

# CSO CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS: A CZECH CONTEXT

## *About FoRS*

FoRS - Czech Forum for Development Cooperation is a national platform of Czech development NGOs, academic institutions and faith-based organizations involved in development cooperation, development education and humanitarian assistance. Established in 2002, FoRS represents over 50 members and observers vis-à-vis institutional stakeholders and provides capacity building, information service and expert consultancy to its members and partners, while further engaging in awareness-raising on development cooperation and sustainable development.

In 2003, FoRS became a founding member of CONCORD - the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development. Since 2007 it has been actively engaged in development effectiveness initiatives as a participant in the Global Facilitation Group of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, and through its engagement in the Global Council and working groups of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE).

## *Acknowledgment*

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## **Acronyms and Abbreviation**

B2B	Business to Business (program for private sector)
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
CPDE	CSO (Civil Society Organizations) Partnership for Development Effectiveness
CSO	Civil society organization
CZDA	Czech Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEMAS	Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights
EU	European Union
FoRS	Czech Forum for Development Cooperation
GNI	Gross National Income
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance (International Development Cooperation in Czech terminology)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

## Summary

The Czech Republic, a relatively small donor country and only a recent member of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DAC), accomplished a transformation of its Official Development Assistance system in 2012. Yet increased commitments on ODA quality and quantity have still to be met, and political support for ODA remains low. In addition, while official documents proclaim the eradication of poverty and inequality as an explicit priority of Czech ODA, the focus of ODA efforts is still influenced by economic interests.

With regard to civil society participation, the Czech NGO platform FoRS – Czech Forum for Development Cooperation has become a respected partner of Czech institutions and other development stakeholders since its foundation in 2002. FoRS members participate in shaping ODA and related policies through monitoring as well as through direct engagement in strategic consultations. However, they also face funding constraints, some legal barriers (e.g. with this year's new Civil Code), and internal constraints related to insufficient capacities and resources. While they advocate for the fulfilment of development commitments by the Czech government, they too have adopted their own Code on Effectiveness.

FoRS members participate in both inter-sectoral partnerships (with entities from the public, non-governmental and private sectors) and cross-sectoral cooperation (among development, environmental and educational CSOs), and consider these as key areas for effective development.

Key issues related to Czech ODA, an enabling environment for CSOs, and CSO development effectiveness, are reflected in this study.

## Introduction

The position of the Czech Republic as a development actor on the international stage has changed fundamentally over the last 25 years. Formerly Czechoslovakia was a donor country in the “Eastern Block”. With the end of the Communist era, the Czech Republic as a transition country was, until quite recently (2006), an aid recipient. Today, the Czech Republic is once again a donor, being the 37<sup>th</sup> richest country of the world<sup>1</sup> and a member of the OECD DAC. The current system of Czech ODA was (re-)established after the Czech Republic joined OECD in 1995 as the first transition country of the Central and Eastern Europe region.<sup>2</sup> The Czech Republic accepted its share of responsibility and demonstrated its interest in addressing global problems and sustainable eradication of poverty. The establishment of the Czech NGO platform FoRS in 2002 and the accession to the EU in 2004 reinforced the impetus for change in the development cooperation system.

In 2008, the Council for International Development Cooperation was established as a multi-stakeholder coordination and advisory body for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2010, the Act on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Provided Abroad was adopted, forming the ODA system transformation and establishing the Czech Development Agency (CZDA). In May 2013, the Czech Republic became a member of OECD DAC, which was declared

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<sup>1</sup> FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014): What Czechia is doing (is going to do) to contribute to eradicate poverty in the world by 2015 and onwards. NGO View on Czech ODA, <http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/aidwatch-final-4-web.pdf> (only in Czech)

<sup>2</sup> TRIALOG Systematization (2014) (draft outcome document, page 79)

big political success and a confirmation of positive progress.<sup>3</sup> This increased the international prestige of the Czech Republic and strengthened its commitments to aid quality and transparency, including the commitment to increase the ODA budget.<sup>4</sup> These commitments, however, have not been fully met. Equally missing is a clear and binding commitment to policy coherence for development. The Czech contribution to the global development is far from perfect.<sup>5</sup>

