

*Zdenka Mansfeldová, Sławomir Nałęcz, Eckhard Priller and
Annette Zimmer*

Civil Society in Transition: Civic Engagement and Nonprofit Organizations in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989

1. Introduction

In recent years, the development of civic engagement and the nonprofit sector in the former Eastern bloc countries has attracted special attention from political scientists and policymakers alike. Have civil society and the nonprofit sector in this part of the world developed into the societal underpinning of democracy? Or, on the contrary, even more than a decade after the collapse of socialist rule, are nonprofit organizations still functioning as proxies of state institutions in Eastern European countries? To what extent are the new democracies in Eastern Europe supported by their citizens?

The reason these questions are still being widely discussed in the social sciences is closely linked to democratic theory and political sociology. According to the seminal work of political scientists Almond and Verba (1963), civic engagement ranks among the most important prerequisites of a societally embedded democracy. The nonprofit sector, with its broad spectrum of organizations that serve the common weal by providing social services as well as offering avenues for political participation and societal integration, constitutes the infrastructure of civil society.

There are several indicators to measure the embeddedness and organizational density of civil society. Among the most important are figures on membership in nonprofit organizations. Besides membership, the number of nonprofit organizations and its growth rate provide a further important indicator of the development and well-being of civil society. Finally, data on nonprofit employment as well as on financing of nonprofit organizations allow a look at another facet of civil society that is closely related to the welfare state and its social service provision. More precisely, the size and composition of the sector expressed in economic terms tell the story of whether, how and to what extent the sector is embedded in welfare state policies.

With special reference to the aforementioned indicators - number of

NPOs, membership, and “economic size” of the sector - this chapter takes a closer look at the development of civil society and its nonprofit organizations after the collapse of socialist rule in the Central and Eastern European countries under study. After a short introductory note describing the situation of nonprofit/civil society organizations under socialist rule, the chapter focuses on the foundation boom of nonprofit/civil society organizations in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1990. Subsequently, data on membership development and civic engagement in the aforementioned countries will be presented. Against this background the economic size of the nonprofit sector in these countries will be portrayed by primarily referring to the results of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.

2. Emerging Civil Society - Growing Nonprofit Sector

The systemic transformation in Central and East European countries was accompanied by a remarkable revival of civil society, which was significantly facilitated by the establishment of favorable political conditions for civic engagement and nonprofit organizations. In the Eastern European countries under study, after the breakdown of the socialist regimes, a foundation boom of nonprofit/civil society organizations took place, triggered by those societal interests, needs and desires going along with the process of political and social change from authoritarian to democratic rule.

However, civil society did not start from scratch in Eastern Europe in 1989. As outlined elsewhere in this volume (see contributions by Szabó and Frič), in the countries under study there already existed traditions of civic engagement and nonprofit activity that originally were affiliated with either social movements, the churches or the gentry. Moreover, during the time of authoritarian regimes and specifically during socialist rule, nonprofit organizations were trapped in a so-called catacomb existence. Although heavily regulated and controlled by government, they nevertheless were responsible for organizing civic activities and for providing services in a number of policy fields such as arts and culture, sports, and leisure activities.

As Kubik, an expert of societies under socialist rule, notes, “The organizational density of state socialist regimes was higher than in democratic countries. More people belonged to various formal organizations and movements (trade unions, youth and professional associations, etc.) than under any other type of political regime.¹ Moreover, these organizations and

1 For a fine analysis of civil society organizations acting under authoritarian regimes, see the contribution by Frič on CD.

movements provided their members with an entire range of benefits and services” (Kubik, 2000: 184-185). The organizations to which Kubik refers were “pseudo” nonprofit organizations (Mansfeldová/Szabó, 2000). Under socialist authoritarian rule, a nonprofit sector did not exist independently of the ruling state ideology. Even those “pseudo” nonprofit organizations had to be affiliated with so-called “mass social organizations,” which closely adhered to the ideology of the ruling party. Nevertheless, among those “pseudo” nonprofit organizations were many member-serving clubs that fulfilled functions similar to those of nonprofit organizations in market economies, particularly in the fields of welfare, social services, sports, culture, and recreation. These organizations provided goods and services for their members as well as for a limited public. The same holds true for quite a number of clubs funded and run by state-owned enterprises. Thus, there is no simple answer to the question whether the term nonprofit sector might also be used for referring to the organizational infrastructure of socialist regimes. At the same time, there is no doubt that this organizational infrastructure lacked important features of the nonprofit sector in liberal democracies; more specifically, the organizations were not granted by law free access to the public sphere (Kubik, 2000: 188).

Although there were significant differences among the Eastern European countries with respect to the leeway that those “pseudo” nonprofit organizations enjoyed, no civic activity beyond the control of the state was allowed. With special reference to Poland, Kubik (2000: 188) characterizes this situation in a nutshell as an “imperfect civil society under state socialism.” Despite the fact that under authoritarian rule there was no independent nonprofit sector, according to Kubik, even an “imperfect civil society” that lacked legal security helped to create networks of mutual relationships among those citizens who participated in those “pseudo” civil society organizations.

After the breakdown of the socialist regimes, the newly won freedom was used to transform the “imperfect civil society” of monopoly and mass organizations, in which membership was *de jure* voluntary but in fact compulsory, towards a civil society characterized by organizational pluralism. Referring to the specific development of societies in transition from socialist authoritarian rule to democracy, Kubik distinguishes three types of nonprofit organizations:

- reformed organizations inherited from the communist period;
- split-off organizations, especially those that broke away from their communist-era organizations; and
- newly formed organizations (Kubik, 2000: 195).

