

Artículo de investigación

## Interaction between the authorities and the non-profit sector in Russian Federation: resources and development constraints

Interacción entre las autoridades y el sector no lucrativo en la Federación de Rusia: recursos y desarrollo de restricciones

Interação entre as autoridades e o setor sem fins lucrativos na Federação Russa: restrições de recursos e desenvolvimento

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### Abstract

The aim of the work is to study the conditions of Russian NPO functioning, the key problems and the trends of their development, and to develop the mechanisms that provide constructive practices for cooperation between the state and the non-profit sector. The results of statistical studies illustrate a high level of territorial differentiation among the representatives of the non-commercial sector, which creates inequality in terms of access to social services, the opportunities to meet the social needs of the population, the development of civil society, the involvement of social groups for the development and the implementation of managerial decisions in the social sphere. A low level of financial and infrastructural security of NPO activities, the lack of voluntary support lead to the reduction of trends and the volume of social assistance for the population. Currently, the interaction of local

### Resumen

El objetivo del trabajo es estudiar las condiciones de funcionamiento de las OSFL rusas, los problemas clave y las tendencias de su desarrollo, y desarrollar los mecanismos que proporcionan prácticas constructivas para la cooperación entre el estado y el sector sin fines de lucro. Los resultados de los estudios estadísticos ilustran un alto nivel de diferenciación territorial entre los representantes del sector no comercial, que crea desigualdad en términos de acceso a los servicios sociales, las oportunidades para satisfacer las necesidades sociales de la población, el desarrollo de la sociedad civil, la participación de grupos sociales para el desarrollo y la implementación de decisiones gerenciales en el ámbito social. Un bajo nivel de seguridad financiera y de infraestructura de las actividades de OSFL, la falta de apoyo voluntario conducen

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government and non-profit public organizations is characterized by rather narrow models of cooperation. The leading mechanism that can provide the necessary modernization of non-profit organization activities, the increase of their role and representation in public problem solution, is an intersectoral social partnership that can provide constructive coordination of key agent positions in the social space, an effective interaction of government bodies, population and public organizations.

**Keywords:** non-profit organizations, authorities, development resources, intersector partnership, support mechanisms.

a la reducción de las tendencias y al volumen de asistencia social para la población. Actualmente, la interacción del gobierno local y las organizaciones públicas sin fines de lucro se caracteriza por modelos de cooperación bastante estrechos. El mecanismo principal que puede proporcionar la modernización necesaria de las actividades de organizaciones sin fines de lucro, el aumento de su función y representación en la solución de problemas públicos, es una asociación social intersectorial que puede proporcionar una coordinación constructiva de puestos de agentes clave en el espacio social, una interacción efectiva de organismos gubernamentales, población y organizaciones públicas.

**Palabras clave:** organizaciones sin fines de lucro, autoridades, recursos de desarrollo, asociación intersectorial, mecanismos de apoyo.

## Resumo

O objetivo do trabalho é estudar as condições operacionais das organizações sem fins lucrativos russas, os principais problemas e tendências de seu desenvolvimento e desenvolver mecanismos que forneçam práticas construtivas de cooperação entre o Estado e o setor sem fins lucrativos. Os resultados dos estudos estatísticos ilustram um alto nível de diferenciação territorial entre os representantes do setor não comercial, o que gera desigualdade em termos de acesso a serviços sociais, oportunidades de atender às necessidades sociais da população, desenvolvimento da sociedade civil, a participação de grupos sociais para o desenvolvimento e implementação de decisões gerenciais no campo social. Um baixo nível de segurança financeira e infraestrutura das atividades da NPO, a falta de apoio voluntário leva à redução de tendências e ao volume de assistência social para a população. Atualmente, a interação do governo local e organizações públicas sem fins lucrativos é caracterizada por modelos de cooperação bastante estreitos. O principal mecanismo que pode proporcionar a necessária modernização das atividades das organizações sem fins lucrativos, o aumento de sua função e representação na solução de problemas públicos, é uma associação social intersectorial que pode proporcionar uma coordenação construtiva de posições de agentes o espaço social, uma interação efetiva de agências governamentais, população e organizações públicas.

**Palavras-chave:** organizações sem fins lucrativos, autoridades, recursos de desenvolvimento, associação intersectorial, mecanismos de apoio.

