

About the NGOs in Italy: definitions and brief statistics

Definition 1:

An NGO is a non-governmental organization, this means that it is independent from the states and therefore does not receive the funds. NGOs pursue different goals of social utility, political causes or development cooperation. The areas of intervention are: environmental protection, protection of minorities, areas of development and protection specific to certain categories of people.

The NGOs carry out their work independently from the supranational states, but can collaborate with institutions such as the European Union. The NGOs are non-profit. Most of them are managed by volunteers, but not all.

Activities in small NGOs and non-profit organizations are usually managed by volunteers.

The big international NGOs are instead managed by paid staff because they need specific skills to carry out their work effectively and efficiently.

For example, Save the Children Italy is an Italian Non-Governmental Organization, which was launched in 1999. Today it is an NGO (non-governmental organization) recognized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The international NGOs present and best known in Italy are among others ActionAid, Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, WWF Italy, Save the Children Italy.

(Save the Children Italy – Original in Italian: <https://www.savethechildren.it/blog-notizie/che-cos%E2%80%99%C3%A8-una-ong-facciamo-chiarezza>)

Definition 2:

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a non-profit organization that is independent of states and international government organizations. Usually a non-governmental organization is financed by donations or philanthropists, although all the larger ones are also supported by public money. It is mainly managed by volunteers. NGOs are very different organizations, are engaged in a wide range of activities and take different forms in different parts of the world. Some may have the status of charitable institutions, while others may be registered for tax exemption based on the recognition of social purposes.

They are organizations independent of governments and their policies and generally, even if not always, they are non-profit organizations (non-profit) that obtain at least a significant part of their income from private sources, mostly donations. In the Anglo-Saxon world they are often identified with the initials PVO (of private voluntary organizations), preferred to NGO (abbreviation of non-governmental organization).



The two essential characteristics for defining a non-governmental development cooperation organization are therefore constituted by the private, non-governmental nature of the association and by that of the absence of profit in the activity.

A characteristic of these organizations is a strong ideal drive, aimed at contributing to the global development of the most socially and economically backward countries; they are part of the participatory democracy circuit, as they involve ideally motivated masses in initiatives that are not strictly politicized.

NGOs operate for different purposes, typically to carry forward the political and social demands of their members, often neglected by governments. Typically they are part of the ecologist, pacifist, labor / progressive movement or indigenous peoples, and are not formally affiliated with any political party or point of view that is not human rights or peace or ecology or tolerance.

In Italy NGOs are particular **ONLUS – Organizzazione Non Lucrativa di Utilità Sociale (non-profit organization of social utility)** that concentrate their activities in development cooperation and that are recognized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and included in a specific list. The main Italian NGOs are **Emergency, Italian Caritas, Community of Sant'Egidio, Hands off Cain, Legambiente**, etc.

In Italy, non-governmental organizations to be considered as such must obtain recognition of eligibility by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to the law of February 26, 1987. N.49. concerning the "New discipline of the cooperation of Italy with the developing countries"¹.

(Wikipedia – Original in Italian:

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organizzazione_non_governativa#Italia)

Definition 3:

Non-governmental organizations in Italy that deal with cooperation with developing countries (DCs) must obtain recognition from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to benefit from the contributions of Italian cooperation.

This recognition is expected from 1979 (Law 38 on cooperation) and, in particular, the reform law (49/87). NGOs recognized under Law 49/1987 are considered non-profit by law.

The list of Italian recognized NGOs is held by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, which is in turn subject to the control and direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Directorate General for Development Cooperation.

There are about 230 recognized NGOs working in this sector in 2017.

¹ <https://www.esteri.it/MAE/normative/leg26.2.87.pdf>



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(Wikipedia – Original in Italian: [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/ONG_\(Italia\)](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/ONG_(Italia)) – at this link the complete list of Italian NGOs is available).

Important consideration by SINERGIE for the project implementation: within the NGEnvironment project we will consider as target *non-profit organisations of social utility* regardless of the official recognition from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.