Reformed organizations are those nonprofits that enjoyed government recognition under authoritarian rule and managed to survive and to reorganize

themselves. Without any doubt the largest and most important organizations of this type are the trade unions. Split-off organizations are very often nonprofits that look back upon a long tradition of civic engagement, but were forced to affiliate with the state-controlled mass organizations under socialist rule. Cases in point are many sports clubs and initiatives in the fields of arts and culture, which sometimes trace their origins back to the early 19th century. Finally, the newly formed organizations are those that were started after the breakdown of socialist rule by local activists using their newly won freedom to launch initiatives and to set up organizations, particularly in those fields that had not previously been tolerated by state ideology. Textbook examples are activities associated with the new social movements such as environmental groups, pacifist groups, and solidarity groups. Despite their very different backgrounds, these organizations have in common that they provide avenues for participation and civic activity through membership affiliation. The following section provides an overview of the burgeoning of nonprofit/civil society organizations, which is reflected in the number of organizations registered since the early 1990s.

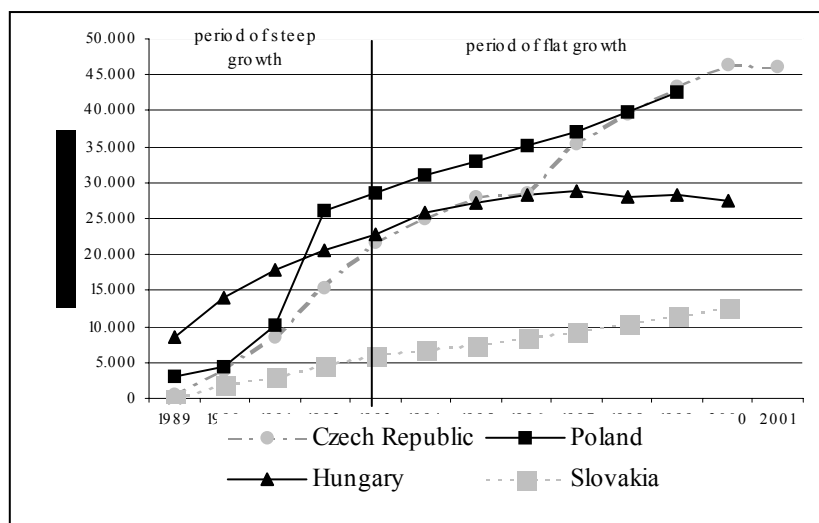
3. Burgeoning of Nonprofit Organizations

A period of renaissance of civil society and a veritable “association boom” characterized the first years after the breakdown of the socialist regimes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Anheier/Seibel, 2001; Anheier/Priller/Zimmer, 2001; Anheier/Priller, 1991). Civic activity, which under socialist rule had been subordinated under those “mass organizations” that were very much in accordance with the ideology of the ruling party and thus integrated into the communist party-state apparatus, blossomed. With the breakdown of the former regimes, both the context and the basic conditions of civic activity changed radically. This was specifically the case for those aforementioned “pseudo” nonprofit organizations. Some were legally transformed into registered voluntary associations, while others reorganized or dissolved. Importantly, the transformation of and the split-off from the “old” state-controlled so-called mass organizations into “new” private legal forms coincided with the founding of many newly formed nonprofit organizations. In the countries under study the majority of nonprofit organizations were registered as associations or foundations. In the years to come these two developed into the legal forms most frequently used by nonprofit organizations in the countries under study. The process of massive registration was further facilitated by legal and political changes, which eliminated or reduced government control over registration and tight supervision of the organizations’ activities. Moreover, a big change of the

political climate motivated active citizens to organize their informal civic activities and to continue their civic engagement within legalized and formal organizational structures based on such values as self-organization, self-government, pluralism, and democracy.

Data from the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia show that the process of registration of new nonprofit and specifically membership organizations was especially rapid in the first three to four years after 1989 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Foundation Boom of Associations in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia; 1989-2001



Data sources:

Polish data: Ministry of Justice (quoted by Nałęcz, 2003)

Hungarian data: according to Bocz et al., 2000

Czech and Slovakian data: Albertina Firemni Monitor, 2001

Although the number of nonprofit organizations significantly increased in all countries in the region, it is interesting to note that the process of growth was slower in Hungary. In this country, thanks to a more liberal communist rule in comparison to Poland or Czechoslovakia, in the late 1980s relatively more “pseudo” nonprofit organizations were allowed to function quite independently from state control. According to Éva Kuti and István Sebestény, “By the time of the breakdown of the Soviet Bloc ... (in Hungary) civil society organizations were numerous, developed, and widespread enough to become important actors of the systemic change” (Kuti/Sebestény,

2002: 4). There is even a controversy whether in Hungary the organizations officially recognized by the communist state enjoyed enough autonomy to be classified as civil society organizations. But, as stated earlier, there were significant differences with respect to the leeway that nonprofit organizations enjoyed in the countries under socialist rule. Compared to Hungary, in Poland and in Czechoslovakia “pseudo” nonprofit organizations were much more subordinated to the state, whereas the “...relatively liberal Hungarian version of state socialism had let ‘politically innocent’ voluntary associations exist” (Kuti/Sebestény, 2002: 8). Against this background it becomes understandable why in Czechoslovakia and in Poland many more organizations were registered during the first years of democratic rule. These organizations had survived, thus having existed informally at the end of the 1980s (Frič, 2002: 4; Siellawa-Kolbowska, 2002). Presumably, at the end of communism in Czechoslovakia and Poland, societal potential for civic engagement, which was not organized in any institutional setting, was significantly larger than in Hungary. In the early 1990s, this civic potential was rapidly transformed into associations and foundations.

In the second part of the 1990s, the growth rate of associations slowed down significantly. Currently, there is a more stable development. However, there are indicators that the number of organizations may even decline. Due to registration procedures, it is difficult to say whether the number of organizations registered in a given year exceeds the number of those that suspended their activities. Some organizations stop their activities, but they do not de-register. Reports from Poland and the Czech Republic confirm that only about two-thirds of registered organizations remain active (2001 NGO Sustainability Index, 2002: 60, 121).

