first, three central questions were derived from the research questions. Second, several research propositions were created. Third, multiple cases according to the selection criteria were identified. Fourth, the data was linked logically to the propositions. The fourth point required more details. Five categories were created to which the data could be systematically allocated, once collected. These five categories were relevant to the entire research process. First, they were the five chapters of the interview guideline.

Second, all text passages and paraphrases were allocated to one of the five categories. Lastly, in the result chapter each of the five headers represents one of the five categories. Thus, the entire research process is structured according to the five categories, starting from data collection, and ending at data interpretation. The fifth point of Yin´s (Cf. Yin, 2018, pp. 27–34) recommendation for research design is a set of criteria for data interpretation. Therefore, rival explanations for the findings are identified and addressed to strengthen the arguments. Additionally, to these five steps, a case study protocol determining the criteria, procedures, and rules to be followed during the research process was prepared, as Yin suggested.[11]

3.2.1 Central questions, hypotheses, and propositions

A strategic decision before the preparation of the expert interviews was to carefully define central questions which should be answered through the research. Those are in a very simplified manner the following:

1. In which situation is the NPO now?

2. In which situation would the NPO like to be?

3. What do the NPOs do to move from their current to their desired position?

The purpose of the first question is to define the current state of the NPOs, both from an external and internal point of view. Question two aims at showing towards which goals the NPOs are oriented. The third question is the bridge between the first and the second one and emphasizes the core question. It intends to answer how the strategy is designed to move from the current state, as described in the first question, to the desired state, as described in the second one.

As mentioned in the initial part of chapter 3.2, Yin stated that a case study research design needs theoretical propositions. According to Yin, propositions are expected outcomes and assumptions. In the thesis, propositions were used complementary to the hypothesis. The

[11] The case study protocol can be found in the attachments.

following Figure 5 repeats the research questions and hypotheses as written in chapter 1.1 and additionally shows the corresponding propositions:

RQ 1: "Is strategic management established in humanitarian NPOs in Romania and if yes, in how far?"

H 1: The smaller the NPO in terms of projects, staff, or financial resources, the less established the organization´s strategic management.

P 1: Younger NPOs have no or less established strategic management.
P 2: Smaller NPOs equalize their vision and mission with the strategy.
P 3: The awareness of strategic management increases with the size of the NPO.

RQ 2: "Do leaders of humanitarian NPOs in Romania consider strategic management as success factor?"

H 2: The less established an organization´s strategic management, the less it´s consideration as success factor.

P 4: An organization´s success is not attributed to achievements of strategic management.
P 5: Since no definition of success exists, no success factors have yet been identified.

Figure 5: Research questions, hypotheses, and propositions.

The propositions directed attention to an aspect that was examined within the scope of the case study. They were posed to assist in reflecting on theoretical issues and narrowing the path for where to look for relevant evidence (Cf. Yin, 2018, pp. 27–28).

3.2.2 Linking data to propositions

The case study aimed to link the collected data to the three central questions and the propositions stated in Chapter 3.2.1. To do so, the three central questions were transferred to five major categories, which were already mentioned in Chapter 3.2. At this point, more details about the categories and the advantages of choosing a-priori classification will be given.

The five categories were chosen in a way that they serve as a guiding structure through the entire research process: In the beginning, the five categories formed the structure of the semi-structured interview guideline.[12] Next, whenever data and literature were reviewed, it was either identified as fitting one of the five categories or classified as not valuable for this research.

[12] See also interview guidelines in the attachments.

Also, all coded text passages of the transcribed interviews were allocated to one of the categories. Furthermore, further subcategories were included in each of the five major categories. Finally, the names of the categories are identical to the titles of the result chapter in section 5 of the thesis. Thus, the structure defined in the research design is maintained through the entire process, from collection to presentation of the data. By using pre-defined categories and relying on them throughout the entire research process, the reliability and validity of the results were ensured.

The following Table 2 shows the five categories on the left and the three core questions with additional sub-questions on the right side. In the middle, the method chosen for the illustration of the results is shown.

Table 2: Non-standardized analysis method: aims, categorization, and illustration (own illustration).

No.	Major category	Description	Simplified core question
1	External environmental factors	PESTLE-analysis	1a) Where is the NPO now? What are the political, environmental, social, technological, legal, and environmental circumstances the NPOs face?
2	Self-perception	SOAR-analysis	1b) Where is the NPO now? What are the NPOs strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results?
3	Aims of the organization	Qualitative content analysis	2) Where would the NPO like to be? What do they want to achieve? Towards what goal is the strategy oriented?
4	Implementation	Qualitative content analysis	3a) How does it get there? What do they do to achieve the aims?
5	Reflection	Qualitative content analysis	3b) How does it get there? What did they do in the past 3 years, to pursue their strategy?

This means, that before the data collection process started, the structure of how the gained information will be analyzed in the thesis had already been designed. This approach is also consistent with what Kuckartz (Cf. Kuckartz, 2018, pp. 63–65) called the a-priori categorization. In an a-priori categorization, categories are defined based on an already existing system like a theory, hypotheses, or an interview guideline. In the thesis case, the latter one was chosen.

Now, the purpose and intention of each category are described. The first and second categories were created to assess the current state of the NPO and thus give answers to the first core question.

1. Category one is named *external environmental factors* and is intended to show in which environment the NPO operates. This environment was analyzed and illustrated from an external point of view through a PESTLE-analysis (political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental). The PESTLE-analysis has its roots in Aguilar´s (Cf. Aguilar, 1967; Cf. Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016, p. 386) ETPS system (economic, technical, political, and social) which was an abbreviation for the four sectors influencing the business environment in the late 1960s. It has been further developed into PESTLE and other acronyms, by a range of authors in the 1980s. Among them are Fahey and Narayanan, Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher, which is the reason why the source of the PESTLE-analysis remains undefined. For the thesis, the PESTLE-analysis has been preferred over other models such as Finlay´s (Cf. Finlay, 2000) DEEPLIST system. The DEEPLIST additionally includes demographic and informational aspects of the existing PESTLE factors. However, demographics can hardly be separated from social aspects, and informational aspects would have gone beyond the scope of the thesis. Thus, a PESTLE-analysis is suited better to illustrate the results of category one.

2. Category two is called *self-perception* and is intended to show the current state of the NPO from an internal point of view. One of the most traditional approaches to analyzing the self-perception of an NPO is to use a SWOT framework, which points out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to an organization or company. There are contractionary views on the origin of SWOT-analysis. It is credited to Stanford University Professor Albert Humphrey or the Harvard Academics or Igor Ansoff, among others (Cf. Haberberg, 2000; Cf. Turner, 2003; Cf. King, 2004; Cf. Helms and Nixon, 2010). A more recent approach is the SOAR-analysis (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results). It is a strategic planning framework that positively addresses the identification of *strengths,* encourages creativity to build *opportunities,* uncovers *aspirations,* and determines measurable *results* of an entity. Different from the SWOT-analysis, it avoids weaknesses and threats. It is therefore a strategic inquiry using a more appreciative intent. Furthermore, the SOAR-analysis is less competition based. Much

more, it leads the entity to become the best version of itself. It focuses on innovation and value generation rather than incremental improvement. Also, it pays attention to results rather than gaps (Cf. Stavros and Cole, 2013, pp. 10–21). Stavros and Cole agreed, that focusing too much on potential negative influences on a strategy would hinder creativity for innovations and the creation of strategic advantages (Cf. Kim and Mauborgne, 2005; Cf. Stavros and Cole, 2013, p. 19; Cf. Thompson *et al.*, 2013). Thus, the SOAR framework was identified to be the better fit for the analysis of strategies of the NPOs in the thesis.

Categories one and two are a sound basis for the current state of the NPOs, both from an external and internal point of view. The PESTLE and SOAR-analysis are helpful tools to visualize the findings. The results of categories three to five are analyzed and depicted through a qualitative content analysis, using the deductive category creation approach as described by Mayring.[13]

3. Category three is named the *aims of the organization* and intended to show the goals of the NPO. Its purpose is to show what the organization wants to achieve in the short (1 year) medium (2-5 years) and long run (5-10 years).

4. Category four is called *implementation* and aims to answer the question of how the organization intends to achieve the goals described in category three. In this section, it is also described which resources and capabilities will help the organizations to achieve their goals.

5. Category five is called *reflection* and serves two purposes: On the one hand, it reflects on all previous chapters. On the other hand, it reveals best-practice examples of strategy building and implementation.

To allocate the data to the major categories first all transcripts were coded and paraphrased from the interviews. Then, all codes and paraphrases were allocated to one of the five major categories. As a next step, these five major categories were divided into further subcategories. For instance, all codes and paraphrases of category one *(external environmental factors)* were

[13] Cf. Mayring 2022, p. 60–107.

allocated to one of the subcategories *political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental,* which corresponds to the PESTLE-analysis. Simply adding all coded entities and paraphrases to one of the five major categories without further subdivisions would have been too general. By adding subcategories to the five major categories, an in-depth analysis was ensured. Once all coding entities and paraphrases were allocated to the sub-categories, the statements were grouped in each sub-category according to their thematic emphasis. For instance, in the first category *external environmental factors*, with the sub-chapter *political,* there were four final group statements about four topics: the *heritage of the communist regime, state authorities, EU membership,* and *ethnic inequalities.* This way it was ensured that several interrelated phrases scattered through the different transcripts were bundled together and rendered by a new statement. Text components that did not contribute to the content have been omitted. Lastly, the initial phrases were compared to the final statements to ensure that the newly produced material truly represents its original meaning (Cf. Mayring, 2022, pp. 60–107). The software used for coding and paraphrasing the text material is a tool for qualitative data analysis called MAXQDA.[14]

[14] See also https://www.maxqda.com

4 Case study preliminaries

4.1 Cases

Our case study covers six cases and draws a single set of cross-case conclusions. Each case was selected carefully, narrowing down the research and expecting each case study to predict similar results. All six cases arranged and aggregated in the multiple case study provide compelling support for the initial propositions defined above (Cf. Yin, 2018, pp. 17 & 55). The cases studied in the thesis were international, humanitarian non-profit organizations that operate in Romania to eradicate poverty through social services and educational programs. The period covered in the case study is from 2017 until 2022, however, data on future aspirations for a time frame of up to ten years were also collected.[15] The following Table 3 gives an overview of the organizations assessed in the case study, their international affiliation, their experience in Romania, and their main areas of dedication:

Table 3: Organizations in the case study (own illustration).

Organization	Affiliation	In Romania	Dedication
Caritas Alba Iulia	Caritas	30+ years	Education and health
Organizația Umanitară Concordia	Concordia Sozialprojekte	30+ years	Education, social work, and social business
Asociația Elijah Iniţiativa Socială Ruth Zenkert	Elijah	11 years	Education, health, and income
Junior Achievement România	Junior Achievement Worldwide	30 years	Work readiness, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship
United Way România	United Way Worldwide	19 years	Education, health, and income
World Vision România	World Vision International	30+ years	Education, child protection, rural economic development, and advocacy

From Table 3 one can retrieve that World Vision, Concordia, Junior Achievement, and Caritas settled down in Romania as soon as the iron curtain fell, and the communist regime ended. The

[15] Details on the experts in the case study can be found in chapter 4.2.

organization Elijah was established in 2012 by the founders of Concordia, which is why Elijah has access to more knowledge than the founding date indicates. Today, both organizations operate as separate entities. All organizations are internationally affiliated and emphasize education as a matter to combat poverty and improve living conditions in the long run. The following section gives a concise insight into each NPO of the case study.

Caritas Alba Iulia

The Charity Service of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia (Caritas Alba Iulia or Caritas) is part of the international Caritas network and has been providing services to disadvantaged communities since 1990. In 2021, the organization had 625 employees 299 volunteers, and over 8,300 beneficiaries in 5 counties. It is a civil organization of public utility and offers accredited social services in Transylvania. Its mission is charitable work, the promotion of the charitable spirit, and the promotion of social justice. The organization provides social care and various activities for all age groups and all social strata, both in the city and in the countryside. Its main activities include early childhood development and education, activities for people with disabilities, children and teenagers in need, family-type placement homes, home-based care for the sick, care for the elderly in residential and day centers as well as Roma inclusion and integration activities among several other projects (Cf. Caritas Alba Iulia, 2022, p. 6).

Organizația Umanitară Concordia

Organizația Umanitară Concordia (Concordia) was founded by Father Georg Sporschill SJ and started its work in Romania in 1991. Initially, the organization provided placement and shelter services for street children, later developing independent living projects, vocational education, and counseling, employability projects, day centers, and social economy enterprises. The organization grants aid to more than 3,000 people per year with a workforce consisting of 159 employees. About 10% of their beneficiaries find a job directly at the organization Concordia. The NPO maintains three day-care centers, four family-type homes for children from troubled families, a sheltered housing project for adults with disabilities, two social housings, a trade and a primary school, job-coaching activities, a transit center, and two social economy enterprises (Cf. Organizația Umanitară CONCORDIA, 2022, pp. 1–6).

Asociația Elijah Inițiativa Socială Ruth Zenkert

In 2012, the Asociația Elijah Iniţiativa Socială Ruth Zenkert (Elijah) was founded by Ruth Zenkert and Father Georg Sporschill SJ to support neglected Roma children and their families in Transylvania, Romania. The organization is internationally affiliated with the Austrian NPO *Elijah. P. Georg Sporschill SJ. Soziale Werke*. In the project, the Roma receive direct and sustainable help to improve their living conditions to get out of generational disadvantaged living. Today, Elijah is active in six villages and runs four social centers, two music schools, educational projects and work training, a student dormitory, and a children's home. About 80 employees provide social services to more than 300 children and their families, adolescents, and the elderly. The total number of beneficiaries is not available (Cf. Elijah. P. Georg Sporschill SJ. Soziale Werke, 2023).

Junior Achievement România

Junior Achievement România (Junior Achievement) was founded in 1993 and is part of Junior Achievement Worldwide and Junior Achievement Europe. It is the world's largest international business and entrepreneurship education organization with programs in 40 countries in Europe and 100 countries worldwide. The mission is to prepare the young generation to succeed in career and life by encouraging initiative, professionalism, and the development of essential skills for personal and professional life. Junior Achievement provides projects for primary, secondary, high school, and university education to schools and universities by adding practical modules to existing courses and activities like those in the real economy. The aim is to develop the skills needed by young people in their profession and life. The contents of all programs are made available digitally through their platform. In Romania, more than 240,000 young people from over 1,700 pre-university and higher education institutions benefit from learning-by-doing and project-based programs, run in partnership with the Ministry of Education, educational institutions, and the business community. In the school year 2021-2022, the organization had 21 partners, 23 programs, and 27 projects (Cf. Dobrea, Borteanu and Andon, 2023).

United Way România

Since 2004, United Way România (United Way) has been supporting programs and social initiatives that improve the lives of children, youth, adults, and seniors in need. United Way

Romania is an independent Romanian foundation, affiliated with United Way Worldwide. The organization's work focuses on three areas that lay the foundation for a thriving community: access to quality education, good health services, and enough income to support a family. Its vision is a thriving community, able to support its members to reach their full potential. United Way´s mission is to improve the quality of life in the community by encouraging individual, corporate, and volunteer giving. The NPO pursues this mission through developing educational, health, and socio-professional integration programs for disadvantaged people, by contributing to the strengthening and consolidation of civil society. In particular, the social services provided by NPOs, and by supporting government institutions in their efforts to build prosperous communities. In 2021, the organization supported a total number of 13,500 people in need with the support of 110 companies, 37 major donors, 3,500 individual donors, and 755 volunteers (Cf. United Way România, 2022).

World Vision România

World Vision România is part of World Vision Worldwide, which was founded by missionary Bob Pierce in 1950 and is active in almost 100 countries today. World Vision România supports 130,000 vulnerable children and 50,000 adults in 24 counties. The organization facilitates access to quality education for children in rural areas and helps them to get out of the vicious circle of poverty. Their projects include advocacy work for the well-being of children, educational programs, projects for child protection, economic development in rural areas, and job placements (Cf. World Vision, 2023).

4.2 Experts

The selection of the interview partners followed a pre-defined set of criteria. The study area has been limited to Romania and non-profit organizations operating in the humanitarian sector. Next, the participants had to have at least five years of work experience within their organization. If they had changed their employer in the meanwhile, they have only been selected if this change took place before 2022. Among the interviewees, only one person had left their position as president of the organization. The mandate had ended one month before the interview was carried out. This way, it was ensured that state-of-the-art information was collected. Furthermore, the experts had to be part of the executive management or board of directors. By limiting the interviews to this target group, it was ensured that the interview partners were persons in charge of the organization´s actions. Lastly, the experts had to be involved in the strategic decision-making processes within their organization. The selection criteria are summarized in the following *Figure 6*.

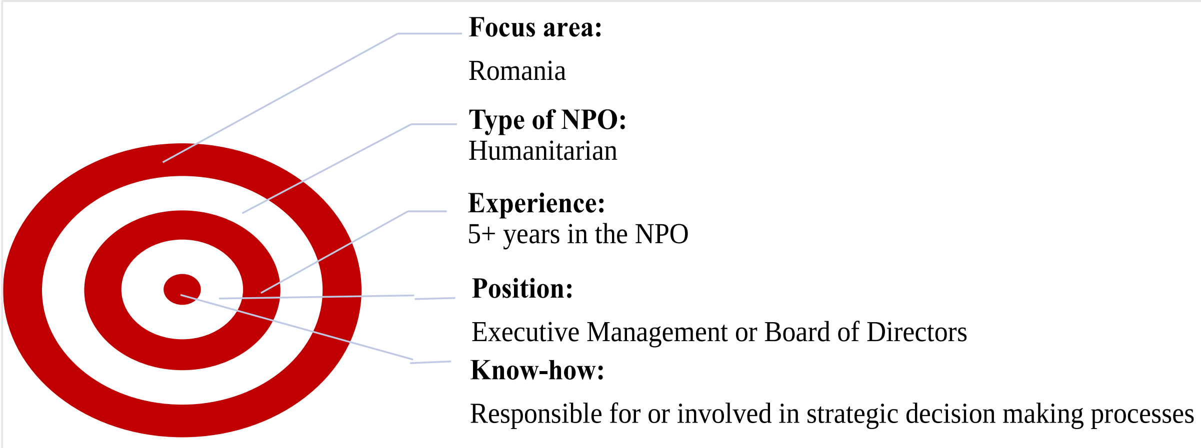


Figure 6: Selection criteria for experts in the case study (own illustration).

The experts fulfilling the criteria described above were identified through online research. They were contacted via E-Mail or an InMail via the social network LinkedIn. The interviews were carried out through videoconferences in November and December 2022. The voices were recorded to facilitate the transcription process and ensure completeness. All interview partners agreed to the audio recording of the meetings. The following Table 4 lists the experts of the NPOs chosen, their position, and amount of years of relevant work experience in this field. The NPOs are listed alphabetically:

Table 4: Experts in the case study (own illustration).

NPO	**Expert**	**Position**	**Experience**
Caritas	Andras Marton	Director of the Board	30+ years
Concordia	Elena Matache	Executive Director	20+ years
Elijah	Ruth Zenkert	President of the Board & Founder	30+ years
Junior Achievement	Elisabeta Moraru	President of the Board	11 years
United Way	Vladimir Kalinov	President of the Board	6 years
World Vision	Rudolf Fedorovici	President of the Board (former)	9 years

As Table 4 shows, five of the six interview partners are members of the board of directors of the organizations. For Concordia, the executive director of Romania was interviewed since she was identified to be the person having the most country-specific experience. All experts have at least 6 years of relevant working experience in their NPO.

5 Case study results

This chapter shows the results of the case study. These are described within five main chapters which correspond to the five major categories explained above. In the first chapter, the environment in which the NPOs work (5.1 External environmental) is going to be described. This analysis serves to look at the NPO from an external point of view. The second chapter is going to look at the NPO from an internal point of view (5.2 Self-perception). After having learned about the external and internal factors of the NPO, the focus is on what they would like to achieve in the third chapter (5.3 Aims of the organization). After having described the goals of the NPOs, the thesis shows what the organizations do to achieve the aims in the fourth chapter (5.4 Implementation). The fifth and last chapter reflects on all previous chapters and shows best-practice examples (5.5 Reflection).

It has been agreed with all interview partners that their names and the names of their organizations are stated but not linked directly to their statements. Thus, the following results are described anonymously. The NPOs have been assigned with the names Case 1-6. When for example Case 1 is cited, it refers to the same NPO always. However, the numbering is different from the order shown in Table 3 and Table 4. This way anonymity and coherence were ensured.

To some questions, the interviewees of different NPOs gave similar answers, thus providing high scientific evidence. To give an example in section 5.1.1 Cases 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 stated that working in the non-profit sector in Romania is more challenging because they often dedicate their projects to Roma, an ethnic group in Romania that is often stigmatized. To other questions the interviewees gave answers which are quite divergent, thus not providing scientific evidence. To give an example, in section 5.2.1 the activities involved in strategy development were described. In the interviews, the responsible persons for strategy development named a range of different activities such as risk management tools (Case 1), social need assessments (Cases 2 and 5), key performance indicators (Cases 2 and 4), and active information exchange (Case 2, 3, and 6). This way, no scientific evidence is given on which activities are included in the strategy development in humanitarian NPOs in Romania. However, the thesis partly functions as summarizing tool of different managerial practices in NPOs, aiming to identify best practices. Thus, whenever results diverge from each other, the reader perceives this as an opportunity to learn from other organizations and enrich their strategy.