## Introduction

The intersectoral partnership of government bodies and non-profit public organizations is one of the most significant areas increasing the effectiveness of state activity in the social sphere. Efficiency implies not only the provision of a higher quality of social services to the population, but the reduction of financial costs. As research shows, the transaction costs for the development of public institution network providing public goods production are higher than the costs of the non-profit sector initiative support (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). The higher

quality of social services is associated with the advantages of NPOs in the role of social service providers as compared with the performance of similar functions by state institutions or commercial organizations (Mersianova, Benevolensky, 2017). In modern conditions, it should be possible to organize new subsystems that increase the efficiency of state function implementation (Volkov, 2016). The results of the expert surveys in Russia show that the public sector provides consumers with a basic level of social services both in terms of composition and quality. It was established that the state can not adapt quickly and flexibly to the growing pace of

innovative progress in technology (Makeeva et al., 2017). Therefore, target audience of citizens appear whose specific needs go beyond the state-provided social services (Zvorykina, 2017). The urgency of the topic is determined by the need to find the best ways to develop the social sphere in modern Russia, which, despite all attempts to its state regulation, still lags behind the population needs (Babakaev, Vinogradova, Kulyamina, 2017). Non-commercial organizations are able to fill up the underproduction of the required goods and services, provide a more solid representation of various social groups, implementing the mechanisms of direct democracy and forcing other sectors to act efficiently and effectively in the public interest (Demidov, 2009). The growth of NPO number is directly related to the development of civil society, with the protection and the improvement of democratic institutions (Belyakin, Baidamin, 2015). Non-commercial public organizations play a key role in society, their activities allow to fill the gaps between public services and the market, improve the quality of social services for the population (Kirk, Abrahams & Ractham, 2016; Vinichenko et al., 2017), to provide institutionalization of public-private partnership practices (Mendel & Brudney, 2014).

However, in modern conditions, the activities of non-profit public organizations are limited by a number of factors. The economic crisis exacerbated the problem of financial security substantially (Kim & Kim, 2016). A high level of NPO dependence on voluntary donations and state funding initiates the reduction of their sustainability and efficiency, especially in the context of downturns (Stecker, 2014). The response to these trends is the development of hybrids that combine nonprofit and for-profit arrangements (Kramer, 2000). The increase of hybridization among nonprofit organizations represents the restructuring of the state and the adaptive response to these organizations to an increasingly turbulent environment (Smith, 2017).

New challenges and threats, both in economic and political spheres, have transformed the directions of functioning of the non-profit sector, the specifics and the boundaries of its activities (Eschman, Schwartz & Austin, 2011). One of the problems is the reduction of non-profit sector legitimacy (Schlesinger, Mitchell, Gray, 2004), the distribution of fraud, incompetence of

leadership, the lack of accountability cases in mass media. The stereotype that public organizations spend less resources than the tax breaks they receive (Lipman, 2001; Sullivan & Karlin, 1999) is quite common. In these conditions, the tendency of control strengthening over NPO activities, the attention to the issues of their work efficiency measurement (Benjamin, 2014) seems quite natural. At the same time, the results of the study have shown that the measurement of effectiveness is focused mainly and almost exclusively to monitor and evaluate the use of funds (Moxham, 2014). This approach excludes the issues of service delivery quality, the orientation to the population needs from the control field. The growth of reporting volume required for NPO participation in the social services market at budget expense creates additional organizational difficulties (Brandsen & Pape, 2015).

An insufficient level of financial support for non-profit organization activities, the reduction of volunteer support from citizens initiates the inconsistency of population expectations and real social assistance practices provided by NPOs (Schlesinger, Mitchell, Gray, 2004). Non-profit organizations often lack the organizational capacity for an effective social service provision (Jones et al., 2017). The efforts of the employees are directed, first of all, to the search for financial resources and the maintenance of organization activity.

The problems of staffing also limit NPO activities. The lack of circulating assets entails a temporary inability of a non-profit organization to provide services, as well as a possible outflow of qualified personnel from it. Small and medium-sized organizations are in the greatest risk area. It is quite difficult for them to meet the quality standards set by the state and the requirements for the certification of NPO personnel (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). Another problem of small NPOs is the forced diversion of staff efforts from an organization mission to administrative functions (Pope, Key & Saigal, 2015).