Development CSOs associated with FoRS are the main focus of this study. They represent an important part of Czech ODA efforts and are key development actors that play multiple roles: they implement projects; they are endowed with grassroots knowledge of problems and challenges in partner countries; they work as mediators and defenders of interest of vulnerable groups; and they participate in political discussions. FoRS aims to become a focal point for strengthening the roles of development CSOs and enhancing their political recognition. These CSOs together aim at ensuring that Czech ODA maintains the eradication of poverty and inequality as its core objective, and that ODA is not affected by narrow political and economic interests. However, resource and capacity constraints still limit the effectiveness of their joint efforts.

There are two other CSO platforms working in related fields: DEMAS – Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights founded in 2008 (currently composed of 13 CSOs), and Green Circle founded in 1989 that brings together nearly 30 NGOs working mainly in the fields of environmental awareness and advocacy. Until recently, development CSOs worked with these platforms and their members rather on an ad hoc basis. In the context of the post-2015 processes, the cooperation on policy engagement and awareness raising has increased significantly.

## **1) *The legal and regulatory framework***

### *Major international conventions on human rights, and other laws that concern civil society*

All fundamental CSO rights<sup>6</sup> are reflected in the Czech legal framework and mechanisms exist to implement them on the ground, including the right to information. However, in the field of ODA, there are significant financial constraints due to the modest ODA budget and to one-year funding schemes. Only in August 2014 the government issued a decree making multi-year grants possible – but this system will only be piloted in 2015.

In addition, issues have been raised regarding the new Civil Code (in force since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014) which requires new registration and changes in the statutes of many non-governmental organizations.

The commitments made in the Accra Agenda for Action, the Busan Partnership, and other international agreements are still not fully reflected in the legal or policy frameworks and there are

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<sup>3</sup> CPDE, *The Journey from Istanbul: Evidences on the implementation of the CSO Development Effectiveness Principles* (2014), <http://www.csopartnership.org/the-journey-from-istanbul-evidence-on-the-implementation-of-cso-de-principles/>

<sup>4</sup> FoRS, *AidWatch Report* (2014)

<sup>5</sup> FoRS, *Country page for the CONCORD AidWatch Report* (2014)

<sup>6</sup> The Czech legal framework promotes and protects the respect of freedom of association including:

- i) the rights of all individuals to form, join and participate in an association, at national and international levels, with legal entity status if the founders so desire;
- ii) the right of CSOs to operate free from unwarranted state intrusion or interference in their affairs;
- iii) the right to pursue a broad range of self-defined objectives, including to seek and secure funding from domestic, foreign and international sources; and
- iv) other basic rights, mainly the right to freedom of peaceful assembly; the right to freedom of expression; and the right to communication and cooperation with others in all sectors, within and across borders.

no explicit road maps to fulfil these commitments. On the other hand, some operational mechanisms have already been adopted. For example, there is an ongoing policy dialogue between FoRS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the commitments from the Paris Declaration are included in the ODA Strategy, a grant scheme on triangular cooperation was launched in 2004 (the Czech government promoted this form of cooperation in Accra), and the Declaration on Good Humanitarian Donorship was approved in 2006. More recent commitments from Busan (2011) and Mexico (2014) emphasize mainly support for private sector engagement in development.

#### *CSOs' ability to follow the regulatory framework and to access and use information*

CSOs are only partially able to navigate in the complexities of the Czech legal system. Reasonable - timely and cost-effective - access to legal services is missing, especially in light of the new Civil Code, which is too complex (3081 paragraphs). In addition, some implementing regulations to this law are still missing.

The Act on Free Access to Information was approved in 1999, and CSOs are technically able to access and use information essential to their work from governmental institutions, including statistical data on financial flows according to the OECD DAC standards. However, the available information is not sufficient and some data are provided only in a consolidated form, with no disaggregated information on crucial social indicators (e.g. per gender, diverse actors or target groups).