The following Figure 7 illustrates shows the main categories of the coding system in the left column. The headline shows the numbered cases 1-6. The last column on the right-hand side sums the total number of coded segments per category. The last row on the bottom sums the total number of coded segments per case. Each category, which is shown in the first column on the left-hand side, has several sub-categories. A full list of codes including all sub-categories is included in the Appendix.

Codesystem	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	SUMME
External environmental factors	11	27	12	27	31	38	146
Self-perception	34	45	32	35	30	16	192
Aims of the organization	3	4	12	8	9	6	42
Implementation		2	5	3	12	3	25
Reflection and outlook	3	8	7	5	2	1	26
Σ SUMME	51	86	68	78	84	64	431

Figure 7: Overview of the 5 frequencies per code, category, and case (own illustration with MAXQDA).

Figure 7 shows that the number of coded segments per case ranges from a minimum of 51 in Case 1 to a maximum of 86 in Case 2. The total number of codes that belong to the case study is 431, of which the majority pertain to the second category. The results of the five categories are shown in the following chapters 5.1 to 5.5.

5.1 External environmental factors

The work of any organization is shaped and influenced by its environment. Thus, external environmental factors are considered when a strategy is built in an organization. From an observer´s perspective, it was essential to gain knowledge about the work environment of the organizations. This way, their strategy's design could be retraced. Thus, a PESTLE-analysis was carried out, which enabled the evaluation of the political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors which influence the work environment. Also, the impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine on the organizations were evaluated to round up the portfolio of external environmental factors. This has been the essential groundwork for the thesis and built a solid basis to understand the strategies applied within the organizations.

5.1.1 PESTLE-analysis

As described in more detail in Chapter 3.2.2, a PESTLE-analysis evaluates the environment of an organization by looking at political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors (Cf. Aguilar, 1967; Cf. Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016, p. 386). However, environmental factors, have not been addressed by any of the participating organizations in the case study. Additionally, the impact of natural events on NPOs has received little attention in the literature. One may argue that the spread of the COVID-19 virus is a biological, and thus, an environmental issue. In the thesis, the influence of the pandemic on the work of NPOs has been covered thoroughly in other chapters. Consequently, the following environmental factors will not be further commented on despite usually being described in a PESTLE-analysis.

The following Figure 8 summarizes the PESTLE factors, which have been thematized by the respondents from the interviews. The predominant topics in the field of politics were the heritage of the communist regime, which has had an impact on society and its behavior until today. Other political factors that play a major role are the influence of government and state authorities, new opportunities due to EU membership, and inequalities due to ethnicity. The main economic factors were related to government spending, brain drain, and the issues of the emigrating workforce. The phenomenon of “brain drain”, which Beine et al. (Cf. Beine, Docquier and Rapoport, 2008, p. 631) described as a process in which resources in the form of human capital migrate from developing to developed countries, is prevailing in Romania. Figure 8 shows that the social factors influencing the NPO´s work environment were poverty, the mindset of the society in general, and topics related to the Roma ethnicity. The technological aspects were only shortly thematized by the respondents and targeted the topics of the digital capabilities of the beneficiaries and the impact of the pandemic on the digitalization of the organizations. Lastly, legal factors included issues related to tax deductibility, high legislative instability, a centralized system, advocacy work, and collaboration with legal authorities. As mentioned above, environmental factors were not thematized by the respondents in the interviews.

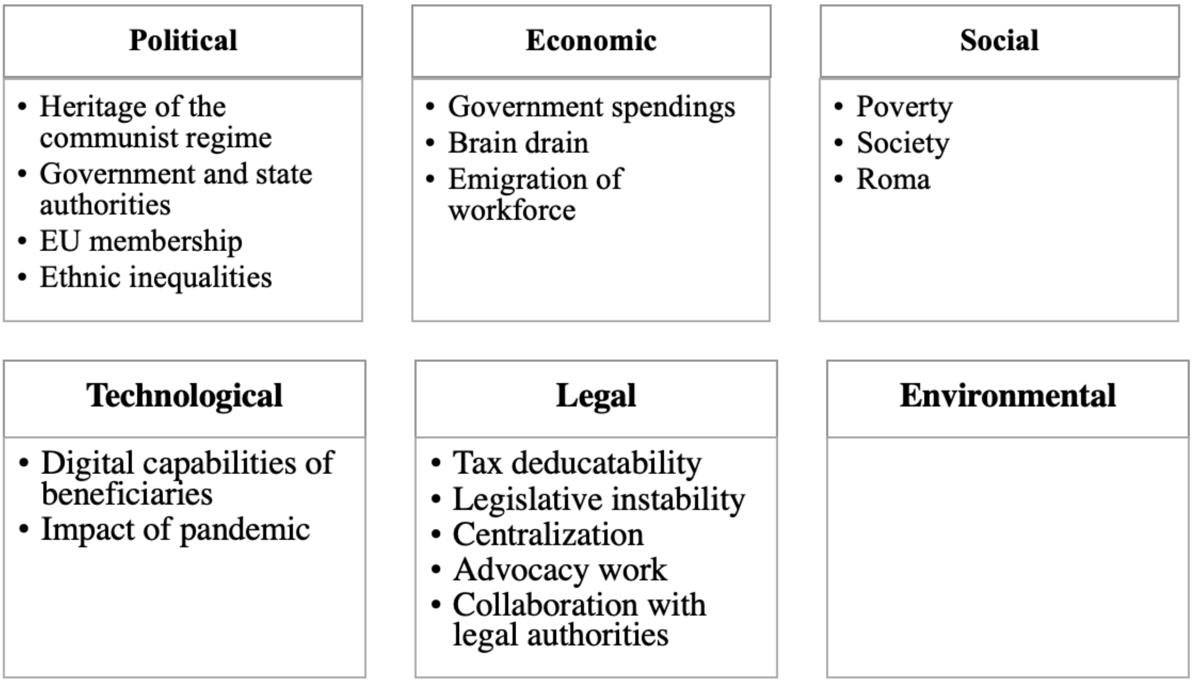


Figure 8: Summary of PESTLE factors (own illustration).

PESTLE: Political factors

Rather than asking the interviewees about specific political events or circumstances that influence the work of the organization, the experts have been enabled to freely address any political issue they would consider having a substantial impact on their work. Thus, the interviewees spoke about different political factors which were most relevant to them. This implies that not every NPO commented on each of the topics described below. Through the interview series, four topics arose notably: The political factors influencing the current work of the NPOs are (1) the heritage of the communist regime, (2) the power of state authorities, (3) the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership and (4) inequality due to ethnicity. The following Table 5 summarizes political factors which influence the work of the organizations:

Table 5: PESTLE, Political factors (own illustration).

Political factors	
Heritage of the communist regime	Lack of civil society engagement
	Lacking culture of responsibility
	Lack of private initiatives and entrepreneurship
State authorities	No financial help despite work replacement
	Reelection interests
	Fragile interacting forms with civilians
	Centralized system
EU membership	Connection to the European Union
	Official pro-Roma mood abroad
	Work opportunities in EU
	Lack of labor force in Romania
Ethnic inequalities	No political support
	No support for Roma used as reelection method

As Table 5 shows, the first major political influence is the heritage of the communist regime. The interviewee of Case 6, put it in a nutshell, quoting Peter Drucker[16], often cited for having said *"Culture eats strategy for breakfast"*. In the case of Romania, this means that a culture of interaction and responsibility must still be built. Though Peter Drucker originally said *"Culture, no matter how defined, is singularly persistent."(Drucker Institute, 2023)*, this quote summarizes well how culture shapes the work environment of the organizations. The communist regime had forbidden and punished any engagement of civil society for decades until the fall of the Iron Curtain. Today, the culture of taking responsibility is lacking behind since it had not been present in society for several decades. Thus, one of the most difficult challenges in the non-profit sector is the lack of civil society engagement. This includes that private initiatives and entrepreneurship are less practiced than elsewhere, says Case 6. Indeed, in a ranking of the best European countries for business in 2020, Romania is ranked among the very last EU countries before Greece and Bulgaria (Cf. European Chamber Research, 2021, pp. 1–3).

[16] Peter Drucker was an Austro-American economist, management consultant, and author and often referred to as the "father of modern management".

Furthermore, Cases 2, 5, and 6 reported that state authorities responsible for social issues do not fulfill their tasks. Local and state authorities are quite satisfied with the organizations doing their work and either not assisting financially or only assisting if the organization contributes. At the same time, the work of NPOs has been described as tricky, since often political interests are hidden. While this may apply to any NPO anywhere, it is more explicit in Romania, says Case 4. It impairs a negative impression of NPOs in society. Especially, local authorities such as mayors position themselves in favor or opposition of the NPO based on populist views and reelection ambitions, reported Case 5. Furthermore, the interacting forms between civil society, civilians, and churches with the authorities are very fragile and not always friendly. Coming back to the previous point, the self-image of authorities is marked by the authoritarian traditions of the communist regime, as stated by Case 6.

As a third topic, the interviewees drew a manifold picture of the country´s EU membership. On the one hand, it is a connection to the Western European world and thus is perceived as an opportunity. The society feels the support of the European Union, the political influence, and the work possibilities. Abroad, the political mood is at least officially pro-Roma, stated the manager of Case 5. Furthermore, joining the EU has brought new funding opportunities to NPOs, as reported in Cases 2 and 6. On the other hand, though the country benefited from the freedom of movement in the beginning, membership also has its flip side. The first mass emigration took place after the communist regime ended in the early 1990s when new ways of freedom became available for the people. While at that time emigration was mostly for temporary or permanent work for people with secondary education, the migration of highly qualified and skilled workers increased once Romania joined the EU on January 1st, 2007 (Cf. Gavriloaia, 2021, pp. 267–268). Particularly in the care service sector, the situation was described as “dramatic” by Case 6. Care work is mostly carried out either free of charge on a private basis by relatives of the person in need or by a remunerated, professional care provider. Since a third of the young labor force is employed abroad, it is difficult to find private or professional care workers for elderly individuals in need says Case 6. Also, Case 4 reported that it is a major challenge to recruit good employees.

The fourth major topic reported repeatedly in Cases 4 and 5 is the discrimination against Roma both on a political level and in society. It has been reported by Case 5 that in society one can still bluster about the Roma relatively freely. The gulf between the two populations is still insurmountable. In practice, this imposes challenges on the recruiting process of employees.

Some candidates want to work for NPOs but withdraw their application upon being informed of the work connected to the Roma. NPOs who dedicate their work to Roma face additional challenges in collaboration with local authorities. Mayors fearing that they will not be reelected if they campaign for Roma are not willing to collaborate and complicate the work of NPOs, says Case 5. The NPO of Case 4 built a school in Bucharest because a large part of the Roma population was unable to get enough places in the state-run school. A separate school was the only way to make sure that Roma kids receive a chance to study in school.

This example illustrates the fact that segregation due to ethnic background is particularly pronounced in Romania. Segregation in this context is the concentration of children from particular socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, or with disabilities in particular schools or classrooms. This violates a child's right to equal education and negatively impacts children's life chances. This issue is persistent in Romania, where more than half of these children attend schools in which all or most of the other children are Roma. This indicates that children of different ethnic backgrounds mostly do not attend schools together, thus separating The share of those who experienced discrimination because of being Roma increased from 2016 to 2021 across all EU countries and in Romania from 4% to 15%. Furthermore, only 27% of Roma children aged from three up to the age of starting compulsory primary education attend early childhood education and care compared to 79% of non-Roma children in Romania. Also, the rate of Romanian Roma aged 20-24 who attained upper secondary education is only 22% compared to 83% of other Romanian nationals. The educational level of 22% among Romanian Roma also falls below the EU average of 27% of Roma who have attained secondary school (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, pp. 36–41).

To conclude, the political environment in Romania is, different from the EU, not necessarily Roma-friendly. Humanitarian NPOs in Romania often dedicate their work to Roma because they are more often affected by extreme poverty (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, pp. 24–28). The political mood and the perception of the ethnic group in society hampers NPOs from fulfilling their missions. Additionally, the collaboration with local and state authorities is perceived as rather challenging and the overall engagement in social civil responsibility actions is low.

PESTLE: Economic factors

On the one hand, managers of Cases 2, 5, and 6 stated that their NPOs are fulfilling a social task that is supposed to be taken care of by the state authorities, but government spending on social issues is too low in Romania to effectively address all issues. On the other hand, an improvement has been noted by Case 6 who reported that state funds for care services have increased since the pandemic and that significantly more money is budgeted for care overall. However, Case 6 also reported that there are three areas in which Romania invests significantly less than the European average, measured in government expenditure by function. The three areas are health, social protection, and education. This statement is confirmed when compared to the total government spending measured in percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Taking 2019[17] as a reference year before the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, it is notable, that the Romanian government spent less than the EU average in four areas, as shown in Figure 9:

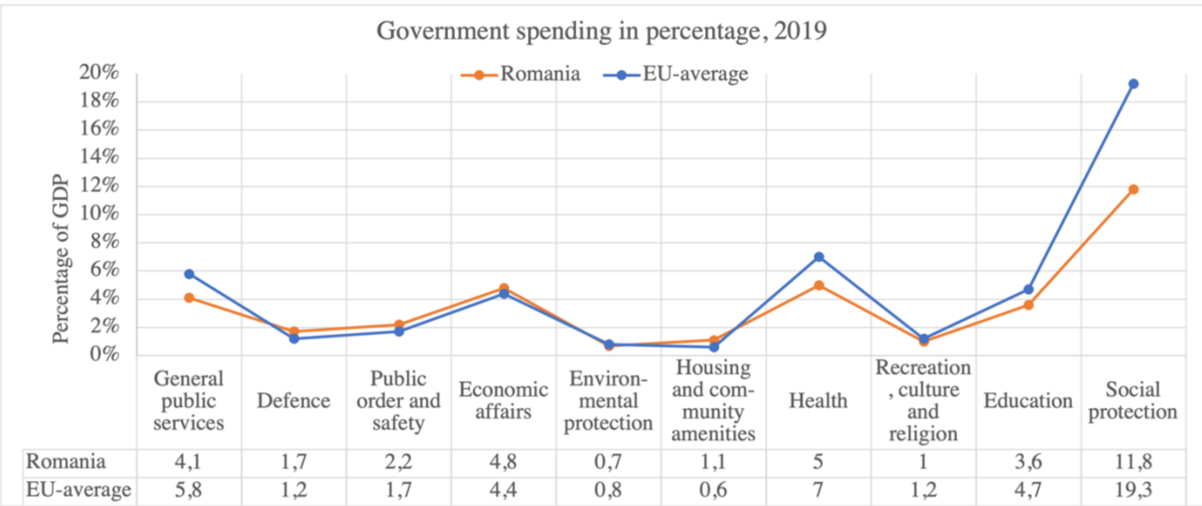


Figure 9: General government expenditure by function in 2019 (own illustration based on Eurostat) (Cf. Eurostat, 2022c).

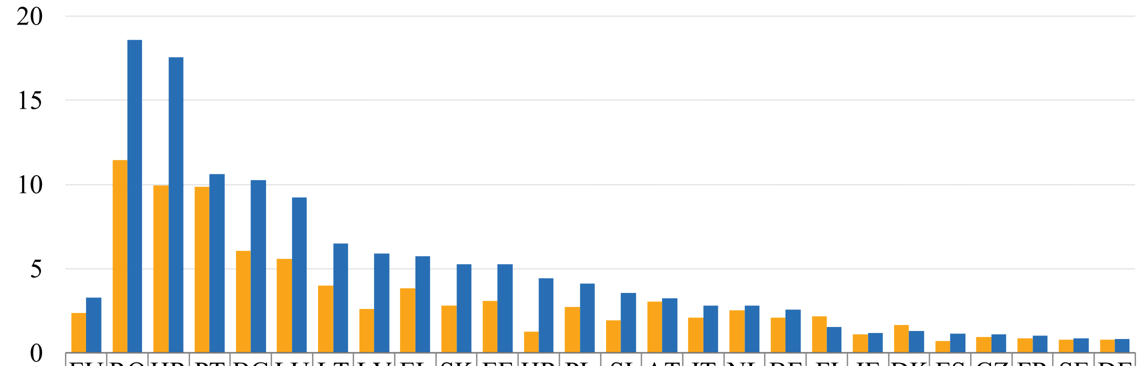
As shown above, in Figure 9, the four areas in which the Romanian government's spending was below the EU average are the sectors of general public services, health, education, and social protection. The latter shows the most significant gap of 11.8% in Romania and 19.3% on the EU average. Romania spent 3.6% on education ranking in the second last position in the EU

[17] There has been a sharp increase in government spending in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic followed by a comparably slight fall in 2021 which make the numbers of 2020 and 2021 unrepresentable. Numbers of 2022 have not been published at the point of time the thesis was written. This applies to both, EU average and Romanian numbers.

before Ireland (3.1%) and after Bulgaria (3.8%). Its neighboring country Hungary, which is often referred to as a peer, spent 4.7% on education. In 2019, Romania spent 5% on health which is more than its peers Bulgaria (4.6%) and Hungary (4.5%) but below the EU average (7%). Government spending measured in percent of the GDP was lower in Romania (36%) than in the EU average (46.6%) overall (Cf. Eurostat, 2022c).

In the interviews, the economic factor thematized most is related to human capital in Romania, which is limited due to high emigration rates. This phenomenon is called "brain drain" and it is usually seen as stressing the economic development of the sending country since one of their scarcest resources is deprived (Cf. Docquier, Lohest and Marfouk, 2007, p. 193). Fellow scholars analyzed the outflow of the labor force and its positive and negative consequences for the country of origin. Among the positive ones are increased skills upon return and remittances. The experts of the NPOs interviewed strongly emphasized the negative effects, such as the fall of welfare for the ones left behind and a lack of workers (Cf. Bhagwati and Hamada, 1974, p. 19; Cf. Beine, Docquier and Rapoport, 2008, p. 631).

In Romania, the average full-time adjusted gross salary per employee is, together with Bulgaria and Hungary, among the lowest. In 2021, it amounted to 13,000 euros compared to 33,511 euros as the EU average (Cf. Eurostat, 2022b). But people do not only emigrate for higher salaries, but also for primarily stable political conditions, better standards of living, and access to advanced technology. A survey carried out by IMAS Marketing și Sondaje among 1,011 respondents aged 18 or older in 2019 found that the primary reason for emigration is corruption (31.3%), followed by poor living standards (31.1%) and a lack of job opportunities (21.8%) (Cf. IMAS Marketing și Sondaje, 2019). In fact, in the European Union Romania is by far the leading country whose working age (20-64) nationals are usual residents in the rest of the EU, as the following Figure 10 shows (Cf. Eurostat, 2022a):



	EU	RO	HR	PT	BG	LU	LT	LV	EL	SK	EE	HR	PL	SI	AT	IT	NL	BE	FI	IE	DK	ES	CZ	FR	SE	DE
2010	2	11	10	10	6	6	4	3	4	3	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
2020	3	19	18	11	10	9	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Figure 10: EU mobile citizens of working age (20-64) by country of citizenship, % of their home-country resident population (own illustration based on Eurostat).

Figure 10 displays that about 19% of Romanians (2020) are residents of other EU countries. Thus, the country has the highest share of nationals living in other EU countries followed by Hungary and Portugal. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Romanian nationals of working age (20-64) living in other EU countries increased by 7.1% (Cf. Eurostat, 2022a).[18] The World Bank Group reported that among all EU countries, Romania experienced the highest increase in emigration between 1990 and 2017 (Cf. Dospinescu and Russo, 2018, p. 1). Migration of people born in Romania aged 15 or older to OECD countries increased by 213.2% between the years 2000/01 and 2015/16. Among them, more than 22% are highly educated, and 30% are low-educated workers (Cf. d'Aiglepierre and et al., 2020, pp. 9–39). According to the UN Migration Report of 2015, Romania experienced the second-highest growth in the size of its diaspora population between 2000 and 2015 with 7.3% per annum. This amount was only exceeded by the Syrian Arab Republic (13.1%) where people fled the war (Cf. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016, p. 19).

The NPOs who participated in the case study either require skilled or unskilled or both types of labor force. On the one hand, they require skilled staff to manage their organization. On the

[18] Cyprus, Malta, and Iceland: missing values. Luxembourg and Ireland: figure with low reliability for 2020.

other hand, for instance, Cases 2, 3, and 5 offer work opportunities for low-skilled personnel within their projects, aiming to reintegrate people living in extreme poverty into society. In both areas, the NPOs face issues related to brain drain. On a professional level, with the general shortage of the labor force, particularly in the Romanian market, it is difficult to attract good-quality employees for jobs in NPOs. Thus, they find themselves in competition for the same human resources as productive companies, says Case 4. On the other side, the NPOs face difficulties in permanently employing unskilled workers since it is easier and faster for them to earn more money in Germany or elsewhere, states Case 5. Yet, unlike 20 years ago, the number of beneficiaries of the NPOs is not stable. Due to the volatile landscape, the NPOs must be agile and keep close contact with the families and communities to properly address their needs, says Case 1.

PESTLE: Social factors

The three social factors influencing the work of NPOs in Romania are related to poverty, prejudices in society, and issues related to ethnicity, whereas the three aspects are interwoven with each other. The following Table 6 gives an overview of the main social challenges:

Table 6: PESTLE, Social factors (own illustration).