Thus, the research problem lies in the contradiction between NPO activity high social significance and the presence of administrative and organizational barriers that reduce the effectiveness of the non-profit sector. The aim of the study is to analyze the conditions of Russian NPO functioning, the key problems and the

trends of their development, and to develop the mechanisms that provide constructive practices for cooperation between the state and the non-profit sector.

### Methods

The information base of the study is the federal and regional normative and legislative acts, statistical data, information and analytical materials of federal, regional and local authorities. In the course of the study, they used general theoretical methods: analysis and synthesis, deduction and induction, generalization, theoretical modeling, and empirical methods: document analysis, sociological surveys and observation.

In the course of the study, a mass questionnaire survey of the population was performed using a representative sample. A quota sample was used, formed on three grounds: respondents' gender, age and the district of their residence, which made 705 people. The total amount is a permanent urban able-bodied population of RF municipalities, whose age makes 18 - 60 years. The sample represents the respondents by gender and age. The study tool is a questionnaire. The form of the questionnaire used both the author's questions and questions from an open database of the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VCIOM, Press Release No. 2691). The borrowing of a number of issues allowed a comparative analysis of the respondents' responses of the capital region to all-Russian sample. The processing and the analysis of mass survey quantitative data was carried out using the mathematical and the statistical methods of data processing and analysis.

Besides, the empirical base was represented by the results of studies at the Higher School of Economics, the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VCIOM, Press Release No. 2691) and the Public Opinion Fund (FOM). The article uses the results of population surveys carried out by these organizations. The representative nature of the data is ensured by the use of a multistage stratified territorial random sample. The application of the abovementioned methods and techniques made it possible to ensure the validity of the analysis, theoretical and practical conclusions.

### Results

#### Resource support of non-profit public organization activities

The financial support for NPO activities is one of the most significant problems. In this regard, grant support and the access of non-profit organizations to the provision of social services in the budgetary sphere is of a particular relevance. The key constraints for the establishment of a stable financial base for NPOs are low and economically unjustified tariffs for social services, determined solely by the practice of government social service institutions, high requirements for the participation in competitions to obtain government contracts on social servicing for citizens (RF Ministry of Labor data).

The results of the survey conducted among NPO leaders by the Center for Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector Studies, showed that only 15% of respondents are confident that their organizations "have enough funds to implement everything they have conceived" (Mersiyanova, Benevolensky, 2017)

The inadequacy of infrastructure support for NPO activities is equally important issue. So in 2015, 70,000 public organizations do not have any premises to organize their activities.

The problem of personnel resources for the non-commercial sector is quite acute. According to the results of Russian NPOs survey conducted by the Center for Civil Society Studies and the nonprofit sector of the HSE SRU in 2012, the share of small organizations with no more than five employees reaches 68% (Benevolensky & Shmulevich, 2013). According to Rosstat data in 2016, only 4.8% of citizens (among working-age people) are the members of any public, voluntary or charitable organizations (movements), 7.9% of them are directly involved in the activities of public organizations.

This trend is typical today both for developed and developing countries. According to the study results, the non-profit sector under current conditions is characterized by scarce resources and relies on the goodwill of volunteers (Moxham, 2014).

The ability and the willingness of volunteers to carry out various tasks, to provide social assistance is critical to the success of many projects of non-profit sector (Albergoni, 2016).

As a rule, the population does not trust public organizations. The data of the survey show that, in the opinion of every fourth of the respondents in the Moscow region, the activities of public associations are more formal.

Citizens are not ready to unite in order to solve citywide problems, low activity is observed among the population (Fig. 1). The analysis of population passivity reasons demonstrates that the distrust for local self-government bodies and the lack of belief that residents can change something themselves are the key barriers that limit the development of territorial self-organization.

