

The Role of NPOs in the Socio-Economic Development in the Russian Region

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Abstract. The Russian non-profit organisations (NPOs) went through the long pass from political actors to social-oriented assistances and then to some drivers of socio-economic development [1]. Avoiding the engagement of the population in political actions, the Russian government pays significant attention to involving people in socio-economic decision-making processes and creating and developing a non-profit sector. The indicators measuring NPOs' activities have been included in a wide range of official governmental documents and projects. However, the non-profit organisations remain invisible on the socio-economic landscape of Russian regions. On the one hand, there is a lack of theoretical understanding of the role of NPOs in regional socio-economic development. On the other hand, the official statistics do not have enough basic information on NPOs scope, structure, financing, and contributions in socio-economic development. As a result, some contradictions between official proclaimed targets of NPOs involvement in socio-economic development and measurement of these results occur. This paper provides an analysis of the situation on a regional level. Using the Nizhny Novgorod region as a case study, we explore how different governmental bodies operate with statistics about NPOs and how this information is collected by the official statistics office. The findings based on a set of interviews, analysis of governmental reports and plans for official Federal statistics work plan. These efforts point the way toward putting the NPOs on the economic map of the Russian region for the first time in a way supporting participatory mechanism of regional socio-economic development.

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paragraph. Since contemporary information-retrieval systems rely heavily on the content of titles and abstracts to identify relevant articles in literature searches, great care should be taken in constructing both

1. Introduction

Recent academic and public debate has paid a great deal of attention to the subject of mapping the non-profit sector [2,3]. However, the problem still exists, and different countries have the enormous diversity of this sector, embracing everything from volunteer care centres to huge hospital complexes and prestigious universities — this diversity based on cultural and economic traditions and regulation systems of non-profit organisations. The following commonalities are widely employed for setting this sector as a distinct economic area, which needs in special mapping: different production function, public-goods production, different governance structures, distinctive revenue structure, distinctive staffing structure, different tax treatment and distinctive legal treatment [4]. The Russian non-profit sector can be described by the employment of all these features.

However, these descriptions do not constitute a definition of non-profit organisations. The literature review shows that NPOs could be defined by employing several approaches such as legal terminology implemented in a regulation system in a particular country [5,6]; economic approach to describing non-profit sector [7,8]; functional definitions [9,10] and normative approach [11,12].

The problem of measuring the non-profit sector and volunteering was first-ever discussed on Global Assembly in 2007. This event brought together national accounts statistical staff from more than 50 the countries and offered some principals and System of National Accounts. Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts provides 11 features, which can be used for distinguishing this sector from other economic activities: not-for-profit character, public-goods production, governance structures, revenue structure, staffing, capital sources, tax treatment, legal treatment, lack of sovereign powers, relative detachment from political pressures, characteristic types of transactions [13, p. 4-5].

Considering the fact that implementation of NPI was a significant step forward in studying the statistics of NPOs, it was wildly criticized in different ways such as incomplete classification [14], inaccurate grouping [15], the contradiction between different satellite accounts [16]. Majority of researchers agreed that the contribution of non-profit organizations to the worldwide economy is significantly underestimated [3,4,17]. The Russian Federation implemented basic principals of international statistics [18] that gave the opportunity to measure the impact of NPOs in economic development. However, the process of establishing information systems at the regional level is incomplete, that was an initial force for starting our research in the condition of information about NPOs at a particular region.

For the purpose of our research, we use the legal definitions of a non-profit organisation which was implemented by Federal Law dated 12.01.1996 N 7-FZ "On Non-Profit Organizations" (as entered into force on 01.01.2019). "A non-profit organization is an organization that does not have a profit as the main goal of its activity and does not distribute the profit between its participants." "Non-profit organizations are organisations established in the forms provided for by this Federal Law (with the exception of state corporations, state companies, public associations that are political parties) and carrying out activities aimed at solving social problems and developing civil society in the Russian Federation are recognized as socially oriented non-profit organizations (SO NPO)" [19]. This definition helps us exploring the information flow, which is generated and exchanged between different governmental bodies involving in regulation and interaction with NPOs.

