

ACTIVITIES OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Abstract

The article analyzes the development of civil society in the Czech Republic on the basis of a large number of empirical materials. The author notes that civil society organizations operate within a broad legal framework in the state. It is proved that the Czechs are actively involved in the activities of civil society organizations that are established in various areas of life. The article examines two main types of non-governmental organizations – advocacy groups and service organizations. Legal regulation of the organizational form of non-governmental organizations allows us to study groups and organizations of civil society. Through the civil society organizations the citizens of the Czech Republic show their views and political positions, provide various services to other members of society. Civil society organizations are structured and separated from the state, usually they are not profitable and they have their own autonomy. The author argues that civil society in the Czech Republic is based not only on the activities of formally registered organizations, but also creates a number of informal groups and initiatives that do not always require legal registration. However, they function successfully and bring great benefits to society.

Keywords: Czech Republic, civil society, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, advocacy and service organizations.

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ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА В ЧЕСЬКІЙ РЕСПУБЛІЦІ

Анотація. У статті на основі значної кількості емпіричних матеріалів проаналізовано розвиток громадянського суспільства у Чеській Республіці. Автор наголошує, що в державі організації громадянського суспільства функціонують на основі широкої законодавчої бази. Доведено, що чехи активно включаються у діяльність громадських організацій, які створено

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у різних сферах суспільства. У статті досліджено два основних типи недержавних організацій – адвокатські та сервісні. Правове регулювання організаційної форми неурядових організацій, дає змогу дослідити групи і організації громадянського суспільства. Через громадські організації громадяни Чехії виявляють свої погляди і політичні позиції, надають різні послуги іншим членам суспільства. Громадські організації структуровані, відділені від держави, зазвичай вони не прибуткові, мають своє самоуправління. Правове регулювання організаційної форми неурядових організацій, підводить до аналізу груп і організацій громадянського суспільства. Автор доводить, що в Чеській Республіці громадянське суспільство ґрунтується не лише на діяльності формально зареєстрованих організацій, а й створює низку неофіційних груп і ініціатив, які не завжди вимагають юридичної реєстрації. Втім, вони успішно функціонують і приносять велику користь суспільству.

Ключові слова: Чеська Республіка, громадянське суспільство, громадські організації, неурядові організації, адвокатські та сервісні організації.

Statement of the scientific problem and its significance

The origins of the concept of “civil society” originate from ancient Greek policies. Modern interest in civil society appeared in the late 1980s – early 1990s. It was then that the concept of “civil society” began to be widely used in political speeches and statements by some influential politicians and organizations – those in particular who sought to support the stability of democratic regimes in various countries of the world. In modern political science, there are three different approaches to civil society, linked to three historical traditions: neoliberal, conservative and social-liberal.

Supporters of neoliberalism believe that the core of civil society is the market; that it is created by individuals who are interested in their personal goals, and therefore civil society counters the state. According to the conservative approach, civil society is formed by traditional public institutions, and their center of attraction is in the family and the Church. Following the third, now dominant approach, both in terms of discussions about civil society and in support policies, the structure of civil society is formed by various organizations that should not be identified with the family, market, or state. It is simply an environment in which various groups of interests, independent organizations and associations interact, through which citizens express their aspirations, and which help them meet their own needs.

Analysis of research on the problem

In both old and new democracies, the debates about the role of civil society on the one hand, and the state on the other – are ongoing. Opposite positions on this issue are presented in two published books by foreign scientists: “To Empower People: From State to Civil Society”

by American authors P. L. Berger and R. J. Neuhaus (1996) and “The State and the Rule of Law” by the French scientist B. Kriegel (1995). Berger and Neuhaus celebrate the revival of civil society at the end of the XX century and the diminishing role of the state. B. Kriegel, on the contrary, warns the supporters of civil society about the dangers of too active public participation and points to the role of the constitutional democratic state as an irreplaceable guarantor of human rights and dignity.

Presentation of the main material

The growth of interest in civil society in the 1980s developed in two different regions at once – in Latin America, where civil society experienced oppression from authoritarian authorities; and in CEE, where the idea of civil society was strongly developed by opponents of Communist regimes. When in Latin America civil society was considered an alternative to political parties that discredited themselves and to populist mass movements typical for this region, in CEE this concept expressed the idea of developing parallel political structures that should provide a space for political activity for some part of citizens. Until the 1970s, there were no official independent associations of citizens, and the existing ones had been formed only with the sanction of the state, which used them to control the people.

