
Chapter 19

The Development Dimension of Czech Foreign Policy

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MEMBERSHIP IN THE OECD DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE: THE END OR A BEGINNING? ¹

When one day someone writes a brief history of the Czech development cooperation, the date of 14 May 2013, when the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD DAC) accepted the Czech Republic as its 26th member, will certainly not be missing. If the OECD is often described as the “club of the rich”, its committee of development aid donors may be easily described as the “club of the super-rich”; although only six member states of the OECD as a whole remain outside the gates of the DAC for now. This perception is not changed by the fact that in the face of growing competition from the global South, the OECD as a traditionally Western alliance with roots in the Marshall Plan loosened the criteria for committee membership as well as membership in the organization itself. In any case, the “partner countries”, formerly aid recipients, still criticise that the future of development cooperation at the global level is to a large extent determined by this exclusive institution without their direct involvement and UN legitimacy. In any case, the Czech Republic joined the DAC in the 53rd year of its existence as the first former country of the Eastern bloc, and thus confirmed its primacy among the “new” EU member states in the area of development cooperation.

As a rare media reference put it, the accession happened “*without much pomp, fanfare and media attention*”.² Deputy Foreign Minister Tomáš Dub held a *Vin d’honneur* on the occasion. It was attended by a large part of the Czech development community from both the state and the private sector. Politicians, however, were missing. Their absence illustrated the red line that runs through this book series in the chapters on development cooperation: a low level of politicization, decreasing polarization and a high level of bureaucratization of this costly foreign policy agenda. The main complaint in the assessment of the Foreign Development Cooperation (FDC) by the OECD – the translation of the official name of the policy in the Czech language – is directed at the low volume of development aid, an area that depends primarily on the political decisions of the government and the support of the parliament. Not even

the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) demanded an overall increase in aid in their recommendations to the plan for 2014 and the period until 2016, in spite of the expected economic growth. The second distinct complaint of the DAC was aimed at the fact that development aid was tied to the supply of goods and services from the Czech firms and NGOs. This context makes the message of the then Foreign Minister of the transitional government Jan Kohout sound ironic. Kohout said that development cooperation is an investment that should be *“implemented by the Czech companies”*. He said this to the diplomatic corps immediately after he praised our accession to the DAC as a proof of our *“advanced standard”*.³

This example shows that – as was the case in the context of the multilateral strategy in the previous year – potential politicization of development cooperation is expressed by a pragmatic approach to development cooperation as an instrument of economic diplomacy or straightforward export-promotion policy.⁴ Thus, if the accession to the DAC symbolizes the imaginary completion of the institutional and technical framework of development cooperation, from the political and public point of view it means rather the beginning, and a challenge to the securing of the political sustainability of policies, beyond the exclusive argumentation of positive economic impact of the policy on the growth of the Czech economy. In 2013, the political leadership was, however, provided by a government without the confidence of the Parliament, appointed by the new President Miloš Zeman, and therefore it is necessary to wait for the possible changes to this policy in 2014, when the coalition government that emerged from the October elections to the Chamber of Deputies took office.

THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Low Level of Politicization and the Pragmatic Approach to Development Cooperation by the Interim Government

Although the protests at the Euromaidan started in late November 2013, the revolution in Ukraine followed by the annexation of the Crimea by Russia and the subsequent war in the east of the country, considered to be the largest conflict in Europe since the Balkan wars, took place only in 2014. The politically motivated development and transformation assistance provided to the Ukraine on the grounds of a special resolution of the Czech government is therefore not included in this chapter.⁵ In particular, it will be interesting to see whether the Ukraine follows in the footsteps of Georgia, which, starting the humanitarian aid that followed the military conflict with Russia in 2008, gradually become a priority country of the Czech development cooperation. The experience of the subsequent inclusion of Georgia among project countries shows that the politicization of development cooperation relates only to the immediate post-conflict phase or the political negotiations at the highest level, because later on, the interest of the politicians in the continuation of the assistance usually wanes and the assistance is then carried on by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) through the Czech Development Agency (CzDA), both on the basis of continuity resulting from

the long-term character of development cooperation, and on the basis of previous successes or failures. In any case, the countries included in an *ad hoc* manner (Georgia, Palestine, Kosovo and Cambodia) kept their place on the list of project countries, i.e. countries without a Country Strategy Paper, unlike other priority countries with a Country Strategy Paper.⁶ The development cooperation system, supported by laws and a strategy, has become so robust and formally tied by rules that any attempt to fundamentally change the territorial and sectorial priorities would require strong political will at the level of the government as a whole and not only the changes at the ministerial level. Even so, in 2013, according to some actors, there were ideas at the MFA for getting Senegal or South Sudan on the list of the priority countries.⁷

