

DemoTic Interviews with Czech NGOs

REPORT ON VOLUNTEERING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CZECH NGOS



VOLUNTEERING MEASUREMENTS

Impact of volunteering is notable in various areas of life. For instance it is essential in sports, culture, social sciences etc. Mentioning the sport the importance of volunteering has been measured on Czech as well as on European level. Even though the non-economic data cannot provide precise numbers about the whole scale it can contribute to the economic studies. After all, volunteering is an activity done for selfless reasons and free of charge it cannot be measured solely by the economic models. Even the aspects like civil society development, education of youth or experience gaining, and social inclusion have to be taken into account.

VOLUNTEERING AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Czech enterprises support volunteering and the relevant activities of the non-profit sector mostly financially through many funds and grants. Companies start engaging themselves even in different way when the employees are directly involved in certain activity of the foundation or organisation. Therefore it can be stated that the business slowly enhance its support for volunteering, but there is still a long way to go. Generally there still prevails an opinion that the Czech companies do not support volunteering enough. To make that work they need to be motivated strongly by the government (through a tax relief), and also by public opinion and by employees themselves.

RESEARCH VALUE

Volunteers themselves are also a very valuable source of information about the real state and real functioning of an activity. As independent and external observers they are managed to contribute a new and an objective point of view, and thus they can use those experiences in their (professional) life. In the same time they act as a tool of social inclusion of minorities or handicapped groups to major society. Government should therefore definitely provide a great support for research and its results in order to improve civil society via volunteer centres, or by providing funds and other capacities and by the legislative aid.

VOLUNTARY RESOURCES

Concerning the level of the European Union, the Czech non-profit sector has been slowly realising how to use the available funds and it is still not able to use them sufficiently. That is why the cooperation and communication with the relevant authorities and stakeholders is a key in this matter. In the same time it is essential to improve and share the knowledge about the use of the funds and make the bureaucratic procedures as simple and user-friendly as possible. Mostly the proof-providing burden should be reduced while applying for a grant and then also with realising the project.

PARTICIPATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

This coordination and communication should be done the closest to the people the possible, so on the local level. On the other hand on the European level they should certainly be in accordance for easier international cooperation and exchange of relevant experiences. Therefore the combination of local, national and European level functional communication would be the ideal solution.

TOWARDS THE VOLUNTEERING PARLIAMENTARY INTERGROUP

In general, every activity connecting with the support of volunteering is very welcome from the point of view of Czech NGOs, although it seems that the European Parliamentarian Intergroup is not necessarily needed. The NGOs and any relevant stakeholders can communicate and cooperate via various informal discussion and forums.

SKILLS, TRAINING, LEARNING AND EUROPEAN PASSPORT

Even in terms of skills improvement and trainings, volunteering has a very individual impact on participants. Therefore such activities should never be directed officially by a norm or legal act. Any activity done on voluntary base should be supported, respected and evaluated extra, as an additional value of a certain individual. The pressure can be done only informally by the civil society. Thus, the European Professional Card should provide an opportunity to present such an experience but it should not be a mandatory field.

TRANS-NATIOAL VOLUNTEERING

International cooperation also has a great potential for further development, meaning the EVS or other forms of long-term volunteering, or work-camps and short-term events. The international projects and cooperation naturally need an international cooperation of volunteers. By connecting capacities via international organisations or networks it is possible to achieve much greater results. Therefore it is extremely important to encourage the experience, the language and cultural capacities on local, national and international level.

2015, THE YEAR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND EUROPEAN COOPERATION

Volunteering generally represents a priceless and very useful part for the development aid. Majority of projects in less developed regions or in Third World countries are based on the activities of volunteers. Trained and educated young professionals spend their time on foreign

missions or they contribute to the success of the missions on their domestic soil. From Czech non-profit organisations dealing with this kind of volunteering activities can be mentioned ADRA or People in need.

EMPLOYMENT AND ANSWERS TO POVERTY

How to deal with challenges of good job gaining? Is there a space that can be filled by the non-profit sector? In general, it is essential mostly to motivate the NGOs and also the business sector to widen their offer and support of volunteering positions and internships, to share information about such opportunities among the target group, and maybe to make the YouthPass more popular etc.