The employment of legal definition in the research project provides clarity in communication with different experts but creates several limitations. One of the severe problems of using this definition is the limitation of international comparative work because of the lack of uniformity across national borders [20]. However, according to our research questions, we look at the structure and development of information and statistical accounting of NPOs in particular country rather compare the scope of NPOs impacts.

Employed with this operational definition of NPOs, then we faced additional tasks to formulate a classification system for sorting activities of NGOs that can be measured as impact in socio-economic development. According to economic approaches in this set of classification can be included the results of economic activities of NPOs in breakdown to particular markets such as funds and financial cash flows, number of NPOs' social service recipients, number of employees and volunteers and so on.

2. Methodology

The information database of our research included 1) official regional statistics about NPOs activities for 2015-2018, annual reports (2013-2018) from the Ministry of the interior, regional, and municipal policy of Nizhny Novgorod region, and series of interviews with 15 experts. They represented the following groups: officials of federal and regional governmental bodies involved in the interaction with NPOs; representatives of different types of NPOs; staff from the regional statistical office. The information has been collected during 2019.

3. NPOs in perspective of regional statistics

According to the statistics of Ministry of Justice, 3982 NPOs operate in Nizhny Novgorod region [21], nevertheless, in the region there is statistical information only in terms of SO-NPOs, which are collected by two institutions Federal State Statistics Service in the region and Ministry of Interior, regional, and municipal policy of Nizhny Novgorod region. Besides, the data do not always match.

According to the Federal State Statistics Service data [22], the number of SO-NPOs in the Nizhny Novgorod region is gradually increasing over the period of 2015-2018. In 2015, 1,551 socially-oriented non-profit organizations were registered in the region according to Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) statistics, in 2016 the number of NPOs increased to 1,865 NPOs; the tendency of subsequent decrease in the number of NPOs (1,515) in 2017 was changed in 2018. According to the latest data of Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), there are 1,648 non-profit organizations in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

There are dynamics in changes in the structure of the socially-oriented NPO sector in the region. According to statistics, the most frequent type of such NPOs are organizations that provide social support and protection of the population. The share of this type of NPOs has increased during 2016, 2017, but in 2018 it decreased slightly to 22%. The second most frequent type of NPOs are organisations, which carry out activities in the field of education, enlightenment, science, and the promotion of these activities. The share of such organisations dropped during the period: thus in 2015, their share was 35%, then in 2018 it does not exceed 19%. The share of non-profit organizations engaged in activities in the field of physical education and sports, and in the promotion of such activities, on the contrary, increased: from 12% in 2015 to 18% in 2018. Over the period 2015-2018, the share of non-profit organizations in the field of patriotic (including military-patriotic), the moral education of the population of the Russian Federation dropped from 24% in 2015 to 9% in 2018. The non-profit organisations in the field of culture and art are in a similar situation; their share dropped from 24% in 2015 to 6% in 2018. The comparable tendency exists in the field of healthcare, prevention and protection of the health of citizens, and promotion of healthy lifestyle, their share dropped from 23% in 2015 to 6% in 2018. The share of non-profit organizations in the field of improving the moral and psychological conditions of citizens sharply decreased from 20% in 2015 to 3% in 2018. During the period 2015-2018, there is a tendency of increasing the share of NPOs involved in the fields of: promoting charitable activities; providing legal assistance (free of charge or for reduced fees); legal education of population; in the field of rights and freedoms protection; in the field of improving the quality of life of the aging people, as well as in the field of volunteering activities.

During 2015-2018, there are changes in the amounts of NPOs financing and its' structure. In 2015, the total volume of financing of non-profit organizations was 6,121,630 thousand rubles, and lowed in

2016, increased again in 2017, and sharply increased in 2018 by 20%, amounting to 7,295,808 thousand rubles.