Social factors	
Poverty	More poverty than officially reported
	Lack of financial resources of NPOs
	Little engagement of the state
Society	Lack of social responsibility
	Prejudices against the poor
	Prejudices against NPOs
	Emigration and lack of workforce
Issues related to ethnicity	Poverty related to ethnicity
	Negative perception in society
	Stereotypes and discrimination

As written in Table 6, a major social challenge is poverty. Poverty is a complex reality, influenced by the level of indebtedness, the extent of poor health, educational disadvantage, or access to public services, among many more factors. Social transfers and low work intensity have an impact on poverty measurements. There is a range of indices and methods to measure poverty, such as the budget standard approach, the food ratio method, and the United Nations poverty index (Cf. European Anti-Poverty Network, 2023). A survey among 10 European countries published in 2020 revealed that in Romania the share of people at risk of poverty is 23% overall and 78% for Roma, which is an increase of 8% since 2016. The definition of poverty used is when the income after social transfers was less than 60% of the median income in the country. Compared to the other 10 countries in the survey, the gap of 53% between the general population and Roma is among the lowest after Bulgaria (47%). However, this is partly caused by the high poverty rate of the population in general (23%) and due to high poverty rates among Roma in other countries such as Italy and Estonia (98%), and Portugal and Greece (96%) (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, pp. 24–25).

The interviewee of Case 2 stated that there is much more poverty than was officially reported. Case 4 said that they will never have enough financial resources to help every person in need and emphasized that the Romanian state will not be able to cover all aspects completely unless the society helps. Thus, civil responsibility plays an essential role in combating poverty. However, a dominating concept in Romanian society is that *"you are poor so you must be bad and your bad and that's why you're poor"* as stated in Case 4. The self-fulfilling prophecy is felt as an additional burden when fundraising and more so if the project is dedicated to Roma. It has been reported that a "culture of giving" and private donations are not as common in Romania as they are in other EU countries, by Cases 2, 4, and 6. People are more willing to donate to victims of family crimes, natural disasters, or anything linked to health than to Roma living in extreme poverty, reports Case 4. At the same time, poor communities have become cautious when they are offered help, having been fooled several times before, mainly by politicians, said Cases 2 and 5. Mistrust prevails not only on the part of potential beneficiaries but also on society in general. NPOs are suspected of supporting a particular political party or their managers using the membership in the organization as personal enhancement, reports Case 4. Further social challenges affecting the work of NPOs is the lack of a qualified workforce as described above. Whilst joining the EU has increased sources of funding and the freedom of movement was perceived as a great benefit in the beginning, the high amount of emigration is now negatively affecting the labor market in Romania, describe Cases 4, 5, and 6.

Finally, Cases 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 stated that working in the non-profit sector in Romania is more challenging because they often dedicate their projects to Roma and the perception of this ethnic group in society often contains negative stereotypes. Among them is the opinion that *"they* *don´t believe that these people can learn and work"* and that they are *"anyway useless and only thieves"* as quoted by Cases 5 and 4. Those statements demonstrate that discrimination against ethnic minorities is still at a high level. In Romania, every fifth Roma felt discriminated against because of their ethnic background in 2020, which is an improvement of only 1% compared to the reference year of 2016 when the discrimination rate was at 21%. The EU Roma framework aims to reduce the amount of Roma who feels discriminated against in their daily life because of being Roma to 13% by 2030. Though the discrimination rate did not change significantly between 2016 and 2020, the rate of Roma who experienced at least one of five forms of hate-motivated harassment[19] (Cf. Council of the European Union, 2020 Article 2 § 3) decreased from 27% in 2016 to 11% in 2020 in Romania and from 30% to 17% overall in the EU (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, pp. 21–23). Though hate-motivated-harassment against Roma remains on a high level both in Romania and in the EU in general, significant progress towards a just future has been achieved.

PESTLE: Technological factors

The impact of technological factors was less thematized than the other factors and mostly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Case 3 already emphasized strengthening the digital capabilities of their beneficiaries before the pandemic and reported that they will use it even more than before. The manager reported that by using technology the organization incrementally increased its outreach to their beneficiaries and that they were well prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases 1 and 4 reported that they partnered with tech companies to distribute digital devices for distance learning during the pandemic. Different to that, Case 6 reported that during COVID-19 online participation of children in any activity was impossible for most of the children due to the living conditions in their homes.

PESTLE: Legal factors

In terms of legal aspects shaping the work environment of NPOs, the interviewees emphasized four areas which are (1) the limited possibility of tax deductibility on donations, (2) the

[19] Hate-motivated harassment occurs when an unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an (1) intimidating, (2) hostile, (3) degrading, (4) humiliating or (5) offensive environment.

legislative instability, (3) issues related to a highly centralized system, and (4) cooperation and advocacy work with legal authorities.

The manager interviewed in Case 4 expressed that the legislation is not very encouraging in terms of allowing donors to factually contribute. There is a limited percentage of corporations and donors that can support the organizations financially without having any implications inflicted on the fiscal side. Thus, the expert further expressed, at the end of the year there is enormous competition on who can secure funds from donors. In fact, in Romania, the tax deductibility of donations is regulated by the law of sponsorship, which defines which associations and foundations are eligible, and by the fiscal code, which defines to which limit the donor may benefit from tax credits (Cf. Parlamentul, 1994 Art. 4a, Cf. 2015). Concerning the fiscal code and the Council of Foundations, only companies with a turnover of more than one million Euros are eligible for a tax deduction of their profits. If the annual turnover is below that threshold, a company may only donate to NPOs who support social services (Cf. Liu, 2021). Since the profits of corporations decreased during the pandemic, donations declined accordingly, as reported in Case 4.

The second legal factor frequently influencing the work of NPOs is the instability of the legal framework, which has been described as the most prevailing threat to their work. Case 4 reported that it is not the quality of the legal system that challenges them, but the frequent changes that hinder them from navigating their projects through the legal framework. It is the reason why some NPOs refrain from planning specific actions and instead rely on short-term views, planning, and organization. This implies, that frequent changes in legal requirements hamper NPOs to build strategies in the long run. Case 5 however reported that there are regional differences, stating that dealing with the legal system and authorities was easier in the urban area than in the countryside.

Case 6 further reported that the Romanian legal system is highly centralized. Both, EU funds and tax money are collected and redistributed through the authorities in Bucharest, which is why the greater power is with the central authorities. The NPOs apply to EU funds through regional development agencies or the Romanian social development fund, but the criteria for eligibility and the consideration of tenders are set on a national level. Since the state controls the allocation process, civil organizations have little possibility to receive funding for meaningful projects. The national institutions have been described by the interviewees to be *"not necessarily civilian friendly"*. Thus, when possible, some NPOs decided to partner with smaller regional institutions which acknowledge and appreciate their social work.

Closely related to the issue of the highly centralized legal system is the advocacy work of NPOs undertaken to achieve social change. They aim to influence the national framework conditions to increase the social responsibility of authorities and find themselves frustrated in doing so, reports Case 6. The NPOs must accept that they cannot legislate and implement visions but only educate and partner with the existing system to change the framework conditions for the better, says Case 3.

5.1.2 Impact of crises

This part analyzes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of war in neighboring Ukraine on the work of Romanian NPOs, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic. With the lack of proper hygiene conditions and possibilities of social distancing in the poor communities, Case 5 feared initially that the COVID-19 crisis would affect their beneficiaries dramatically. However, the same manager perceived that COVID-19 has not hit society in Romania as hard as in Austria, supposing that the hard life has made their beneficiaries more immune. Despite this insight, it remains difficult to measure and lies beyond the research scope. From a strategic management point of view, the long-term strategies of the NPOs have not been affected by the pandemic, since they are built on a multi-year vision, as Case 1 stated. Much more the short-term activities changed due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Thus, the crisis affected the operations of the short-term organization more than the strategy itself. To summarize what follows below, the COVID-19 crisis influenced the work of the NPO in terms of communication, funding, planning, and operations. Thus, the NPOs had to become more agile.

In terms of communication, maintaining annual discussions, communicating with, and expanding the list of donors the NPO's work became more complex. The representatives of the NPOs were often not allowed to visit the premises for an audit. Discussions on funding have been perceived as very difficult to manage in a digital environment, says Case 4. Communication was limited not only towards the contributors but also target groups since their projects such as educational houses, social centers, and public schools were closed. Knowing about the home conditions of children living in extreme poverty and the fact that for most of them, online participation in school courses was not possible was a challenge for Case 6. Due to the emotionally challenging environment for NPO employees, Case 2 considered team aspects first, including a psychologist for employees, arguing that only this way they would be able to help their beneficiaries. Different from that, Case 1 reported that, in times of crisis, it is an instinct to get involved in problem-solving activities, but the board decided that it was best to resist the temptation, just see their path, and leave the space to the professionals. Whilst Cases 2 and 6 stated that their operations were limited due to social distancing laws, Case 6 faced an increased amount of workload due to the limited number of organizations that were allowed to move freely and visit people in need at their homes.

To put it in a nutshell, the organizations had to increase their agility. The COVID-19 crisis was a lecture on how to deal with unplanned events, improve short-time planning skills, and develop the ability to adapt good operational comfort to rapidly changing circumstances, say Cases 4 and 6.

The second recent crisis is the war in Romania's neighboring country Ukraine, which began on February 20th, 2022 (Cf. Dijkstra *et al.*, 2022). Cases 1-6 reported that they have been or continue to be involved in helping refugees fleeing from the war to or through Romania. The workload of all NPOs increased on top of their usual activities, with all Cases responding immediately to the needs of the refugees from Ukraine. The additional financial burden was thematized by the managers of Cases 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Including Ukrainian refugees, the number of beneficiaries doubled from 2.000 to 4.000 between February and November 2022 for Case 2. Its manager stated that the biggest challenge was that this work came on top of the planned expenditures for existing projects, calling for a need to change financial management. The manager of Case 4 stated that, on the one hand, coordination activities increased. On the other hand, a major task was to *"go around and beg for money"* to be able to help the refugees. Different from that, Case 3 carried out a case study noting that their funds had increased. Donations were received specifically for educational programs for Ukrainian children. Case 6 reported that they co-financed activities on a national level and supported a partner organization in Ukraine. Cases 5 and 6 also mentioned that they are expecting energy prices to rise significantly, thus imposing additional challenges on their beneficiaries and thus, creating higher demand for aid from NPOs. To summarize, the war in Ukraine increased the workload and financial burden for the NPOs. Like the COVID-19 crisis, agility was and still is needed instantly respond to the needs of Ukrainian refugees.

5.2 Self-perception

This section will describe the organization's internal view of itself, described in two parts. The first part gives insights into who designed the strategy, for what time frame, what it includes, and how it is conducted. The second part of the section is the SOAR-analysis. It summarizes the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results of the NPOs. The following Figure 11 illustrates the structure of the present chapter:

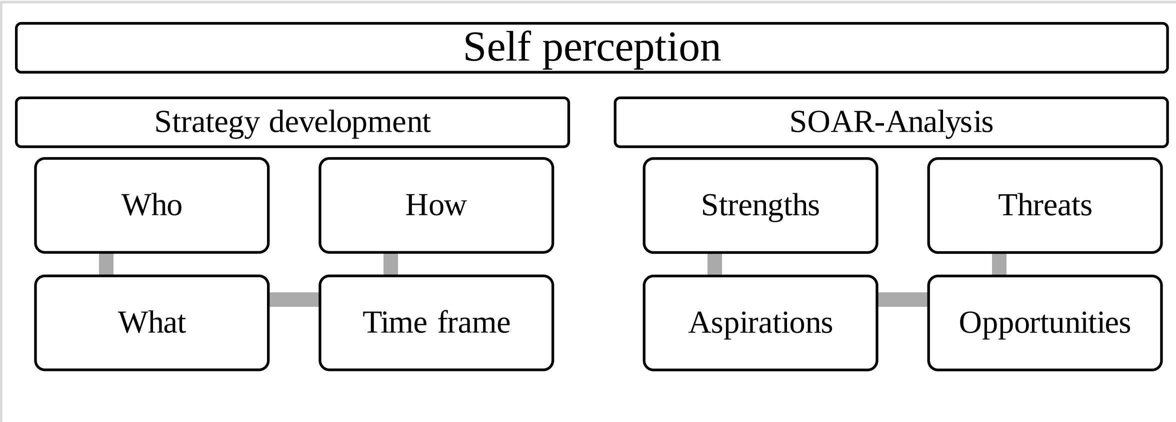


Figure 11: Structure of result Chapter 5.2 Self-perception (own illustration).

5.2.1 Strategy development

Who?

The Cases 2, 5, and 6 have an executive board in charge of developing the organizational strategy. Additionally, Cases 1, 3, and 4 have a board of non-executive directors, which is built of leaders from private companies in different industries. Through their international affiliation, Cases 2 and 5 also hold a non-executive board of directors which influences the strategic development of the NPO in Romania. The advantages of having a non-executive board of directors includes the importation of resources and know-how, says Case 3. Case 4 adds that they help to secure funds on a consistent level. Many of the board member´s companies are also donors that contribute financially or provide services on top of their contribution. As another advantage, Case 1 mentioned that the board of non-executive directors assists to change the organization and holds the strategic direction like an azimuth. However, Cases 1 and 4 also mentioned challenges related to having a board of non-executive directors. Case 1 reported that it was a challenge to build a board of non-executive directors, as this management practice is less known in Romania. This argument could also be among the reasons why Cases 2, 5, and 6 do not have a non-executive board of directors now. Another challenge mentioned by Case 4 was that people want to be on boards as a personal enhancement rather than to contribute quite often. The manager continued that this was somewhat more explicit in Romania.

Strategy building is not only done by the executive board and the non-executive board. Further stakeholders include (1) the international affiliations of the organizations, (2) major donors, and (3) several levels of management and key employees.

1. Cases 1 and 2 said that they build their strategy within the boundaries of the international strategy of the overlying organization. Thus, Cases 1 and 2 explicitly mentioned the collaboration with their affiliations. However, this does not imply that Cases 3-6 do not consult with their international affiliations when building a strategy.

2. Cases 1 and 5 reported that a strategy may be influenced by donors who contribute a major sum to a project. They described this case as an opportunity since major costs are covered, yet, as an instant that can turn into a threat to the organization. Case 1 said that a major donor has the potential to destabilize the organization when having specific requirements, going bankrupt and unable to continue donations, or suddenly withdrawing the collaboration due to pandemics. Similarly, Case 5 mentioned that their strategy came under pressure due to the donor imposing specific expectations on the financed project.

3. Cases 2, 5, and 6 reported that several levels of management are included in strategy building. The managers of these cases said that involving different levels of management and certain employees contributes positively to project development. The interviewee of Case 2 stated that the idea is to increase involvement because if the employees feel that they are involved they will contribute to putting the strategy into practice. Otherwise, it does not work, the staff will not be able to internalize organizational goals, making it difficult to put the strategy into practice. Case 5 said that by involving employees they ensure that they are growing and developing. This has proved the best way to build future managers with self-confidence. Case 6 also reported that involving employees is essential to ensure that the knowledge comes from the organization and not from the expertise of individuals.

What?

The tasks involved in strategy development were summarized well by the manager of Case 1. The interviewee said that strategy development is about building the organizational structure, functions, capabilities, and competencies that enable the organization to generate sufficient resources for itself so that its beneficiaries are not adversely affected. To summarize the statements of all Cases, the main task of strategy development is to ensure that the organization is stable and robust in the long run.

When the managers of the Cases were asked what they do to develop a strategy, they talked about the kind of decisions they take. Their practical examples were manifold; however, they had a few common denominators which are sustainability, scalability, and personnel. Furthermore, all examples had in common that the persons in charge are aiming to make wise decisions from which the organization will benefit in the long run. Thus, sustainability, scalability, decision-making, and thinking, in the long run, are keywords. In what follows examples of the tasks involved in strategy development are going to be shown. It starts with sustainability and scalability and then moves on to personnel.

In the interviews, Cases 1-5 talked about what they do to make their projects sustainable and scalable in the long run. In the thesis, the effort of creating sustainable and scalable projects will be referred to as "smart project design". Cases 2 and 3 thought about how well-functioning projects can be expanded to help as many people in need as possible. Case 3 said that they maintain an active alumni network to guarantee the sustainability of their projects by keeping graduates involved and connected to the organization. To ensure scalability, Case 3 invested in training the trainers to maximize knowledge sharing, which is a major part of their educational programs. It is part of their vision to create sustainable and scalable projects always. Like Case 3, Case 2 also draws decisions aiming to scale their projects. The manager reported that they developed a franchise model of a day-care center. It is their best practice project that can be set up anywhere and independently from the legislation in the country where it is applied. The franchise package contains the strategic vision, deep operational insights, descriptions of procedures, and practical templates. The organization aims to distribute this idea throughout Romania or internationally in the next ten years. Offering a franchise package means sharing knowledge with other NPOs, which is also similarly done by Case 4. The manager of Case 4 reported that it was a good decision to partner with smaller organizations because they create a much bigger reach. By doing so, they serve a larger geographical coverage than their personnel could cover. In practice, they teach smaller local partners about standards to build activities and trust. The aim for the partners is to set them up for the possibility to start raising money on their own in the future. Case 5 is also concerned with ensuring a smart project design. The manager reported that they are constantly asking themselves whether they should expand or improve the quality of existing projects. Interestingly, the manager has noted that when an additional project is started the organization is enriched with new energy. A smart project design also considers external environmental factors, like in Case 1. The manager reported that programs must be rethought, for example, when a factory is opened next to a community creating job opportunities and income for the people in need. To conclude this section, a major part of strategy development is dedicated to designing smart projects which are sustainable and scalable in the long run.

The second major task of strategy development is human resources. All Cases 1-6 thematized that the people in the NPO and decisions related to them are essential to ensure a stable and robust organization. This applies to both, the non-executive, and the executive part of the organization. Cases 1, 3, and 4 thematized the non-executive part. Case 1 stated that one of the wisest decisions they took was to establish the board of non-executive directors, which is committed to changing the organization, assisting during this process, and serving like an anchor. Cases 3 and 4 stated that their non-executive board of directors composed of industry leaders ensures the inflow of resources, know-how, and financial contributions. Thus, the non-executive part of the organization ensures stability in the long run. The executive part was thematized by Cases 2, 4, 5, and 6. Like any company in the private industry, NPOs try to dismiss non-performers, promote good employees, and attract high potentials to ensure their strategy will be put into practice. To give examples, Case 2 stated that they only kept the best staff members they had and dismissed people not performing to the highest level. Cases 5 and 6 said that it is part of their strategy to invest in employees and promote them, with quality staff this way coming from within the organization. For them, it is part of the strategy to build well-functioning teams. Finally, Case 4 said that recruiting qualified people is a key element of success, however, this is an issue in the current economic environment in Romania as described in chapter 5.1.1. To conclude, from the observation of all Cases, it could be retrieved that topics related to human resources are a key task of strategy development.

Time frame

Strategic planning is mostly done for short, medium, and long terms which the interviewees referred to as 1-, 2-5-, and 6-10-year goals. The following Figure 12 summarizes the periods for which the NPOs have drafted strategic plans:

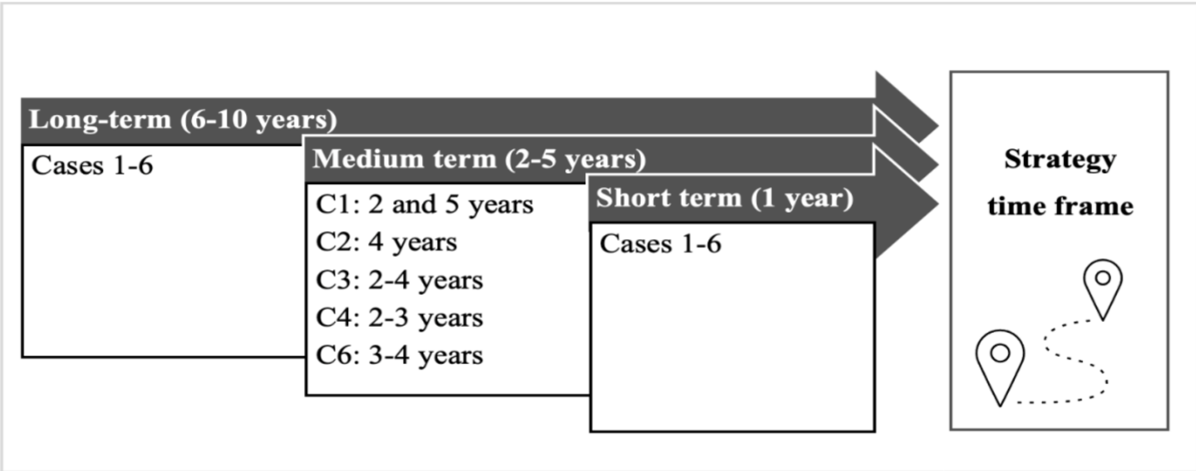


Figure 12: Strategy time frames of Cases 1-6 (own illustration).

All cases have a general direction they follow in their strategy, referring to a long-term period of six to ten years. Likewise, all Cases have a short-term strategic plan according to which they orient their immediate activities. The long-term and short-term strategic planning timeframes are roughly the same for all Cases. There are small differences in the medium-term strategic planning. Case 1 does its medium-term planning for two and five years, Case 4 does its medium-term planning for up to 3 years, and Cases 2, 3, and 6 for up to 4 years. Case 5 did not report on medium-term planning. Case 3 additionally expressed that 70% of resources are invested for the short-term, 20% for the medium-term, and 10% for long-term strategic actions. To conclude, all Cases follow similar time frames for strategic planning by establishing a main direction, supported by goals for medium-term and short-term aims.