However, soon in the 1970s, independent public initiatives appeared which criticized the regime and acted in parallel with official structures. Hence their name – “parallel polis” or “islands of positive deviation”. Some dissidents and the future President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel, declared the immorality of the Communist system, and saw civil society as “life in truth” and the source of “power of powerless”. So, civil society is an alternative to the official policy of the Communist state. Supporters of democracy around the world have come to understand that civil society organizations that emerged in the 1980s in socialist countries (“Charter 77” in the CSSR and “Solidarity” in Poland) were the harbingers of the inevitable fall of Communist regimes².

The experience of the opposition in the CEE, as it was called in the 1980s, aggravated civil society in the 1990s. The collapse of socialism and democratization that emerged in the CEE region proved that “civil society works” and the new task for the countries was to build a civil society that would help stabilize transformational regimes. This was in line with the results of research by scientists of 1990s that explained the positive relationship between the functioning structure of civil society and democracy.

Some democratic theorists have argued that the network of associations and organizations that form the basis of civil society is as important to democracy as investing capital in the economy. R. D. Putnam, R. Leonardi and R. Y. Nanetti stated that civil

² Гражданское общество в период третьей волны демократии: его значение для гражданского образования[w] Гражданское образование: содержание и активные методы обучения / Под ред. С.Шехтера, Н.Воскресенской. М.: Межрегиональная ассоциация «За гражданское образование», 1997. С. 57.

society is characterized by an active and public-oriented position of citizens, egalitarian political relations based on trust, cooperation and social communications.

R. D. Putnam calls all this “social capital”. Citizens who acquire social capital through participation in civil society organizations can then use it to strengthen democratic principles in government. On the basis of this argument the scientists believed that without trust between people, which arises exactly as a result of active participation in civil society, it is impossible to imagine a stable democratic regime³.

The rapid growth of non-governmental organizations in post-Communist countries has shown that these countries have a huge potential for a dynamic civil society. In Poland, for example, there are more than 15,000 active associations, foundations and groups that advocate for the interests of certain groups of the citizens. The same situation can be observed in Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Even in Romania, where the process of democratization is somewhat slower, there are hundreds of independent non-governmental organizations that have the appreciation of the state. S. Schachter believes that a state with a viable civil society has a real chance of becoming and remaining a democracy⁴.

Active participation of Czech civil society organizations in the development of the democratic political process, in the creation of state policy in the 1990s became one of the tools in the fight against corruption and promoting the interests of certain circles. Openness, access to information and communication had become a prerequisite for controlling state and public institutions. Involving civil society organizations in public administration and self-government in the first decades of the XXI century has developed into a tool for increasing the responsibility of their representatives in relation to the public in favor of which these representatives should act. Therefore, civil society has been an important part of the program for stabilizing democracy in the Czech Republic ever since the 1990s. All the important organizations focused on supporting democracy have adopted the civil society development program as their own. The ideas of civil society in the programs of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organizations, private funds of the United States, European funds and programs of the European Union have become a real component of the political events of Czech Republic and are being practically implemented in life⁵.

Over the past three decades the civil society in the political life of the Czech Republic is understood as a sphere of association of citizens that exists between the state

³ Патнам Р. Д., Леоначи Р., Нанетти Р. И. (2001). Творения демократии: Традиции гражданского активностив современной Италии / Пер. з англ. В. Ющенко. Київ: Основи. С. 17.

⁴ Гражданское общество в период третьей волны демократии: его значение для гражданского образования [w] Гражданское образование: содержание и активные методы обучения / Под ред. С. Шехтера, Н. Воскресенской. М.: Межрегиональная ассоциация «За гражданское образование», 1997. С. 59.