Altogether, however, the burgeoning of associations has been impressive in the countries under study in the aftermath of socialist rule. Between 1989 and 1999, the population of incorporated associations multiplied by a factor of 123 in Slovakia, and grew 81 times in the Czech Republic, 14 times in Poland, and three times in Hungary. The data suggest that the newly founded organizations incorporate civic and social potentials that might make these organizations into influential actors of democratic consolidation.

As already mentioned, democratic theory in particular highlights the different ways and approaches by which these organizations contribute to the construction and the strengthening of democracy. Among the most frequently mentioned functions of nonprofit organizations that work in favor of the strengthening of democracy and the deepening of civil society are first and foremost democratic socialization as well as societal integration and participation (Forbrig, 2001; Anheier et al., 2001). Whether and to what extent nonprofit organizations and particularly membership associations are indeed fulfilling these functions will be analyzed in the next section.

4. Democratic Consolidation Based on Civic Engagement?

According to democratic theory, civic activity, which most frequently is measured by membership affiliation, is a high potential indicator for democratic development in the sense that citizens are ready to take over responsibility and not look upon the state as the main problem solver. However, while studying membership affiliation and development, various factors have to be taken into consideration simultaneously. It was Hirschman who already in 1982 underlined the fact that over time there are parallels between the extent and intensity of civic engagement and economic trends. According to Hirschman (1982), civic activity is closely linked both to the individual life style and to the political and economic context. The interaction of these two factors translates into changing levels of social and political awareness as well as ups and downs in the level of civic engagement and political participation in a given country. Against this background, favorable political and economic constellations have a positive influence on civic engagement. If, however, due to a downswing of the economy, citizens have to work significantly harder to make a decent living, this situation might translate into a reduction of overall civic engagement in the respective country. But citizens might also keep away from civic activity if their hopes and desires are turned down, leaving them disappointed with the outcome of their involvement, which did not live up to their expectations.

That there is a subtle interaction of these factors influencing civic engagement is clearly seen in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, while studying levels of civic engagement and citizen participation in this part of the world, it is necessary to keep in mind the legacy of the past communist or socialist rule. The lack of experience in self-organization and volunteering due to long years of dictatorship observed in the former German Democratic Republic (Anheier/Priller/Zimmer, 2001: 140) holds true also in the four countries under study. Thus, decisions to become a member or to refrain from civic engagement are highly influenced by citizens' experiences under the former socialist regime. Due to the legacy of the past where membership in those pseudo or mass voluntary organizations was compulsory and not based on individual decision, in Central and Eastern Europe citizens might decide against formal membership, thus becoming involved in a more informal and friendship or neighborhood type of civic activity.

In the following, drawing on the results of both the World Value Survey and the Study on Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, membership distribution and membership development in the four Eastern European countries under study are the focus. Against the background of the information concerning membership affiliation and membership development

in the 1990s, the analysis returns to the question whether and to what extent citizens are willing to take responsibility and thus no longer seek the protective role of the state.

4.1 Density and Development of Membership

According to the results of the International Comparative World Values Survey (www.worldvaluessurvey.org; Inglehart, 1997) in 1995 less than one third of the population of the countries under study was affiliated with any voluntary organization, political parties included. Against the background that in Western European countries at least every second citizen is a member of a nonprofit/civil society organization (ibid.) the Eastern European countries have still a way to go in order to catch up with respect to membership development. However, concerning preferences of membership affiliation there are no striking differences between Western and Eastern Europe.

Almost around the world, citizens are less likely to be members of political parties or environmental groups, but prefer membership in leisure-related fields of activity such as sports or recreation. Again according to the data of the International Comparative World Values Survey (ibid.), sports and leisure clubs rank first in terms of members – both active and passive – in the countries under study. Membership in labor unions is still very important, although the level of affiliation has significantly decreased since the late 1980s. However, if we take a look at membership rates among those citizens who are in an economically active age, the figures for labor union affiliation are significantly higher in the countries under study than in Western European countries. This is a strong indicator that after a significant loss of prestige following the breakdown of socialist regimes, the attractiveness of labor unions is again on the increase in Central and Eastern Europe. Compared to the public image of trade unions in the early 1990s, there is a change towards increasing popularity and confidence (Rose/Haerpfer, 1996). Nevertheless, with respect to labor unions it has to be taken into consideration that due to the transformation of the economy, in particular, privatization, the boom of small enterprises, and the closure of entire industries resulting in high rates of unemployment, the potential for trade union affiliation has significantly decreased since the early 1990s.

Next to trade unions, churches and religious organizations are also very popular, ranking third in the list of the most prevalent areas of membership affiliation. According to the results of the International Comparative World Values Survey in 1995, membership affiliation of the population in religious groups amounted to 20 percent in Hungary, 17 percent in the Czech Republic, and 29 percent in Slovakia. Compared to Western European countries, this is still a relatively low level. In Germany, for instance, in the same year

membership in church or religious organizations amounted to about 80 percent of the population. What has changed in the years since the breakdown of socialist regimes? In order to get an idea of the levels of involvement in civil society organizations, we will take a look at the results of the "Consolidation of Democracy Survey," which records development in ten-year intervals. In table 1 based on data of the aforementioned fifteen-country study on the consolidation of democracy in Eastern Europe, we trace the development of membership per country. The following organizations, societal entities and social groups were included in the study: leisure time organizations, local organizations, political parties, social and political movements, ecological groups, sports clubs, trade unions, student organizations, and parishes as well as religious organizations.