How?

To conclude the chapter, a summary of how persons in charge develop strategies is given. The tools, procedures, and rules of strategy development in the NPOs were identified. They will be described below, starting with the tools.

When asked about the tools used within strategy development, almost every NPO highlighted a different one. This does not necessarily mean that the NPO does not make use of other tools as well. To summarize, the tools outlined by the interviewees are (1) risk management, (2) social need assessments, (3) key performance indicators (KPIs), and (4) active information exchange.

1. Case 1 uses functional risk management to assess, monitor, and forecast risks. They identify risks and their potential outcomes and build second and third-case scenarios.

2. Case 2 reported that one of their major tasks is to constantly monitor and adapt to the current social needs. Thus, they keep their eyes on what is happening in Romania, but also in Europe. Similarly, Case 5 stated that they are always aware of the current social needs of their beneficiaries. They do so by involving employees of the executive arm in strategic decision-making since they know the actual social needs.

3. The organizations of Cases 2 and 4 measure their success through indicators. Case 2 has developed a set of KPIs that help them to constantly monitor the social needs and the impact of their projects. This ultimately assists to guide the strategy in the right way end ensure efficiency. Case 4 develops indicators to measure the success of a project. This is, for instance, a percentage rate of the total number of children who participated in a traffic rules training program in one village.

4. Active information exchange was particularly mentioned by the interviewees of Cases 2, 3, and 6. Case 2 is involved in different federations, mainly to monitor the current social needs. Case 3 stated that, when building a strategy, there is a constant flow of information between the county directors, the networks, and many other NPOs. Case 3 is also part of a few associations. Case 6 highlighted the flow of information within the organization, having built resonance groups that work out concrete proposals for change.

After having described the tools, the procedure of strategy development will be shown. As mentioned above, some of the NPOs build their strategies within the boundaries of the international strategies of their allied organizations, as specifically mentioned in Cases 1 and 2. Case 1 described the procedure of strategy development as a build-up and build-down approach. It is an effort of circulating and receiving information from both directions, from the top of the organization and the field. Based on the organization´s capability to forecast the future they define where they want to be in 10 years and establish a direction. They then roll back to five and two years and plan resources, incomes, outcomes, and possible changes. They also define expectations and potential risks. Case 2 mentioned that they build a strategy for four years. Every year they organize a retreat for two to three days to revise the current strategy and discuss the strategy for the next year considering the social needs, financial aspects, and legislation. Cases 3 and 6 highlighted the importance of being agile in the procedure of strategy development. The manager of Case 3 elaborated that agility is very relevant because in one year they might find themselves in need of having to adapt the team and the network to a bigger size. In another year they might fall short on funding, thus not being able to move at the same pace and having to adapt the strategy. Like Case 1 before, Case 6 stated that building a strategy is like establishing a main direction. Thus, Case 6 established internal feedback loops enabling them to adapt to reality and their goals.

After looking at the tools and procedures of strategy development in NPOs, the last aspect of this chapter will follow, which are the rules of strategy development. A selection of these rules is shown in Figure 13 and described in detail below:

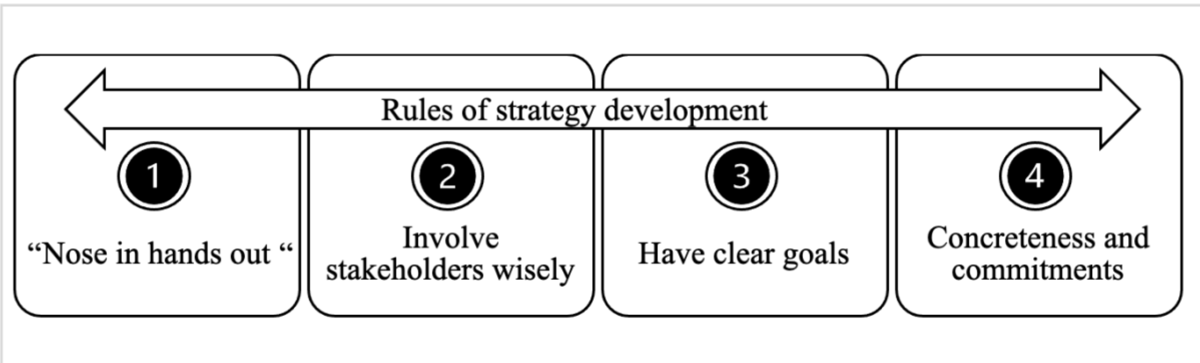


Figure 13: Rules of strategy development (own illustration).

As Figure 13 shows, the first rule is "nose in, hands out". It was described by Case 1 and refers to the function of the non-executive board of directors. It means that they need to ask for information as much as possible to make sure that they understand everything that happens. However, it is against the organization´s policies to have any operational implications there. Having a non-executive board of directors was described to be like an anchor that keeps up the direction. Nevertheless, there may be moments the non-executive board has to intervene, Case 1 gave an example of how the relationship between the executive and non-executive board is in practice. If employees had to be dismissed because anything they do, think, and represent is against the strategy of the organization, but the national director would refuse to let these people go, the non-executive board of director's role would be to find good solutions for the affected employees and dismiss them.

The second rule is to involve stakeholders in strategy development. This rule was mentioned by Cases 1-3 and 5 As described above, Case 2 stated that the idea is to involve several levels of managers and key employees in the process. This has two relevant advantages. On the one hand, it makes sure that the strategy developed fits the actual social needs. On the other hand, making employees feel involved will contribute to putting the strategy into practice. Besides involving employees, Cases 2 and 3 furthermore stated that they include also other stakeholders. They relate to several other NPOs, networks, and federations to exchange ideas. However, stakeholders must be involved wisely. As Cases 1 and 5 stated before, having a major donor may destabilize the organization by imposing specific requirements on the strategy. Thus, involving several stakeholders in the strategy development process holds many advantages but must be done wisely to ensure the NPOs stick to their mission.

The third rule is to set clear goals. It was specifically mentioned in Cases 1 and 4. The latter stated that it is extremely important to define for yourself what the result should be. Looking at other NPOs, the manager noted that the definition of what the organizations want to achieve is too general. Having a very general and abstract definition leads NPOs to projects which do not align with the NPO goals. Thus, major issues come from vague definitions of what the organization wants to achieve. Therefore, it is important to define the strategic objective on which the NPO wants to focus. This was confirmed by Case 1 who stated that strategic management is to establish an azimuth. This is the main direction and what the organization wants to achieve in the next 10 years. The non-executive board of directors has the major role to ensure that clear goals are set.

Rule three emphasizes having a clear set of goals in the long run and thus focuses on long-term strategy development. Different from that, rule four targets short-term strategy development, it is about concreteness and commitment and was highlighted by Case 5. The manager emphasized that whenever short-term goals are defined, concrete tasks must be distributed. Those tasks must be assigned to employees who take a firm commitment and the responsibility to fulfill them. Finally, the distribution and assignment of tasks must be documented to ensure their implementation in practice.

5.2.2 SOAR-analysis

The SOAR-analysis is about identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and results of an organization. It is a strategic thinking and planning framework used to assess performance and create strategic plans. The SOAR-analysis combines two aspects. On the one hand, a strategic inquiry is carried out by asking for strengths and opportunities. On the other hand, the SOAR-analysis has an appreciative intent. It asks for the aspirations and results of the organization. The framework is therefore also defined as a strategic inquiry with appreciative intent (Cf. Stavros and Cole, 2013, pp. 10–20). In what follows, each element is described in detail, starting with the strengths of the NPOs.

Strengths

This section summarizes the strengths of the organizations. It shows what the organizations do particularly well. If several cases have the same strength, it is likely to be a fundamental strength across the industry. If a strength has only been described by one case, this does not contribute to the scientific evidence that it is a fundamental strength in the whole industry. However, these strengths will still be described in the following text due to two reasons: On the one hand, individual strengths demonstrate a successful diversification of the organization that can act as a competitive advantage and thus is a success factor. On the other hand, readers can be inspired or learn from other organizations. Thus, the enumeration of a wide range of strengths is not only beneficial but also necessary. In what follows, first, the strengths that have been named by several NPOs are described, thus contributing to the scientific evidence that it is a fundamental strength in the whole industry. Two strengths across several organizations were identified. Those are the benefits included in having a board of non-executive directors and the advantage of building strategic partnerships in different networks. In the second step, a diverse overview of the individual strengths of NPOs is shown, which may provide interesting insights to the reader. Those strengths are technology and funding prerequisites.

The managers of Cases 1, 3, and 4 have emphasized that the organization benefits from a diversified board of non-executive directors. The benefits are manifold, on the one hand, because of the knowledge that is brought into the organization by individuals from the private sector. On the other, partnerships can be formed with the employers and companies of the board members. In addition to the know-how, financial and material resources can be acquired through cooperation with the companies of the board members. These are important contributions that represent the overall strength of the organization. However, this strength must also be viewed critically because it was described by people who are themselves part of the board of non-executive directors. Therefore, possible negative aspects of a board of non-executive directors were not examined.

The second major strength described by Cases 2, 3, and 4 is partnerships. As mentioned above, strategic partnerships may be built on the networking ability of members of the non-executive board. For instance, they may encourage their companies to support the NPO. However, the types of partnerships described below are different from those formed by the members of the board of non-executive directors. The partnerships outlined in this section relate to collaboration with federations and small local organizations. Now some examples are given. Case 2 mentioned being part of several networks. One of them is FICE (International Federation of Educated Communities), which is a network to support those who work with children and teenagers at risk. The FICE is spread across 30 countries worldwide and under the patronage of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (Cf. Ihtimanska, 2022). Case 3 also mentioned being part of a network and highlighted the collaboration with AmCham Romania. This is the American Chamber of Commerce to Romania. AmCham advocates for American companies committed to Europe which contribute to the communities they live and work in (Cf. *About us*, 2017). Cases 3 and 4 furthermore reported on their strategic partnerships with smaller, local entities. For Case 3 this means to emphasize community leaders and spreaders of their mission. To become concrete, the leaders the organization focuses on are the teachers in the communities. Case 3 follows this strategy because they believe that if they have a few very successful students, so-called champions, in each community their mission will spread best. Thus, it is a strategic project of Case 3 to have a few champions in each community who will become community leaders and spreaders of new educational tools. Case 4 collaborated similarly with smaller entities. But instead of focusing on individuals as Case 3 does, Case 4 targets smaller NPOs with interests like its own mission. Case 4 reported that it was a good decision to partner with smaller organizations because these ways they have a much bigger reach. They teach the local partners about the standards to build activities and trust to start raising money on their own, as described in more detail above.

Now, the second step describes the individual strengths of particular organizations. Those are the use of technology and funding opportunities. The manager of Case 3 described that their strength is to heavily rely on technology. The interviewee said that they had been using technology and online training for 10 years. They partnered with various companies to use their knowledge and expertise to train the teachers of their projects in digital competencies. Thus, they had been a frontrunner in terms of using technology to fulfill the NPO's mission already before the COVID-19 pandemic. The manager stated that during the pandemic the organization became very agile working much via technology and that the reach they had for teachers and pupils increased incrementally. The interviewee of Case 3 reported that the NPO was well prepared for the pandemic since the organization had had an emphasis on technology for the past 10 years. The second individual strength is the ability to fulfill funding prerequisites. Case 2 reported that they are lucky because they are fit for basically all kinds of funding. The manager said that the organization invested in quality and put an emphasis on working according to European requests related to child protection issues. Thus, they can apply to a wide range of funding opportunities. This is a strength of the organization which may also be an opportunity. The identified opportunities are described below.

Opportunities

Three categories of opportunities have been identified: (1) scalability, (2) funding, (3) and opportunities related to the legal framework. However, the latter is perceived as a threat that can be reframed as an opportunity. Details of each category are given below.

1. Scalability has been described as an opportunity by Cases 1-3, and 5. Case 1 said that they will take opening field offices in other countries into consideration, such as the Republic of Moldova. The manager reported that they are in a position to help more countries in need. Thus, a strategic direction that they will be drawing is to expand their activities regionally. Like that, Case 3 mentioned that their projects need to scale in the entire country of Romania. Scalability is of utmost importance across all their projects. The manager reported that if they manage a successful pilot project in one place, they will be able to impact the lives of all kids in need if they go national. To do so they invest in community leaders and use technology, which has been identified as a very valuable leverage tool before, during, and after the pandemic. Case 2 reported that they would like to scale, because they see the social need to do so, however, Case 2 does not have the financial assets to realize these ambitions. In practice, they have a long waiting list of people in need who want to participate in their social projects. They currently

support about 4.000 beneficiaries, 2.000 of them being Ukrainian refugees. However, together there are 20.000 people in need just in Ploiești. The manager said that there is a need for 10 additional day-care centers, but two are the maximum amount they can fund with the current financial limits. Thus, scalability is seen as an opportunity in Case 2, but their operational activities are constrained by their financial limitations. Different from that, Case 5 reported that they constantly ask themselves whether they should work on the quality of existing projects or scale up the reach of the organization through new projects. This thought suggests that enough financial resources are available to follow either way since both options involve financial investments. The manager shared the experience that scaling the reach of the NPO through additional projects is enriching since new energy comes to the organization.

2. Funding opportunities are the basis for scaling a project and are thus related to the aspects mentioned above. As described previously, Case 2 reported that their operational activities are limited due to financial resources. This is confirmed by Case 4 who said that NPOs never have enough money. This implies that the organizations see opportunities to become active in their environment but are hindered to take them by the lack of resources. As a response to this issue, the organization of Case 4 tries to attract donors by making a clear differentiation between themselves and everybody else on the market. The manager emphasized that it is important to have a clear purpose the donors can identify themselves with to attract them. Another interesting, completely different aspect is the opportunity of a new dynamic that comes into an organization when a major donor steps in. Cases 1 and 5 have had such an experience. Case 1 reported that convincing a major donor who, for instance, finances 50% of the target is excellent news and ensures that the projects can be maintained. However, the downside is that a major donor has the potential to destabilize the organization. This may occur when the donor wishes for some specific requirements which require the organization to allocate additional resources towards the particular project. This has been described similarly by the manager of Case 5, who stated that acquiring a major donor has put them under a lot of pressure. The donor wanted to implement a project by any means, but the project did not fit the social circumstances of the beneficiaries. Two conclusions can be drawn from these insights. First, scalability is based on funding opportunities and NPOs tend to be hindered from scaling due to them. Second, partnering with major donors is seen as an opportunity to reach the target but also as a threat to destabilize the organization.

3. Cases 3-6 explicitly mentioned opportunities related to the legal framework in Romania. For Cases 3-6 it is a challenge to navigate in the existing legal framework. Case 4 stated that the unstable legal environment is the principal threat to NPO work. It does not matter how good or bad a legal environment is as long as it is stable, and the organization knows how to navigate it. However, frequent changes make the work of NPOs difficult. Case 5 even stated that their projects are sometimes caught between the legal and illegal when cooperating with mayors. Cases 3 and 6 said that they would like to influence the framework conditions to increase the social responsibility of authorities. However, they had to realize that an NPO is not a public authority that can legislate and implement visions. They can only educate the system but not change it. Case 4 concluded that the unstable legal environment is the reason why the long-term view of the NPO where they would like to go can only be a general direction. The NPO does not plan many specific actions because the legal framework only allows for a very short-term view. Thus, planning sessions are constrained by the frequent changes in the legal framework of Romania. The opportunity which can be seen in this challenge is that organizations must become more agile.

Aspirations

The aspirations of an organization are what the organization wants to achieve in the future and the capabilities it uses to do so (Cf. Stavros and Cole, 2013, p. 17). Thus, this section is closely related to Chapter 5.3 in which the aims of the organizations are described in more detail. Therefore, the following section only gives a short overview of what the organizations would like to achieve.

Cases 4 and 5 emphasized they are aiming to recruit and keep good employees. It is their major aspiration because human resources are key to fulfilling the mission. This aspiration has some obstacles, as the interviewees reported. For instance, Case 4 said that in Romania it happens quite often that people want to join NPO boards for personal enhancement functions rather than to contribute to the organization. Thus, the organization has been careful in picking board members. Regarding recruiting for lower positions, they find themselves in the same competition as public companies. Also, Case 5 stated that recruiting qualified people is an aim but also a major challenge. Cases 4 and 5 stated that due to their work with Roma recruiting skilled people is even more difficult. They said that many stereotypes have been created in society. Little empathy is given to people of other social classes. This makes it difficult to raise money but also to recruit qualified people. Case 5 reported cases of job applicants withdrawing their applications when realizing that the work of the NPO is dedicated to Roma. The manager of Case 5 summarized this behavior by saying: “They don’t believe that these people can learn and work”. From this one can retrieve that despite the challenges outlined above recruiting and keeping good employees is a major aspiration the NPOs have.

Results

Results are outcomes that can be measured and show the effectiveness of the work of an organization (Cf. Stavros and Cole, 2013, p. 26). The results of the organizations in this case study are described in more detail in chapter 5.5. In order not to reproduce the same contents in two chapters of the thesis, at this it is only shown how the results can be measured. Case 2 reported that they employed a quality management director whose job is to collect data and show concrete results of all programs to measure their impact. They developed specific KPIs to measure their progress. For instance, one of them is measuring family abandonment. By keeping track of the numbers, the organization can measure the impact of their social projects. Furthermore, Case 2 conducted an impact study in the fall of 2022 to investigate which aspects already work particularly well and which ones need to be improved. Case 3 said that the return rate of teachers to their training, contests, and projects is the best proof of the quality and relevance of their work. Cases 4 and 5 reported that they see the effectiveness of their work when children and teenagers they had supported since an early age graduate from school and move on to the next educational level. Achieving a goal, therefore, means that as many children as possible complete vocational school or higher education. In general, all organizations show their concrete results with numbers and figures of the past year in their annual reports which can be found on their websites.

5.3 Aims of the organization

This chapter is divided into two sections. First, the organizational aims will be shown. Four major ones have been identified: (1) organizational change and growth, (2) social impact, (3) knowledge transfer, and (4) future projects.

1. Cases 1, 3, and 5 thematized that organizational change is necessary to make NPOs sustainable in the long run. At the same time, organizational growth has been one of the

topics related to the aims of the organizations. Case 1 gave a specific example, saying that back in 2012, they decided that the Romanian office needed to be independent of their international affiliation by 2022. They had to achieve this whilst reaching the same quality and quantity in their programs and maintaining the same impact as before. Thus, they undertook major changes in the near past in terms of culture, reporting, roles, and tools. Today, they aim to make sure that the organization stabilizes and becomes more sustainable. When doing so, the organization must be more agile than before. Because unlike 20-30 years ago today everyone can move and relocate at a relatively low cost which implies that the target group can change rapidly. Thus, the organization must quickly adapt to changing landscapes, said the manager of Case 1. Agility is also a topic for Case 5, whose manager said that the world will have changed in the next 10 years anyways and thus, the organization of this manager does not plan long-term goals in detail but holds on to their mission as a guide towards the future. It is the aim of the organization to fulfill the social task where the state fails to do so. However, they are aiming to transfer the social tasks successively to the state and only assist where they are needed. The manager of Case 3 emphasized that their aims are all about scalability and sustainability. They aim to grow not just today and in the next year but in the long run. They want to impact the methodology and the processes within the educational system in Romania. Therefore, they aim to scale in the entire country. They believe that, if they manage a well-working pilot project in one place, it must scale to the entire country to help as many children as possible. It is also part of their vision to build a community around them. One of the tools they use is an alumni network, which allows them to ensure scalability and sustainability.

2. All Cases strive to have a social impact by reintegrating the poor and marginalized into society. To do so, all interviewed managers reported that their organizations put a major focus on the education of children. The aim is to enable them to find a job that will help them to abandon poverty. Thus, the organizations focus on improving their educational level. Cases 2, 4, 5, and 6 explicitly mentioned that they are working with Roma children who are more often at risk of poverty and thus also subject to defamations. These organizations not only aim to improve the educational level and job possibilities of children but also to change the negative perception of Roma in society.

3. The third major aim described by Cases 2, 4, 5, and 6 is knowledge transfer. It stands to reason that Cases 1 and 3 are also keen on knowledge transfer, but they did not explicitly comment on this. Now a short insight into how Cases 2, 4, 5, and 6 ensure knowledge transfer is given. As mentioned before, Case 2 created a franchise system for their best-practice project, which is a day-care center. The manager said that they put all their knowledge and expertise into creating that model. It is the aim of the organization to distribute it in Romania and other countries. Case 4 aims to transfer knowledge by acting as an intermediary for other NPOs that are too small to raise money from donors on their own. At the same time Case 4 is not able to conduct sufficient projects for which they have funding on their own. The NPO aims to support those smaller NPOs because they believe that they will contribute the most to the change in the local communities. The manager of Case 5 reported that one of the most prevailing goals now is to build up two future leaders, who will take over the leadership of the organization as a second generation after the founders. Thus, a major knowledge transfer is necessary to ensure the survival of the organization. The founder aims to make future managers confident and to equip them with the skills needed to lead the organization. Case 6 said that it remains a major aim to promote education, also within public institutions. They are currently fulfilling social tasks which they believe should be done by the state. They want to pass on these tasks to state authorities. The organization of Case 6 tries to do this without any loss of quality.

