

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND MANAGER'S COMPETENCES IN NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract The article deals with the Slovenian non-governmental organisations (NGO), NGO classification in Slovenian legislation and stresses the specific task of human resource management of the non-governmental organisations, namely for the work processes to be executed managers have to engage the volunteers at hand not only their employees. The employees in the Slovenian NGO sector are scarce, even though the European average (EU-28) of NGO paid employment compared to total paid employment is five times higher than in Slovenia. The text therefore presents the comparison of paid employment to total employment and total worth of voluntary work in Slovenian and EU NGOs. The Slovenian human resource management research in NGO is overviewed to argue why NGO leaders' competency modelling would be the right step forward for Slovenian NGOs.

Keywords:

NGO sector,
competencies,
human resource
management,
Slovenia.

1 Non-governmental organisations in Slovenia

The exact definition of the term non-governmental organisation is hard to find. In short, these are non-profit, voluntary citizens' groups, principally independent from government, which are formally organised on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good. The NGO sector is diverse, heterogeneous and populated by organisations with hugely varied goals, structure and motivations. To find a common definition of the term "non-governmental organisation" is not an easy task (The European Commission and non-governmental organisations: Building a stronger partnership, 2000).

European Commission defines NGOs in the following form:

The term "NGO" refers to a range of organisations that normally share the following characteristics:

- NGOs are not created to generate personal profit. Although they may have paid employees and engage in revenue-generating activities they do not distribute profits or surpluses to members or management;
- NGOs are voluntary. This means that they are formed voluntarily and that there is usually an element of voluntary participation in the organisation;
- NGOs are distinguished from informal or ad hoc groups by having some degree of formal or institutional existence. Usually, NGOs have formal statutes or other governing document setting out their mission, objectives and scope. They are accountable to their members and donors;
- NGOs are independent, in particular of government and other public authorities and of political parties or commercial organisations;
- NGOs are not self-serving in aims and related values. Their aim is to act in the public arena at large, on concerns and issues related to the well-being of people, specific groups of people or society as a whole. They are not pursuing the commercial or professional interests of their members.

The authors of the discussion paper point out that the size as well as their scope of activities can vary considerably in NGOs. They make a distinction between NGO that are operational (they contribute to the delivery of services) and advocacy

(influence policies of public authorities and public opinion). They also stress they vary in number of members, number of professional staff and volunteers. (The European Commission and non-governmental organisations: Building a stronger partnership, 2000)

Slovenian Act of Non-Governmental Organisations Act – ZNOrg (Official Gazette, No. 21/18) defines three primary forms of not-for-profit organisations (NPOs): Associations; Institutes, which can be private or public; and Foundations. The act brought an important change in the legal framework as it specifies which organisations are NGOs and introduces the “NGO in the public interest” status. The NGOs with this status receive national funds with significant priority as well as funding of 0, 5% of the income tax.

One must bear in mind that NGOs appear in public under different names, some of them being non-profit, voluntary, humanitarian, independent, civil society, third sector, and non-governmental organisations (Mevlja & Kavčič, 2019).

In literature on management in USA (United States of America) the term non-profit institution is often synonymic to European of non-governmental organisation (United Nations (UN), 2010). Therefore, the functional definition of NPI (Non Profit Institution) written by the father of management, Peter Drucker, comes in handy: *“The “non-profit” institution neither supplies goods or services nor controls. Its “product” is neither a pair of shoes nor an effective regulation. Its product is a changed human being. The non-profit institutions are human-change agents. Their “product” is a cured patient, a child that learns, a young man or woman grown into a self-respecting adult; a changed human life altogether.”* (Drucker, 2005) To sum up, NPOs are human change agents and a changed human being should be the end product of an NPO.

