

Civil dialogue in the New EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe The Example of the Czech Republic

**What role for European networks of social NGOs
in strengthening the civil dialogue
at European and national level?**

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Terminology

Civil society – Not-for profit non-governmental organisations (NGO) – Organisations working in the public/general interest

- Continued differences concerning these terms
- Understanding of general public and experts differ concerning these terms
- Assumption: NGO in general not transparent, efficient and capable to act
- Prior to 1990 everything was managed by the state
- many persons think/general belief that the state is better equipped to administer (all) tasks

What is understood in the ČR by term „Non-governmental organisation (NGO)?“

NGO

- Established in order not to exercise an economic activity
- Non-distribution of (potential) gains to natural or legal persons (owners, founders, members, associates), but their reinvestment according to objectives/statutory purposes of organisation
- Independent and separated from the state, region (district), municipality in organisational terms
- Can involve volunteers
- Can serve general interest objectives

Legislation concerning NGO in the ČR

- No framework legislation for NGO
- No obligations and rights for NGO
- No standards for all NGO (with the exception of institutions providing personal social services)
- New framework legislation under preparation
 - Characteristics of NGO
 - Definition of public utility
 - Conditions for assignment of public utility status for specific NGO
 - Register of public utility organisations
 - Rules for NGO for usage of public funding
 - Fiscal advantages for NGO or NGO with public utility status
 - Safeguards for public/general interest and protection of public assets of NGO
 - Committees and administrative bodies for NGO (Board and consultative committee for NGO; Commission for public utility NGO)

Financing of NRO from public sources

Two different systems

- a) Public organisations (established by state, region or municipality)
 - Entitlement to continuous funding
- b) NGO
 - No entitlement to funding, no continued financing, only funding through projects or user fees

Structure of NGO in the ČR

- a) Autonomy of NGO (Self administration)
 - Association of NGO in the ČR
 - Regional Associations
 - Nation-wide sectoral associations
- b) Partnership with government and public administration
 - Government consultative committee for NGO
 - Steering Committee for implementation of programmes from EU structural funds
 - Commissions in the regions

Structures of dialogue between government or public administration and civil society

a) in social sector

- NAPSÍ
- Personal social services

b) in the field of culture

c) in the field of environment

d) in the field of education

e) under other ministries/in other portfolios

Principles of partnership of NRO in the Czech Republic (I)

Source: Programmatic document of Association of NGO in the ČR

- What NGO offer to government and public administration
 - Support of democratic society
 - Active citizenship, involvement of society
 - Plurality of interests and groups
 - Alternative workplaces
 - Social economy as alternative approach of economic activity combining it with a social (policy)/general interest objective
 - Provision of flexible and high quality services
 - Cooperation with different sectors (NGO – public administration – employers – employees)
 - Supporting sustainable development
 - Monitoring of compliance with fundamental/human rights
 - Raising private financial means for activities in the general interest

Principles of partnership of NRO in the Czech Republic (II)

Source: Programmatic document of Association of NGO in the ČR

- **What NGO expect and need from government and public administration**
 - New system of financing of NGO, on an equal footing with financial conditions for public institutions
 - Stronger involvement of NGO with regard to the administration and usage of EU funds
 - Building up facilities and capacities for information and counselling for NGO at regional and national level
 - Public support for social economy
 - Support of partnership between NGO and commercial sector
 - Partnership between NGO and public administration on all levels

What NGO expect from the state

- Legal framework for functioning of NGO
- Equal treatment of different legal forms for NGO
- Viable economic conditions for NGO
- More effective usage of financial means of EU funds
- Implementation of national funds for small projects
- Financial support for database on NGO
- Public funding of financing of self administration of NGO
- Recognition of value of volunteer work
- System of incentives concerning fiscal treatment of NGO
- Partnership between public administration, commercial sector and NGO
- Involvement of NGO in decision making process of government and public administration
- Framework convention between state and NGO

Priorities of partnerships of NGO with foreign partners

- Integration into European structures on an equal footing with organisations from „old“ EU Member States
- In framework of Visegrad countries
- In framework of new EU Member States
- With NGO in CEE countries

What do Czech NRO expect from European networks of social NGO?

- Adaptation of priorities according to needs and interests of NGO of new EU Member States
- Equal representation in statutory bodies and committees (according to their relative weight)
- Training to build up and strengthen capacities
- Support in adapting European Union rules according to situation/realities in new EU Member States
- Support in implementing framework conditions for effective work of NGO vis-à-vis politicians and civil servants

What do Czech NRO expect from European networks of social NGO?

- Development of active partnership including setting up of projects in cooperation
- Support based on exchange of experience and good practice
- Support with regard to setting up and organising new projects
- Preparation and development of joint projects in collaboration with NGO from old and new EU Member States
- Awareness raising of role of NGO in media and with regard to general public

What do Czech NRO expect from European institutions?

- Influencing of politicians and civil servants in new EU Member States
- Implementation of binding EU measures in view of improving status, role and conditions of functioning of NGO, e.g.
 - Equal obligations and rights for all NGO
 - No discrimination of NGO according to legal status
 - Delegation of services of general interest to private providers (e.g. based on public tenders) under equal conditions for all enterprises/organisations

Communication strategy Asociace NNO

- Website:

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- Information Bulletin
- Annual Reports

- **Thank you for your attention!**
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