4. All Cases shared insights into the projects they aim to realize soon. For Case 1 the major objective is to prepare kids for school by, for instance, distributing educational materials to preschool children in disadvantaged communities, offering learning and homework support, and hot meals. Case 2 wants to introduce remedial education. This means that children are enrolled in school grades according to their age, but they lack the knowledge they are supposed to have learned by this grade and require additional support. The manager reported that these children are labeled as awful, dirty, and other kinds of defamations. Case 2 wants to target especially these children to help them position themselves with self-confidence in class. Remedial education is therefore going to be one of the major aims soon. Case 3 aims to scale the projects to the entire country using technology. The manager said that there are more than two million pupils in Romania and that the majority live in rural or small urban areas. The organization aims to help them keep up with modern technological tools. Ultimately, they have this goal

to ensure the children will have the skills for the jobs of the future. Therefore, for Case 3, it is essential to prepare children and teenagers for job readiness. In the best case, many children will have the skills and abilities to become entrepreneurs themselves. Another aim of Case 3 is to broaden its alumni network. Since this organization is keen on finding leverage tools to scale its reach, they are currently brainstorming on how it could use alumni to leverage the network. For Case 4 it remains a major aim to continue the educational program for disfavored kids. The manager said that the ambition of the organization is to ensure that the children are finishing school or even university and that they can realize themselves in their lives. The organization wants to equip its beneficiaries with the skills that will enable them to sustain themselves and their families on their own in the long run, rather than supporting them with goods for daily needs. Case 5 stated that their aims are based on an evaluation of where their commitment is no longer needed and where their support is needed. The manager gave three examples. For instance, the need for a social day-care center is different today than 10 years ago. Today, the tasks have changed. One example is the need to protect women and children from violent and abusive relationships. Poverty and hopelessness exacerbate domestic conditions that often victimize women and children. A future project is therefore the cooperation with a women's shelter. The second priority of Case 5 is to support gifted young people. The organization has accompanied children through their educational careers by supporting them with for instance learning activities in their social centers. Those who manage to graduate from schools, which are in the countryside, may move to a student’s dormitory in the next bigger city to continue with higher education. The young people would not have the chance to commute every day. Thus, it is the aim of Case 5 to accompany them so they will be able to live a reasonable life. Case 5 currently also builds family houses. However, the manager emphasized that they are hoping that they will not have to build houses anymore in five years. Either because everybody can afford a house through their work or because everyone has one. Case 6 has a major focus on care services besides educational programs for children. In the field of care, they are aiming to promote the rights of those who need care. Now, they have few opportunities for professional care services. Thus, the organization tries to share its expertise and convictions with other organizations and institutions.

5.4 Implementation

This Chapter shows how the organizations notice that their strategy is implemented in practice. Thus, the managers of the organizations have been asked which aspects they see as the success factors of the strategy they set for their projects. To show the results of the organizations numbers and figures were additionally retrieved from their annual reports. However, the data shown in what follows are not exhaustive since that would go beyond the scope of the thesis. Thus, only the data related to the core work of the NPOs were collected. Yet, the reader should be informed that the organizations also listed the outcomes of smaller projects in their annual reports.[20]

In 2021, Case 1 supported a total number of 32,435 children of which 2,354 (7.5%) are aged 0-5, another 13,787 (42.5%) are aged 6-11, and 16,194 (50%) are aged 12-18. One can notice that the NPO emphasizes children aged 6-18 from enrollment to graduation from school. Additionally, the NPO provided help to 2,885 adults in need. According to the annual report 2021, the total number of children in kindergarten who benefitted from programs for basic literacy skills in reading and numeracy was 1,063, and 98% made progress. Also, 3,311 children enrolled in grades 0-4 have benefited from remedial education, and 97% maintained or improved their school results. As children move to secondary school, supporting activities appear to be less effective. A total number of 2,828 children in secondary school have received school support in Romanian language and mathematics and 54% have improved their results. Besides their support for pupils, the NPO maintains a range of other projects whose outcomes can be found in the annual report.

The NPO of Case 2 had a total number of 3,011 beneficiaries in 2021. They cared for 58 children in children's homes who achieved a 100% academic success rate. Over 140 children were cared for in the social centers, who also achieved a school success rate of 100%. The social centers additionally supported over 1,500 people in the communities. The NPO tries to integrate people into the labor market. In 2021, 165 beneficiaries were able to find a job with the support of the organization. A total of 1,352 people participated in job coaching activities. Further

[20] The most recent annual report at the time of writing the thesis is from 2021 for Cases 1, 2, 4, and 6. Case 3 published a factbook for the school year 2021-2022 as an annual report. The latest annual report available for Case 5 is from 2022.

numbers about the people enrolled in other programs can be retrieved from the annual report. To ensure that their strategic goals will be achieved in the future, Case 2 is going to further improve their KPIs. For instance, the NPO is aiming to check whether the grades of a child enrolled in school have improved over the years that a child has been accompanied through homework assistance.

In the school year 2021-2022, Case 3 collaborated with 1,898 institutions supporting more than 254,000 pupils and university students and 4,757 teachers. With a total number of 157,385 pupils, the major proportion of beneficiaries is currently high school students (62%). Furthermore, 44,907 pupils are enrolled in secondary school (18%). Another 41,620 beneficiaries go to primary school (16%) and 10,866 are university students (4%). One can therefore notice an emphasis on pupils enrolled in upper school with a total amount of 202,292 pupils (79%). Additionally, to the numbers stated in the factbook, the manager of Case 3 stated that the most important proof that their strategy is put into practice effectively is the return rate of beneficiaries to their training, contests, and projects. The manager of Case 3 said that a high rate of return not only proves the quality but also the relevance of their work. To become concrete, the organization trained over 20,000 teachers in digital skills in the last nine years. To ensure that their strategic ambitions are reached in the future as well, they are going to use technology as a leverage tool to reach more beneficiaries and emphasize alumni networking activities.

In 2021, Case 4 assisted a total number of 13,646 people. This number of beneficiaries is composed of 8,597 children from disadvantaged backgrounds who were supported to continue their education and stay in school as well as their parents. In this program, 954 teachers were involved. Furthermore, the organization supported 2,608 adolescents and adults in need to integrate them socially and professionally. Their backgrounds are foster homes, homelessness, single mothers, people with disabilities, parents, and young people from poor families. A total number of 1,487 children, parents, and elderly received health and social services that would enable them to live a dignified life. With 63% of the beneficiaries (8,597) being children from disadvantaged backgrounds the focus of the NPO is to keep these children enrolled in school. In 2021, a total number of 6,049 were supported to go to school and kindergarten, 2,130 were hospitalized for a long period and participated in educational and art therapy programs and 418 children benefited from literacy activities. The working methods with children of disadvantaged backgrounds have been improved by having 727 teachers enrolled in classroom management courses. Lastly, 803 parents were supported to develop their parenting skills and 348 received psycho-social counseling. Additionally, to the numbers stated in the annual report, the manager of Case 4 said that two years ago the first children they took care of finished school. The manager said that the best proof that their strategy is implemented effectively is that one of the former beneficiaries wants to study pedagogy to come back and teach and the very same school. The representative of Case 4 concluded that this is the right way to change stereotypes in the local place where the beneficiaries live.

In 2021, Case 5 supported people in need through four social centers, two music schools with about 250 students, a family-type children´s home for 12 children, a student dormitory for 32 adolescents, and a social business enterprise. They also built 17 small houses for families living in extreme poverty. Furthermore, the NPO connected the precarious housings of six families to the water pipelines and built bathrooms for them. In their annual report Case 5 reported to have served a hot meal and provided homework assistance and recreation activities to more than 300 children daily. The NPO stated that they are also providing services to their families by offering a mother´s club, a youth club, social services, hygiene products, and other products if necessary. Though no official number of total beneficiaries including parents and elderly people is available, the outreach of the organization must be bigger than 300 children. The NPO stated that five years ago 85% of the children of a village where they have a social center were not going to school. Today, all children go to kindergarten and most of them proceed to school. The manager of Case 5 sees that the strategy is implemented effectively since school authorities confirm the success of the children.

Case 6 has a major focus on healthcare services. In 2021, the NPO took care of 5,067 sick or elderly patients at home. Furthermore, the organization provided residential homes for the 238 persons in need of care services. On the one hand, those are elderly people who need sheltered housing. On the other hand, the NPO offers socio-medical and palliative services to people in need of care following a chronic or acute illness. The focus is on acquiring the skills needed to live independently. Another 110 seniors are taken care of in day-care centers to prevent marginalization and social isolation of the elderly. Besides providing services to the elderly in need, the NPO focuses on people with disabilities. In 2021, more than 1,500 children and adults with disabilities and their families benefited from services offered by day-care centers to integrate them into society. The organization also provides day-care centers to children and families of disadvantaged backgrounds, working with a total number of 776 minors and 231 families in 2021. 15 children have been taken care of in a child´s home. These services aim to prevent social exclusion and improve the quality of life while preparing for independent living. More information about the outcomes of further projects can be found in the annual report of the NPO.

5.5 Reflection

This chapter describes best practice examples of the strategic management of the Romanian NPOs which participated in the case study. It, therefore, gives a concise overview of the most essential wise decisions and good practices mentioned in the chapters above. The flip side of best practice experiences is key lessons that organizations have grown from. On the one hand, these key lessons can be seen as mistakes. On the other hand, they can be seen as valuable experiences or as lessons from which not only oneself but also others can learn. Because the goal of the thesis is to provide the reader with the best benefit, the following text not only provides best-practice examples but also points out what can be avoided.

In what follows, at least one best practice example is shown for each organization. To summarize in advance, the best practices in nonprofits of this case study are about the topics of franchising, agility, technology, importing resources, the ability to make good decisions, and topics related to human resources.

5.5.1 Franchising

The NPO of Case 2 developed a project which they said provenly prevents family abandonment and can be distributed via the franchising method across the country of Romania and in any other country regardless of the legislative system. They bundled their knowledge to develop a project plan for running a social day-care center for vulnerable children and their families living in poverty. The organization holds 30 years of experience working in this field and the two employees who developed the system have been working in the organization for up to 20 years. The manager of Case 2 stated that the biggest lesson they had learned was that their social projects could never replace the parents of a child, even if children live in miserable conditions. The organization, therefore, built its social day-care centers through which they can support the families and ensure that the parents and children stay together.

The developed franchise model is a day-care center that offers non-formal educational support, daily hot meals, basic commodities and hygienic products, counseling, and community visits. Adults and families are supported with job search assistance, vocational training services, health information and support, psychological counseling, and support in accessing public services (Cf. Concordia Romania, 2023). The managers stated that they can develop a social day-care center everywhere and they are willing to share their knowledge with any other NPO or local authority. The franchise package includes a strategic vision for the project, guidance on how to do the operational work, what procedures to follow, and templates for different processes. Case 2 is also considering training staff of other NPOs or authorities. The reason why the organization is wanting to distribute its franchise project is because they have acquired the necessary knowledge to help people living in poverty, they see the need to help many more people, but they lack the financial resources to do so. The manager of Case 2 stated that in one of the county seats where they operate at least 10 more day-care centers are necessary to respond to the social need of people living in poverty.

Since the day-care center developed by experienced employees of Case 2 has been proven to prevent family abandonment and increased success rates of children in school, it may be labeled as a best-practice example, at least in the context of the thesis. The positive impact a social day-care center has on a child´s life is also confirmed by Case 5 which runs similar projects and reported positively about an increased number of children going and succeeding in school.

5.5.2 Agility and technology

Case 3 emphasized that to manage an NPO successfully being agile is very relevant. This is partly caused by the financial resources which can diverge widely in their extent from one year to another. Therefore, one must be able to adapt the team and the network to a bigger or smaller size quickly. Depending on the current financial sources the NPO needs to be floating all the time and adapt to changing circumstances. The manager summarized this by saying that it was important to be able to jump from one level to another.

On the one side, the organization of Case 3 has outlined that being agile in adapting to changing financial situations is a challenge. On the other side, the NPO has proven its ability to be agile through its experience in using technology. The organization has been a frontrunner in terms of using technology to reach its beneficiaries already before the COVID-19 pandemic. Already before the pandemic, they were using technology, online training and partnered with various companies to reach as many beneficiaries as possible. Specifically, they offer learning-by-doing and project-based programs and projects for schools and universities for primary, secondary, post-secondary, and university education. The activities are like those in the real economy, aimed at developing the skills young people need in work and life. Since all programs are offered in a blended learning system and the content is available digitally through the organization's platform the reach of their beneficiaries is very scalable.

Their knowledge and expertise to train teachers in digital skills have been on their agenda for 10 years already. Then, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization turned into a very agile NPO that worked much via technology, increasing incrementally the reach they had for teachers and pupils using technology. Since Case 3 had an emphasis on reaching their beneficiaries through technological resources before the COVID-19 pandemic and was able to rely on this strength through a crisis, this strategic decision is labeled as a best-practice example in the thesis. Other NPOs may be encouraged to consider reaching their beneficiaries through digital methods as well, since this may increase the outreach of the organization and improve crisis resilience.

5.5.3 Decision-making skills

When asked about wise decisions Case 1 emphasized that it is not just one key decision without which the history of the organization would be changed dramatically, but a snowball of good decisions that gradually grows. However, the manager pointed out that strong decision-making skills are a key asset. One way of bringing this asset to the organization was building a board of non-executive directors. The manager stated that the board was committed to changing the organization and assisting it through this change, serving as an anchor that keeps the direction.

For instance, the board of non-executive directors has proven its decision-making skills in the field of human resources. The manager gave the example that if a national director refused to dismiss employees whose actions, thoughts and representation is against the strategy of the NPO, the board of non-executive directors would intercede. Another aspect of strong decision-making skills is the ability to say no. The manager stated that it was a wise decision to teach their executive management how to refuse to do projects. They said no to projects which they thought were not at their level and left space for other NPOs. The type of projects which fall into the category of being refused are those, where the temptation to invest a lot of money is high but which will endanger the existence of the organization if they fail. Resisting this temptation is also part of the third example stated by the manager of Case 1. The interviewee stated that for the leaders of the NPO, it was a good decision to abstain from getting involved and taking a role in times of crisis, even though this may sound like a paradox. The manager stated that, when being at the head of leadership of an organization, one must resist the tempting instinct to take action just to achieve the feeling that one has tried to do their best. Therefore, the leaders of the organization resisted this temptation, just saw their path, and their role, emphasized what they had to do, and abstained from doing other activities. They left the space for the professionals to do their jobs. The manager concluded that this contributed to the better development of the organization.

5.5.4 Human resources

Cases 2, 3, and 5 have in common that they realized that it is of utmost importance to ensure that their strategy is received and understood well by all personnel to ensure it is implemented. One could say that the strategy is developed through a top-down but implemented through a bottom-up approach. Thus, the organizations made a significant effort to ensure that the employees at the lower levels of the organization know what the strategy is about. Now, a practical example of how strategy is implemented through a bottom-up approach in Cases 2, 3, and 5 is given.

The executive manager of Case 2 stated that as a leader it is sometimes challenging to keep the employees aligned with new tendencies because people are resistant to changes and some of the staff can adopt faster than others and some will never adapt. From a leader´s perspective, this is challenging because putting the strategy into practice requires a team effort. Thus, the interviewee ensured that the manager was always working with the team, leading by example. The way of ensuring that the strategy reaches the bottom level of employees and that transformative decisions are implemented is to make sure that managers fully understand the issue. Additionally, the organization only keeps the best staff and aims to dismiss people who are not performing to the highest level.

Case 3 reported that it has trained 20,000 teachers in the last 9 years. The teachers are not employees of the organization but are affiliated with them through partnerships. Thus, in the thesis, they are seen as an extended arm of human resources of the organization and are included in this chapter. It was a strategic project for the NPO to approach the teachers because they realized that if they managed to have in all communities a few excelling persons, they will become community leaders and spreaders of the educational tools. Their partnerships with teachers and pupils involve various contests in entrepreneurial skills. They also collaborate with universities to link the dots between the different programs. The interviewee said that community building and the work with the teachers no matter where they are in the country is the most important element of ensuring the strategy is implemented. The manager emphasized that it is grassroots work that has become a substantial success factor and helped them to gain more leverage.

Case 5 said that the best way to ensure that employees are adopting the strategy and the overall mission of the organization is to have them grow with the organization. The organization wanted to profit from knowledge from the private industry. However, the management learned that whenever they attempted to bring people from private companies to higher levels of executive managers they failed. The several attempts of doing so gave the organization various setbacks. Thus, with regards to human resources the interviewee of Case 5 highly recommended to have people, including very young employees, grow within the organization. It has proven to be the best practice to give young employees the opportunity for growth, successive assumption of responsibility, and promotion to higher management positions instead of acquiring employees from private companies at higher management levels.

One can conclude that regarding human resources it is a best practice for NPOs to find a way to keep low-level employees attached to the strategy. This may happen through managers working amid their teams (Case 2), through emphasizing community leaders to leverage the impact (Case 3), or through having employees grow within the organization (Case 5).

5.5.5 Resource importation

Cases 1, 3, and 4 reported the positive effects the importation of resources has had on their organizations. One could notice that the bigger the organization is, the higher the probability that it will collaborate with large companies. Moreover, it was notable that the bigger organizations in terms of total number of beneficiaries, the likelier they have a non-executive board of directors whose members are representatives and leaders of a wide range of different industries in Romania thus composing a diversified board. The board of non-executive directors with its members from various backgrounds causes an information and knowledge inflow to the NPOs. The organizations, therefore, benefit from know-how imported from private or public companies.

As detailly described in chapter 5.5.3, Case 1 emphasized that building a non-executive board of directors has helped the organization to keep the direction once they had set their strategy. Case 3 stated that one very important element is the constant collaboration with companies when asked about what aspects of their strategy has been having been well done. This is because the persons on the board are from companies, mostly at the CEO level, and are passionate about education. They come with the resources and know-how of what happens in day to day in the private world. Thus, they make valuable propositions of which kind of projects should be brought to schools and what the children should be learning for the future to increase their employability. Furthermore, the organization of Case 3 collaborates closely with universities. Through this, they bridge the continuation of education of the children. Besides that, the universities also strive for and struggle with the employability skills for their graduates and therefore seek to learn from the NPO. Thus, this collaboration is mutually beneficial as it provides an exchange of education on the one side and know-how on the other side. Lastly, the manager in Case 4 talked about the advantageous resources flowing to the organization when having a board of non-executive directors. These benefits include that the members are typically opinion leaders in their industries which are actively engaged in Romania. This helped the NPO to secure funding in a consistent way and at a constituent level. Many of their companies are also donors and various of them assist the organization through additional activities or services pro bono on top of their contribution. For instance, one company does tasks about public relations and another one carries out transportation services for the NPO. The manager concluded that having a very broad board was a wise decision. It ensured that a larger part of the local economy could be mobilized to help the organization in achieving its mission.

6 Summary and conclusion

The thesis examined the success factors of strategic management in humanitarian non-profit organizations in Romania through a multiple case study. In this context, two research questions and hypotheses were posed:

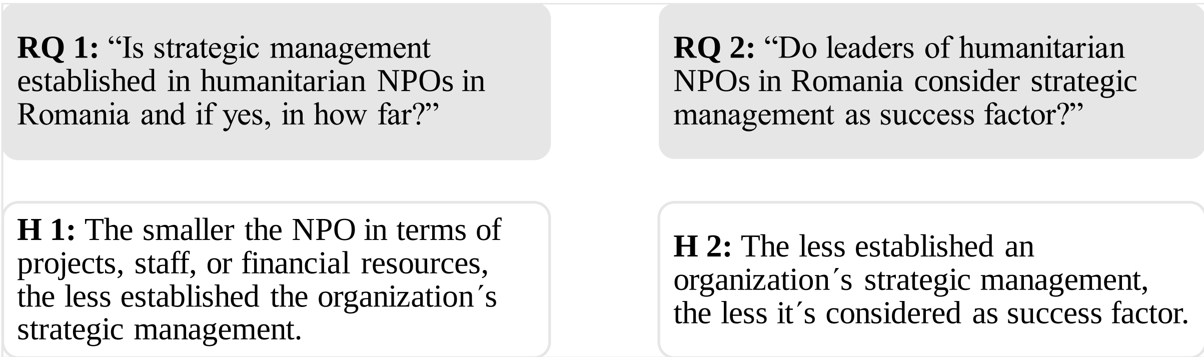


Figure 14 Research questions and hypotheses.

As shown in Figure 14, the first research question was *whether strategic management is established in humanitarian NPOs in Romania, and if yes, to what extent*. The second research question was *whether leaders of humanitarian NPOs in Romania consider strategic management as a success factor*. The before-named questions were answered through a multiple case study that was based on a literature review. The case study evaluated the environment of NPOs (5.1), their self-perception (5.2), aims (5.3), implementation (5.4), and a reflection (5.5) on their strategic management. The literature provided a concise overview of humanitarian NPOs (2.1), strategic management (2.2), and the country specifics of Romania (2.3).

The first research question contains “strategic management”, “humanitarian NPOs”, and “Romania”. Thus, before directly answering the research question, the major findings about each of these three aspects are briefly summarized below. This way, a sound understanding of the context of the research question is ensured.

Strategic management

The conclusion of the section about strategic management (chapter 2.2) is that strategic management means gaining a long-term competitive advantage over other organizations by leveraging internal strengths, neutralizing external threats, and avoiding internal weaknesses.