⁵ Cisaf O. (2004). *Transnacionální politické síte. Jak mezidrodni instituce ovlivňuji činnost nevládních organizací*. Brno: UPS.S.12.

and the family, and is relatively independent from them. Civil society allows voluntary organizations of citizens to manifest themselves in various forms. Such organizations are structured, separated from the state, not profitable, and have their own self-government. Within the Czech civil society, there are various non-governmental organizations through which citizens can express their views and political positions and provide a number of services. There are two main types of non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic – advocacy groups and service organizations. Associations of the first type protect the rights of certain groups of the population, influence politics and public opinion; while the latter provide social and educational services, work in the field of sports, leisure, and health care⁶. Some advocacy organizations (trade unions) protect the socio-economic interests of certain groups of the population, while others protect the so-called public interest, although it is difficult to clearly indicate the group of people who such activities are beneficial for. In particular, non-governmental organizations that fight for a clean environment, for human rights or against corruption are not interested in the material factor and at the same time they defend the general principles and values of the entire Czech society.

There is special group of civil society organizations in the Czech Republic that create expert knowledge – the so-called “think tanks” – institutions that research various policy areas, analyze them and form practical recommendations. There are academic, contractor, advocacy and party “think tanks”. Academic and contractor think tanks are similar: highly qualified people are working there, conduct accurate scientific and social research, and seek to act as objective non-party organizations. They differ in funding methods, in terms of who decides what these organizations will do, and in the final product of their activities. The goals and activities of academic “think tanks” are usually produced in an organization, although there is a noticeable impact of the funding sources. On the other hand, the contract “think tanks” are largely financed from public funds that they receive for performing various orders. Therefore, the state bodies decide on the content of their activities. “Think tanks” are assigned specific projects that they carry out for the customer in forms of research reports⁷.

Other types – advocacy groups and party “think tanks” – also have some features in common. The advocacy type, although formally independent, is still associated with a certain ideology, ideological groups, or interest. Instead of non-party research, these organizations rely on the desire to win in the “ideological struggle” and convince the target group (politicians, officials, general public) of their rightness. Therefore, in their analyses, they often rely on information sources provided to them by groups whose

⁶ Dvofakova V. (2002). *Civil Society in the Czech Republic*[w]Uncivil Society. Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe / Eds. P. Kopecky a C. Mudde. London, New York: Routledge. S. 136.

⁷ Dvofakova V. (2002). *Civil Society in the Czech Republic*[w]Uncivil Society. Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe / Eds. P. Kopecky a C. Mudde. London, New York: Routledge.S. 137.

interests they protect (firms, trade unions, etc.). In such organizations there are more people from government agencies, interest groups, and political parties than scientists. Commitment to party membership is an inherent characteristic of these “think tanks” that are connected to specific political parties and protect their ideological and program goals. Their activities and platform are dictated by the “parent” political party⁸.

Civil society in the Czech Republic consists of two main components – politically oriented advocacy groups and service organizations. Specific organizations often perform both functions. For example, those civil society organizations that protect women rights simultaneously provide services (professional development courses for unemployed women) and participate in the legislative process when they seek to implement measures to help women. A separate group of civil society organizations consists of “think tanks”, focused on creating expert opinions and materials for all other civil society organizations, government agencies and politicians. However, no matter what organizations we are talking about – service, advocacy or “think tank”, each civil society organization is influenced by the broad community, where it operates, decides on its status, seeks to get a stable source of funding and present itself in a way that is familiar to the general perception⁹.

A favorable climate of legislative regulation in a democratic environment has been created for current civil society in the Czech Republic. First, basic civil rights are guaranteed, and above all, the right to freely unite in civil society organizations. Secondly, civil society organizations and their activities are separated from the state, that is, there are conditions in the country for creating associations in the citizens’ interests, and not in the interests of the state. The existence of civil society organizations does not depend on the state. Every non-governmental organization, the actions of which do not contradict the laws, has the right to operate. The regulation procedure that determines the creation of a civil society organization is transparent, simple and fast. After all, a slow, blurred and complex procedure creates obstacles for individuals who want to express themselves in civil society.

The legal forms of non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic are also clear and transparent. There are special legal regulations functioning in the activities of the church and trade unions as specific forms of civil society. In this regard important regulations have been created regarding the rules for the foundation activities and the conditions for fund raising to support civil society. The conditions for non-governmental organizations to receive funds from their own activities are clearly defined¹⁰.

It is clear that civil society can only act effectively if state institutions want to interact with it. Formal conditions for the existence of civil society organizations are not

⁸ Cisaf O. (2004). *Transnacionální politické síle. Jak mezivládní instituce ovlivňují činnost nevládních organizací*. Brno: UPS. S. 19.