Table 1. Membership in organizations in 1990 and 2000 (% within sample)

Country →	Czech Republic		Slovakia		Hungary		Poland	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Type of organization ↓								
Leisure time organiz.	28,2	24,3	22,3	18,4	2,2	5,5	1,4	2,2
Local associations	8,7	14,3	14	12,3	2,4	3,5	1,7	3,7
Political parties	10,2	5,6	11,4	8,2	-	2	1,1	1
Social or political movements	13,5	2,3	10,4	2,6	1,5	1,3	1,1	0,6
Ecological groups	5,2	3,3	8,4	1,9	0,8	1,4	0,9	1
Professional organiz.	7,4	2,9	6	4,5	4	5,3	4,5	3,2
Sports club	23,2	21,5	20,6	18,5	4,7	6,4	2,3	2,1
Trade unions	43,6	14	37,5	19,9	36,3	11,7	21,8	7,1
Student organiz.	3,2	1,3	6,2	1,4	0,8	2	0,3	0,7
Parish, religious organiz.	4,1	3,9	14,9	10,2	7,2	3,7	2,9	9,5
Other organiz.	14,9	8,9	8,7	4,4	2,7	2,7	7,1	8,6

Data source: Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe 1998-2001: A Fifteen Country Study (Continuation of the 1990-92 Post-Communist Publics Study in Eleven Countries) coordinated by Edeltraud Roller, Dieter Fuchs, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Bernhard Wefels (Social Science Research Center Berlin, WZB), and János Simon (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest).

Without any doubt, the losers of the period covered by the data are political parties, trade unions and, in the case of the Czech Republic in particular, social movements. Apart from these striking results, the overall structure of membership in organizations has not considerably changed in any of the four countries. The same holds true for the distinctive differences between individual countries with respect to the level of activity and type of organization.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, membership in leisure organizations and sports clubs ranks first. Remarkably, membership in social movements has decreased significantly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where there are reasons to assume that membership affiliation has shifted from social movements to political parties, or, to put it differently, that specific political movements have been transformed into political parties. A textbook example is the broad umbrella movement Civic Forum in the Czech Republic. Surprisingly, membership affiliation in professional associations has also decreased, even though the entrepreneurial sector feels a growing need to articulate and represent its interests. In Hungary and Poland, levels of membership affiliation have slightly increased over the ten-year period. However, the overall level of civic activity ranks quite low in these two countries. This is especially the case for religious associations.

Another indicator of citizen involvement is frequency of membership. While membership affiliation provides information concerning the number of individuals engaged, the frequency of membership gives the percentage of individuals who are members in a) no organization, b) one organization, or c) more than one organization, thus providing information whether there are a few highly involved citizens (i.e., a small percentage of individuals having many memberships) or whether citizen involvement is a much broader phenomenon (i.e., a large percentage having at least one membership).

Table 2 reveals a shocking result: The group of respondents that expanded the most over the ten-year period is the one whose members do not belong to any organization and are not engaged at all. Membership density is particularly low in Poland where, in 2000, 82% of the population was not engaged in any organization. Slovakia ranks “best” with “only” 42% of the population entirely unaffiliated. However, these results have to be put into perspective, and they become less shocking when they are compared to the situation in selected Western European countries. According to the results of the Welfare Survey (www.gesis.org/en/social_monitoring/Data/WS.htm), a survey that provides data on membership affiliation for Germany, a substantial number of German citizens (42%) were not affiliated with any nonprofit organization in 1998. Of all respondents, 39% were members in one organization, 14% in two organizations, and 6% in three or more organizations. A long-term analysis of Germany shows that membership affiliation has not changed significantly since the 1980s.

Table 2. Frequency of membership in civil society organizations 1990 and 2000 (in %)

No. of organizations the interviewee belongs to	Czech Republic		Slovakia		Hungary		Poland	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Year	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
None	24	48	23	42	51	66	65	82
1	31	25	33	31	38	24	28	13
2	20	13	24	17	9	6	6	3
3	16	9	11	6	2	2	1	1
4 & more	9	5	9	4	1	2	0	1

Data source: Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe 1998-2001: A Fifteen Country Study (Continuation of the 1990-92 Post-Communist Publics Study in Eleven Countries) coordinated by Edeltraud Roller, Dieter Fuchs, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Bernhard Weßels (Social Science Research Center Berlin, WZB), and János Simon (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest).

Moreover, similar to the development in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary, membership in East Germany has declined. In 1998 some 62% of the citizens did not belong to any organization at all. The rise of this number (from 53% in 1993) is due to a decline of membership in trade unions. In 1998, 29% of the East Germans were members in two organizations, whereas only one percent was a member in three or more organizations.

In the former Eastern bloc countries including East Germany, there are a number of indicators that citizens increasingly decide to go into private retreat, thus reducing the associational capacity of the societies under study. At the same time, however, citizens highly appreciate the opportunity to freely establish organizations in order to follow their interests. In Hungary, 71% of respondents consider this opportunity very important, but in Slovakia, only 33.8% do so. However, 96% of respondents in Hungary, 94.9% of respondents in Poland, 77.2% of respondents in the Czech Republic, and 75.4% of respondents in Slovakia consider it very important or rather important (Consolidation 1998-2001).

4.2 Civic Activity as an Expression of Societal Engagement

Involvement in organizational networks serves as an important indicator for the readiness of citizens to participate in activities, which are for the benefit

of certain societal groups that do not belong to the well to do. Thus, the value attributed to volunteering indicates whether citizens are ready to invest time and energy for community development. Networks of associations provide a bonding infrastructure of societal life that offers citizens opportunities for individual development as well as for interest representation and lobbying (Gabriel et al., 2002: 20). The opportunity to participate in decision making in the neighborhood, community and region enhances the quality of life (Možný, 2002: 119). Against the background that the change of the political and economic system of the countries under study was accompanied by many conflicts and disputes, volunteering might also serve as an indicator for grassroots development of democratic structures and activities.