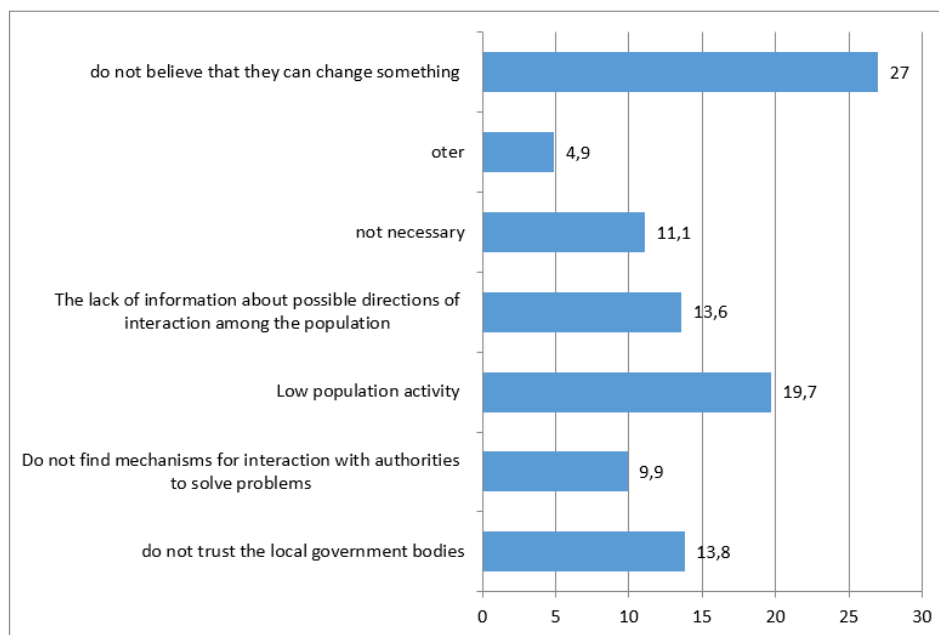


Fig. 1. The answer to the following question: "Why are the residents of your city (settlement) not ready to unite to solve citywide problems (in %)"

The survey data of the Moscow region residents correlate with the results of the VCIOM poll, according to which the citizens do not aspire to take part in the activities of the non-profit sector: almost one of three Russians is not interested in the activity of public organizations in principle (31%); Every fourth (23%) of the respondents noted the lack of resources and opportunities for his participation (poor health, lack of material opportunities), 14% of respondents consider the work of NPOs as irrelevant and uninteresting (VCIOM, Press Release No. 2691).

The consequence of the low level of financial and infrastructural security concerning the NPO activities and the lack of voluntary support has been the shrinking of social assistance to the

population. The decrease of NPO activity effectiveness is noted in the following indicators:

- the number of people who received legal aid on a grant or concessional basis (the drop by 38%);
- the number of people who received charitable assistance in kind, except for the provision of social services and legal aid on a grant or concessional basis (the drop by 4%);
- the number of people who received charitable assistance in cash (the decline by 11%).

This trend was confirmed by the fact that according to the results of the survey conducted by All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, 89% of the interviewed respondents

have never received assistance from non-profit organizations (VCIOM, Press Release No. 2691).

### 3.2 The interaction between RF authorities and the non-profit sector

State support is the most significant factor of resource support for the activities of non-profit organizations in Russian Federation. Russian society is characterized traditionally by a very significant role of the state, as the public life regulator and the spread of paternalistic values. Under these conditions, the leaders of non-profit organizations, reflecting the moods and the expectations prevailing in the society, are oriented mostly toward state support. Sponsorship, the reduction of cost by the attraction of volunteers and highly qualified volunteers are additional, but not the main sources of development.

The polls of NPO leaders illustrate certain problems of their resource provision, the contradictions in interactions with the public sector. Only 16% of experts noted positive changes in this issue, considering that the state encourages the development of NPOs and civic initiatives, establishes the cooperation with NPOs as equal partners. Most experts noted significant dysfunctions in the matters of interaction with authorities. So, every fifth respondent does not see the prospects and the points of cooperation, and believes that the state treats them "indifferently and ignores them." A low level of state support effectiveness was noted in the responses of 23% of experts. An even more disturbing trend is an excessive control by the authorities. This point of view is shared by about a third of experts (27%).

The control over NPO activities is the factor that prevents corruption and financial irregularities, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, the complication of reporting, the tightening of requirements for the certification of activities initiate the diversion of NPO personnel resources and reduce their mobility. It seems that the interaction of state authorities and non-profit public organizations should be rather partnership, based on mutual respect and trust. The role of the state is seen in general limits determination of the non-profit sector activity, the creation of conditions for its development, which does not involve a direct interference in internal processes (Frolova, 2016). The main tools for partnership development are the transparency of competitive procedures, the

provision of access to the state order, the shift of control and supervision functions from authorities to the public, the popularization of volunteer activity among the population.