2 The employment of non-governmental organisations in Slovenia

2.1 The growing number of NGOs

The number of NGOs in Slovenia grows constantly (see Picture 1 below), which can be attributed to the fact that many individuals have recognized the power of joining forces to reach a specific, and often unique and niche mission that helps them fulfil the needs of their beneficiaries. Another reason may be The Societies Act

(Official Gazette, 2006) that in its Article 8 states that an association can be founded by at least three natural persons of contractual capacity, so founding an association does not bear a significant burden. The question remains if three people truly make for an association, having sincere goals to do public good. The other two acts, concerning NGO – Institutes Act (Official Gazette, No. 12/91 of 22 March 1991) and Foundations Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 60/95 are obsolete and Slovenia has not seen any significant changes in the field for more than 25 years. As Črnak Meglič(2016) remarks the unpreparedness to cooperate and extensive growth in number of NGOs is one of the most important reasons for the bad financial position of NGO sector in Slovenia. As a consequence, bad financial position hinders the NGOs to have paid staff that could more easily be expected to think strategically and therefore consider the necessary measures in human resource management practices that would help them be more efficient and effective.

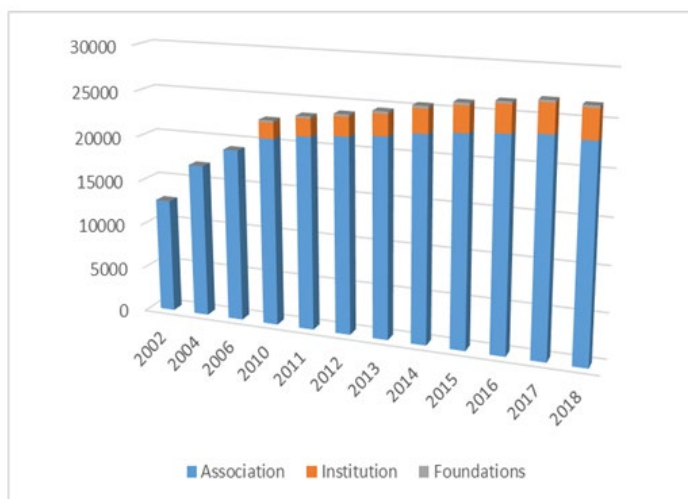


Figure 1: Number of Slovenian NGOs.

Source: (Črnak Meglič, 2016), CNVOS, 2020

Table 1: Number of NGOs in Slovenia.

	Associations	Institutes	Foundations
2002	12.687	no data	no data
2004	17.044	no data	no data
2006	19.122	no data	no data
2010	20.722	1.764	214
2011	21.275	1.947	224
2012	21.622	2.111	232
2013	21.988	2.348	242
2014	22.568	2.609	263
2015	22.975	2.826	267
2016	23.258	2.991	232
2017	23.529	3.145	236
2018	23.272	3.180	232

Source: adapted from (Črnak Meglič, 2016; CNVOS, 2020)

2.2 Employees and volunteers

Even though the Slovenian NGOs have a long tradition, the level of their professionalization has generally remained low (More-Hollerweger, Bogorin, & Meyer, 2019). The employees in the Slovenian NGO sector are scarce, even though the European average (EU-28) of NGO paid employment compared to total paid employment is five times higher than in Slovenia (see Table 2). The new legal framework does facilitate funding from the state, but it does not promise a higher quality of human resource management, neither the necessary changes in the organisational culture that would promote higher number of professionals working in the sector.

Namely, the number of employees in the Slovenian NGO sector is not rising significantly, even though in the last two decades there have been many initiatives and programmes for development of the third sector from the state as well as EU. ¹

¹ Nevertheless, the rise by 5% of total number of employees is noted in private institutes. The obsolete Institute Act (Official Gazette, 1991) in its Article 48 states that the founders can use the surplus of revenue over expenditure solely for the purposes of carrying out and developing its activity unless otherwise provided by the institute's memorandum of association. The Institutes with memorandums stating the founders can use the surplus differently do not fit the definition of NGO, set by European Commission (The European Commission and non-governmental organisations: Building a stronger partnership., 2000). We do not have access to data to find out how many of these institutes distribute profits or surplus, neither are they provided by the state reports, so we have no other option, but to include them in the statistics.