Whilst one may assume that NPOs aim to help as many persons in need as possible and thus operate in a less competitive field than the private sector, it was found that at the beginning of the 21st century, challenges such as the economic crisis, environmental issues, and social, demographic and economic changes, caused that NPOs were operating in an increasingly complex and competitive environment. This was because the number of NPOs increased, and government funding decreased. At the same time, the support of volunteers was decreasing while the need for social services among the population increased (Cf. Alexander, 2000, pp. 287–303; Cf. Papadimitriou, 2007, pp. 571–587; Cf. Kong, 2008, pp. 281–282).

However, the second decade of the 21st century showed a different development. Strategic management has evolved under the pressure of the external environment and instead of rising competition the benefits of collaborating with similar NPOs have been discovered (Cf. Miller, 2019). It resulted that cooperating with similar organizations increased financial and human resources, leading to innovation and performance through external knowledge (Cf. Misener and Doherty, 2013, pp. 135–147; Cf. Wemmer, Emrich and Koenigstorfer, 2016, pp. 241–363). This was beneficial to NPOs because as argued in the IC view, human and relational capital is strongly associated with NPO performance influencing internal and external effectiveness, the quality of work as well as financial and mission-based outcomes (Cf. Mohd Noor, Hajar and Idris, 2015, pp. 459–474; Cf. Bontis *et al.*, 2018, pp. 712–731; Cf. Laurett and Ferreira, 2018, pp. 881–897; Cf. Benevene, Kong, De Carlo, *et al.*, 2019, pp. 161–171). To summarize, major challenges in the last two decades were professionalizing management to become more transparent to stakeholders, increasing effectiveness and efficiency regarding financing to become more attractive, and non-profit collaboration (Cf. Yanyan, 2011, pp. 39–56; Cf. Swanson, 2013, pp. 303–323; Cf. AL-Tabbaa, Leach and March, 2014, pp. 657–678; Cf. Jeong and Kearns, 2015, pp. 1975–2001). Despite that, not all non-profit organizations apply strategic management because it requires high resources and human capital (Cf. Miller, 2019).

Humanitarian NPOs

The conclusion of the research about humanitarian NPOs (chapter 2.1) is that the NPO sector was the smallest in Eastern and Central Europe in the early 1990s in Romania but social engagement within the framework of non-profit work was revived with the end of communism, and the number of NPOs has quadrupled between 2000 and 2019 (Cf. Lambru and Dobre, 2020, p. 62; Cf. Lambru and Petrescu, 2021, p. 159). The case study confirmed, that NPOs are struggling with the aftermath of communism, in which social engagement of society was suppressed, which is why there is still a deficit of social engagement today. Therefore, NPOs perform social tasks that are the responsibility of state authorities, which evade this task. The work of NPOs is challenging because there are often hidden political interests that can damage the reputation and transparency of the organization.

Today, according to the Romanian National Register, 71% of the organizations are registered as associations, whose creation requires three people with the same interests and whose membership implies the free contribution of knowledge, skills, and activities (Cf. Lambru, 2017, p. 159). Such volunteer work is one of the ways NPOs differ from for-profit businesses. Romanian NPOs face challenges in attracting and mobilizing volunteers and new work members, reducing their effectiveness. This is due to political history and so-called "compulsory volunteerism" which was forced labor to support economic growth imposed by the communist regime (Cf. Tufis, 2014, pp. 281–306). This was confirmed by experts in the case study, who stated that recruiting qualified persons and attracting employees remains a major challenge.

Romania

The conclusion about the work environment in Romania (chapter 2.3) is that Romania's social structures had to be rebuilt after the fall of totalitarian communism (Cf. Badescu, Sum and Uslaner, 2004, pp. 316–341) and that this process is not yet complete. The country is among the poorest in the EU in terms of economic indicators, which Romania joined in 2007 (Cf. European Union, Directorate-General for Communication, 2023). The following section summarizes the key insights about the country relevant to NPO work:

1. Today, regional disparities of GDP per capita, primary income per capita, and disposable income per capita remain among the highest in the EU (Cf. European Commission, 2020, pp. 9–10). Inequalities in income increased between 2000 and 2019, partly due to the introduction of a flat income tax in 2005 (Cf. International Monetary Fund European, 2022, pp. 18–19). Romania invests less than the EU average in health, social services, and education (Cf. Eurostat, 2022c) and faces the highest emigration rate of working-age people in the EU (Cf. Eurostat, 2022a). Besides higher salaries, the primary reason for emigration is corruption, followed by poor living standards and lack

of job opportunities (Cf. IMAS Marketing și Sondaje, 2019). The participants of the case study confirmed that the labor market in Romania is volatile due to the high emigration rate, which makes recruiting and retaining staff for the long term difficult for NPOs and more so if they are dedicated to Roma since stereotypes are persistent in society. EU membership is viewed diversely, as it brought new job opportunities, political influence, and freedom of travel, but also led to mass emigration.

2. Despite the EU's influence on policymaking, NPOs face challenges such as a paternalistic national legacy, poor relations between the state and its civil society organizations, and high levels of bureaucracy (Cf. Bežovan, Matančević and Baturina, 2017, pp. 111–125). The analysis of the legal environment in the case study confirmed these results. The experts revealed that for companies, the deduction of taxes on donations is limited and strictly regulated, which means fewer financial resources for NPOs, which decreased anyway due to lower profits of companies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The instability and frequent changes in the legal system hinder NPOs from navigating their projects through the legal system. Some NPOs refrain from planning specific actions and instead rely on short-term views, which implies that frequent changes in the legal system hamper NPOs from building long-term strategies. The instability applies more to the countryside than to urban areas.

3. Poverty is a major issue in Romania. The rate of severe material deprivation, relative poverty, children at risk of poverty, and the population living under the poverty threshold is significantly higher in Romania than in most EU countries and even more so if the person is a female Roma. (Cf. OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2021, p. 15; Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 26) The analysis of social factors in the case study revealed that 23% of the Romanian population and 78% of Roma lived in poverty in 2020 (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, pp. 24–25). Poverty affects Roma in particular, and it is unclear how many live in Romania. The European Commission counts 3.3%, news agencies up to 12.5% with 80-90% living in extreme poverty (Cf. Ciobanu, 2017; Cf. European Commission, 2022; Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 25; Cf. Council of Europe Portal, 2023). NPOs argue that there is more poverty than is officially reported. Social challenges NPOs face include that working with Roma increases the burden when fundraising additionally to the fact that private donations are

not as common in Romania as in other EU countries. Projects dedicated to Roma contain negative stereotypes and discrimination against ethnic minorities remain at a high level. The non-profit organizations of the case study aim to have a social impact by changing the negative perception of Roma in society, and enhancing the education of children so they will find a job that helps them to abandon poverty.

4. The latest PISA results showed that socioeconomic status had a strong impact on results and that advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students more in Romania than on OECD-average (Cf. Schleicher, 2019, p. 17). There is a wide gap between the general population that finished secondary school and Roma, who frequently leave the educational system early (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 38). Participants of the case study confirmed the high levels of segregation among school children due to their ethnic backgrounds.

5. Compared to the rest of the EU Romania lacks behind in terms of clean water and sanitation with almost one-fifth of the population neither having a bath, a shower, nor an indoor flushing toilet in their household and only 50% having access to at least secondary wastewater treatment. It is important to note that there is a wide gap between urban and rural areas (Cf. United Nations, 2023i).

6. The unemployment rate was comparable to EU countries. However, the amount was higher among Roma people and more so for Roma women who often carry out unpaid work (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 43). The share of young people NEET was comparable to the rest of the EU but significantly higher among young Roma. One of the reasons the experts stated is the high drop-out rate of Roma children from school.

7. The population reporting crime, vandalism, or violence in their area was lower in Romania than the EU average, however, the majority of Roma does not report incidents of harassment (Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 30). Only every second Romanian trusts the police and the rule of law, the Roma even slightly less.

After having concluded the research on strategic management, humanitarian NPOs, and Romania now the research question is *whether strategic management is established in humanitarian NPOs in Romania and if yes, to what extent* can be answered. The first research question concludes that yes, strategic management is established in humanitarian NPOs in Romania and several factors influence the degree to which extent it exists. This is a finding that requires more details. Below, the numbered bullet points directly answer to the research question one and hypothesis one.

1. In the context of the first research question, the case study resulted that the larger the NPO, according to the number of projects and sites, the more likely a board of non-executive directors is established, and the more likely strategic management is firmly in place. Furthermore, the more senior and diversified this board is, the more expertise in strategy development was reported.

2. While the establishment of a board of non-executive directors and the experience of its members counted, not sufficient evidence could be found that the establishment of strategic management depends on the age of the organization itself. The case study also found insufficient evidence for the proposition that investment in strategy development and the implementation of strategic management depended on the financial resources or the size of the organization's staff, as argued by Miller (Cf. Miller, 2019) who stated that, not all non-profit organizations apply strategic management since it requires high resources and human capital.

3. However, it was found that smaller organizations, according to the number of projects and sites tend to consider their mission and vision as a strategy. They are less likely to do strategy development and implementation. Since larger, more established NPOs consider the importation of experience from external, voluntary members such as non-executive directors as a particular success factor, smaller NPOs should also be encouraged to acquire external knowledge.

4. If strategic management is established in an NPO, the development is carried out foremost by the executive and non-executive board of directors, with the latter one having the advantages of importing resources and know-how, helping to secure funds consistently, and holding the strategic direction like an azimuth. However, building a

non-executive board is a challenge since it is less familiar in Romania. Strategy building furthermore includes other stakeholders such as international affiliations, major donors, several levels of management, and key employees. The main task of strategy development is to ensure that the organization is stable and robust in the long run, thus building the organizational structure, functions, capabilities, and competencies that enable the organization to generate sufficient resources for itself so that its beneficiaries are not adversely affected. The NPOs establish a main direction with long-term goals between 6-10 years, supported by goals for the medium term of 2-5 years and short-term up to one year.

The second research question asked *whether leaders of humanitarian NPOs in Romania consider strategic management as a success factor*. The conclusion is that leaders of humanitarian NPOs do consider strategic management as a success factor just as much as in private companies. Despite that, success in NPOs remains difficult to measure. Nevertheless, NPOs see whether strategic decisions were successfully put into practice by evaluating the results of their work. The more persons benefited from effective support the more successful the strategy. Projects related to the education of children and teenagers are measured by the academic success rate of pupils and students and by the number of children of disadvantaged backgrounds that keep going to school. School support activities are more effective the younger the student. Projects dedicated to reintegrating adults into the labor market are measured by the number of persons who participated in job coaching activities and the ones who were able to find a job through the NPO´s support. If teachers are the project´s target group, the success is measured by their return rate of them to the NPO´s programs and contests with their students. Another way to track results is the number of children, parents, and the elderly participating in services offered by day-care centers or living in sheltered housing. The exact results are stated in chapter 5.4.

Besides answering the research questions, several success factors were retrieved from the interviews of the multiple case study. Experts were asked about their organization´s best practice examples and key learnings based on their experience as leaders in Romanian the non-profit sector. They were described in detail in chapter 5.5. and are put in a nutshell below:

1. At the stage of strategy development, several success factors were stated. One of them was that non-executive directors should ask for as much information as possible to

understand everything that happens, but they should not have any operational implications unless the organization is at high risk. Another key success factor is to involve all other stakeholders wisely. One the one hand, involving lower-level managers and employees increases the probability that the strategy will be adopted at all levels and ensures that it fits the actual social needs. On the other hand, NPOs must be cautious about involving major donors in strategic decisions as their expectations may destabilize the organization and change the organization´s original mission. The third success factor of strategy development is setting clear goals on what the organization wants to achieve and what results should look like. Abstract definitions of goals lead to projects that do not fit the NPOs mission. For those in charge of developing a strategy, it is crucial to set the main direction and hold it like an azimuth. The fourth and last key success factor of strategy development is that all goals must relate to concrete tasks and persons in charge to ensure the strategy is implemented.

2. One NPO decided to develop a franchise model to increase its outreach despite its financial constraints. Therefore, they designed a franchise package of day-care centers that can be applied regardless of the legislative system in Romania and abroad, including the strategic vision, guidance for operational work, and templates for processes. This confirms in practice what has been found in the literature review of chapter 2.2.1., where it was argued that sharing databases, manuals, strategies, routines, organizational culture, publications, and copyrights increases the material value of the organization, and multiplication of value creation can be expected.

3. Another best practice example is to use technology to become more agile. By emphasizing on online training and making projects available digitally the reach of the beneficiaries is scalable. Partnerships with technology companies can ensure that equipment is available. Strengthening the digital capabilities of beneficiaries furthermore increases their job readiness at a later stage in their life.

4. Another good practice to scale projects is through building strategic partnerships with entities that are not paid by the organization but affiliated with it. Those can be for instance teachers, universities, or companies that collaborate with the NPOs. More leverage can also be achieved by building up community leaders that will become

ambassadors of the NPO´s vision and projects, motivating their neighbors to join the projects.

5. In terms of human resources, it is of utmost importance that the strategy is understood well by personnel of all levels to ensure that its implications are implemented in practice. Strategy is developed mostly through a top-down but implemented through a bottom-up approach.

6. A major strength is strategic partnerships. As mentioned before, building a board of non-executive directors has the advantage of building strategic partnerships in different networks. It is importing knowledge, financial and material resources of the private sector besides increasing the networking ability and the possibility that the companies of the board members will support the NPO. Besides that, strong decision-making skills is an asset that can be brought to a non-profit organization by establishing a board of non-executive directors that serves as an anchor that keeps the direction. Thus, having a diversified board with leaders from different industries will bring additional resources to the NPO.

As for the limitations, it is unfavorable that there is no clear data on the performance of the selected NPOs. Furthermore, studies involving the perception of failure are difficult because different respondents may have different experiences, and emotions can influence responses. Finally, the small sample is also a limitation. The validity of the success factors and results needs to be further validated for future research, as the determinants of success can vary significantly across non-profit activities. Some scholars argue that the generalization of NPO sustainability results is limited, and that universal determinants of success and failure cannot be extracted from research. Through the master thesis, the first practical findings on success factors in the strategic management of NPOs in Romania were identified and presented. To increase the validity and reliability of the discussed facts, other researchers are encouraged to conduct the case study with more objects of investigation. Thus, replication studies in NPO research should be emphasized by fellow scholars.

References

Aguilar, F.J. 1967. *Scanning the Business Environment*. Studies of the modern corporation. New York: Macmillan.

d'Aiglepierre, R., and et al. 2020. *A Global Profile of Emigrants to OECD Countries: Younger and More Skilled Migrants from More Diverse Countries* OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers. Vol. *239*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/0cb305d3-en. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/a-global-profile-of-emigrants-to-oecd-countries_0cb305d3-en.

Alexander, J. 2000. "Adaptive Strategies of Nonprofit Human Service Organizations in an Era of Devolution and New Public Management." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 10 (3):287–303. doi:10.1002/nml.10305. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/nml.10305.

AL-Tabbaa, O., D. Leach, and J. March. 2014. "Collaboration Between Nonprofit and Business Sectors: A Framework to Guide Strategy Development for Nonprofit Organizations." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 25 (3):657–78. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43654951.

Amit, R., and P.J.H. Schoemaker. 1993. "Strategic Assets and Organizational Rent: Strategic Assets." *Strategic Management Journal* 14 (1) (January):33–46. doi:10.1002/smj.4250140105. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/smj.4250140105.

Anheier, H.K. 2005. *Nonprofit Organizations: Theory, Management, Policy*. London: Routledge.

Avvisati, F., A. Echazarra, P. Givord, and M. Schwabe. 2019. *Country Note. Programme for Interantional Students Assessment (PISA). Results from PISA 2018. Romania*. Paris: OECD. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_ROU.pdf.

Backman, E.V., A. Grossman, and V.K. Rangan. 2000. "Introduction." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 29 (1_suppl):2–8. doi:10.1177/0899764000291S001. https://journals.scholarsportal.info/details/08997640/v29inone/2_i.xml.

Badescu, G., P. Sum, and E.M. Uslaner. 2004. "Civil Society Development and Democratic Values in Romania and Moldova." *East European Politics and Societies* 18 (2):316–41. doi:10.1177/0888325403259915. http://gatewaywebofknowledge.com/gateway/Gateway.cgi?GWVersion=2&SrcAuth=DOISource&SrcApp=WOS&KeyAID=10.1177%2F0888325403259915&DestApp=DOI&SrcAppSID=EUW1ED0EE8Nc2gEbGMXhFuOmroFcI&SrcJTitle=EAST+EUROPEAN+POLITICS+AND+SOCIETIES&DestDOIRegistrantName=SAGE+Publications.

Barman, E.A. 2002. "Asserting Difference: The Strategic Response of Nonprofit Organizations to Competition." *Social Forces* 80 (4) (June 1):1191–222. doi:10.1353/sof.2002.0020. https://academic.oup.com/sf/article-lookup/doi/10.1353/sof.2002.0020.

Barney, J. 1991. "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage." *Journal of Management* 17 (1) (March):99–120. doi:10.1177/014920639101700108. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/014920639101700108.

Beine, M., F. Docquier, and H. Rapoport. 2008. "Brain Drain and Human Capital Formation in Developing Countries: Winners and Losers*." *The Economic Journal* 118 (528):631–52. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0297.2008.02135.x. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2008.02135.x.

Benevene, P., E. Kong, A. De Carlo, M. Lucchesi, and M. Cortini. 2019a. “A Qualitative Study on the Perception of Intellectual Capital among a Group of Senior Managers of Italian Social Enterprises.” *Knowledge Management Research & Practice* 17 (2) (April 3):161–71. doi:10.1080/14778238.2018.1538600. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14778238.2018.1538600.

Benevene, P., E. Kong, M. Lucchesi, and M. Cortini. 2019b. “Intellectual Capital Management among Italian Non-Profit Socio-Cooperatives.” *Journal of Workplace Learning* 31 (1) (March 19):17–30. doi:10.1108/JWL-07-2018-0085. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JWL-07-2018-0085/full/html.

Bežovan, G., C. Matančević, and J. Baturina. 2017. “Country Report: Croatia.” In *Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by Peter Vándor, Nicole Traxler, Reinhard Millner, Michael Meyer, and Nicole Traxler, 111–25. ERSTE Stiftung studies. Wien: Erste Stiftung. https://www.erstestiftung.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/civil_society_studie_issuu_e1-1.pdf.

Bhagwati, J., and K. Hamada. 1974. “The Brain Drain, International Integration of Markets for Professionals and Unemployment: A Theoretical Analysis.” *Journal of Development Economics* 1 (1) (January 1):19–42. doi:10.1016/0304-3878(74)90020-0. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0304387874900200.

Bluhm, D., W. Cook, T. Lee, and T. Mitchell. 2011. “Qualitative Research in Management: A Decade of Progress.” *Journal of Management Studies* 48 (December 1):1866–91. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00972.x.

Bontis, N. 1998. “Intellectual Capital: An Exploratory Study That Develops Measures and Models.” *Management Decision* 36 (2) (January 1):63–76. doi:10.1108/00251749810204142. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251749810204142.

———. 2002. “Managing Organisational Knowledge by Diagnosing Intellectual Capital: Framingand Advancing the State of the Field.” In *The Strategic Management of Intellectual Capital and Organizational Knowledge*, edited by N. Bontis and C. W. Choo, 621–42. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bontis, N., and C.W. Choo, eds. 2002. *The Strategic Management of Intellectual Capital and Organizational Knowledge*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bontis, N., W. Chua Chong Keow, and S. Richardson. 2000. “Intellectual Capital and Business Performance in Malaysian Industries.” *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 1 (1) (January 1):85–100. doi:10.1108/14691930010324188. https://doi.org/10.1108/14691930010324188.

Bontis, N., M. Ciambotti, F. Palazzi, and F. Sgro. 2018. “Intellectual Capital and Financial Performance in Social Cooperative Enterprises.” *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 19 (4) (July 10):712–31. doi:10.1108/JIC-03-2017-0049. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JIC-03-2017-0049/full/html.

Brown, E., and A. Slivinski. 2006. “Nonprofit Organizations and the Market.” *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook* 2:140–58.

Caritas Alba Iulia. 2022. *Culorile Caritas 2022* Annual report. Alba Iulia: Caritas. https://drive.google.com/file/d/11FLdztp2DoYkOa54M4gSMYrHZUwnqUyl/view?usp=sharing&usp=embed_facebook.

Chadwick-Coule, T. 2011. “Social Dynamics and the Strategy Process: Bridging or Creating a Divide Between Trustees and Staff?” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40 (1) (February 1):33–56. doi:10.1177/0899764009354646. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764009354646.

Ciobanu, C. 2017. “Roma Fear There Is No Place for Them as Romania’s Cities Modernize.” *Reuters*, March 22, sec. everythingNews. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-romania-roma-property-feature-idUSKBN16T043.