There is a need to improve publishing and accessibility of Czech ODA information. An important step is the foreseen accession to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) in 2015. An independent ODA monitoring initiative *Publish What You Fund* assessed the transparency of Czech ODA as “poor” in both 2013 and 2014. In 2014, the Czech Republic fell from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> place among the EU countries in terms of transparency. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic remains one of the most transparent donors among the “new” member states of the EU.<sup>7</sup>

#### *CSOs' engagement in expert consultations on the legal system*

CSOs have limited capacity to engage in expert consultations on the legal system. In particular small organisations have limited capacity and expertise to study and comment on the country's legal framework. FoRS endeavours to reduce these gaps by organizing special workshops and other information and capacity building events based on the needs of its members.

## **2) The political environment**

#### *Democratic institutions and recognition of CSOs*

The accomplished transformation of the Czech ODA system in 2012 concentrated responsibilities and ODA budgetary mechanisms under the MFA. The Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid defines eradication of poverty as the main goal, and identifies roles and responsibilities of different state actors. The Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017 is a programme framework which concretizes the objectives and principles of Czech ODA, geographical and sector priorities, and modalities.<sup>8</sup> The organizational setting and division of competencies between the MFA and the implementing body CZDA seems to be relatively effective, providing better planning and coordination.

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<sup>7</sup> FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014)

<sup>8</sup> There are other related strategies such as the National Strategy for Global Development Education (2011-2015) or the Strategy for granting scholarships to students from developing countries (2013-2017)

FoRS is a respected partner for state institutions and participates in consultations on strategic issues such as the Development Cooperation Strategy and its mid-term revision or on modalities of cooperation with the private sector. FoRS, together with the Platform of Entrepreneurs for International Development Cooperation<sup>9</sup>, has an observer status in the Council for International Development Cooperation. FoRS is also represented in several working groups of the Council, for example in the working group on evaluations.

### *CSOs' participation in policy formulation and development initiatives*

Only a few political leaders advance development cooperation policies and practices that address the structural causes of poverty and inequality. The current approach focuses more on economic growth and pro-export policies. ODA now belongs under the responsibility of the Economic Section of the MFA, and commercial tie-ups have been strengthened. Besides bilateral projects implemented by private companies, a new programme of development/economic partnership (“B2B” Business-to-Business) has been piloted since 2013.<sup>10</sup> New tools supporting private sector engagement including its cooperation with other actors are in the pipeline and CSOs are engaged in these discussions.

FoRS monitors Czech ODA and provides recommendations for its improvement. Some recommendations related to the Czech ODA Strategy or to project cycle management are already reflected in policy documents and operational procedures. Since 2008, FoRS regularly publishes a “Czech AidWatch report”, evaluating the Czech ODA in the past year with the aim of spurring discussion with other actors.<sup>11</sup> With regard to the private sector, FoRS acknowledges its role in development as a potential source of job opportunities, income (incl. taxes) generation, new investments, knowledge transfer, and capacity building. However, FoRS affirms that economic interests should be promoted by different tools than ODA. The primary goals of ODA should be poverty and inequality eradication. These goals cannot be met by economic growth alone. In that regard, all development cooperation initiatives, including foreign investments and commerce-related policies, must not impact negatively on the rights of people on the receiving end of ODA.<sup>12</sup> The engagement of the private sector, as well as of other development actors, must follow the cross-cutting ODA principles (good governance, respect for the environment and the climate, and respect for human rights including gender equality) and the principles of development effectiveness (ownership, transparency, and shared responsibility for results).

Consultations between CSOs and government representatives on key policy issues pertaining to ODA continue both on a formalized and on an ad hoc basis. For instance, FoRS created ad hoc geographical working groups during the mid-term revision of the Czech ODA Strategy. However, the impacts of these consultations have still been limited – priorities are politically driven and there is limited space for CSOs' right of initiative. For example, the grants for bilateral or triangular cooperation can be provided only for the projects in several priority countries or sectors set by the government. The effects of open dialogue are also limited due to generally low political support for ODA and due to low decision making power of civil servants engaged in these debates. It is therefore necessary to set more effective cooperation mechanisms with parliamentarians and with other ministries.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.ppzrs.org](http://www.ppzrs.org)