The mechanisms of NPO financial support are centered at the state and regional levels for the most part. The main state bodies which provide financial support to NPOs are the Administration of RF President, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Labor of Russia. The largest amount of funding falls on regional competitions (74.95%) and the competitions of federal authorities (24.98%). Less than 1% are the tenders of grantors.

The interaction between local self-government bodies and non-profit public organizations is characterized by fairly narrow cooperation models. The majority of municipal employees (74%) expects help from public organizations in the work with public. The results of NPO leader survey illustrate that such assistance is provided to municipalities: 29% of NPOs provide information and analytical services to local self-government bodies, 27% participate in joint public (coordination) councils, 21% support municipal programs (without a social order), 21% participate in joint working groups with authorities, negotiation sites, conciliation and conflict commissions (the data from the Higher School of Economics). The obtained data indicate a high level of the non-profit sector involvement in local problem solution. A significant problem in this context is the fact that only 7-12% of non-profit organizations have the practices of cooperation with municipalities on a material basis (municipal grants, the works on social order). Thus, we can assume the existence of a stable system of behavior partners in the interactions of local authorities and NPOs, the essence of which is represented mainly by the gratuitous assistance from the latter. The institutional nature of the non-profit sector does not contradict these trends. However, taking into account the financial, infrastructural and personnel inadequacy of Russian NPO resources, the lack of economic and organizational support for their activities can lead to significant dysfunctions and imbalances in the non-profit sector development (Frolova, Medvedeva 2018).

Focusing on the support of the non-profit sector at the federal and regional levels, the lack of practical cooperation with the local authorities



on a material basis is associated with a number of factors, the key of which are the financial restrictions of Russian municipality activities (Frolova, Rogach, 2017). Despite the declarations of the state authorities on the need to strengthen the financial and the economic base of local self-government, the practice shows negative dynamics of these processes. The overwhelming majority of RF municipalities are subsidized nowadays. According to statistical data, the deficit of local budgets has a stable tendency to increase in recent years.

### Discussion

Social partnership is the leading mechanism that can provide the necessary modernization of non-profit organization activities, the increase of their role and representation in social problem solution. This mechanism is designed to ensure a constructive agreement of key agent positions of the social space, an effective interaction between government bodies and public organizations.

In this context, the development of institutional conditions that ensure trust and cooperation in the interactions of power and public organizations is of particular importance. Trust and cooperation implies both openness on the part of the state (the transparency of competitive procedures, the access to the state order), and the possibility of complete and reliable information obtaining from NPOs. «Transparency is a symbol for accountability and a critically important dimension of nonprofit organizations, which are private and voluntary but chartered by government for public purposes» (Hale, 2014).

The problem of public confidence in public organizations is also of particular relevance for Russian society. One of the trends of work on this factor can be the involvement of the media to cover their activities (Frolova, Ryabova, 2018), the development of a single channel to inform about the trends of work, the connection of thematic groups to information support in social networks. The mass media make a significant influence on the attitude towards public organizations, determine behavioral intentions related to volunteer activity or monetary donations (Nah et al., 2017).

A strategic trend that ensures the viability and the effectiveness of the non-profit sector is to popularize volunteer activity among the

population. According to research results, positive emotional expectations related to the volunteer's work determine the willingness to start volunteer activity for beginners, as well as the level of self-identification as a volunteer for experienced participants (Barraza, 2011). The information vacuum around volunteer activities, the lack of a social order for volunteerism hamper significantly the activities of non-profit public organizations. The mechanisms of population attraction to volunteer activities are the following ones: informational support of voluntary activities, including the development of a fashion / trend for volunteer activity, the creation of a positive image of volunteering, the provision of an educational environment for the training of volunteers (qualification development, supervision), the motivation of participants.

In addition to the popularization of volunteerism among different groups of population, the dissemination of cooperation practices between NPOs and the persons with a high level of legal, financial and economic qualifications is of particular relevance. When the majority of NPOs has a limited number of full-time employees, the attraction of volunteers, not only for the implementation of the main mission, but also for the performance of professional services in the legal, marketing and accounting sphere, is especially relevant. The personnel shortage of modern Russian NPOs, the lack of financial resources, and the complication of bureaucratic problems actualize the search for the mechanisms that, on the one hand, reduce costs, and, on the other hand, improve the efficiency of administrative functions.