By volunteering and civic engagement citizens express their sense of responsibility, and they indicate that they are eager to solve problems themselves instead of turning to government. As already outlined, this attitude is influenced by various factors which are related to the individual life style and economic affluence of citizens, as well as to their long-term experiences. According to Hirschmann (1982), among the numerous factors, which are influencing the decision to become active there, are the legacy of former experiences, particularly those dating back before 1990, new challenges and expectations, but also feelings of disappointment and rejection. Therefore, citizens are more likely to get engaged if their individual and societal background supports an active life style of civic engagement, and furthermore, if the desire to become active is very welcomed by the organizations. To put it differently, citizens' readiness for engagement must be accompanied by an enabling infrastructure. Therefore, nonprofit/civil society organizations should be able to stimulate citizens to become engaged and to integrate them in their daily routines and operations.

Thus, the decision to keep engaged in volunteering highly depends on an ideal combination of the aforementioned factors. However, in the last decade, those factors influencing volunteering and civic engagement have not always been very favorable in the countries under study. Therefore, findings of selected surveys do not strongly support the hypothesis that civic activity is an expression of societal engagement in the countries under study. For example, even after more than ten years of democratic development, citizens still prefer the protective role of the state; more specifically they do not trust thoroughly in their capabilities. According to the results of the Survey Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe“ only 35.1% of respondents in the Czech Republic, 19.6% in Hungary, 20.4% in Poland, 22% in Slovakia agreed with the statement: “Instead of depending too much on the government, people should learn to take care of themselves” (Consolidation 1998-2001). Finally, we have to be aware of the fact that with respect to membership affiliation and civic activity in a more general sense of being involved in activities that are of public benefit, there are differences

according to age and gender of the respondent and type of organization. Table 3 shows, using a weighted average mean, that despite differences among the countries, men and people in the 31-50 age group are more active in solving problems in the community than are women or the other age groups.

Table 3. “How often do you work with other people in this community to try to solve some local problem?” (weighted average mean)

Country	Total	Male	Female	Age group 18-30	31-50	51-
Czech Republic	0,69	0,76	0,63	0,50	0,74	0,77
Hungary	0,38	0,38	0,35	0,38	0,47	0,32
Poland	0,43	0,55	0,33	0,36	0,54	0,36
Slovakia	0,73	0,77	0,70	0,46	0,86	0,79

0 = Never, 1=Seldom, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often

Data source: Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe 1998-2001

It becomes evident that those having roots in local associations are more often ready to co-operate and join forces with other people in order to solve local problems. To put it differently, they are more inclined to manage problems themselves instead of turning to the state. In the next section, the question whether this attitude has an impact on the embeddedness of the sector – or, whether government is willing and inclined to work closely together with nonprofit/civil society organizations in order to attract additional resources for social service delivery – will be addressed by referring to the results of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, which specifically analyzed the sector in economic terms.

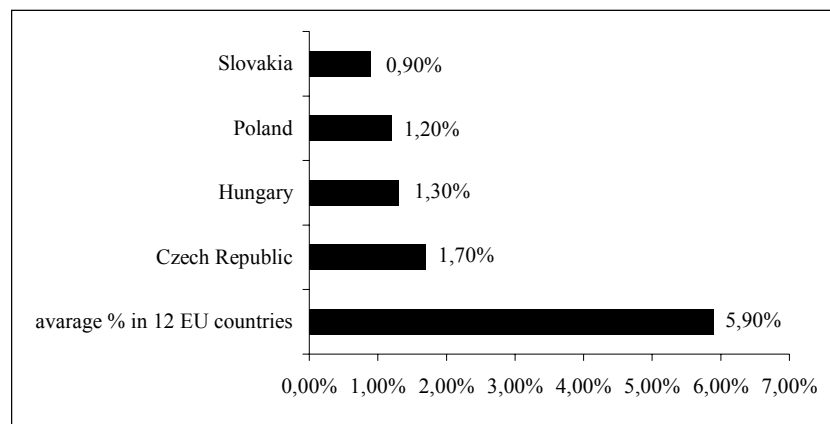
5. The Nonprofit Sector in Central and Eastern Europe

This section provides an overview of the size of the nonprofit sector in the Visegrád countries, primarily measured in terms of nonprofit employment. The chapter draws heavily on the results of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (see Salamon et al., 1999). As can be clearly seen in figure 2, the nonprofit sector in the four Visegrád countries is significantly smaller than the average size of the sector in the twelve Western European countries² that took part in the Johns Hopkins study in 1995. Among the Central and Eastern European countries under study, the Czech Republic had

² The Western European countries participating in the study were: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

the largest nonprofit sector in the mid-1990s. However, with 1.7% of the country's total non-agricultural employment, the size of the sector in the Czech Republic was still about three times smaller than the average size of the sector of those twelve EU countries.