<sup>10</sup> FoRS, Country page for the CONCORD AidWatch Report (2014), FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014)

<sup>11</sup> FoRS, ODA of the Czech Republic in 2011 - Perspective of the non-governmental organizations joined together in FoRS, Briefing paper (2012), <http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/AW-brief-EN.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014)

The ODA budget has stagnated in several past years (149.5 million EUR in 2013, only 0.11% ODA/GNI), a ratio of bilateral cooperation<sup>13</sup> is only 27%, and support for the Least Developed Countries is decreasing (comparing to 2012, there was 10% fall).<sup>14</sup>

#### *CSO consensus on political objectives*

Development CSOs consider extreme poverty as one of the most pressing global problems. FoRS envisions the eradication of poverty through environmentally sustainable and socially just development, human rights protection, conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution.<sup>15</sup> Development, prosperity and decent life are not possible without environmental protection and respect for planetary boundaries, inter-sectoral cooperation, and linking domestic and foreign as well as development and non-development agendas. ODA should contribute to economic growth that does not put in danger long-term conditions for a quality life that is enjoyed also by the most vulnerable population groups such as women, children, small farmers, and elder or disabled people.<sup>16</sup> Consensus on key principles of effective development was confirmed by adoption of the FoRS Code on Effectiveness<sup>17</sup> in 2011.

### **3) The governance context**

#### *ODA policies and practices*

Cooperation with 5 priority countries is defined by multi-annual cooperation programmes. Projects in other partner countries reflect the priority needs in several generally defined sectors. The Czech MFA prepares an annual implementation and financial plan of bilateral ODA with a mid-term outlook for the following two years. These plans are negotiated within the Czech Council for International Development Cooperation. During the consultations on 2015 plan, FoRS remarked favourably continuity of the Czech ODA and the strengthened focus on human rights, but also provided a number of recommendations, including the need to increase and better use the ODA budget.

In the frame of bilateral ODA, a special Transition Promotion Programme was established in 2005 as a financial instrument of the Czech MFA, with the goal of supporting democracy and human rights, in light of the Czech Republic's history of social transition and democratization. The total allocation for 2015 is 1.8 million EUR. Its projects are implemented in cooperation with Czech CSOs and their local partners, underpinning the importance of civil society in democratization processes, with a broader notion of human rights.<sup>18</sup>

The grant programmes for CSOs include a programme on awareness and education (0.54 million EUR in 2015), a programme on capacity building and partnerships (0.11 million EUR in 2015) and a programme on capacity building of the platforms (0.09 million EUR in 2015). The CSO must usually provide 30% of own co-financing. This disqualifies many small CSOs. A special grant programme supports triangular cooperation with other donors, in particular with the European

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<sup>13</sup> The bilateral ODA includes development and transition projects, grant programs for NGOs (including triangular projects), small grant program at the embassies, humanitarian aid, programs for migrants, scholarships, peace missions, and other modalities, plus monitoring, evaluation, and administration costs.

<sup>14</sup> FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014)

<sup>15</sup> FoRS Strategy 2011-2015 (2011), [http://fors.cz/user\\_files/strategiefors\\_final19.12.2011.pdf](http://fors.cz/user_files/strategiefors_final19.12.2011.pdf) (only in Czech)

<sup>16</sup> FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014)

<sup>17</sup> FoRS Code on Effectiveness (2011), [http://www.fors.cz/user\\_files/fors\\_code\\_on\\_effectiveness\\_en.pdf](http://www.fors.cz/user_files/fors_code_on_effectiveness_en.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [www.mzv.cz](http://www.mzv.cz)

Commission (1.23 million EUR in 2015). A budget of 0.18 million EUR is then allocated for ODA evaluations.

Czech bilateral projects are divided between CSOs and the private sector on a relatively even basis. The projects implemented by CSOs receive 39% of the allocated bilateral budget while the projects implemented by private sector receive 36%. Universities and other academic institutions have 6%, and governmental and local authorities around 6% share. Most of the projects are launched through public tenders, with most of the supplies provided by private sector. CSOs can submit their own projects in the relevant grant programmes but must ensure their own co-financing.