Donations from business and entrepreneurs, incomes from the results of NPOs own activities, as well as individual donations, are the main components of funds of non-profit organizations. During the period, the structure of the main sources of NPOs' financing has changed. Thus, in 2015, a third of all budget were incomes from the NPO's own activities (32%, which were 1,928,627 thousand rubs), but gradually decreased over the period to 28% (which were 2,042,046 thousand rubs) in 2018.

The share of individual donations increased from 27% (1,648,884 thousand rubs) in 2015 to 32% (1,882,007 thousand rubs) in 2016 and therefore became the main source of NPOs' budget. In 2017, 2018, their share slightly decreased to 23% (1,644,889 thousands rub) in 2018. The share of donations of the business community was 23% (1,422,226 thousand rubs) and was the third most important source of financing for NPOs. By 2018, the share of these revenues increased and became the main source of financing for NPOs (30% of all revenues, which is 2,172,544 thousand rubs).

Table 1. The structure of NPOs' funds, thousand rubles.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total revenues, rates of growth	100	-3	1.94	20.53
From federal budget	1.84	1.37	1.62	2.7
From regional budget	1.7	2.01	2.58	2.21
From municipal budget	1.96	1.85	1.93	1.7
Personal donations	26.94	31.69	23.87	22.55
Own activity income	31.51	30.15	29.65	27.99
Donations from business	23.23	20.38	24	29.78
Other	12.83	12.54	16.35	13.04

During 2015-2018, budget funds of different levels, including federal and regional government grant programs, were not a significant source of financing for NPOs and did not exceed 6.5% of all income. If the plans to increase the grant financing of the NPO sector in 2020 has been implemented, the picture could change.

During the period, there are changes in the structure of social services provided by NPOs. There is a gradual reducing of the share of the communal, social and personal services in the social services offered by non-profit organizations (from 74% in 2015 to 63% in 2018), nevertheless, this type of social service provided by NGOs continues to prevail (this is a Russian-wide trend mentioned by other researchers [18]). This category includes social services provided by NPOs in the field of organizing of leisure and entertainment, culture and sports events and activities (codes for the classification of economic activities, <http://www.consultant.ru/law/podborki/theme-okvjed/>).

Over the period 2015-2018, the proportion of the population that received social services from non-profit organizations increased significantly. Thus, the share of the population did not exceed 6% in 2015, but in 2018, it amounted up to 30%. The structure of social services provided has also changed over the period. In 2015, 2016, the most frequent social services provided were in the field of health services (33% and 30%, respectively); in 2017, 2018 their share fell sharply (to 9% in 2018). On the contrary, more than half of social services were provided in the sphere of culture (53% in 2017 and 49% in 2018); the share of these social services at the beginning of the period did not exceed 12%. Similar, the NPOs' activities in the sphere of sport sharply increased during 2015-2018 (from 18% in 2015 to 31% in 2018). According to 2018 statistics, it became the second most frequent type of social services of NPOs in the region.

Table 2. Number Of Npos' Social Services Recipients.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
In total	203371	245888	585089	974687
Education	19.1	18	9.9	5.5
Health	33.3	30.7	14	8.6
Culture	12.2	14	53.5	48.5
Sport	17.7	19.7	13.4	31
Social policy (including social services)	17.6	17.7	9.2	6.5
The share of social services recipients	6.2	7.5	18.0	30.1

These rapid changes of shares of the social services provision might correlate with the increasing of NPOs activities aimed in organising one-off cultural events, festivals with shrinking of the share of regular occurring social activities [23]; it could be a research question for the further investigation.