Figure 2. Nonprofit Sector Employment in the Visegrád Countries measured as Percentage of Total Employment, 1995

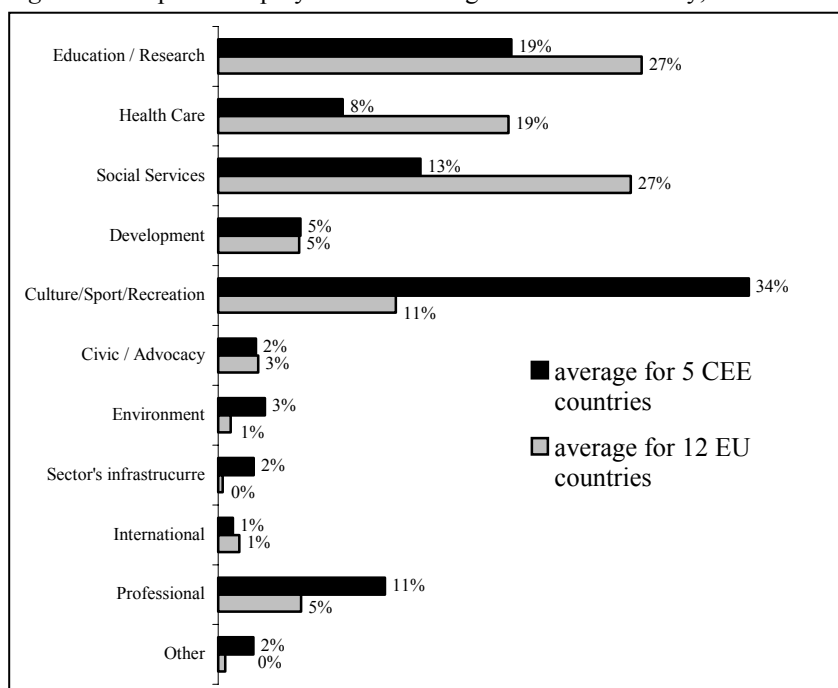


Source: Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project

In addition to its small size, the internal composition of the sector represents another striking difference between the nonprofit sector in Central and Eastern Europe and its counterpart in Western European countries. Figure 3 presents data for the four Visegrád countries and Romania and for the twelve Western European countries that took part in the Johns Hopkins study.

More than one-third of the sector's workforce in the Central and Eastern European countries is active in the field of recreation, leisure and sports. While in the Western European countries almost fifty percent of the sector's workforce is employed in the core welfare areas, i.e., health care (19%) and social services (27%), in the Central and Eastern European countries (including Romania) this figure amounts to only 21% of the workforce. As clearly indicated by the data, the areas of education, social services, health care and development, which are the strongholds of nonprofit employment in the Western European countries, are of minor importance in terms of nonprofit employment in the Central and Eastern European countries.

Figure 3. Nonprofit Employment According to Fields of Activity, 1995



Source: Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project

In the first part of the 1990s, organizations active in the core welfare fields that had cooperated with the communist state or were a part of the former political system lost the generous subsidies that they used to receive; in some cases these organizations even dissolved. Thus, due to the changed political and societal environment, these organizations had to reduce their activities and to downsize their personnel (Nałecz, 2003: 30). Nevertheless, as explained elsewhere in more detail (see Rymza/Zimmer in this volume), some nonprofit organizations dating back to the socialist period managed to keep their feet in the social service industry. In the meantime they are again enjoying a relatively strong economic position with respect to their scope of operation and personnel employed.

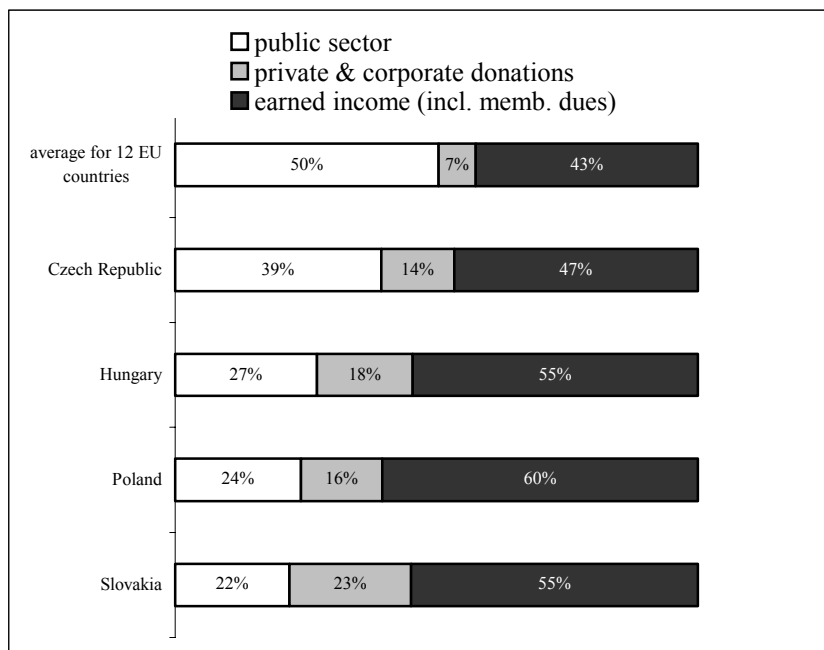
Against this background it has to be mentioned that, from an economic point of view, the great bulk of the newly registered membership organizations are of less importance. The main capital of these new entities is primarily people's enthusiasm (Nałecz, 2003: 30). These organizations also face significant difficulties obtaining government financial support. However,

they also try to keep a distance from the state because they do not want to get mixed up with the former “mass organizations”; moreover, from the point of view of the newly founded organizations, government still does not have a very good reputation in the countries under study. In order to indicate that they are different, the new citizen-based organizations are very careful about their identity, and tend to call themselves “nongovernmental organizations” as opposed to the old “social organizations” or “mass organizations.”

As outlined elsewhere in more detail (see Frič and Rymśza/Zimmer in this volume), in the early 1990s political authorities very much welcomed civic engagement, and there was a general acceptance of civic organizations as an indispensable part of the new democratic system. However, politicians and state officials had no clear vision of the sector, its organizations and its societal functions. Thus, in the first part of the 1990s, the political elite – pressed by problems of the political and economic transformation and preoccupied with neoliberal ideology – neither thought about supporting the recently founded NGOs nor treated these nonprofit organizations on par and as equal partners in the delivery of social services, such as health care, social assistance or education (Leś/Nałęcz, 2002: 31). In a nutshell, the nonprofit sector in the Visegrád countries does not yet play a major role in the provision of social services in the core welfare areas. Again, this is a striking difference to the embeddedness of the sector in Western European countries.