⁹ Vrablková K. (2007). *Jak zkoumat sociální hnutí? Aktivismus ženských skupin v ČR*. Politologický časopis. № 14 (3). S. 239.

¹⁰ Vrablková K. (2007). *Jak zkoumat sociální hnutí? Aktivismus ženských skupin v ČR*. Politologický časopis. № 14 (3). S. 227.

enough, so within the Czech political system they have access to various consulting and advisory bodies, public hearings, etc. At the same time, communication between state institutions and civil society organizations is clearly regulated, which ensures its transparency and protects it from corruption, inherent to the non-transparent actions of lobbyists. Thus, thanks to the clear rules, civil society organizations in the Czech Republic have become effective actors in the fight against corruption and contribute to the transparency of public administration and self-government decisions¹¹.

An important indicator of civil society activity in the Czech Republic is the external political environment (legal context, institutional framework), organizational factors, and funding. Before the 1989 “velvet revolution”, citizens of the CSSR could only unite within the framework of mass organizations founded by the state. Participation in at least one official public organization was considered almost mandatory. There were no independent organizations until 1989 that would unite citizens on a voluntary basis and act as representatives of their needs, since these organizations were associated with the state or the Communist party of CSSR and operated under its leadership. Despite the regime’s control over the entire public space, unofficial initiatives that were not controlled by the state gradually appeared in the CSSR, which criticized the regime and advocated the creation of an independent environment for free communication of those who knew about this activity. Dissidents, as they were called at that time, sought to defend civil liberties and human rights. The regime considered these initiatives illegal and hunted them down. Until the end of the 80’s, the activity of such groups increased and significantly helped or was one of the levers that caused the collapse of socialism. The vast majority of these groups united with other critics of the regime in the fall of 1989 in so-called Civic Forum, which had different ideological vectors and proposed different goals. In November 1989, the Civic Forum was an effective anti-regime phenomenon that led to protests by almost three-quarters of the country’s adult population.

The “velvet revolution” of 1989 had been a dramatic turn in the development of Czech civil society, in which active protest groups swept away the current regime. After the fall of socialism, conditions were created for independent public initiative, primarily in the form of respect for civil and political rights. The status of civil society organizations was reflected in the declaration of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (December 1992), which guaranteed “right to freely associate together with others in clubs, societies, and other associations”. The new civil society has moved to the broad democratic platform of the Civic Forum¹². Its activists formed political parties and thus

¹¹ Cisaf O. (2008). *Politický aktivismus v České republice: Občanská společnost a sociální hmůti v období transferu mace a evropeizace*. Brno: CDK. S. 71.

¹² Бурдяк В.І., Бутирська І.В., Герман М.Г., Федорчак Т.П. (2015). *Громадянське суспільство і соціальний капітал у нових країнах-членах Європейського Союзу*. Монографія. Чернівці: Технодрук. С. 271.

became new political actors or remained in the non-governmental sector and developed civil society organizations.

The next type of social groups that to some extent continued the activities that had begun before November 1989 were organizations that were gradually transforming from the National Front (trade unions, sports clubs, unions of hunters, volunteer firefighters, and the like, which were previously under the state). After the abolition of state supervision of churches, they separated and began social work in charitable institutions. Many new organizations in different fields and with different goals have appeared.

The Czech political elite played an important role in the development of civil society, which, in addition to the legal and institutional aspects, actively created new legal and institutional frameworks necessary for the functioning of civil society. The post-Communist Czech Republic considered two main interpretations of civil society, presented by prominent Czech politicians Vaclav Havel (speaker of the Civic Forum and President of the Czech Republic in 1989-2003) and Vaclav Klaus (Prime Minister in 1992-1997, later President). V. Klaus, the architect of the Czech economic transformation strategy, actualized his “economic” approach to the transformation, which had no place for civil society. He probably understood civil society in a completely different way than most of those who sought to create it. V. Klaus inclined to the neoliberal interpretation of civil society, that is, he saw it as a set of individuals pursuing their interests in the market. And these interests, according to Klaus, should have become the driving force of post-Communist social change in the Czech Republic. Klaus believed that liberalizing the economy would create an environment for independent individual initiative that would accelerate the country’s movement toward a functioning market system. In other words, in his views, he connects civil society exclusively with private initiative and the functioning of the market¹³.