Though official strategy documents acknowledge aid effectiveness, the Czech Republic has never had a clear implementation plan to fulfil its commitments with binding targets, indicators or time schedules. This has not changed much since Busan. Some positive steps have been taken in terms of improving coordination and harmonisation with other donors and implementing bodies, such as involvement of the Czech Republic in so called Joint EU programming.<sup>19</sup> New themes have emerged, such as the private sector's role in development. During the mid-term review of the Czech ODA Strategy, an increased attention was given to development effectiveness and sustainability of impacts. In the recent study, FoRS proposed several measures to improve sustainability of the Czech ODA projects.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Constraints for inclusive engagement of CSOs*

The governance of ODA programs is still not fully satisfactory. For example, the usual cutting of the budgets of the approved project challenges the principles of good governance, effectiveness and transparency. The role of Czech Embassies is also unclear, and new guidance on institutional competencies has not been completed yet. New development diplomats in priority countries should help improve the design and monitoring of development projects.

Predictability and continuity of funding is fundamental for effective development cooperation. The up-to-date system of one-year grants within a fiscal year complicates the implementation of development projects or programmes and reduces their impacts. Based on the new Government Decree (August 2014), the system of multi-year grants and programme funding will be piloted from 2015. The system of ODA tenders should also allow for multi-year projects, which is already possible in other areas, including for projects supported by the EU Structural Funds or the environmental projects managed by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Environment.

Mechanisms for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of cross-cutting ODA principles are still not fully in place.<sup>21</sup> FoRS, in cooperation with the Czech Evaluation Society, prepared a guideline for assessing gender aspects in development projects, and this guideline has been incorporated in the Terms of Reference for evaluations since 2014.<sup>22</sup> The ODA plan for 2015 emphasizes support of all generation of human rights, in accordance with the Policy Statement of the Czech Government.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> FoRS, Country page for the CONCORD AidWatch Report (2014)

<sup>20</sup> Körner, M., Píbilová, I., FoRS, Sustainability of Czech ODA Projects (2013), [http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/sustainability-web-FINAL\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/sustainability-web-FINAL_ENG.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> FoRS, AidWatch Report (2014)

<sup>22</sup> FoRS, Czech Evaluation Society, How to mainstream the different roles, needs and priorities of women and men in development, humanitarian, educational and awareness raising projects (2014), [http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/FoRS\\_CES\\_Metodika\\_gender\\_projektyZRS.pdf](http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/FoRS_CES_Metodika_gender_projektyZRS.pdf) (only in Czech)

<sup>23</sup> FoRS position to the Plan of Czech ODA for 2015 and for a mid-term outlook till 2017 (2014) (only in Czech)

### *CSOs' own commitments and advancing multi-stakeholder initiatives*

In 2011, FoRS adopted its Code on Effectiveness, with five key areas linked to the Istanbul Principles: Grassroots knowledge, Transparency and accountability, Partnership, Respect for human rights and gender equality, and Accountability for impacts and their sustainability. The Code is to help FoRS members enhance the quality and effectiveness of their operations. FoRS members agreed that breaching of “key indicators” (e.g. corruption) could eventually result in the exclusion of a member from FoRS. This is also stated in the FoRS Statute.<sup>24</sup>

FoRS members carry out an annual self-assessment<sup>25</sup> according to indicators related to each principle. FoRS Secretariat monitors the annual changes and reflects learning needs in its capacity building plans. The findings are shared at FoRS General Assembly and discussed by the Working group on Effectiveness. In addition to self-assessment, peer-reviews were introduced in 2013 where the peers provide mutual feedback on using the Code, prioritize learning needs, set concrete plan of actions and assess progress.<sup>26</sup>

FoRS is also engaged in designing and piloting a peer-learning process on effectiveness policies and practices among member organizations of CONCORD.