The – compared to Western European countries – very different societal position of the sector in the Visegrád countries is clearly reflected by the revenue structure of the sector (fig. 4). In sharp contrast to Western European countries, the public sector does not constitute the prime source of revenue for the nonprofit sector in the Visegrád countries. On the contrary, the sector relies heavily on earned income, which is made up mostly of membership dues and income from commercial activities, such as selling services, which has developed into the most important source of income in terms of financial value. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that compared to its Western European counterpart, the nonprofit sector in the Visegrád countries also relies to a larger extent on private and corporate donations. Donations are very unequally distributed, with the vast majority of assets being earmarked for a small number of organizations, which are typically located in the capital and other big cities. In Hungary, “it is one-third (of nonprofit organizations) that earn 94% of the total revenue of the sector” (Kuti/Sebestény, 2000: 10f.). In Poland, “9% of the (nonprofit) organizations - those employing more than 5 persons - use nearly two-thirds of financial assets, while 75% of the organizations - those with no employee - have at their disposal only one-tenth of all financial means of the sector” (Nałęcz, 2003: 29).

Figure 4: Source of Nonprofit Sector Revenue, 1995



Source: Global Civil Society At-a-Glance. Major Findings of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (2000: 9)

Against the background that the economy of the Visegrád countries underwent a thorough process of privatization, decentralization and privatization social services are still lagging behind. The market for core social services is still dominated by public providers, some of them still having a monopoly. Government policy continues to keep the sector and its organizations at the margins of service provision. This is particularly the case in Hungary (Bocz et al., 2002), whereas the situation in Poland is slightly different due to the fact that many church-based nonprofits are active in the provision of social services (Leś/Nałęcz, 2001: 20).

However, it is open to discussion whether the engagement of nonprofit organizations in core welfare state activities should constitute a prime goal for the further development of the sector in the Visegrád countries. Currently, although nonprofits play a marginal role in social service provision, they are very important because they fulfill an avant-garde function with respect to those societal needs and services that are not mainstream. There is a very visible faction of the NPO community that aims at responding to new social

problems by offering those services in demand and by being heavily engaged in advocacy. In Poland a textbook example is the campaign, "Giving birth in a human way," which had a great impact on humanizing birthing clinics and hospitals in the country. Moreover, nonprofits are also becoming engaged in new fields of service delivery by setting up mutual help organizations or by establishing new service initiatives, which are operating on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these nonprofits are mostly operating in certain niches or small spheres of social needs, which had not been addressed by public or commercial organizations. Examples of this type of activity are shelters for the homeless and hospices or group therapies for drug addicts or alcoholics. The approach of contracting out core social services and the concept of subsidiarity are not yet thoroughly shared by public opinion. As a consequence of keeping state dominance in the provision of the main welfare services, public sector employment is still disproportionately larger than nonprofit employment in Central and Eastern Europe (Salamon et al., 1999). Summarizing the results of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project for the Visegrád-countries it becomes quite obvious that there is a close nexus between the current economic situation in the countries under study and the well being of the sector. The same holds true for the level of civic activity and engagement of the citizenry in the Visegrád-countries.

6. Concluding Remarks

How does civil society look like more than a decade after the breakdown of the socialist regimes in the countries under study? Are the young democracies of the Visegrád countries societally embedded and supported by an active citizenry? Or, on the contrary are they still lacking the societal underpinning and organizational infrastructure of a lively and prosperous nonprofit sector? These questions were addressed by referring to the results of selected surveys and by drawing on the outcome of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Project.

There are no easy answers to the aforementioned questions. At the beginning of the transition period civic engagement was flourishing in the Eastern European countries under study. A veritable foundation boom of nonprofit organizations and civic initiatives took place right after the breakdown of the socialist regimes. As we already know from numerous studies (e.g., Plasser/Ulram/Waldrauch, 1997) the burgeoning of associational life is a very typical phenomenon for periods of societal and political transitions. The reasons why civic engagement is blossoming right after the breakdown of authoritarian regimes are manifold. Citizens are eager to use

their newly won freedom. Many organizations, which under socialist rule had survived in a so-called catacomb existence, were registered and thus legally acknowledged. Finally, both the *Zeitgeist* and the political context thoroughly supported civic engagement.

The period of intensive mobilization was followed by a slowdown of civic activity. While foundation rates of nonprofit/civil society organizations slightly decreased, membership affiliation went down significantly. Political parties were without any doubt the losers of the decline of membership affiliation. But, also trade unions and other nonprofits being primarily active in the political arena suffered from a decline in membership. Compared to West European countries, figures of membership affiliation, which are providing information concerning the number of citizens being members, are currently significantly lower in the Visegrád countries. However, concerning preferences of membership affiliation there are no striking differences between West and Eastern Europe. All over the world including the countries under study, citizens are most likely to be members of sports clubs or recreational associations instead of political parties or environmental groups. Unfortunately, with respect to membership affiliation and civic activity there are specific trends indicating that a civic culture has not yet fully developed in the countries under study. Firstly, between 1995 and 2000 even those nonprofit/civil society organizations which are active in the leisure oriented fields of activity suffered from a decline in membership. And secondly, even more than a decade after the breakdown of the socialist regime citizens still lack an entrepreneurial spirit with respect to civic engagement on behalf of community affairs.