President V. Havel had a different idea of civil society. He believed that civil society is not formed from a set of individuals, but from their association; that civil society should not be identified with the market, because it is a special public sphere, different from both the market and the state. In the sphere of civil society, citizens, as holders of civil and political rights, unite and take part in the country’s public life. In other words, V. Havel symbolized the prevailing social-liberal interpretation of civil society. In Klaus’s opinion, a citizen’s role was limited to participation in regular elections, and Havel wanted the citizen to be more politically active. He believed that citizens not only participate in elections and choose political parties with their electoral programs, but also found non-governmental civil society organizations themselves and influence the public sphere through them. Non-governmental organizations act as a tool through

¹³ Fagin A. (2000). *Environmental Protest in the Czech Republic: Three Stages of Post-Communist Development*. Czech Sociological Review. N^o 8 (2). S.144.

which citizens take part in politics and control the decision-making process of the elected political representatives. V. Havel considered the activities of the non-governmental organizations as an important tool for a functioning liberal democracy, rather a viable “alternative semblance of democracy” that should be based not on the competition of political parties, but on the mobilization of the population in the sphere of civil society¹⁴.

Public discussion on civil society in the Czech Republic in the 1990s was also defined by these two approaches. The positions of V. Havel and V. Klaus were supported by opposite social camps, with their own views on the nature and functions of civil society. Usually, both approaches have merged and shaped political institutions in different ways during the period of changes in the Czech Republic.

The attitude of various governments to the non-profit sector has often changed. After the first free elections in 1990, there was a government that consisted of some politicians had a positive view of civil society, because they had come out of the Civil Forum organizations themselves. The results of research by Johns Hopkins University scientists show that the government supported the activities of the non-governmental organizations and their role in the democratization process and considered it necessary. Experts from the non-profitable sector consulted civil society activists when preparing new policy development concepts, so they had influenced their content. P. Fric defines this period as a “warming” period of relations between government and the civil society¹⁵.

After the 1992 elections, when the government was headed by V. Klaus, there was a “cooling off” period, with a restrained attitude to civil society. The amount of budget expenditures to support civil society activities grew up until 1997. The study concluded that the real reason was that the government pushed civil society to the periphery of its interests and refused to recognize that civil society could perform certain political functions. The government, therefore, supported non-political service organizations that were not profitable, and rejected advocacy groups which had certain political views¹⁶.

The first problem arose from a narrow economic attitude to post-Communist transformation, which was typical for the Czech Republic in the 1990s. Klaus Government “underestimated the moral scale of the transformation and the role of non-profit organizations as producers of a certain moral climate, trust and civic culture”, the existence of which is mandatory for the operation of market mechanisms¹⁷. When the state relegated civil society to the background, it destroyed its transformation efforts and lost

¹⁴ Fagin A. (2000). *Environmental Protest in the Czech Republic: Three Stages of Post-Communist Development*. Czech Sociological Review. № 8 (2). S.145-146.

¹⁵ Fric P., Rochdi G., eds. (2001). *Neziskovy sektor v Ceske republice. Vysledky mezizdrodniho srovnavaciho projektu Johns Hopkins University*. Praha: Eurolex Bohemia. S. 23.

¹⁶ Fric P., Rochdi G., eds. (2001). *Neziskovy sektor v Ceske republice. Vysledky mezizdrodniho srovnavaciho projektu Johns Hopkins University*. Praha: Eurolex Bohemia. S. 27.

¹⁷ Ibid. S. 31.

the ability to receive information that public organizations carried. The government was not consulted on policy decisions before they were made. Non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic entered the center of the events “only sporadically, when unexpected crises arose that the state administration could not cope with.”¹⁸ The government’s unwillingness to recognize the non-governmental organizations as a relevant political voice is related to this problem. The government, following a centrist approach, did not want to listen to the opinions of citizens, because this attitude was symbolized by the Prime Minister of that time V. Klaus. He believed that any politically oriented associations of citizens are a threat to parliamentary democracy¹⁹.

However, this is how the government treated only certain politically oriented advocacy organizations, revealing a differentiated approach to them. Since the early 90’s, Czech Executive bodies have clearly tended to communicate with the leading advocacy organizations formed before 1989, primarily with the trade unions. Thanks to the extensive consultations of the government within a tripartite system (a 3-party body consisting of state representatives, employers and workers), the Czech Republic managed to avoid the negative consequences of the transformation that took place in other post-Communist countries. Consultations with the trade unions ensured high-quality political decisions from the first government of V. Klaus (1992-1996). Problems arose when this order was violated in the second half of the 1990s²⁰.