Open partnerships of entities from the public, non-governmental and private sectors are key assumptions for effective development cooperation. Though this is also an important aspect declared in official documents, there is no systematic support for joint projects carried out by CSOs, private companies and other actors. FoRS has thus initiated or participated in several multi-stakeholder initiatives. Besides the ongoing dialogue within the Council for International Development Cooperation and FoRS participation in thematic workshops organized by the MFA or CZDA, the first big inter-sectoral event was a FoRS International Conference on Development Effectiveness organized during the Czech Presidency of the European Council in 2009. The process of searching for possible ways of cooperation with private companies as well as academia is ongoing, and FoRS has commissioned several studies on this matter. CZDA and MFA representatives are invited to all FoRS expert events and they regularly participate in the FoRS General Assemblies.

An important cross-sectoral cooperation of development CSOs (FoRS), environmental CSOs (Green Circle) and educational CSOs has begun during preparations for the European Year for Development 2015. Recently, they presented joint “starting points” for discussions about the global development agenda post-2015 to the MFA, sharing a joint vision of the world – one where all human beings enjoy the right to a secure, decent and meaningful life without exceeding planetary limits. Beyond fulfilling the unmet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), they will also strive for changes in diverse areas such as energy sector transformation, better monitoring of development efforts, education for global citizenship, tax justice, gender equality, the protection of biodiversity, democratic participation by citizens in decision-making processes and access to justice.<sup>27</sup>

FoRS sees the European Year for Development as an opportunity to draw public and political attention towards the global development problems. FoRS will aim both to raise awareness, and to engage in the policy debates by clarifying Czech position to the post-2015 global framework (post-

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.fors.cz/user\\_files/fors\\_code\\_on\\_effectiveness\\_en.pdf](http://www.fors.cz/user_files/fors_code_on_effectiveness_en.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <http://bit.ly/MmlxjC>

<sup>26</sup> CPDE, The Journey from Istanbul: Evidences on the implementation of the CSO Development Effectiveness Principles (2014), <http://www.csopartnership.org/the-journey-from-istanbul-evidence-on-the-implementation-of-cso-de-principles/>

<sup>27</sup> FoRS, Inputs from development, environmental and other NGOs for discussions on global development agenda post-2015, addressed to the Czech MFA (2014) (only in Czech)

MDGs/SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals). CSOs will also support the Czech negotiations in the United Nations and the European Council and will contribute to CONCORD, Beyond2015, and CPDE initiatives. In addition, FoRS aims to increase dialogue and cooperation with the private sector, especially with the Czech Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Platform of Entrepreneurs for International Development Cooperation.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4) *The socio-cultural context***

##### *Respect for diverse cultural, social and political views*

MFA and CZDA recognize and in general respect the diverse cultural contexts of countries where Czech ODA projects are implemented. On the other hand, development diplomats in partner countries are still often missing and the role of Embassies is unclear. There is insufficient political and financial support for in-depth research on development issues or for enabling CSOs to conduct such research (within limited budget for bilateral cooperation). Some surveys, advocacy or policy activities, trainings, conferences or internships can be partially funded from the ODA programmes for CSOs.

##### *Recognition of rights and freedoms affecting CSOs, and public recognition of civil society*

Though fundamental rights and freedoms are well recognized, some minority groups, including small NGOs, do not have access to national or European funding schemes due to restrictive eligibility criteria or due to the required co-financing. Some politicians also still challenge the role of CSO sector – this may relate to the fact that this relatively new sector was created only after the “velvet revolution” of 1989.

Lately, the role of CSOs in addressing development challenges has been well-received by the mainstream and social media. The public appreciates real life stories and the visible outcomes of development interventions.

Czech citizens’ support for development cooperation and humanitarian aid was confirmed by the results of the annual *Eurobarometer* opinion poll<sup>29</sup>, and the opinion poll commissioned in 2013 by FoRS and carried out by NMS Market Research agency (1210 respondents).<sup>30</sup>

According to the results of the FoRS survey, non-profit organizations should be the main recipients of financial resources for humanitarian aid and development cooperation. Traditional big NGOs - two of them are FoRS members - rank among the best known non-profit organizations, partly due to their engagement during humanitarian crises, e.g. after the typhoon Haiyan in Philippines. The main argument that would persuade people to financially contribute is the guarantee that their money will get where it is intended to. The main motives of both ODA and humanitarian aid were assistance to people in need, improvement of health situation in poor countries, and ethical and moral motivations. Support for education is also important as well as maintaining the positive image of the Czech Republic in the international arena. On the other hand, support for the Czech