Concordia Romania. 2023. “Programe sociale și centre de zi pentru copii.” . https://www.concordia.org.ro/programe/comunitate/.
Conner, K.R., and C.K. Prahalad. 2002. “A Resource- Based Theory of the Firm: Knowledge versus Opportunism.” In *The Strategic Management of Intellectual Capital and Organizational Knowledge*, edited by N. Bontis and C. W. Choo, 103–31. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Cook, S.D.N., and D. Yanow. 1993. “Culture and Organizational Learning.” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 2 (4) (December 1):373–90. doi:10.1177/105649269324010. https://doi.org/10.1177/105649269324010.
Costa, E., T. Ramus, and M. Andreaus. 2011. “Accountability as a Managerial Tool in Non-Profit Organizations: Evidence from Italian CSVs.” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 22 (3) (September):470–93. doi:10.1007/s11266-011-9183-7. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11266-011-9183-7.
Dal Corso, L., F. Carluccio, I. Buonomo, P. Benevene, M.L. Vecina, and M. West. 2019. “‘I That Is We, We That Is I’: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement between Key Leadership Behaviors and Volunteer Satisfaction.” *TPM - Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology* (26) (December):561–72. doi:10.4473/TPM26.4.5. https://doi.org/10.4473/TPM26.4.5.
Dijkstra, H., M.D. Cavelty, N. Jenne, and Y. Reykers. 2022. “War in Ukraine.” *Contemporary Security Policy* 43 (3) (July 3):464–5. doi:10.1080/13523260.2022.2099085. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2022.2099085.
Dobrea, A., M. Borteanu, and B. Andon. 2023. *Raport Anual 2022*. București: United Way România. https://www.unitedway.ro/wp-content/uploads/UWraport_anual_2022.pdf.
Docquier, F., O. Lohest, and A. Marfouk. 2007. “Brain Drain in Developing Countries.” *The World Bank Economic Review* 21 (2) (January 1):193–218. doi:10.1093/wber/lhm008. https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhm008.
Dospinescu, A.S., and G. Russo. 2018. *Romania - Systematic Country Diagnostic: Background Note - Migration* Systematic Country Diagnostic. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/210481530907970911/Romania-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic-background-note-migration.
Drucker, P. 1993. *Concept of the Corporation*. 1st edition. New Brunswick, N.J., U.S.A: Transaction Publishers.
Drucker, P.F. 2006. *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles*. Reprint. New York, NY: HarperBusiness.
Elsevier, B.V. 2023. “Research on Strategic Management in Nonprofit Organizations: Synthesis, Analysis, and Future Directions.” *Administration and Society*. https://www-scopus-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/record/display.uri?eid=2-s2.0-0000616101&origin=resultslist&sort=plf-f&src=s&sid=8543dcaac6d2241f41220e5facca6c23&sot=b&sdt=b&s=TITLE-ABS-KEY%28Research+on+strategic+management+in+nonprofit+organizations%3A+Synthesis%2C+analysis%2C+and+future+directions.%29&sl=119&sessionSearchId=8543dcaac6d2241f41220e5facca6c23#metrics.
Estes, R.J. 2014. “Disadvantaged Populations.” In *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*, edited by Alex C. Michalos, 1654–8. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_742. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_742.
European Chamber Research. 2021. *Best European Countries for Business 2020*. Gorizia: EUCham. https://eucham.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-BECB-full-report.pdf.

European Commission. 2020. *Comission Staff Working Document. Country Report Romania 2020. 2020 European Semester: Assessment of Progress on Structural Reforms, Prevention and Correction of Macroeconmic Imbalances, and Results of in-Depth Revies under Regulation (EU)*. Brussels: European Commission. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8b39ae9a-5945-11ea-8b81-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF.

———. 2022. "Population: Demographic Situation, Languages and Religions | Eurydice." . https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/romania/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2022. *Roma in 10 European Countries. Main Results: Roma Survery 2021*. Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2022-roma-survey-2021-main-results2_en.pdf.

European Union, Directorate-General for Communication. 2023. "Romania – EU Member Country Profile | European Union." *Romania. Overview*. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/romania_en.

Fahey, L., and L. Prusak. 1998. "The Eleven Deadliest Sins of Knowledge Management." *California Management Review* 40 (3):265–76. https://www.proquest.com/docview/216149722/abstract/5AC2B15875ED4AC5PQ/1.

Finlay, P.N. 2000. *Strategic Management: An Introduction to Business and Corporate Strategy*. New York: Pearson Education.

Friberg, J.H. 2020. "Poverty, Networks, Resistance: The Economic Sociology of Roma Migration for Begging." *Migration Studies* 8 (2) (June 1):228–49. doi:10.1093/migration/mny038. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mny038.

Frumkin, P. 2005. *On Being Nonprofit: A Conceptual and Policy Primer*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile (FDSC). 2017. *Romania 2017. Sectorul Neguvernamental: Profil, Tendinte, Provocari*. Bucharest: FDSC. https://www.fdsc.ro/library/files/romania-2017.pdf.

Furr, N.R., and K.M. Eisenhardt. 2021. "Strategy and Uncertainty: Resource-Based View, Strategy-Creation View, and the Hybrid Between Them." *Journal of Management* 47 (7) (September):1915–35. doi:10.1177/01492063211011760. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01492063211011760.

Gavriloaia, C. 2021. "The Impact of the Brain Drain Process on Romania -Possible Solutions in Order to Increase Resilience." *CES Working Papers* XII (4) (February 22):267–81.

Georgescu, D., and E. Palade. 2003. *Reshaping Education for an Open Society in Romania 1990-2000: Case Studies in Large-Scale Education Reform* Country studies. Education reform and Management publication series. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. https://web.worldbank.org/archive/website00238I/WEB/PDF/ROMANIA_.PDF.

Gläser, J., and G. Laudel. 2010. *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: als Instrumente rekonstruierender Untersuchungen*. 4. Aufl.. Lehrbuch. Wiesbaden: VS, Verl. f. Sozialwiss.

Haberberg, A. 2000. "Swatting SWOT." *Strategic Planning Society* Strategy (September).

Hamel, G. 2006. "The Why, What, and How of Management Innovation." *Harvard Business Review* 84 (2) (February):72–84, 163.

Harrison, Y.D., and V. Murray. 2012. "Perspectives on the Leadership of Chairs of Nonprofit Organization Boards of Directors: A Grounded Theory Mixed-Method Study." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 22 (4) (June):411–37. doi:10.1002/nml.21038. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nml.21038.

Hedlund, G. 1994. “A Model of Knowledge Management and the N-Form Corporation.” *Strategic Management Journal* 15:73–90. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2486877.
Helms, M.M., and J. Nixon. 2010. “Exploring SWOT Analysis – Where Are We Now?” *Journal of Strategy and Management* 3 (3):215. https://www.academia.edu/16674688/Exploring_SWOT_analysis_where_are_we_now.
Hollweck, T. 2015. “Robert K. Yin. (2014). Case Study Research Design and Methods (5th Ed.).” *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 30 (1) (March):108–10. doi:10.3138/cjpe.30.1.108. https://utpjournals.press/doi/10.3138/cjpe.30.1.108.
Hume, J., and A. Leonard. 2014. “Exploring the Strategic Potential of Internal Communication in International Non-Governmental Organisations.” *Public Relations Review* 40 (2). Public Relations and Communication Management in South Africa (June 1):294–304. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.10.011. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0363811113001586.
IMAS Marketing și Sondaje. 2019. “Sondaj-IMAS-Tineri-2.Jpg (1920×1080).” Statistics*Care Credeți Că Este Principalul Motiv Pentru Care Unii Tineri Iau Decizia Să Plece Definitiv Din România?* https://www.europafm.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Sondaj-IMAS-tineri-2.jpg.
International Monetary Fund European. 2022. “Romania: Selected Issues.” *IMF Staff Country Reports* 2022 (311) (September 26):18–28. doi:10.5089/9798400221767.002.A002. https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2022/311/article-A002-en.xml.
Jeong, B., and K. Kearns. 2015. “Accountability in Korean NPOs: Perceptions and Strategies of NPO Leaders.” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 26 (5):1975–2001. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43654879.
Kaplan, R.S. 2001. “Strategic Performance Measurement and Management in Nonprofit Organizations.” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 11 (3):353–70. doi:10.1002/nml.11308. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nml.11308.
Kaplan, R.S., N.P.D.K.S. Robert, R.S. Kaplan, and D.P. Norton. 2001. *The Strategy-Focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
Ketchen, D.J., and C.W. Craighead. 2020. “Research at the Intersection of Entrepreneurship, Supply Chain Management, and Strategic Management: Opportunities Highlighted by COVID-19.” *Journal of Management* 46 (8) (November 1):1330–41. doi:10.1177/0149206320945028. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320945028.
Khieng, S. 2014. “Funding Mobilization Strategies of Nongovernmental Organizations in Cambodia.” *Voluntas (Manchester, England)* 25 (6) (December 1):1441–64.
Kim, W.C., and R. Mauborgne. 2005. *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make Competition Irrelevant*. Harvard Business School Press.
King, D. 2004. “Enhancing Swot Analysis Using Triz And The Bipolar Conflict Graph: A Case Study On The Microsoft Corporation.” .
Kong, E. 2008. “The Development of Strategic Management in the Non-Profit Context: Intellectual Capital in Social Service Non-Profit Organizations.” *International Journal of Management Reviews* 10 (3):281–99. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2370.2007.00224.x. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2007.00224.x.
Kuckartz, U. 2018. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung*. 4. Auflage. Grundlagentexte Methoden. Weinheim: Basel.
Lafortune, G., M. Cortés Puch, A. Mosnier, G. Fuller, M. Diaz, D. Riccaboni, A. Kloke-Lesch, T. Zachariadis, E. Carli, and A. Oger. 2021. *Europe. Sustainable Development Report 2021: Transforming the European Union to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.*. Paris: SSDN, SSDN Europe and IEEP.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2021/Europe+Sustainable+Development+Report+2021.pdf.
Lambru, M. 2017. “Country Report: Romania.” In *Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Challenges and Opportunities,* edited by Peter Vándor, Nicole Traxler, Reinhard Millner, Michael Meyer, and Nicole Traxler, 158–70. ERSTE Stiftung studies. Wien: Erste Stiftung. https://www.erstestiftung.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/civil_society_studie_issuu_e1-1.pdf.
Lambru, M., and A. Dobre. 2020. “Romania: Re-Shaping the CSO Sector in Difficult Conditions.” *Problemy Polityki Społecznej: Studia i Dyskusje* 50 (3). doi:10.31971/16401808.50.3.2020.4. http://www.problemypolitykispolecznej.pl/Romania-re-shaping-the-CSO-sector-in-difficult-conditions,131585,0,1.html.
Lambru, M., and C. Petrescu. 2021. “Institutionalisation of Social Enterprise in Romania.” In *Social Enterprise in Central and Eastern Europe,* 152–68. 1st ed. New York: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780429324529-11. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9780429324529/chapters/10.4324/9780429324529-11.
Laurett, R., and J.J. Ferreira. 2018. “Strategy in Nonprofit Organisations: A Systematic Literature Review and Agenda for Future Research.” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 29 (5) (October):881–97. doi:10.1007/s11266-017-9933-2. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11266-017-9933-2.
Lee, T. 1999. “Qualitative Research in Organizational and Vocational Psychology, 1979–1999.” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 55 (2) (October):161–87.
Lőrincz, C., I.L. Bălălău, Ștefania E. Deák, A.J. Klein, and M. Toader. 2018. *Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030* SDG. Bucureşti: Guvernul României. https://leap.unep.org/countries/ro/national-legislation/romanias-sustainable-development-strategy-2030.
Mackay, D., and M. Zundel. 2017. “Recovering the Divide: A Review of Strategy and Tactics in Business and Management: Recovering the Divide.” *International Journal of Management Reviews* 19 (2) (April):175–94. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12091. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijmr.12091.
Maier, F., M. Meyer, and M. Steinbereithner. 2016. “Nonprofit Organizations Becoming Business-Like: A Systematic Review.” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 45 (1) (February):64–86. doi:10.1177/0899764014561796. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0899764014561796.
Marin, A., and A. Csonta. 2013. *Discrimination of Roma Communities. Romania National Report.* Workstream 1 Report NET KARD Project.. Cluj. https://www.gitanos.org/upload/44/68/Discrimination_of_Roma_National_Report_ROMANIA_Net_Kard.pdf.
Mayring, P. 2015. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken*. 12., überarbeitete Auflage.. Weinheim Basel: Beltz.
———. 2022. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen Und Techniken*. 13th ed. Weinheim Basel: BeltzPreselect.media GmbH. https://www.content-select.com/index.php?id=bib_view&ean=9783407258991.
McHatton, P.A., W. Bradshaw, P.A. Gallagher, and R. Reeves. 2011. “Results from a Strategic Planning Process: Benefits for a Nonprofit Organization.” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 22 (2) (December):233–49. doi:10.1002/nml.20051. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nml.20051.

Miller, E. 2019. “Nonprofit Strategic Management Revisited.” *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research* 9 (February 6):23–40. doi:10.22230/cjnser.2018v9n2a270.

Misener, K., and A. Doherty. 2013. “Understanding Capacity through the Processes and Outcomes of Interorganizational Relationships in Nonprofit Community Sport Organizations.” *Sport Management Review* 16 (2) (April 1):135–47. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2012.07.003. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1016/j.smr.2012.07.003.

Mohd Noor, N.H., S.A.B. Hajar, and M.A. Idris. 2015. “The Determinant of Nonprofit External and Internal Effectiveness: The Role of Knowledge Sharing, Collaborative Culture, and Beneficiary Participation.” *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance* 39 (5) (October 20):459–74. doi:10.1080/23303131.2015.1076550. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23303131.2015.1076550.

Mouritsen, J., H.T. Larsen, and P.N. Bukh. 2005. “Dealing with the Knowledge Economy: Intellectual Capital versus Balanced Scorecard.” *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 6 (1):8–27. doi:10.1108/14691930510574636. https://research.cbs.dk/en/publications/dealing-with-the-knowledge-economy-intellectual-capital-versus-ba.

Moxham, C. 2009. “Performance Measurement: Examining the Applicability of the Existing Body of Knowledge to Nonprofit Organisations.” *International Journal of Operations & Production Management* 29 (7) (January 1):740–63. doi:10.1108/01443570910971405. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443570910971405.

OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. 2021. *Romania: Country Health Profile 2021*. Paris: OECD. doi:10.1787/74ad9999-en. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/romania-country-health-profile-2021_74ad9999-en.

OECD and European Union. 2020. *Health at a Glance: Europe 2020: State of Health in the EU Cycle*. Paris: OECD. doi:10.1787/82129230-en. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-europe-2020_82129230-en.

———. 2022. *Health at a Glance: Europe 2022: State of Health in the EU Cycle*. Paris: OECD. doi:10.1787/507433b0-en. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-europe-2022_507433b0-en.

Ogliastri, E., U.P. Jäger, and A. M. Prado. 2016. “Strategy and Structure in High-Performing Nonprofits: Insights from Iberoamerican Cases.” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27 (1) (February):222–48. doi:10.1007/s11266-015-9560-8. http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11266-015-9560-8.

Ordóñez de Pablos, P. 2004. “The Importance of Relational Capital in Service Industry: The Case of the Spanish Banking Sector.” *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital* 1 (4):431–40. https://ideas.repec.org//a/ids/ijlica/v1y2004i4p431-440.html.

Organizația Umanitară CONCORDIA. 2022. *Rapoarte anual 2021* Annual report. Bucharest: Organizația Umanitară CONCORDIA. https://www.concordia.org.ro/fileadmin/user_upload/Romania/Downloads/Reports/Raport_activitate_2021.pdf.

Papadimitriou, D. 2007. “Conceptualizing Effectiveness in a Non-profit Organizational Environment: An Exploratory Study.” *International Journal of Public Sector*

Management 20 (7) (October 9):571–87. doi:10.1108/09513550710823498. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09513550710823498/full/html.
Parlamentul. 1994. *Lege 32 privind sponsorizareaMonitorul oficial*. Vol. *129*. https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/4058.
———. 2015. *Cod fiscalMonitorul oficial*. Vol. *688*. https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/171282.
Penrose, E.T. 2009. *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm*. 4th ed. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
Peppard, J., and A. Rylander. 2001. "Using an Intellectual Capital Perspective to Design and Implement a Growth Strategy:: The Case of APiON." *European Management Journal* 19 (5):510–25. https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeeeurman/v_3a19_3ay_3a2001_3ai_3a5_3ap_3a510-525.htm.
Porter, M.E. 1996. "What Is Strategy?" *Harvard Business Review* 74:61–78.
Powell, T.C. 2001. "Competitive Advantage: Logical and Philosophical Considerations." *Strategic Management Journal* 22 (9):875–88. doi:10.1002/smj.173. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/smj.173.
Rastogi, N., and M. Trivedi. 2016. "PESTLE Tecnnique - a Tool to Identify External Risks in Contruction Projects." 3 (1) (January). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363640549_PESTLE_TECHNIQUE_-A_TOOL_TO_IDENTIFY_EXTERNAL_RISKS_IN_CONSTRUCTION_PROJECTS.
Salamon, L.M., and H.K. Anheier. 1997. "Toward a Common Definition." In *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: A Cross-National Analysis*, 29–50. Manchester University Press.
Salamon, L.M., and S.W. Sokolowski, eds. 1999. *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies.
Salamon, L.M., S.W. Sokolowski, and H. Anheier. 2000. *Social Origins of Civil Society: An Overview*. Working Paper of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project 38. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. http://ccss.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/09/CNP_WP38_2000.pdf.
Sammut-Bonnici, T. 2015. "Strategic Management." In *Wiley Encyclopedia of Management*, edited by Cary L Cooper, 1–4. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. doi:10.1002/9781118785317.weom060194. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118785317.weom060194.
Schleicher, A. 2019. *PISA 2018: Insights and Interpretations*. Paris: OECD. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf.
Schramm, W. 1973. *Notes on Case Studies of Instructional Media Projects - UNESCO Digital Library*. A.I.D. studies in educational technology 15. Washington, D.C.: Information Center on Instructional Technology. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000164120.
Stavros, J., and M. Cole. 2013. "SOARing towards Positive Transformation and Change." *Development Policy Review* 1 (November 1):10–34.
Stewart, R. 1976. *Contrasts in Management*. McGraw-Hill.
Stewart, T.A. 2010. *Intellectual Capital: The New Wealth of Organizations*. New York: Currency/Doubleday. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=722402.
Stone, M.M., B. Bigelow, and W. Crittenden. 1999. "Research on Strategic Management in Nonprofit Organizations: Synthesis, Analysis, and Future Directions." *Administration*

& Society 31 (3) (July 1):378–423. doi:10.1177/00953999922019184. https://doi.org/10.1177/00953999922019184.

Styhre, A. 2003. *Understanding Knowledge Management: Critical and Postmodern Perspectives*. Malmö: Liber Ekonomi [u.a.].

Sveiby, K.-E. 2001. “A Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm to Guide Strategy Formulation.” *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 2 (December 1):344–58. doi:10.1108/14691930110409651.

Swanson, L.A. 2013. “A Strategic Engagement Framework for Nonprofits.” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 23 (3) (March):303–23. doi:10.1002/nml.21067. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nml.21067.

Teece, D.J., G. Pisano, and A. Shuen. 1997. “Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management.” *Strategic Management Journal* 18 (7):509–33. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/%28SICI%291097-0266%28199708%2918%3A7%3C509%3A%3AAID-SMJ882%3E3.0.CO%3B2-Z.

Thompson, A., M. Peteraf, J. Gamble, and A.J.S. III. 2013. *Crafting & Executing Strategy: The Quest for Competitive Advantage: Concepts and Cases*. 19th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Tismaneanu, V. 1993. “The Quasi-Revolution and Its Discontents: Emerging Political Pluralism in Post-Ceauşescu Romania.” *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 7 (2) (March):309–48. doi:10.1177/0888325493007002005. http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0888325493007002005.

Treinta, F.T., L.F. Moura, J.M. Almeida Prado Cestari, E. Pinheiro de Lima, F. Deschamps, S.E. Gouvea da Costa, E.M. Van Aken, J. Munik, and L.R. Leite. 2020. “Design and Implementation Factors for Performance Measurement in Non-Profit Organizations: A Literature Review.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01799.

Tucker, B.P., and L.D. Parker. 2013. “Managerial Control and Strategy in Nonprofit Organizations: Doing the Right Things for the Wrong Reasons?: Doing the Right Things for the Wrong Reasons?” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 24 (1) (September):87–107. doi:10.1002/nml.21082. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nml.21082.

Tufis, C. 2014. “The Not-So-Curious Case of Low Political Participation in Romania.” *Calitatea Vietii* 25 (January 1):281–306.

Turner, S. 2003. *Tools for Success: A Manager’s Guide*. London: McGraw-Hill. http://library.bathspa.ac.uk/items/65309.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2016. *International Migration Report: Highlights*. Washington, D.C.: United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf.

United Way România. 2022. *Raport anual 2021* Annual report. Bucharest: United Way România. https://www.unitedway.ro/wp-content/uploads/UWraport_anual2021.pdf.

Valentinov, V. 2011. “The Meaning of Nonprofit Organization: Insights from Classical Institutionalism.” *Journal of Economic Issues* 45 (4) (December):901–16. doi:10.2753/JEI0021-3624450408. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.2753/JEI0021-3624450408.

Wallman Lundåsen, S. 2014. “Democratic Values and Civic Engagement of Local Voluntary Associations.” *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 24 (3):263–83. http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:esh:diva-1845.

Wemmer, F., E. Emrich, and J. Koenigstorfer. 2016. “The Impact of Coopetition-Based Open Innovation on Performance in Nonprofit Sports Clubs.” *European Sport Management Quarterly* 16 (3) (May 26):341–63. doi:10.1080/16184742.2016.1164735. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16184742.2016.1164735.

