

conference the Czech sociologists promised by way of reciprocation to organise a similar conference in the Czech Republic, which took place in Prague just recently.

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A Workshop on the Non-profit Sector at CERGE-EI

On 27 February 2004, a workshop on the non-profit sector in the Czech Republic was organised by researchers from CERGE-EI (Brhlíková, Ortmann, Svitková), a joint work-site of Charles University and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and from the Faculty of the Humanities at Charles University (Skovajsa). This was the first workshop of its kind in the country and was attended by almost 30 participants from the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, and even the USA. The participants included the most prominent researchers on the non-profit sector (e.g. Frič, Goulli, Pospíšil), along with representatives from the statistical offices of the Czech and Slovak Republics (Vošvrđová, Bernardová, Štěpánková), the Comparative Non-profit Sector Project in Central Europe at The Johns Hopkins University (Green), and representatives from various other organisations (e.g. Krnáčová from Transparency International).

The workshop was dedicated to several major themes, indicated in the titles of the two sessions of the workshop: *Governance, Transparency, and Accountability* was the title of the first session, and *Quality of and Access to Relevant Data* was the title of the second. Both sessions were chaired by Marek Skovajsa.

The speakers in the first session were Ortmann, Svitková, Krnáčová, Green, and Brhlíková. The general theme of the session was that if the non-profit sector wants to increase its reputation among the public it needs to become transparent and account-

able. Using a simple game theory model, Ortmann explained why trust in non-profits (by the public, the state, donors, clients) requires transparency and accountability. Svitková discussed the relatively positive Dutch experience with an accreditation system and introduced the audience to the detailed information that the US 990 form provides to people interested in learning more about non-profits (whether they are researchers or potential donors). Krnáčová gave examples of what she would consider a transparent organisation (e.g. board members' CVs are publicly accessible, information is available on fundraising expenses relative to revenues and programmes funded or run.) She argued that if required to comply with these simple standards all the non-profits whose websites she had browsed the night before would fail the transparency test. Green talked about right-to-information legislation, pointing out that such laws often become neutralised and perverted by secrecy laws, which declare issues of national security and other legitimate and not so legitimate items to be off-limits. He reported that in his various studies, he found no clear-cut effect between the index of the right to information and measures such as Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Brhlíková talked about the US-focused cyber-accountability discussion list – an international community of more than 350 academics, advocates, consultants, enforcement officers, journalists, etc. that discusses issues online, such as the definition of charity fraud, acceptable fundraising ratios, principles of accountable and transparent institutions, or concrete examples of abuses.

The plenary discussion following these presentations touched on a number of issues. It was noted that accountability and transparency starts with people, but that the perceived underfunding of the sector meant that non-profits do not have the professionals that are up to the task. The response to this was that it does not take professionally trained accountants to say how much money, as an in-

stitution, you get and how you spend it. It was suggested that the kind of accountability that one could expect ought to be a function of the kind of organisation under scrutiny (small, large, few donations, many donations, etc.) It was pointed out that elsewhere, e.g., in Maryland in the United States, there exist relatively simple and straightforward sets of principles of accounting, which could be used as a template in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The issue of a system of accreditation similar to the one in the Netherlands was also briefly discussed. It was acknowledged that a system of this kind faced important problems, such as who should and who would initiate it. Such an initiative either would have to establish its reputation and credibility on its own or use the reputation of an existing watchdog organisation, such as Transparency International. It was noted that such a watchdog agency would have to be an exemplary organisation in terms of its accountability and transparency. There was agreement that the last thing needed are more laws and rules, of which there already seem to be plenty (especially so for foundations, foundation funds, and public benefit organisations; less so for voluntary associations). Unfortunately, these laws and rules appear to be poorly enforced: two-thirds of the registered foundations, foundation funds, and public benefit organisations do not submit the mandatory annual reports to the Ministry of Finance, and they seem to get away with it. The proposal made by CERGE-EI representatives that a discussion list be launched, similar in purpose to the cyber-accountability list (www.cyb.acc.org), was met with little interest.

The speakers in the second session were Štěpánková, Bernardová, Pospíšil, Kostolanská, Stulík, and Vajdová. Štěpánková provided an overview of the data that the Slovak Statistical Office compiles. She also summarised some of the trends that are apparent in the data. Bernardová, from the Czech Statistical Office, offered an overview of the data that the Czech Statistical Office (CSO) compiles. She also summarised some trends,

and mentioned that the CSO, in conjunction with the Centre for Research on the Non-profit Sector in Brno is working on satellite accounts, which better capture the scope of the Czech non-profit sector. Pospíšil pointed out that there are various agencies and organisations that collect a great deal of data. He also acknowledged that these data collection efforts are poorly if at all co-ordinated, that the collected data are often raw data, user-unfriendly and not accessible to 'mere mortals'. Kostolanská reported on a study by her organisation (SPACE), which focused on social services and to some extent checked officially provided statistics. While that study drew on an extensive survey (35 questions, of which the majority were open), the selection criteria of the sample and the return rate raise methodological questions about the value it can add to our understanding of the third sector. Stulík pointed out that the poor state of NGO-related studies is likely to have dire consequences for the ability of the two countries to secure EU programme help, an interesting variation on the theme of the first session. Vajdová highlighted the diversity of topics covered in the existing secondary data sources, but she also criticised the lack of systematic research on NGOs in general.

The plenary discussion following this session addressed the following questions: What data are we missing? How can non-profits and statistical offices collaborate on better data collection? There was a sense that, while there are a number of data collection efforts, they are wanting in terms of quality (control) and user-friendliness. Even simple data such as fundraising ratios (repeatedly mentioned in the first session as an important measure of an organisation's accountability, transparency, and effectiveness) are currently not available, or only very indirectly (through analysis, for example, of the various programmes that are funded by the major foundations). No consensus was reached with regard to the quality or accessibility of data. The representatives of the sta-