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<sup>28</sup> FoRS letter to the MFA (deputy minister for non-European countries and economic diplomacy) (2014): Engagement of FoRS in the European Year for Development 2015 (only in Czech)

<sup>29</sup> EC (2014): EU Development aid and the Millennium Development Goals, Special Eurobarometer 405: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_405\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_405_en.pdf); EC (2012): Solidarity that Spans the Globe: Europeans and Development Aid, Special Eurobarometer 392: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_392\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_392_en.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> FoRS, Opinion poll: Czech citizens significantly support development cooperation and humanitarian aid, Press release (2014), <http://www.fors.cz/sdruzeni-fors/dokumenty/tiskove-zpravy/#.VF5-gdEtDIU> (only in Czech)

economy and domestic businesses, as so often mentioned by politicians, does not belong among the key motivations for ODA according to respondents. In addition, 75% of respondents support at least maintaining or increasing the ODA budget, and 85% of respondents support teaching the topic of global responsibility in schools.

#### *CSOs do not discriminate*

In the annual self-assessment carried out by FoRS members on the basis of the Code on Effectiveness, respect for human rights and gender equality has constantly been very well evaluated (“...members and observers strive to improve the situation of socially excluded and other vulnerable groups and to strengthen their role in the society with special attention to women and girls’ empowerment...”). The responsible approaches in this regard are confirmed by peer-reviews among the members and by concrete projects directly focused on these issues. The joint communication framework of FoRS proposes a series of rules including respect to those values that aim at achieving sustainable development, eradication of extreme poverty, achieving gender equality, meet human rights and prevent and peacefully resolve conflicts; and not criticize or defame the work of other NGOs without any serious ethical motive.<sup>31</sup>

### **5) The socioeconomic context**

#### *Broadly shared understanding of the structural causes of poverty and inequality*

Attention to the complex causes of poverty and inequality frame Czech development cooperation, as reflected in relevant policy documents.

Funding mechanisms are formally responsive to priorities of CSOs and governments in partner countries, but there are legal constraints for decentralized funding; only the Small Grant Scheme for Embassies has been allowed. After the Czech Republic became a DAC member, the commitment on untied aid has become more urgent. FoRS started preparation of an analysis on this topic which will include a participatory dialogue with the members on potential effects and impacts.

#### *Reliable funding mechanisms for CSOs*

Funding mechanisms for CSOs are in general reliable, transparent, easy to understand, and disbursed impartially. CSOs contribute to poverty alleviation and equitable development through community work, on-the-ground service delivery, capacity building, policy advocacy and lobbying. On the other hand, the ODA budget does not respond to emerging needs and to the international commitments. There is still low predictability and no long-term programme funding. In addition, due to the modest ODA budget and due to inappropriate appraisal criteria even the approved projects get their budgets cut. This approach challenges the basic principles of effectiveness and accountability for results.

#### *CSOs’ policy and advocacy*

Besides basic requirements on meeting the commitments on increasing ODA budget, FoRS requires more proportionate disbursement of financial resources for priority sectors of the Czech bilateral ODA - in particular, for education, good governance, and civil society. Czech ODA should focus on sectors where the Czech Republic can use the added values and own transition experience. These sectors do not necessarily need to belong to the priority sectors of central governments or big international donors but they are still essential for sustainable development. Educational, social and

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<sup>31</sup> FoRS, Communication Compass for Development NGOs: Practical Tips and Suggestions for Quality and Effective Public Relations (2014), [http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/fors\\_manual\\_A5\\_www.pdf](http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/fors_manual_A5_www.pdf) (only in Czech)

infrastructure projects implemented with the cooperation of various actors should complement each other and enhance their impacts and sustainability. These joint approaches should be reflected in complex programming. However, in the education sector the budget decreased from 1.12 million EUR in 2014 to 0.83 million EUR in 2015. 60% of the Czech bilateral ODA budget is allocated for the projects in the sectors of water and sanitation, agriculture, and energy.<sup>32</sup>

In order to increase effectiveness and contribution to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, development CSOs have adopted their own commitments in the Istanbul Principles, with special emphasis on democratic participation, human rights based approaches, and gender equality. FoRS approved its Code on Effectiveness in 2011 and continues its monitoring initiatives through annual self-assessment and peer-reviews. The self-assessments have continually revealed two strongest areas: 1) respect for human rights and gender equality and 2) transparency and accountability. On the contrary, the weakest area has been accountability for impacts and their sustainability, concretely a proper assessment of impacts. FoRS addresses these gaps through targeted capacity building activities.