The year 2013, therefore, on the external level, did not bring any international political developments that would lead to the politicization of aid. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to take into account an example to the contrary, when not even the engagement of the Czech army in Mali brought up the issue of the country becoming a beneficiary of other than military and in terms of volume proper humanitarian help.⁸ At the domestic level, however, not even the last policy document of Nečas's government stepped out of the increasingly pragmatic approach, supplemented by ideology and an emphasis on Czech exports. Despite the fact that the EU development policy costs the Czech taxpayer billions, it does not even make an appearance in the twenty-five page *Strategy of the Czech Republic in the EU*, issued in May and subtitled *An Active Policy for Growth and a Competitive Europe*, in contrast to the general emphasis on the Eastern dimension and the Common Foreign and Security Policy. However, it does contain a characteristic rejection of the further "*deepening of anti-discrimination legislation*".⁹ The European Affairs Section of the Office of the Government under the leadership of State Secretary Vojtěch Belling also suppressed the global agenda of gender equality in the framework position on the Commission Communication on sustainable development objectives after 2015 called *A Decent Life for All: Ending Poverty and Giving the World a Sustainable Future*, which was the result of the work of the MFA and the Office of the Government, with assistance from the Ministry of the Environment. The Committee for the European Union, therefore, after spending much time on the inter-ministerial consultations, agreed to one common set of objectives for a sustainable and global development, which would replace the Millennium Development Goals. In accordance with the ideological position of the government, however, it also put emphasis on the economic pillar of sustainable development at the expense of its environmental and social dimension, and refused to consider the newly negotiated document to be legally binding. Continuity and compliance with the positions of the MFA, however, may be seen in the document in the emphasis on domestic resources of developing countries instead of the commitments of developed countries, on the private sector and on the absence of social policies, which are key in a situation where most of the poorest in the world live in middle income countries.¹⁰

The Cabinet of Jiří Rusnok, appointed by President Zeman, who is a big supporter of pro-export policy that is in no way constrained by human rights policy, followed up on the emphasis of the right-wing government on the private sector.¹¹ Although the President himself did not mention international development cooperation in his short

speech at the annual meeting of the heads of embassies, he highlighted the promotion of export as the primary task of Czech diplomacy.¹² On the same occasion, the speech of the President's Prime Minister made a neutral impression, when he placed development cooperation in line with human rights and transformation promotion policy and instead of the economic dimension emphasized the Czech transition experience.¹³ The government statement, however, spoke clearly: *"To further improve the functioning of the system of international development assistance, the government will support a greater involvement of the private sector in the implementation of development projects."*¹⁴ The differently set priorities thus also prove the care devoted to this agenda by Rusnok's Government. And finally, Foreign Minister Jan Kohout, who was mentioned in the introduction and who had a lot of experience with the MFA in the past, in his now publicly unavailable speech to the diplomats tied the development cooperation directly to the *"search for new business opportunities"*. Development cooperation to him meant *"a sort of an investment" into "the common good" that "should come back to us" and that "should be implemented by Czech companies"*.¹⁵ Instead of a polarization between the right-wing and the caretaker governments, therefore, there was more of a continuity, which was also supported by the staffing of the middle and lower ranks of the MFA, as is discussed in the relevant section devoted to the actors. A one-time exception to the consensual de-politicization is represented by the anti-EU speech of a certain senator on the occasion of the ratification of the agreement on the financing of the 11th European Development Fund, discussed in the same section.

The Unexpectedly Rapid and Smooth Accession to the OECD DAC

While a few years ago, the MFA as a whole, as well as the relevant development department, adopted a very reserved stance towards the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD due to additional commitments and capacities needed, at the end of 2012 there was a break with the previous approach as a consequence of the determination of the Committee Chairman, Erik Solheim, to expand the DAC. The claim that the reasons, which, in the view of the then Deputy Minister Jiří Schneider *"inspired"* the OECD, were primarily *"the achievements, which the Czech Republic has made since 1995 in the field of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid,"* and that the Czech Republic within three months passed *"tests at the level of a world standard"* is thus just one side of the matter.¹⁶ With a view to the growing influence of the "emerging donors", the OECD wants to maintain its influence in the global development-assistance system. The question, however, is whether the enlargement by a number of Central-European states that provide a negligible share of the assistance may actually save it from the inevitable weakening of its position in a multipolar system. In any case, from the perspective of the MFA, the Czech accession was a quick process, all the more so because its lower ranks were initially not certain about the support of the upper echelons of the ministry, but at the same time knew that the accession would necessitate an increase of capacity at the headquarters and in the mission to the OECD in Paris. The Czech Republic submitted an official application to the DAC on 15 January 2013.