It should be noted that the provision on the political system isolation in relation to non-governmental organizations during V. Klaus premiership (1992-1997), concerned only the following advocacy organizations: environmental, human rights, women rights groups, etc. And these non-governmental organizations were most eager to participate in politics within the new democratic system, trying to counter the clan interests of political parties and political class (professional politicians).

With the emergence of social democracy governments since 1998 and the beginning of the Czech Republic’s accession process to the European Union, its attitude to the civil society has changed. Governments of social democracy were more open in their cooperation with non-governmental organizations, thanks to the influence of the European Union, which identified a number of requirements that coincided in certain areas with the requests of organizations, and were a part of the consultations that were held before the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU. A specific EU influence was expressed in different ways: in the harmonization of the Czech legal field with EU norms; in the same EU requirements with those proposed by non-governmental organizations, in particular in the law to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, which was introduced only after the pressure from the EU – even though some public organizations

¹⁸ Ibid. S. 34.

¹⁹ Mansfeldova Z., Kroupa A., eds. (2005). *Participace a zdjmovne organizace v Ceske republice*. Praha: SLONS. 75.

²⁰ *USAID 2006. The 2006 NGO Sustainability Index*. Washington: USAID, 2007. P. 39.

fought for it for a long time; in the EU pressure on the government, which was first forced to address the gender issue and recognize it as worthy of political debate; in the EU demand for some form of partnership between government and civil society in which the state must prove its open cooperation with non-governmental organizations; in the demand to create a number of advisory bodies with representatives of public organizations along with politicians and employees. The main body that now coordinates state policy on non-governmental organizations is the Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations. This body was created in 1992, but it had been operating since 1998, consisting of representatives of a number of ministries and non-governmental organizations.

Since 1991, the Law “On Freedom of Religion and the Status of the Church and Religious Organizations” came in effect, although only 35% of the Czech population is members of different churches, and 60% of the population, according to statistics, consider themselves atheists²¹. The state supports registered churches. In the Czech Republic, there are also churches that are not recognized by the state. If they comply with the law, the state does not interfere with their activities, but does not support them. Churches create their own educational institutions and organizations that provide social services and operate as non-profitable entities.

In 1992 the Law “On Funds and Charitable Organizations” was adopted. But it did not sufficiently regulate their activities, so in 1997 it was amended. As a result of the change in the law, the number of funds in the Czech Republic has abruptly decreased – most of them were unable to meet the conditions of the new Law. Funds are special property associations that operate for a socially useful purpose: the development of spiritual values, the protection of human rights or other humane causes, the protection of the environment, cultural monuments, and traditions, development of science, education, and sports. A fund provides financial support from the profit from the authorized capital (the minimum amount is 500,000 CZK, or almost \$ 30,000) and other property of the fund. The fund’s authorized capital cannot be used to perform its tasks, but only the income from its property. A charitable organization differs from a fund in that it is not required to divide its property into authorized capital and other property. Therefore, the minimum deposit amount is not set. However, you need to make a contribution. To achieve this goal, the charitable organization uses all its property and profits from it. In 1996 the Law “On Socially Useful Organizations” has come in effect – it provides services to society, on an equal basis to everybody.

Conclusion

Thus, civil society organizations are successfully developing in the Czech Republic on the basis of the established legal framework. Czechs actively participate in public organizations

²¹ *Zakon o svobode nabozenске vıry a postavenı cirkvi a nabozenських, spolecnosti*308/1991 Sb.URL: <http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/docs/surveys/fs/10.html>

operating in various spheres of society. There are two main types of non-governmental organizations – advocacy groups (which protect the rights of certain groups of the citizens and impact policy and public opinion) and service organizations (providing social and educational services operating in the field of sport, leisure, health), Citizens express their views and political positions through public organizations, providing various services to other members of society. Public organizations are structured, separated from the state, not-profitable, and have their own self-government. Legal regulation of the organizational form of non-governmental organizations allows analyzing the activities of civil society groups and organizations. Along with the legal forms above, we should note that civil society is based not only on the activities of formally registered organizations, but also creates a number of informal groups and initiatives that do not always require legal registration.

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