Wheelen, T.L., J.D. Hunger, A.N. Hoffman, and C.E. Bamford. 2014. *Strategic Management and Business Policy: Globalization, Innovation, and Sustainability*. Fourteenth edition. Boston: Pearson.

Wilson, M., and R. Larson. 2002. “Nonprofit Management Students: Who They Are and Why They Enroll.” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly - NONPROFIT VOLUNT SECT Q* 31 (June 1):259–70. doi:10.1177/08964002031002005.

Yanyan, L. 2011. “Growing Strategies of Non-Profit Organisations in Japan and China.” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 39 (1):39–56. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43500537.

Yin, R.K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. 6th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Young, J. 2012. “Social Capital and Trust for a Web Environment.” In *Personal Knowledge Capital*, 81–90. Amsterdam: Elsevier. doi:10.1016/B978-1-84334-700-2.50007-5. https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/B9781843347002500075.

Anon. 2017. “About Us.” AmCham EU. https://www.amchameu.eu/about (Accessed: 1 March 2023).

Apelblat. 2005. “Lack of ID Cards Leaves Roma Minorities without Basic Rights.” POLITICO. https://www.politico.eu/article/lack-of-id-cards-leaves-roma-minorities-without-basic-rights/ (Accessed: 13 April 2023).

Council of Europe. 2023. “Romania - Roma Women’s Access to Justice.” Roma Women’s Access to Justice. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/access-to-justice-for-roma-women/romania (Accessed: 13 April 2023).

Council of Europe Portal. 2023. “Legal Status / Identity Documents / Statelessness - Roma and Travellers.” Roma and Travellers. https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/legal-status-/-id-documents (Accessed: 13 April 2023).

Council of the European Union. 2020. Council Directive 2000/43/EC. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2000%3A180%3ATOC (Accessed: 13 January 2023).

Drucker Institute. 2023. “Did Peter Drucker Say That?” Think TankPerspective. https://www.drucker.institute/did-peter-drucker-say-that/ (Accessed: 16 January 2023).

Elijah. P. Georg Sporschill SJ. Soziale Werke. 2023. “Über ELIJAH.” Elijah. https://elijah.ro/e/ueber-elijah/ (Accessed: 9 March 2023).

European Anti-Poverty Network. 2023. “How Is Poverty Measured?” What Is Poverty? https://www.eapn.eu/what-is-poverty/how-is-poverty-measured/ (Accessed: 31 January 2023).

European Chamber Research. 2021. Best European Countries for Business 2020. Gorizia: EUCham. https://eucham.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-BECB-full-report.pdf (Accessed: 26 January 2023).

———. 2022. “Population: Demographic Situation, Languages and Religions | Eurydice.” . https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/romania/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions (Accessed: 12 April 2023).

European Sustainable Development Network. 2023. “ESDN: Romania.” ESDN. https://www.esdn.eu/country-profiles/detail?tx_countryprofile_countryprofile%5Baction%5D=show&tx_countryprofile_countryprofile%5Bcontroller%5D=Country&tx_countryprofile_countryprofile%5Bcountry%5D=23&cHash=16646567f4a0bcb4238f9b312843a36b (Accessed: 11 April 2023).

Eurostat. 2020. “SDGs & Me: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.” Statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20200921-1 (Accessed: 13 April 2023).

Eurostat. 2022. “Living Conditions in Europe - Poverty and Social Exclusion.” Statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion (Accessed: 24 May 2023).

Eurostat. 2022a. “Archive: EU Citizens Living in Another Member State - Statistical Overview.” Statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:EU_citizens_living_in_another_Member_State_-_statistical_overview (Accessed: 26 May 2023).

———. 2022b. “GDP per Capita, Consumption per Capita and Price Level Indices.” Statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=GDP_per_capita,_consumption_per_capita_and_price_level_indices (Accessed: 15 April 2023).

———. 2022c. “Average Full Time Adjusted Salary per Employee.” StatisticsAverage Full Time Adjusted Salary per Employee. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/nama_10_fte_esms.htm (Accessed: 18 January 2023).

———. 2022d. “General Government Expenditure by Function (COFOG) (Gov_10a_exp).” StatisticsGeneral Government Expenditure by Function (COFOG) (Gov_10a_exp). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/gov_10a_exp_esms.htm (Accessed: 30 January 2023).

———. 2023. “GDP per Capita, Consumption per Capita and Price Level Indices.” Statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=GDP_per_capita,_consumption_per_capita_and_price_level_indices (Accessed: 13 May 2023).

Ihtimanska. 2022. “Child and Youth Care around the World.” FICE Interantional. https://www.ficeinter.net (Accessed: 16 February 2023).

Liu, L. 2021. “Nonprofit Law in Romania. Country Notes.” LegalCouncil of Federations. https://cof.org/country-notes/nonprofit-law-romania (Accessed: 1 February 2023).

Marinescu, V. 2019. “A Brief History of Roma People in Romania Covinnus Travel.” Tours of Romania and Eastern Europe. https://covinnus.com/history-roma-people-romania/ (Accessed: 13 April 2023).

SDSN, and IEEP. 2023. “Europe Sustainable Development Report 2022.” . https://eu-dashboards.sdgindex.org/ (Accessed: 12 April 2023).

United Nations. 2023a. “THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals (Accessed: 24 May 2023).

———. 2023b. “Goal 1 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).

———. 2023c. “Goal 3 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).

———. 2023d. “Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).

———. 2023e. “Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).

———. 2023f. “Goal 6 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).
———. 2023g. “Goal 8 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).
———. 2023h. “Goal 16 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” . https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16 (Accessed: 24 May 2023).
———. 2023i. “UN WATER. Romania.” UN WATER. https://www.sdg6data.org/en/country-or-area/Romania (Accessed: 12 April 2023).
World Population Review. 2023. “Romania Population 2023.” . https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/romania-population (Accessed: 12 April 2023).
World Vision. 2023. “Impact şi zone de intervenție.” Intervenţia World Vision România în 2022. https://worldvision.ro/cine-suntem/impact-si-zone-de-interventie/ (Accessed: 9 March 2023).

List of figures

List of tables

Appendix

1. Request to experts

Dear Mr. / Mrs. XY,

I am contacting you because of the qualifications I believe you possess because of your position as XY in XY. Due to your background, I strongly believe that you would be an ideal interviewee for my case study, which I am conducting to finalize my master's thesis at the University of Vienna.

My name is Name Surname, and besides my professional work in a non-profit organization, I specialized in strategic management in Europe during my studies. In cooperation with my supervisor, Title Name Surname Title, the following topic arose for me to work on:

Success Factors of Strategic Management in Non-Profit Organizations.
A Case Study in Romania.

The motivation behind the thesis might be also the reason why you might be interested in investing your time (duration max. 90 minutes) in the interview. I believe that the work of humanitarian NPOs in Romania could be even further improved if they had the chance to learn from each other's successes and failures. Thus, I want to share my thesis with all interview partners, once it is finished. There, you are going to read a concise summary of the state-of-the-art scientific literature on the strategic management of NPOs in Romania. Furthermore, you are going to get valuable insights into how other NPOs for humanitarian relief think about strategic management in Romania.

NPOs are doing an essential work to improve living conditions and my master thesis shall be a small contribution to that. I shall be grateful if you are willing to contribute to this work. The online interview could take place between **7th-9th or 15th-18th November 2022.**
Hoping for your willingness to participate, I will contact you again in the next few days to arrange a suitable time for the interview. Please also find a summary of the information stated above in the attachment. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the number +43 XXX XXX XXXX or e-mail XXXXXXXXXX@unet.univie.ac.at.

Best regards,
Name Surname

2. Information sheet for experts

Name Surname
University of Vienna
XXXXXXXXXX@unet.univie.ac.at
+43 XXX XXX XXXX

October 11th, 2022

Information for experts for the master thesis:
Success Factors of Strategic Management in Non-Profit Organizations.
A Case Study in Romania.

Research topic	Based on expert interviews with selected humanitarian NPOs in Romania, we would like to examine whether strategic management is perceived as a success factor in NPOs and if yes to what extent.
Limitation	Strategic Management in NPOs based on the example of humanitarian non-profit organizations with projects in Romania.
Participants	Name Surname, Titles: Master student in international business administration | University of Vienna Titels, Name Surname, Titles: Supervisor and first examiner | University of Vienna Titels, Name Surname, Titles: Supervisor and second examiner | University of Vienna
Time frame	Submission in March 2023 Interviews: 7th-9th and 15th-18th November 2022
Aims	Obtain, summarize, and share knowledge about strategic management of within the community of humanitarian NPOs in Romania.
Method	Partially structured expert interview with at least 5 interview partners.
Privacy and disclosure	The interviews will be recorded so that interview protocols can be created. The protocols are evaluated within the framework of the work and used for the master thesis by Name Surname, Titles. The protocols are not disclosed to the public. In the evaluation only statements will be listed, however they will be anonymized. The final thesis may be published or shared within the community.

3. Interview guideline

Success Factors of Strategic Management in Non-Profit Organizations.
A Case Study in Romania.

Expert name, organization, date, time

1 Prior informed consent
2 Aim of the case study & role therein of the interview
3 Privacy and disclosure
4 Recording of the interview

	Knowledge interest	**Interview question**
Introduction	Mission, vision in the expert´s own words	1) I´ve went through your website and your annual reports and read your mission and vision. However, I would be interested in how you would describe it. Could you please tell me a bit about in your own words about your vision and mission?
External environmental factors	Work environment of NPO Influencing external factors on work of NPO	First, I would like to know more about the environment you are working in: 2) Romania is an interesting work environment for NPOs. What are the opportunities but also challenges of working in the non-profit sector in this country?
	Work environment of NPO How PESTLE - factors shape its work (Political, economic, or social conditions, environmental factors, technological or legal requirements)	3) When multinational firms extend to new markets in new regions or countries, they have to inform themselves about the environment which will shape their work. External factors, such as for instance *(pick 2)* political/economical/social/technological/legal/environmental aspects, will have an impact on their projects. In how far do these factors shape your work environment?
	Impact of challenges like the energy crisis & war in Ukraine - on the NPO and - on the society	4) Some people say we live in times of multiple crisis. What is the impact on your work? How do you respond to these crises? What are the effects of these crises on the society?

Self-perception	**RQ: Is strategic management perceived as a success factor? If yes, to what extent? If not, why?**	Now I would like to learn more about how you think about strategic management. 5) First of all, how would you define strategic management? 6) Do you do active strategic management in your organization? 7) In the private sector, strategic management has become essential. How is it considered in your NPO? 8) Do NPOs need strategic management to the same extent as private companies? Why? / Why not? 9) What does it take for your NPO to achieve its mission and which role might strategy management play therein?
	RQ: How has strategic Management been developed and implemented in humanitarian NPOs in Romania in the past five years?	Through the next set of questions, I would like to learn more about your experience with strategy implementation in the **past five years.** 7) I like to compare strategy management with a nerve center, where information of all departments converges, and reactions are sent out. How has strategy development worked in your organization in the past five years? 8) For which time frame did you create a strategy and who did that? Has it been developed within a permanent management team or an ad hoc task force? 9) If the NPO is working in different regions in Romania: Are there differences in your strategy for the different regions in Romania where you work for instance due to cultural differences? 10) Looking back at the strategy you followed in the past 5 years, how did you make sure it was implemented? 11) Which aspects worked particularly well, which ones did not? 12) In how far do crises like the war in Ukraine or COVID-19 impact strategy building in your NPO? 13) In how far did these events (war in Ukraine and COVID-19) impact the financial situation of your organization?
Self-perception	SWOT of the NPO(SWOT: e.g., S: financially stable, W: difficulties in recruiting & HR; O: many years of experience; T: Brain drain)	14) Why did the strategy you chose suit your NPO best? (Strengths & Opportunities) 15) Is there anything about your NPO´s strategy that could have been improved? (Weaknesses) 16) Are there obstacles you had to be overcome within your organization to put this strategy into practice? (Threats)
	(Reasoning against strategic management)	**NO:** If not, what are the reasons you refrain from having a strategy management?
Aims of the	Aims in the future - Short term: 1 year, - Medium term: 2-5 years - Long term: 6-10 years	After having looked at the past, I would also like to ask you about your future aspirations. 17) I think strategy is about how to use the given resources and capabilities in the best possible way to achieve the goal of the organization. Given your resources and capabilities, what would you like to achieve on the short, medium, and long run in the future? (1 year, 2-5 years, 6-10 years)

	Advantageous resources or knowledge *(Could be for example financial stability, experienced management board etc.)*	18) Which resources or capabilities will help you to achieve the goals you just named?
Implement	Practical insights Recent experience with strategic management	19) How do you. ensure, that the strategic decisions are implemented? 20) Where do you see the fruits of the strategy you set out before?
Reflection and outlook	Practical insights Best-practice examples Learnings from "best failures"	We have now come almost to the end of the interview, and I would like to ask you two more questions, one reflecting the past and one for the future: 21) Once I read that strategy is like a rugged landscape. There are peaks and dales of strategic performance. It is the combination of choices that puts you on a peak, not any individual choice. Please think about the last five years. Which choices do you think were particularly successful? Which ones could you have left out? Why?
	Closing	22) Closing question: If I had to do a job like yours, which advice would you give me? 23) Is there anything else you would like to add?

4. Case study protocol

Section A: Overview of the Case Study	
Topic	**Description**
1. Mission and goals reflecting the interests of the supervisors and audience	<u>Supervisor:</u> Focus on managerial strategy & success factors in general in NPOs/NPOs <u>Goals for audience:</u> Provide information to NPOs on how their success can be driven by strategic management, what are do´s and don'ts.
2. Case study questions, hypothesis, and propositions	RQs: - Is strategic management perceived as a success factor in the NPOs studied, and if so to what extent, if not why? - How is strategic management developed and implemented in humanitarian NPOs in Romania in the past 5 years? Case study questions: See interview guideline. Hypothesis: <u>Propositions:</u> Interview partners must: - be preferably founders or alternatively managers in NPOs - have with experience in the strategic management of the organization of at least 5 years - have worked or supervised projects in Romania in the past 3 years - agree that the thesis may be published and distributed among all interview partners - agree to their interview being recorded
3. Theoretical framework for the case study: key readings	<u>Literature review</u> for *current* state of research rooted in the old theories: IC by Stewart 1997 and RBV/KBV by Penrose 1959 and Barney 1991; + Kong 2008 + more recent works/papers that cited Kong
4. Role of the protocol in guiding the case study researcher	This protocol serves the purpose of guiding the researcher through the working process. It helps to remember the initial idea, purpose and goal of the study.
Section B: Data Collection Procedures	
1. Names of the contact persons for doing fieldwork	1. Ruth Zenkert – Founder and CEO – Elijah 2. Rudolf Fedorovici – President – World Vision Romania 3. Vladimir Kalinov – President – United Way Romania 4. Elisabeth Moraru – President – JA Romania 5. Elena Matache – Executive Director – Concordia 6. Andras Marton – President – Caritas Alba Iulia
2. Data collection plan (type of evidence expected,	<u>Types of evidence expected:</u> Strategic management is essential for NPOs, SM is currently underdeveloped in NPOs, NPOs do not invest or possess enough resources to do proper SM, NPOs do not know a lot about SM for NPOs, the better established the SM in

including the roles of people to be interviewed, the events to be observed, and any documents to be reviewed in the field)	an NPO the better the perceived performance, NPOs operate according to their beliefs rather than aiming to achieve predefined results; Success is difficult to determine and to measure. Roles: Preferably founders, alternatively managers of NPOs Events to be observed: Documents to be reviewed: - Annual report of the organization, preferably of 2019, 2020, and 2021 (+2022 if already available) - Website - Newspaper releases if available
3. Expected preparation prior to fieldwork (specific information to be reviewed and issues to be covered)	Preparation: - Writing the interview questions - Feedback and confirmation of the interview questions by the supervisor - Finding interview partners and appointments - Testing the technical equipment Time: When can the interviews be conducted? How long will one interview session they take? Place: Where will the interviews be conducted (online, on-site?)
Section C: Protocol questions	
1. Where is the NPO now?	Surrounding: What are the political, environmental, social, technological, legal, and environmental circumstances the NPOs face? (PESTLE-analysis) Internal: - Where do the NPOs think their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats lie? (SWOT/SOAR Analysis) - Do they even have a strategy? - What is the basis of the strategy, where does it come from? (Mission, Vision, beliefs, stakeholders, or donors, …?)
2. Where does the NPO want to be?	What do they want to achieve? Towards what goal is the strategy oriented?
3. How does the NPO get there?	What did they do in the past 3 years to pursue their strategy?
Section D: Tentative outline for the case study report	

5. Full list of codes and frequency per case (Software: MAXQDA)

Codesystem							
Background information	4	5		2	1	11	23
Finance	5	10	5	14		9	43
Mission and vision			1	1	2	1	5
Mission	2	9	2	3	5	2	23
Vision	2	4	5	4	1	1	17
External environmental factors							0
Work environment	2			1	4	2	9
Opportunities			2		2	2	6
Challenges							0
Human resources	1	1	1	3	3	4	13
Society	1		1	3			5
Funding	2	4		2			8
Politics and legality			1		2	3	6
PESTLE							0
Political			1	2			3
History						2	2
State authorities		1			2	3	6
EU-membership					1	1	2
Roma				1	2		3
Economic							0
Brain drain				1	2	5	8
Policies			1		1	1	3
Social	1	7		6	5	3	22
Technological			3				3
Legal			1	3	1	5	10
Environmental							0
Impact of crises on organization	4	14	1	5	6	7	37
Self-perception							0
SM as success factor	3		3	4			10
SM development	1	2	1	2			6
What	8	9	5	7	4	3	36
Who							0
Responsibles	4	2	1	4	2		13
Involved	2	3	1	1	7	2	16
How							0
Tools	1	5	2			2	10
Procedure	4	2	1		1	4	12
Rules	1	1	1	2	4		9
For how long	4	2	4	1	4	3	18
Why	4	2		2	2	1	11
SOAR		1					1
Strengths							0
Board, non-ex			2	1			3
Partnerships		1	2	1			4
Diversification			1				1
Technology			3				3
Funding prerequisites		1					1
Opportunities							0
Scaleability	1	4	3		1		9
Donors	1	1		3	1		6
Legal framework			1	2	1	1	5
Aspirations		2		4	1		7
Results							0
How do we know when w		4	1				5
What measures will help		2			2		4
How do we know when w		1		1			2
Aims of the organization				1	3		4
Future aims							0
Organizational change	3		4		1		8
Social impact				4		3	7
Knowledge transfer		1		1	2	2	6
Projects		1	5	1	2	1	10
Resources and capabilities		2	3	1	1		7
Implementation					1		1
Fruits		1	5	1	2	1	10
Learnings							0
Inside the organization		1		2	4		7
Framework					5	2	7

Codesystem							
Reflection and outlook							0
Best-practice examples							0
Franshising		2					2
Agility			1				1
Diversification		1	1				2
Institutionalization		2					2
Resource importation	1		3	5			9
Decision-making skills	2						2
Human resources		3	2		2	1	8
SUMME	64	114	81	102	93	88	542

4. Abstract (English)

Keywords: Civil society organizations, Non-profit organizations, Romania, Strategy Development, Strategic Management, Success factors.

The third sector is growing rapidly in Romania, quadrupling in size since the fall of communism in 1989. The work of NPOs is strongly influenced by the country's history, the impact of which can still be felt in society today. At the same time, the country is among the poorest EU member states. The rapid growth of NPOs in the country and the still often underestimated poverty in the European Union make Romania a particularly interesting area of study. The case study of the present work brings together different perspectives on the success of nonprofits and shows the perceptions of managers and board members. It therefore positions and critically assesses what is important in the management of non-profit organizations and how past experiences of success or failure of top managers change their perspectives. The results provide researchers and practitioners with a more holistic framework for evaluating success and enable them to learn from others´ experiences. It has two implications: First, it may assist support non-profit managers and board members in evaluating and selecting the most relevant factors to ensure success in their organization. Second, it lays the groundwork for a more thorough investigation of the Romanian non-profit sector based on the findings.

5. Abstract (Deutsch)

Schlüsselwörter: Organisationen der Zivilgesellschaft, Gemeinnützige Organisationen, Rumänien, Strategieentwicklung, Strategisches Management, Erfolgsfaktoren.

Der dritte Sektor wächst in Rumänien rasant, er hat sich seit dem Fall des Kommunismus 1989 vervierfacht. Die Arbeit der NPOs ist stark von der Geschichte des Landes geprägt, deren Auswirkungen in der Gesellschaft noch heute deutlich zu spüren sind. Gleichzeitig gehört das Land zu den ärmsten EU-Mitgliedstaaten. Das rasche Wachstum der NPOs und die in der Europäischen Union immer noch häufig unterschätzte Armut machen Rumänien zu einem besonders interessanten Untersuchungsgebiet. Die Fallstudie der vorliegenden Arbeit wurde mit Managern und Vorstandsmitgliedern von sechs NPOs durchgeführt. Die Untersuchung bringt verschiedene Perspektiven auf das strategische Management von Nonprofit-Organisationen zusammen und bewertet kritisch was Erfolgsfaktoren darstellt. Die Ergebnisse bieten Forschern und Führungspersonal von NPOs einen ganzheitlichen Rahmen für die Identifikation und Bewertung von Erfolgsfaktoren in einer Organisation. Zusätzlich legt sie den Grundstein für eine umfassendere Untersuchung des rumänischen Non-Profit-Sektors.