

# **AN APPEAL BY CZECH NGO REPRESENTATIVES: THE CIVIC SECTOR ACTS IN LIEU OF THE STATE BUT THE GOVERNMENT REFRAINS FROM SUPPORTING IT**

The following appeal has been initiated by NGO platforms active in the spheres of social and health services, equal opportunities, education, human rights and culture.

FORINT

(Fórum pro integraci / Forum For Integration)

ANEPOSS

(Aliance neziskových poskytovatelů sociálních služeb / Alliance of Non-Profit Social Services Providers)

ČESKÁ ŽENSKÁ LOBBY

(Czech Women's Lobby)

RUO

(Rada uměleckých obcí / Council of Professional Artists' Associations)

JANA HYBÁŠKOVÁ, MEP

**PRAGUE, 17 July 2008** – Non-profit organisations constitute an important part of any democratic society, for they significantly contribute to civic services and non-profit activities. **It is with alarm and concern that the non-profit sector awaits further project calls within the structural assistance programs of the EU administered by the Czech authorities. Since most calls for the period of 2007–2013 have not been made yet, concerned organisations are prevented from a ready and uninterrupted follow-up of their past activities. The situation results in a wasted potential and endangered continuity of proven approaches to the development of public service and non-profit activities which in the long run threatens their recipients as well.**

On the other hand, EU funds promise a unique chance to implement a variety of activities that include not only those for which the Czech state has so far lacked financial means but mainly such that the character of which would better reflect the principles and requirement of today's advanced society, as they are constituted by services provided by NGOs enhancing social integration and acting against social exclusion. However, subsidy policies still give preference to the government sector, shunting the NGOs and their activities apart.

**The authors of this appeal are highly concerned with, and warn against, a gradual liquidation of NGOs caused by the lack of the government's interest as well of financial means. The situation is caused not only by the postponement of the European Social Fund grants calls but also by a continuation of the indifferent and often outright negative attitude of the government vis-à-vis the NGOs. The last few months have seen a drastic decline of NGO activities. Most NGOs are in financial dire straits while some being forced to terminate their activities altogether. Especially adverse is the situation in the provision of social services, in which any termination of NGO activity poses a severe threat to large population groups that directly depend on such NGO assistance.**

**The current situation makes the authors of this appeal afraid that this is not any momentary accident but one of the tell-tale examples of the Czech state's essential disregard for the NGO sector and even a symptom of the government refusal to see a greater promotion and assertion of participatory democracy.**

*„Europe has ample means to allocate,“ states MEP Jana Hybášková. „What we are rather concerned about is the country's capability of drawing them. What we anxious to see is a well-devised and*

*highly professional approach to the problem at hand which requires a most consequent and socially responsible specification of programme priorities aimed at maximum absorption capacity. In other words this country must make its utmost from the chance of utilising the potential sources and to do so sensibly. Relevant officials and individual ministries must lose no time to evaluate the potentials and prepare very shortly a fine-honed breakdown of programme priorities and calls in order to facilitate a most responsible and most rational fund assignment and use. The topmost task is to boost as much as possible the country's absorption capacity rather than coming short of it. This is not only a matter of communication with the EU but something that depends much on proper interpretation, on-going control, detailed specification, honest evaluation and continuous, rather than intermittent, drawing from the funds that are there to be used."*

However, the other EU member countries are much unlike the Czech Republic in this respect. For example, Czech neighbours such as Germany or Austria show that the authorities administering the structural funds of the EU are aware of the unique and unparalleled role of NGOs in a democratic society, do support them and finance their activities. By co-operating with them, they utilise their expertise, target group contacts and field-work experience which, in turn, enhances the so-called active citizenship, i.e. the participation of ordinary citizens in the decision-making processes concerning matters that immediately affect their lives.

**The authors of this appeal therefore call on all relevant officials and authorities, namely all government ministries to clearly inform the public as soon as possible of the terms and programmes of structural assistance funding of the NGO sector and thus facilitate its participation in the public service and projects designed to contribute to a further development of the Czech society, with a special emphasis on the priorities and associated implementation tools of the support of NGOs providing social services.**

**A call is also made on the media to inform about the potentials and contribution of the NGO sector to the implementation of the structural funds in the Czech Republic. The prime role of these funds is not designed to solve the state's needs but to help the work of those who contribute to the solution of actual and long-term problems of the society, a principle strongly emphasised by the European Union. It is with this mind that the authors of the appeal call on the media to become a genuine tool of public control of government policies.**

**As yet, 83 NGOs have joined this appeal**

Appendix 1 - List of organizations supporting the appeal

Appendix 2 - additional information regarding the general strike of social service providers

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## Appendix 1

Initiated by:

**Forum for integration** – FORINT, 10 Czech NNO: Drom, romské středisko, Drom, o.p.s., Otevřená společnost, o.p.s., Poradna pro občanství, občanská a lidská práva, o.s., Vzájemné soužití, o.s., Socioklub, o.s., Step by Step ČR, o.s., IQ Roma servis, o. s., Člověk v tísni – společnost při ČT, o.p.s., La Strada ČR

**Česká ženská lobby** – Platform of 21 gender equality NNO: APC – WNNSP, Aperio, Asociace podnikatelek a manažerek ČR, Athinganoi, Česká asociace dul, Český helsinský výbor, Český svaz žen, Evropská kontaktní skupina, Fórum 50 %, Gender Studies, Hnutí za aktivní mateřství, Manushe, Moravská asociace podnikatelek a manažerek, proFem, Rosa, Rozkoš bez rizika, Soroptimist International – Pražský klub, Unie katolických žen, UNIPA, projekt Magdala České katolické charity a Žába na prameni

Rada uměleckých obcí – RUO – 12 professional art organizations

**ANEPOSS** - Alliance of 23 NNO

**The appeal is supported by:**

Nadace OSF Praha / Open Society Fund Prague

Art Language, o. s.

Atelier ALF, o. s.

Charita Javorník

Dženo

Women's Initiatives Network

Peacework Development Fund

Slunečnice, o. s. Děčín

Agentura Pondělí

Pohoda – společnost pro normální život lidí s postižením

Most k naději o. s.

Ester Javorník, o. s.

SEF, o. s.

HESTIA, o. s.

Darjav o. s.

Český západ o. s.

Quip - Společnost pro změnu

Zšvůle práva, o. s.

Poradna pro uprchlíky

RES-SEF, o. s.

Hana Mullerová

Taťána Pospíšilová

## Appendix 2

### Additional information:

On July 14, 2008, more than twenty leading representatives of Czech social service providers announced general strike of social service providers BED IN

The strike will take place on December 10, 2008, on the occasion of Human Rights Day.

For more information about the strike, please visit

[www.generalni-stavka.info](http://www.generalni-stavka.info)

<http://email.seznam.cz/udir?hashId=880114654&to=http://www.generalni-stavka.info>

To join BED IN or to obtain more information, consultations, please contact us on  
alf@artlanguage.org

<http://email.seznam.cz/newMessageScreen?sessionId=&to=mailto:alf@artlanguage.org>

On behalf of Preparatory Committee:  
Dušan Dvořák