Table 3. Structure Of Participants Of Npos' Activities.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
The average number of full-time employees (excluding part-time workers)	6893	5417	5231	6128
Average number of volunteers	16042	19514	21802	59419
Number of members	1016881	1036057	877093	885358
Share of volunteers in relation to the number of employees in the economy, %	0.97	1.19	1.31	N/A

Over the period 2015-2018, the total share and number of members of the organization decreased in relation to the total number of employees in the Nizhny Novgorod region. During this period, there were changes in terms of shares of the population, involved in NPOs' activities; the number and share of paid employees has decreased, but at the same time, the percentage of volunteers and volunteers participating in NPOs has significantly increased in relation to the number of people employed in the region and especially in comparison to the number of full-time staff of NPOs. The share of volunteers in relation to the number of employees in the economy is about 1.5 %

Thus, even with all the restrictions, despite limitations of the existing accounting system, it reflects the growth of the non-profit sector, and its contribution tends to be comparable to the contributions of small industries in the region [24]. At the same time, this system of indicators yet vaguely correlates with official statistics used by the state to create conditions for the development of the NPO sector.

4. NPOs in the perspective of regional policymaking

The socio-economic role of NPOs, though arguably underestimated by official statistics, is nevertheless recognized by the governmental institutions. Furthermore, the sphere of NPOs' activities has long become a field of regulation from the legislative bodies and practical policymaking. The NPOs are frequently seen by the governmental bodies as providers of essential services, especially those focusing on the issues of social policymaking. This implies both assistance to NPOs' development and exercising some forms of control over that development. To a great extent, it explains why the statistics in terms of activities of socially oriented NPOs are more developed, rather than the NPO sector in general.

Ministry of the interior, regional, and municipal policy of Nizhny Novgorod region is the primary consumer of statistical data about socially-oriented NPOs and their activities. The aims of policymaking of the Ministry, as declared by their annual reports [25], are rising of trust to the regional

Government, ensuring public and institutional approval of the Government's activities, promotion of the Strategy of regional development.

The interaction between the regional authorities (the regional government) and the local civic initiatives have been developing in different ways. One of the ways of interaction is the Government's activities in addressing the grassroots level of civic activities with the so-called Project for Support of Local Initiatives. Economically, the project implies the distribution of money and administrative support between the local initiatives; however, the distribution does not have an exclusively top-down character. The resources are distributed on a competitive basis, and a co-funding from the municipal level is required.

The development of civil society is declared by the Ministry as one of the prerequisites of positive changes in the level of the population's well-being and quality of life. Therefore, the Ministry pays attention to the state of affairs in the civic sector, and the specific optics it uses worth analyzing as shaping the worldview of the decision-makers.

The basic element of the picture as seen by the regional authorities is the number of civic and non-profit organizations. The registry of such organizations forms a pool, to which an organization have to belong in order to compete for financial support. The statistics on the number and structure of NPOs provided by the Ministry and Federal State Statistics Service in the region differ. According to our informants, this is due to both the specifics of the procedures for collecting information and approaches to assessing its quality.

The focus of the statistics of the Ministry is socially-oriented NGOs participating in the process of grants applications and implementing the projects which were chosen. The statistics of grants won by socially-oriented NPOs is yet another element of the political perspective of NPOs situation in the region. It is emphasized that the levels of participation in the yearly competition for regional grants serve as an important indicator of civic activity dynamics.

The regional Government not only monitors the activities of socially oriented NPOs but seeks to drive their development in the desired directions by means of financial and administrative support. The general direction of that drive has been in recent years towards involving NPOs in fulfilment of the prioritized tasks on socially significant areas of development. The Government focuses its attention on the geographical diversity of NPOs' activities. One of the monitored values is the number of districts within the region, where NPOs realize the socially significant project. The main problem is the high level of concentration of NPOs in the capital of the region and poor development of NPOs in rural areas, which coincides with all-Russian trends [26,27,28]. Finally, the picture of the NPOs activities in the view of the Government includes such elements as the media attention to the NPOs-related issues.

From 2015 on, the authorities' policy in the interaction with NPOs is guided by a sub-program 'Support of socially-oriented non-profit organizations in Nizhny Novgorod region in 2015 – 2020', part of the program 'Social support for the citizens of Nizhny Novgorod region'. From the point of view of the figures, the dynamics of the sphere of NPOs is rather modest. The data demonstrate a prolonged and smooth decline of the number of registered NPOs (from 4,251 in 2013 to 3,982 in 2019), while the quantity of the grant competitions and the success rates do not show any pronounced changes. Thus, the number of socially-oriented NPOs slowly increase in the region, according to the regional Rosstat statistics. Therefore, the share of SO-NPOs in the region grows.