One reason for the low numbers can be misunderstanding that NGOs contribute to economy and society differently – they offer their services for below market prices or free of charge and rely on unpaid volunteer labour (Enjolras, Salamon, Sivesind, & Zimmer, 2018).

Such low numbers are clearly the reason why there is a lack of Slovenian research on human resource management in NGOs.

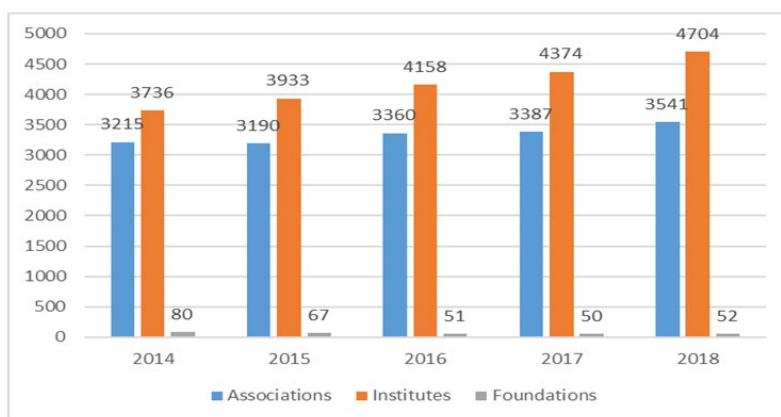


Figure 2: The number of paid staff in Slovenian NGOs (2014-2018).

Source: (Črnak Meglič, 2016), CNVOS, 2020

Enjolras, Salamon, Sivesind, & Zimmer, 2018 discuss dimensions that allow comparison of third and social economy organisations (TSE), NGOs being part of TSE, among the EU countries. The relevant for this article are workforce size (where part-time workers are counted in FTE terms), workforce composition (information are generated on both forms of labours – paid and volunteer) and the average growth of the TSE active workforce and its comparison to the growth of overall employment in the economy.

The number of paid professionals varies among EU countries. While employment in the NGOs is around 8% of the working population in countries such as Belgium, Luxembourg, France and the Netherlands, in the new EU Member States such as Slovenia, Romania, Malta, Croatia, Cyprus and Slovakia NGO remain a small, emergent sector, employing around 1% of the working population (see Table 2).

Table 2: Paid employment in associations, foundations and similar entities compared to total paid employment. European Union (2014-15).

Country	Associations & Foundations	Total employment	Percentage
Austria	236.000	4.068.000	5,80%
Belgium	362.806	4.499.000	8,06%
Bulgaria	27.040	2.974.000	0,91%
Croatia	10.981	1.559.000	0,70%
Cyprus	3.906	350.000	1,12%
Czech Republic	107.243	4.934.000	2,17%
Denmark	105.081	2.678.000	3,92%
Estonia	28.000	613.000	4,57%
Finland	82.000	2.368.000	3,46%
France	1.927.557	26.118.000	7,38%
Germany	1.673.861	39.176.000	4,27%
Greece	101.000	3.548.000	2,85%
Hungary	142.117	4.176.000	3,40%
Ireland	54.757	1.899.000	2,88%
Italy	635.611	21.973.000	2,89%
Latvia	18.528	868.000	2,13%
Lithuania	n/a	1.301.000	n/a
Luxembourg	21.998	255.000	8,63%
Malta	1.427	182.000	0,78%
Netherlands	669.121	8.115.000	8,25%
Poland	128.800	15.812.000	0,81%
Portugal	186.751	4.309.000	4,33%
Romania	99.774	8.235.000	1,21%
Slovakia	25.600	2.405.000	1,06%
Slovenia	7.332	902.000	0,81%
Spain	828.041	17.717.000	4,67%
Sweden	124.408	4.660.000	2,67%
UK	1.406.000	30.028.000	4,68%
EU28	9.015.740	215.722.000	4,18%

In 2015 Slovenian NGOs employed 7322 people, which makes 0,81 % of total paid employment. The NGOs have huge human resource potential as on EU28 scale they employ more than 82 million volunteers. They have a FTE (full time equivalent) of 5.540.433 million employees. The contribution that NGOs make is not to be overlooked. As clearly demonstrated by the data in the Table 3, volunteering in NGO sector in Slovenia presents almost the same workforce as the paid employment, that is 7.125 full time employees, which again proves that human resource management in NGOs must take into account the great human capital the voluntary work brings to the organisation and the society.