Finally, compared to West European countries there is a striking difference with respect to the integration of the nonprofit sector in welfare state arrangements. Nonprofit organizations have not yet become an accepted and thoroughly acknowledged partner of social policy, and specifically social service delivery in the countries under study. Up until today social services are still first and foremost provided by government entities, while nonprofit organizations are more likely to be active in the areas of leisure and recreational activities. Thus, the sector in the countries under study is significantly smaller than its counterpart in West European countries. This is specifically the case with respect to nonprofit employment that compared to West European countries is far less pronounced in the Visegrád countries. For the deepening and strengthening of democracy it is probably not pivotal that the sector follows the West European model of a thorough integration into the specific welfare arrangement (see chapter by Rymcza/Zimmer). Nevertheless, low and decreasing membership figures as well as a low density of membership affiliation provide strong indicators for the fact that the countries under study are indeed "young democracies" whose civic cultures are still developing.

Suggested Readings

- Bashkirova, E. (2002): Political Participation in Central and Eastern Europe. Results of the 1999 European Values Survey. In: Fuchs, D./Roller, E./Weßels, B. (eds.): Bürger und Demokratie in Ost und West. Wiesbaden, pp. 319-332
- Inglehart, R. (1997): Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies. Princeton
- Gabriel, O. et al. (2002): Sozialkapital und Demokratie. Zivilgesellschaftliche Ressourcen im Vergleich. Wien

References

- Anheier, H.K./Priller, E. (1991): The Non-Profit Sector in East-Germany: Before and after Unification. In: *Voluntas* (2), pp.78-94
- Anheier, H.K./Priller, E./Zimmer, A. (2001): Civil Society in Transition: The East German Third Sector Ten Years after Unification. In: *East European Politics and Societies (EEPS)*, Vol. 15, Nr. 1, pp.139-156
- Anheier, H.K./Seibel, W. (2001): *The Nonprofit Sector in Germany. Between State, Economy and Society*. Manchester/New York
- Almond, G.A./Verba, S. (1963): *The Civic Culture*. Boston
- Anheier, H.K./Priller, E./Zimmer, A. (2000): Zur zivilgesellschaftlichen Dimension des Dritten Sektors. In: Klingemann, H.-D./Neidhardt, F. (eds.): *Zur Zukunft der Demokratie, Herausforderungen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*. WZB-Jahrbuch 2000, Berlin
- Bermeo, N. (2000): Civil Society after Democracy: Some Conclusions. In: Bermeo, N./Nord, P. (eds.): *Civil Society before Democracy. Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe*. New York, pp. 237-260
- Bocz, J./Cseh, J./Kuti, É./Mészáros, G./Sebestény, I. (2002): *Nonprofit szervezetek Magyarországon, 2000 (Nonprofit organizations in Hungary, 2000)*. Budapest
- Forbrig, J. (2001): *Civil Society, Democracy and Democratic Consolidation*. Second Chapter of unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 28-48
- Gabriel, O. et al. (2002): *Sozialkapital und Demokratie. Zivilgesellschaftliche Ressourcen im Vergleich*. Wien
- Hirschman, A. O. (1982): *Shifting Involvements. Private Interest and Public Action*. Princeton
- Inglehart, R. (1997): *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton
- Dąbrowska, J. et al. (2002): *Komunikat z badania „Kondycja sektora organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce 2002. Wstępne wyniki – wrzesień 2002*. Warsaw
- Kroupa, A./Mansfeldová, Z. (1997). *Občanská sdružení a profesní komory*. In: Brokl, L. (ed.): *Reprezentace zájmů v politickém systému ČR. Pluralitní demokracie nebo neokorporativismus?* Prague, pp. 151-186
- Kubik, J. (2000): Between the State and Networks of "Cousins": The Role of Civil Society and Noncivil Associations in the Democratization of Poland. In: Bermeo, N./Nord, P. (eds.): *Civil Society before Democracy. Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe*. New York, pp. 181-207

- Leś, E./Nałęcz, S. (2001) Międzynarodowe badania sektora non-profit w Polsce Raport zbiorczy. Warszawa: typescript, Komitet Badań Naukowych (grant nr. H02E 011 16)
- Leś, E./Nałęcz, S. (2002) Infrastruktura społeczeństwa obywatelskiego. Wybrane wyniki Międzynarodowych Badań Sektora Non-Profit w Polsce. In: Gliński, P. et al. (eds.): Samoorganizacja społeczeństwa polskiego: trzeci sector. Warsaw, pp.13-31
- Mansfeldová, Z./Szabó, M. (2000): Zivilgesellschaft im Transformationsprozeß Ost-Mitteleuropas: Ungarn, Polen und die Tschechoslowakei. In: Merkel, W. (ed.): Systemwechsel 5. Zivilgesellschaft und Transformation. Opladen, pp.89-114
- Možný, I. (2002): Česká společnost. Nejdůležitější fakta o kvalitě života. Prague
- Nałęcz, S. (2003): Organizacje społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w III RP. In: Jackiewicz, I. (ed.): W poszukiwaniu modelu. Zmiany instytucjonalne w latach 1989-2001. Warsaw
- Plasser, F./Ullrich, P./Waldrauch, H. (1997): Politischer Kulturwandel in Ost-Mitteleuropa. Theorie und Empirie demokratischer Konsolidierung. Opladen
- Rose, R./Haerpfer, Ch. (1996): New Democracies Barometer IV: A 10-Nation Survey, Studies in Public Policy, No. 262. Glasgow
- Siellawa-Kolbowska, K. (2002): Niezależne inicjatywy społeczne w Polsce końca lat osiemdziesiątych. In: Gliński, P. et al. (eds.) Samoorganizacja społeczeństwa polskiego: trzeci sector. Warsaw, pp.80-91
- Salamon, L. et al. (eds.) (1999): Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector. Baltimore
- Salamon, L./Sokolowski, W. (2001): Volunteering in Cross-National Perspective: Evidence From 24 Countries. Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, Nr. 40 Baltimore
- Welfare Survey: www.gesis.org/en/social_monitoring/Data/WS.htm
- World Value Survey: www.worldvaluessurvey.org