While the figures reflecting the structural dynamics of the NPO sphere in the region are rather stable, the thematic profiles of NPOs' activities as reposted by the Ministry see sufficient changes. Before 2015, the primary accent in the Ministry reports was made on historical and patriotic events. This trend has been relatively stable through the whole period under observation, with a peak in 2015, marking the anniversary of victory in WW2. However, after 2016, the data shows a remarkable growth in the coverage of social and educational activities. The projects successful in grant competitions start to address the long-term issues such as disabled children rehabilitation, quality of life of the older generations.. Generally, there has been a shift from traditional (and therefore annual circular activities such as historical events commemorations) to more progress-oriented strategies aiming at bringing

change to the current state of affairs. While the statistical figures from the Rosstat (see Table 2) suggest a decrease in the percentages of recipients of social services and a growth of the demand for cultural services, the Ministry reports tend to contain more mentions of supported social care initiatives including those aiming at improvement of quality of life of the older people, social adaptation of disabled children, etc. Additionally, the figures from the two sources are not directly compatible (percentages vs absolute numbers), which is a typical limitation for the analysis of the socio-economic role of NPOs.

Another significant trend which manifested itself in recent years is the rise in the educational activities of NPOs. Events such as conferences, strategic and consulting sessions, and master-classes for NPOs' members mark the new stage of the civic organizations' development, requiring a more professional approach. Such events are first mentioned in the Ministry report of 2016, and the trend follows up in the next years' reports.

The state policy defines the development of the NPO sector significantly, but mainly in terms of legislation, and law regulation of the NPO sector. At the same time, financial support from various levels of government during the period 2015-2018 remains almost negligible.

5. Conclusions

Existing statistical data does not yet allow evaluating the role of NPOs in the regional economy. For various reasons, a significant number of organizations remain outside the scope of evaluation (there are the considerable differences in the data of different state institutions, like the Ministry of Justice of Russian Federation and the Federal State Statistics Service). The primary sources of funds flow at this stage are donations from the business community and citizens. Their share during the last years became more critical. Although the support of the state is not sufficient to the current situation at NPOs, there are plans to increase state financing of the third sector in the region via grant programs, which might lead to changes of the NPOs sector direction and intensity of activities. There are changes in the shares of citizens involved in NPOs' activities, the number of paid employees (especially full-time employees) decrease, but the percentage of volunteers and unpaid activities grows.

The actual effect of NPOs' performance on regional socio-economic conditions is, to a significant extent shaped by the policies of the regional authorities. Such policies, in turn, are shaped by, and reflected in, a specific model of perception of NPOs' activities used by the authorities. The features the model can be understood through the analysis of the reports the authorities made on their NPOs-related activities.

The model which the authorities use in Nizhny Novgorod region (at least the one underlying the publically available reports) has certain drawbacks such as incompleteness, and inconsistencies of data. However, it has been changing in the recent six years in two respects, the formal, and the substantial. From a formal point of view, the model has been getting more consistent and full. From the substantial point of view, there has been a remarkable shift from seeing the NPOs involved primarily into repeated activities oriented on historical heritage, the commemoration of historical dates to the perception of civic organizations as included into progress-oriented activities, such as addressing the major social issues. Those issues include providing care for the disabled, educational services, social protection for citizens, etc. Yet another significant shift in the practices of NPOs in the recent three years has been their turn to their own education and systematic improvement of quality of their own work.

Despite the difficulties, the NPO sector continues to grow and significantly impacts on the socio-economic development of the region. The effective maintenance and regulation of NPOs' role need improvements in the statistical system to make it more complete. The statistical system should be developed both in terms of expanding the number of objects of statistical survey (including not only socially-oriented NPOs), and indicators that take into account the contribution of NPOs to the economy of the region in wider aspects, such as assessing market shares, labor productivity of volunteers, and so on.

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