At European level, a peer-learning system for sharing experience and best practices among national CSO platforms has begun.

## **Conclusions**

Despite a number of positive achievements in Czech development cooperation over the past years, challenges remain in the areas of development effectiveness and the promotion of more equitable and inclusive partnerships of CSOs and other development actors. Key successes, challenges and lessons learned are summarized below.

### *Successes/ Achievements*

- Enactment of the Law on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid; and the Czech ODA Strategy 2010-2017 which highlights the key principles of sustainable development.
- Establishment of the Czech Development Agency and the Council for International Development Cooperation (and engagement of FoRS).
- System of development evaluations (with some areas to be still improved).
- Relatively high and stable public support for development cooperation and humanitarian aid.
- An intention to access IATI in 2015 (FoRS will urge the MFA to fulfil this promise).
- Engagement of FoRS in national, European and global strategic discussions on development effectiveness. Increasing engagement of the private sector in policy dialogue.
- Code on Effectiveness adopted by FoRS in 2011, with practical monitoring mechanisms including self-assessment and peer-reviews.

### *Challenges*

- Recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right is quite good at the political level, but practical instruments and means of implementation are still missing and CSOs are

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<sup>32</sup> FoRS position to the Plan of Czech ODA for 2015 and for a mid-term outlook till 2017 (2014) (only in Czech)

still required to follow governmental priorities. ODA is still endangered due to the short-term political and economic interests.

- Lack of policy documents reflecting the Accra, Busan and Mexico commitments on increasing development effectiveness; absence of commitments on policy coherence for development. There are no stated commitments of the private sector either.
- Limited budget for ODA and no plan to reach the related international commitments.<sup>33</sup> However, a policy debate on increasing the ODA budget has just started.
- Relatively good access of CSOs to policy engagement is hindered by limited knowledge, the lack of internal capacity and financial constraints, including modest budget and low predictability of funding (e.g. core funding or mid-term framework agreements are still missing among ODA modalities). CSOs have to nurture the capacity to organize among themselves and lobby for concrete policy changes. The mechanism for internal consultations must be strengthened in order to increase ownership and build wide consensus on joint positions.
- Further improvements of the evaluation system are needed, with a focus on Theory of Change, on systematic assessment of cross-cutting principles (good governance, human rights and gender equality, and environmental protection), and on the use of evaluation results.
- There is space for political dialogue but its impacts are limited, due to low political support for ODA. The European Year for Development 2015 is an opportunity to increase awareness and engagement of various stakeholders, including the private sector, on ODA issues.

#### *Lessons learned*

- FoRS members are still in the process of learning appropriate ways to enhance development effectiveness in practice. Ways forward need to be built on the basis of an open and fair relationship, peer-learning, willingness to improve, and sufficient capacities, resources and time. Knowledge exchange with other CSOs, platforms and bodies like CPDE has been essential.
- CSOs must engage actively in global policy debates – presenting their political messages with a realistic understanding of the limits of these engagements, and buttressing their demands with their own commitments to development effectiveness.

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<sup>33</sup> Despite the resumption of economic growth, total ODA/GNI ratio fell back to 0.11% in 2013 – the lowest percentage since 2007 (ODA budget stagnates in spite of the commitment of 0.33% ODA/GNI by 2015; multilateral aid amounted to 73% of total aid and consisted mainly of mandatory contributions (e.g. to the EU budget and the European Development Fund), instead of bilateral and triangular projects and programs; the share of bilateral aid to Least Developed Countries is decreasing.

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