Table 3: Volunteers in Europe in 2010.

Country	Volunteers in associations	FTE Volunteers	Total volunteers
Austria	29%	331.663	2.000.000
Belgium	35%	84.903	1.165.668
Bulgaria	12%	38.710	93.096
Croatia	(n/a)	(n/a)	45.955
Cyprus	(n/a)	(n/a)	24.000
Czech Republic	30%	41.304	1.215.363
Denmark	36%	110.041	1.477.000
Estonia	17%	(n/a)	285.000
Finland	36%	67.890	1.300.000
France	25%	935.000	13.200.000
Germany	21%	1.211.474	2.300.000
Greece	38%	7.323	(n/a)
Hungary	15%	24600	412.893
Ireland	29%	78.367	1.570.408
Italy	24%	80.600	4.758.622
Latvia	21%	(n/a)	477.000
Lithuania	12%	15.673	100.000
Luxembourg	30%	9.537	107.000
Malta	26%	1.891	29.956
Netherlands	49%	480.637	5.300.000
Poland	12	20.473	5.912.500
Portugal	13%	67.342	1.040.000
Romania	10%	49.417	900.000
Slovakia	47%	1.156	304.094
Slovenia	27%	7.125	96.822
Spain	17%	591.017	1.272.338
Sweden	54%	280.062	3.000.000
UK	43%	1.004.228	13.800.000
EU28	27%	5.540.433	82.887.715

3 Human resource management in NGOs

The NGOs are service organisations providing service that often tackles sensitive interests and needs of beneficiaries. The most important basic asset of an NGO are the adequately trained and mission-focused people who have a good sense for interest of stakeholders and enough knowledge for creative cooperation with them (Tavčar, 2005). The specialty of NGOs are the two types of labour – the paid and the voluntary. The human resource management should therefore approach employees and volunteers differently.

Many NGOs have weak organisational structures, small number of members and are often extremely short-staffed, meaning that in Slovenia the non-profit professional segment of NGO functions as another obstacle on the way to development and strengthening the sector (Svetlik, 2001).

NGOs do not employ many people, but those who are paid are expected to perform several tasks, so they need a vast spectrum of competencies, and multitasking capacity. Besides that, not many organisations grant any promotion at job, which in this case cannot be a factor of motivation (Svetlik, 2001).

In comparison with private sector the NGOs dispose with less financial resources, to substitute that they work more and have a greater need for knowledge – the employees as well as volunteers (Svetlik, 2001). Due to lack of available resources and special mission the NGO rarely use monetary compensation as means of motivation. The human resource manager must foresee s/he will work with people that have unspoken motives, e.g. to work with people or are altruistic. This is especially true for volunteers.

The work in NGO demands a worker with broad expert knowledge, developed social skills, emotional stability and who is motivated by higher, non-monetary, especially social purpose (Svetlik, 2001). With good management and development of human capital the NGO creates itself a competitive advantage among all the other service organisations.

Time and an increasingly dynamic environment has caused a shift in thinking of non-profit managers and non-profit institutions now know that developing strong

management talent is essential, especially since many of the traditional measurements of progress and success such as profits do not exist in NGOs (Clements, 2013).

The NGOs must be able to attract, motivate and retain human capital resources, despite their limited financial resources (Roumpi, Magrizos, & Nicolopoulou, 2019). Human resource is the core resource of non-profit (Akingbola, 2017). From the few existent texts of Slovenian researchers, it could be again concluded that the NGO sector demands from its leaders a special set of competencies.

