



European Commission
Commissioner
Nicolas Schmit
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200, 1049
Brussels
Belgium

Prague, 9 February 2021

Dear Commissioner Schmit,

We would like to thank you for your letter of 3 December 2020, in which you expressed your support for our efforts to prevent a reduction in the European Social Fund Plus in the 2021–2027 programming period. Unfortunately, it seems that the Government of the Czech Republic does not take into account the comments of experts regarding the allocation and rules for drawing European funds and continues to underestimate the importance of prevention in the area of social exclusion and the risk of falling into housing emergency.

Despite the recommendations of the European Commission, evidence-based advice from the monitoring committees and representatives of non-profit organisations and other entities operating in the field of social and other services, the Czech government does not intend to change its position. Not only does it continue to plan to reduce the share of ESF+ funding in the 2021–2027 programming period by 10% in favour of the European Regional Development Funds, but it also plans to ignore the compulsory participation of social and other support services in the process. In practice, this leads to a fundamental diversion of part of the funds from social services and makes access to European funds more difficult for non-governmental organizations and municipalities, which, unlike commercial entities, do not have sufficient resources for the proposed mandatory participation.

As representatives of more than thirty public service providers, we addressed a joint letter to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Mr. Andrej Babiš on this issue on 10 December 2020. In it, we objected to the use of ESF+ funds in the way it is planned now, asked for its allocation to be maintained at least in the originally planned amount proposed by the European Commission and offered our expertise in the further process of setting up ESF+ funding, which cannot be done without proper involvement and consideration of social and territorial partners.

On 5 January 2021, we received a reply to our letter to the Prime Minister from the State Secretary for European Affairs Ms. Milena Hrdinková. We were advised to address directly the Minister of Finance Ms. Alena Schillerová, and the Minister for Regional Development Ms.



#zabydleni

Klára Dostálová in the issue of participation of civil society organisations and transparency of the further process. However, the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic told us that it did not have time to meet with us and did not allow for further debate on reducing the ESF+ allocation and an exception from the mandatory participation for public benefit projects.

The Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic accepted our meeting request, listened to our arguments and concerns, and then stated that comments on participation do not fall within their responsibility, and that in the matter of transferring funds from ESF+ to CF they have no competence to change anything. It is clear from this approach of the Czech government that the proposal to reduce the ESF+ allocation is a political decision that does not reflect the current needs of the population of the Czech Republic nor the view of the professional public.

Dear Commissioner Schmit, we believe in your continued support of our efforts to maintain the ESF+ allocation in the next programming period at the level originally proposed, thus mitigating the negative effects of the incipient socio-economic crisis. Therefore, we would like to ask you once again to use all the means at your disposal to reverse the political decision of the Czech government, which may adversely affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the Czech Republic in the current programming period – not only the most vulnerable groups but the society as a whole.

Sincerely,

Iva Kuchyňková and Vít Lesák

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Czech Republic

List of organizations that joined the content of the letter:



Za bydlení

Initiative For Housing

Helps to enforce the institutional and legislative model which would prevent homelessness and poverty business



Caritas Czech Republic

An organization providing social and health services to people in distress or acute emergency, a member of the global organization Caritas



Platform for Social Housing

Association enforcing the law on social housing and the Housing First program



Children of the Full Moon

An association of parents and other family members of children with autism spectrum disorder

ASISTENCE O. P. S.

Assistance

Support for people with physical and combined disabilities and their independent life in a regular day environment



Association of Educators in Social Work (ASVSP)

Society associating higher professional and higher education institutions or their parts that offer education in social work in the Czech Republic



One second after

A group defending the interests of children and young people growing up in institutional care



J&T Foundation

Help and counseling for families with children in an unfavorable situation



Center for Social Issues – SPOT

Association focused on urban policy in order to ensure a dignified coexistence of city dwellers



Child and family association

Association of 86 organizations operating in the field of care for children at risk



ASOCIACE ORGANIZACÍ V OBLASTI VĚZEŇSTVÍ

Association of Organizations in the field of penitentiary

Connecting different actors in the field of penitentiary and criminal justice and contributing to systematic changes in the field of criminal justice



Life 90

Organizations providing services to support and promote the independence of seniors

GERONTOLOGICKÝ INSTITUT

Gerontological Institute

Analytical, educational, conceptual, conference and consulting activities in the field of old age and aging. Old age from the perspective of science and experts



SOS Children's Village

The oldest non-profit organization helping endangered children in the Czech Republic



Diaconate ČCE

Provider of social services under the banner of the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church, member of the international platform Eurodiaconia



Silesian Diaconate

Provider of social services and assistance to the needy in the Moravian-Silesian region



Salvation Army

An international Christian organization helping people in need



Fokus Prague

The largest non-profit organization in the Czech Republic supporting people with experience of mental illness



INSTITUTE FOR DEBT
PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION

Institute for Debt Prevention and Resolution

An independent think-tank focused on the issue of household indebtedness, executions and personal bankruptcies



Prevent99

South Bohemian organization providing services to young people at risk of addiction

*NADĚJE

Hope

One of the oldest Czech non-profit organizations caring mainly for the homeless and the elderly.



Czech Council of Children and Youth

The umbrella organization of the associations of children and youth in the Czech Republic



IQ Roma service

Support for the possibilities, opportunities and determination of the Roma on the way to their growth and social application



ČOSIV - Czech Professional Society for Inclusive Education

Association supporting the development of inclusive education in the Czech educational system



Hnutí Křesťan a práce
Movement Christian and labour
www.hkan.cz

Movement Christian and Labor

A movement striving for the practical application of the social teaching of the church and for solving the current problems of our society

Member of the European Christian Worker Movement



Association of Christian Seniors

An association that pursues the spiritual and material good not only of the elderly



Revival

An organization focused on reviving the rule of law, monitoring decision-making processes and promoting a support active citizenship



Valika child and family center

Help for vulnerable children and their families in the form of social activation services



EAPN CR

An independent network of organizations and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion



Pomáháme dětem. Nabízíme řešení.

Lumos

An organization focused on the deinstitutionalization and unification of the care system for children at risk

European Renaissance Institute

Institution which deals with the issue of cohesion and harmonization of life of citizens of the European Union



Aslido

Emancipation of homeless people through their involvement in solving housing needs and opening a dialogue between all actors involved in homelessness



Association of the Publicly Beneficial Organizations

The umbrella organization associating almost 100 non-governmental organizations, mainly the public services providers



Association of Community Services

The umbrella organization of the providers of social and health services for people with psychotic mental disorder