



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

# Review of current studies: State of civic space in Czechia



Spolufinancováno  
v rámci programu  
Evropské unie „Evropa  
pro občany“



**environmental  
partnership**  
association



**Civil  
Society  
Development  
Foundation**

---

Michal Šindelář

8. 10. 2019

Varna

Reclaim our civic space workshop

[michal.sindelar@nap.cz](mailto:michal.sindelar@nap.cz)



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

# The studies

- **The current situation and challenges of advocacy CSOs in the Czech Republic**
  - Professional NGOs national level – 7
  - Non-pro NGOs national level – 3
  - Non-pro NGOs local level – 5
  - **Total of 15 qualitative interviews**
  - [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1GS1IzG1P3kPIugTxu9H4Dm\\_dHKc9ryLW](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1GS1IzG1P3kPIugTxu9H4Dm_dHKc9ryLW)
- **Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Monitoring 2019**
  - **quantitative survey of 54 NGOs**
  - the sample contains mostly medium-professionalized CSOs (51%), but also low professionalized (26%) and high-professionalized ones (23%).
  - In terms of size, the annual budgets of the CSOs reveals that only few operate on **less than 5,000 EUR a year (6%)** and 25% have yearly budgets between 5,001 and 100,000 EUR. Almost half of the surveyed CSOs reach annual budgets between **100,001 and 1 million EUR (47%)** and almost another quarter even **exceed the 1 million mark (23%)**.
  - <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ZXSJEnwU5v7FSF--BUfDEgFvugT5GTur>



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

# Financing – the main topic

- vulnerability of professionalized organizations, The conditions have **high demands on the administration** and self-protective arrangements.
- The **declining support of the state leads to reorientation towards individual donors.**
- The **local initiatives have limited options** in both grant schemes and the individual fundraising because they **lack the capacities** for its administration



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

## The personal capacities were the second most pressing topic.

- The professionalized CSOs are able to balance between the aims and the sources available, with uncertainty and precarity being an outcome for the employees.
- The **small and local initiatives see the lack of resources and energy as their essential limitation.**
- The involvement of volunteers is successful when volunteering is regarded as a one of the key values of the organization and when there are appropriate sources dedicated to it.
- The **local initiatives are not very successful in gaining new reliable members nor successors.**



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

# Networking

- There are **several well-functioning thematic networks on the national level** – environmental, migration, local advocacy groups
- Umbrellas for organizations addressing democracy and social issues are still lacking – however “Red Button initiative”
- The connections between the national and regional level remains a challenge due to lack of sources for development and maintaining of relations.
  - FOCUS: core activities; networking and exp. sharing is an extra
- Moreover, there is lack of information, a functional database of local initiatives and their activities is missing.



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

# The anti-NGO discourse

- is particularly tangible in online, media, and political environment.
- The recent practical impacts are: the role of initiatives in the land use approvals, building permit processes, etc., has been limited;
- the relations with former political partners have deteriorated;
- the **caution towards sources of financing has risen (as this is seen as potentially undermining the credibility of the CSOs).**



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

## 2018 governmental backlash against NGO

- the volume of **financial transfers of public funds to CSOs** has become **an issue of public dispute** and raised the concern of CSOs, which was also widely echoed by the media
  - started by PM Andrej Babis – populist attempt at scoring publicity points?
  - aimed at “political” (transparency, accountable government, human rights etc.) NGOs
  - no follow up due to fact that most of the money goes to the sport NGOs and social services NGOs
- The nonprofit organizations also criticized uncertainties in the allocation of public funds and persisting administrative burdens, most notably related to the taxation policy.
- Despite their efforts to diversify their financial resources and despite the latest government measures, **CSOs remain economically dependent on public budgets** (note the sample consisting mostly of pro NGOs)
- This leads to policy efforts to exert more control over and to centralize these financial flows.



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

- On the other hand, there are endeavours by part of the public administration to alleviate the administrative burden and open access for CSOs to EU funds.
- The participants of the Civil Society Survey perceived all other types of resources as less accessible to civil society actors.
- Despite this, they assessed the stability of funding higher in recent years.
- **The relation to the local governments and the EU is viewed in a more optimistic way**
  - vs. relation to the national government, ministries and their service org.
- CSOs see themselves as freely operating actors, although with little impact on their social and political environment.
- Still, the outlook of CSOs is rather gloomy, as they fear a lack of financial resources and mounting political pressures in the future.



nadace

**partnerství**

| LIDÉ A PŘÍRODA

## Thoughts on project funding

- lack of capacities vs prohibitive project administrative efforts
  - local initiatives aren't "project professionals"; make project funding great again?
- capacity = enough wo/men days for proposal understanding, writing, administration; = **time and money**
- pro-client approach: do the administration for the client, let the client focus on her work (= fund operation costs are higher)
  - success story of State Environmental Fund ČR from cca 2012-2015, the Fund basically took over the administration of the project on behalf of their clients (e.g. municipalities) which was hugely appreciated