An analysis showed relatively homogenous bibliographical coupling network of documents in the field of VC and PE in entrepreneurial finance in the period from 2014 – 2019. Initially, WOS provided 49 publications, but one was not shown in the network map and was not assigned to any cluster as it is not connected to any of the remaining articles. We saw that there is a growth in a number of publications each year. In 2015 were published 3 and in 2019 even 14 articles in the given field. The most essential measure that represented the growth in this specific field was total link strength which showed relations among documents, showing how close science contributions of various authors were. Total link strength of this network was 6,528 (on average per document total link strength is 136) as of November 2019. Following, the VOSviewer provided four clusters in which 48 documents were distributed. All given clusters were explained briefly in the next subchapters.

4 Competencies of NGO managers

The term 'competency' refers to underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance. There is a range of factors that differentiated successful from less successful performance. These are personal qualities, motives, experience and behavioural characteristics (Boyatzis, 1982).

The lack of research into NGO leadership means that there is little understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of such NGO leaders, or analysis of the skills and competencies needed (Akingbola, 2013) and there is surprisingly little research about how the people and organizations that implement much development activity, like NGOs, are managed, motivated, or lead (Hailey & James, 2004).

Even though, several research papers try to identify the competencies needed by the managers and leaders of NGOs. The guru of management, Peter F. Drucker, (Kiessling & Glenn Richey, 2004), wrote that a non-profit organisation needs someone who works on the basic competencies. First being the **willingness, ability and self-discipline to listen**. The second essential is the **willingness to communicate, to make yourself understood**, that requires infinite patience. The next important competence is **not to alibi yourself**, explaining the competence by stating “*we don't do things to get by*”. The last basic competence is the **willingness to realize how unimportant you are compared to the task** (Drucker, 2005).

Apart from Drucker other authors lean on three types of competencies that have been identified:

behavioural (type of behaviour required to deliver results), **technical** (knowledge and skills need to carry out and meet performance expectations) and **NVQs/SNVQs²** (something that people in a work area should be able to do) (Armstrong, 2017).

Prahlad and Hamel in (Sanghi, 2016) have also classified three types of competencies, very similar to Boyatzis' definition – **organizational** (comprised of unique factors that make an organisation competitive); **job/role** (demonstrate results in effectiveness in job, role, function, task, duty, organisation); and **personal** (one's ability to perform the activities within the function or occupation to the standards expected in the job). Job/role competences define a range of inputs needed for the job, whereas personal competencies imply a level of achievement.

The competencies are arranged in an organised framework, called the competency model. These are the lists of competencies required for effective performance in a specific job, job family (i.e., group of related jobs), organization, function, or process. Individual competencies are organized into competency models to enable people in an organization or profession to understand, discuss, and apply the competencies to workforce performance (Hoge, Tondora, & Marrelli, 2005).

² NVQ (national vocational qualification) is a concept from UK and may not be applicable to Slovenian NGOs as we have no national vocational qualification for an NGO leader, even though the authors of the Strategy of systematic development of non-governmental organisations in Slovenia for the period 2003-2008 (Vrečko, 2003) foresaw it.

In search of existent competency models for NGO in Slovenia we were not successful. However, the recently adopted Strategy of development of non-governmental organisation and voluntary work until 2023 (Strategija razvoja nevladnih organizacij in prostovoljstva do leta 2023, 2018) announces modelling of competencies, gained by the voluntary work in NGOs. One of the six key goals “Strengthening the role of NGO in planning and public policy enactment on local and national level”, sets the measures to increase the number of permanent paid employments in NGOs. To fulfil this objective, the Slovenian Ministry of public administration in 2018 started with granting NGOs to hire expert staff and additional education with the goal of transition into permanent employment and enhancing organisational development, including the human capital development. These government measures show that defining competencies of employees in NGO sector will be needed in future. The competency model of NGO leaders would consequently set human resource management on firm ground, and consequently provide the information on the education and capacity building programmes needed to maintain and develop the defined competencies.