Insufficient managerial skills limit the ability of modern NPOs to obtain government contracts for the social servicing of citizens. The solution of the problem is seen in the professional development of NPO personnel. According to international studies, the key competencies in the areas of marketing (Chad, Kyriazis & Motion, 2013), leadership, the adaptability to the external environment (Kimberlin, Schwartz & Austin, 2011), strategic planning (Gothard & Austin 2012) are the factors of non-commercial organization efficiency. In this context, the prospects of the non-profit sector sustainability increase include the development of an educational environment for NPO leaders, which ensure the development of their managerial skills and competencies in marketing and law. Legal training can increase considerably

the chances of NPOs entering the market of social services and facilitate the interaction with public authorities. Besides, it is necessary to solve the problem of requirement overstating concerning the level of staff professionalism rendering social services and to prevent the conversion of qualification requirements into a bureaucratic barrier on the way of NPO access to the market of social services. Professional level requirements should take into account the institutional specifics of NPO activities that use of the work of volunteers in their activity extensively i.e. the personnel not included in the permanent staff of an organization (Mersiyanova, Benevolensky, 2017).

The effectiveness of social partnership between the authorities and the non-profit sector is determined by a number of factors:

- 1- The provision of approach variability to interaction with the non-profit sector. Variability involves the consideration of regional differentiation in NPO development, as well as their specifics, their areas of activity, and the level of financial security. The international practice demonstrates the need to take into account such factors as the professionalism of personnel, management effectiveness, an organization budget, also through private donations and the orientation of the mission (Cerino, Doelle & Ware, 2016).
- 2- Economic substantiation of tariffs for NPO services in the field of social servicing. In modern Russian conditions, tariff levels do not compensate often the full expenses of an organization.
- 3- Legal and informational support of the non-profit sector initiatives. A particular attention should be paid to consulting, methodological assistance to NPOs in order to facilitate the access to public funding, the preparation of reports and the participation in grant procedures. It is very important to establish simplified procedures and reporting forms for small NPOs.
- 4- The concentration of mechanisms supporting the activities of non-profit organizations at the local level. The closest approach of local authorities to the population provides the most adequate representation about inhabitant main problems and social needs, the wide possibilities of citizen attraction to volunteer activity, the provision of interaction with them for the social sphere development.

## Summary

A high level of maturity for the development forms and mechanisms of the third sector largely determines the openness of public policy, the effectiveness of population social services, and the quality of citizen life.

The key issues of the non-profit sector development in Russia are the following ones: financial instability, the dysfunctions in the system of interaction with government bodies, a low level of personnel and infrastructural provision for activities, an uneven representation of NPOs in the regions of Russian Federation, and a low level of volunteer support for citizens.

The work of volunteers, a voluntary support is the most significant compensator for the financial and the infrastructural insecurity of the activities in the non-profit sector. The key areas ensuring the sustainability of NPOs in modern Russia are the following ones: the level of people's trust increase in public organizations, the popularization of volunteer activities among the population, including the attraction of highly qualified volunteer staff to carry out legal, marketing and accounting functions.

The financial support of NPO activities is one of the most significant problems. In this regard, grant support, the access of non-profit organizations to the provision of social services in the budgetary sphere is of particular relevance. A high degree of power and governance centralization, the concentration of financial resources at the federal and regional levels in Russian Federation are the factors which destabilize a sustainable development of the non-profit sector at the local level. Local authorities, experiencing the need to support the non-profit sector, are significantly limited in financial resources that could provide a mutually beneficial partnership with NPOs. It seems that the most effective strategy is to center the mechanisms for NPO support at the local level. Local self-government bodies are as close to the population as possible, they have the most complete information on the most severe problems of life support for citizens, and have the opportunities to attract volunteers. These circumstances determine their special role in interaction with the non-profit sector. The partnership approach in the implementation of the municipal policy presupposes the inter-sectoral interaction between the authorities and



NPOs, will solve the most complex social tasks at the municipal level, and will also ensure the sustainable development of a municipality.

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