The researches on leadership competencies in Slovenia have existed in profit sector (Verle, Markič, Bavec, & Mulej, 2012), and also in non-profit public administration. The recently published manuals – one for leaders (Arzenšek, et al., 2019a) and the other for the human resource managers (Arzenšek, et al., 2019b) – are the result of a research, conducted in 2018 and 2019 among the leaders in Slovenian public administration. In the manuals a thorough competency model for public administration leaders is presented. According to their research, the leadership competencies of public administration leaders are – **future-oriented, goal oriented and dedicated, efficient work organisation, team and individual development**. Core competencies are – **dedication to proficiency, strengthening cooperation, working pro-actively, user-focused**.

Work specific competencies are thoroughly defined for each work area in the public administration and will be not included in this article.

This research presents a great model and is closest to the research on competencies that should be conducted in future for Slovenian NGOs. The manuals should be a model also due to the fact that the competency development is clearly explained to the end user – the leader.

However, worldwide the competency models for NGOs have been present for a longer time. One research identified 11 competencies, i.e. **adaptability, set of knowledge (general, international development, intercultural), communication, personal qualities, interpersonal skills, leadership, ethics, local network and knowledge, capacity building, and change management.** (Brière, Proulx, Flores, & Laporte, 2015)

The Italian researcher Ola Hajjaj (Hajjaj & Mandysova, 2004) defined the 10 most important soft skills, ranked by the NGOs employees: **working in team, interpersonal and communication skills, time managing and prioritizing tasks, meeting deadlines and complete tasks, multi-tasking, networking, working under pressure, active listening, speaking at least one additional language (beside the mother tongue language), strategic planning.**

The goal of study of Vicki Clements' thesis was to have non-profit executives articulate and agree upon the essential leadership and management skills they believe are important in their mid-level managers. The skills identified are the following:

Essential Management Skills: **Focused on the mission, Organized, Communication, Accountability.**

Essential Leadership Skills: **Authenticity, Promotes healthy organizational culture, Values human capital, Takes responsibility, Creates alignment, Provides senior level support, Relationship building** (Clements, 2013).

It is clear that the work roles in NPOs tend to require a mix of unique competencies to meet the requirements of complex organizational context in the sector. NGO managers have to focus not only on basic management functions such as budgeting, planning, decision making, and supervision, but they must also learn to work with stakeholders including volunteer board of directors, advocacy groups, and multiple funding organizations (Akingbola, 2013).

Findings of three foreign researches in the field may not be enough, but they clearly demonstrate that the competency modelling so far was not done generically, the grouping and naming of the competencies are not consistent, the researchers did not use the same methodology, so the comparison is not possible. This shows the

necessity of the research in the field based on a pre-set and, most of all, clear methodology.

5 Conclusion

The article discusses non-governmental organisations and their peculiarities, considering the two types of labour – paid employees and volunteers. We present the present situation in the field of employment and volunteer work, as well as human resource management in Slovenia in comparison with EU28 states. Slovene non-governmental organisation employ only 0.81% of all employed in Slovenia, which states that the opportunities that non-governmental sector offers are still not well perceived.

We believe that research of Slovenian NGO sector and especially human resource management, being the core resource of non-profits (Akingbola, 2017), would be shedding new light on the situation in Slovenia and putting forward new approaches in human resource management that would be suited for Slovenian NGOs. The finding could aid to the sector development and, eventually, facilitate a higher share of NGO professionals in total paid employment in Slovenia, especially now when similar incentives are being promoted also by recent measures of Ministry of Public Administration.

The existing competency lists show there is no uniform manner of presenting the knowledge, skills and abilities of workers in NGOs. A step beyond would be establishing a competency model of a NGO leader that would allow managers to seize the opportunities of education and capacity building programmes to develop the competencies even further. Human resource management (for employees as well as volunteers) would therefore have a greater impact on development of the sector and, most importantly, bring more effective satisfaction of the needs of the beneficiaries.

Consequently, the Slovenian NGO can do good better.

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