As late as 2012, the countries of the Visegrad Four (V4) declared their willingness to coordinate their joint accession to the committee.¹⁷ In mid-February, a V4 coordination meeting was even held in the margins of the informal meeting of development ministers of the EU. Three countries, however, eventually joined the committee separately and Hungary remained outside for the time being. In the end the reason was probably the intention of the OECD itself to spread out the process, when it at first invited the Czech Republic to join, and only then Slovakia and Poland. Slovakia in particular allegedly found the disruption of the common accession hard to bear. Slovakia finally joined the DAC at the session on 17 September and Poland joined as late as 22 October.¹⁸ Nevertheless, at least with respect to the assessment of the Slovak development cooperation, summed up in last year's chapter of the yearbook, the Czech development cooperation definitely comes closer to complying with the seven criteria of the OECD.¹⁹ The Committee carried out the Czech assessment mission on 20–22 March and as early as mid-April, it had already prepared the final document.²⁰ The assessment was based on the approximately 30 page-long Memorandum of Accession to the OECD and on older and new translations of strategic documents. These were supplemented by a series of separate meetings with members of the development constituency, ranging from the MFA and Czech Development Agency, through the ministries involved in the Council for Foreign Development Cooperation, to the non-governmental platform Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FoRS) and the corporate Business Platform for International Development Cooperation (PPZRS). Despite many frictions in the past, all the actors proceeded in agreement in the matter of the accession to the DAC.²¹

Of all the accession criteria, the minimal statistical threshold of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounting to 0.20% of GNI or the total amount of aid of at least 100 million USD appeared to be the weakest point. The Committee stressed that the MFA did not report aid-tying, to which it was obliged as a member of the DAC.²² The MFA, however, had already calculated the rate at 64%, and claimed that the criterion did not have to apply to technical assistance. Furthermore, it claimed that tenders were generally not tied, since they comply with EU legislation. It should emphasize that with the exception of small local projects implemented by the embassies, 100% of bilateral aid projects are implemented by Czech entities on the basis of tenders in the Czech language. According to the accession review, the scholarship programme should be reviewed again, despite its recent reform, pointing out its continuing inefficiency in the view of the OECD, which favours foreign policy effects before development impacts.²³ The Committee also criticized the administrative demands of the so-called small local projects at the embassies, which often perform a mainly symbolic function of improving the visibility of the Czech Republic in the countries of the Global South, unless they are additionally linked to already completed projects. It should be mentioned though that despite these drawbacks it is *de facto* the only untied form of Czech project assistance. The mission was also interested in the reporting of climate finances from the perspective of the additionality of new resources, an area for which the Ministry of Finance was not prepared. The criticism of the international organization thus focused particularly on areas where the national development co-

operation is subject to immediate political and economic interests. Overall, the report commended that the Czech Republic respected the recommendations of the special review of 2007; and the state of the domestic system of development cooperation was allegedly a positive surprise for the main evaluators.

The Czech Republic was eventually invited to the DAC meeting on 14 May in Paris, which it confirmed without delay. This happened one month after Iceland, however, it should be noted that the last member to have joined the committee was Korea in 2009 and before that Greece in 1999, with the boundaries between some of the “old” and new members beginning to be blurred. The Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the MFA (ORS) was unable to push through the increase of capacity at headquarters, or at the Paris Mission to the OECD, and thus its secretary shares the agenda of the DAC with three other committees. In general the ORS considers the accession to the DAC to be a “significant breakthrough”; in terms of the consequences even more crucial than joining the European Union. An immediate challenge is represented primarily by the duty to carry out detailed statistical reporting, for which the Department had dedicated a half-time post. The post for this technical agenda, however, shows a high turnover rate and the education and training of junior diplomats tends to lean towards the humanities. Other priorities of the DAC are analysed in the section dedicated to the effectiveness of the Czech development cooperation. This time a standard *peer review* of Czech development cooperation, carried out by experts from the other member states of DAC, will take place in 2016.

Medium-term Assessment of the Concept of Development Cooperation and the Strategy of the Involvement in the Projects of the European Development Fund

Initially, the valid *Concept of International Development Cooperation for 2010–2017* should have been assessed only “*after the major international meetings that are scheduled for 2015*” and any changes should “in an adequate manner” be made only in the case of “*fundamental political and economic changes in the Czech Republic, or in the international context*”.²⁴ The question remains, whether – besides the above mentioned inclusion of the Ukraine – there would not be any major changes in the priorities already following the revision of Czech foreign policy by the new leadership of the MFA in 2014. In any case, the process of a medium-term assessment was launched in January 2013 and completed in the spring 2014. The results were included in the *Information on International Development Cooperation of the Czech Republic in 2013*, submitted to the government. The process itself was based initially on inputs from the embassies. During the spring and summer of 2013, roundtables took place successively, dealing with the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. The NGO platform FoRS at first discussed its opinions in its working groups on different regions. The final draft paper was then submitted to the members of the Council for Development Cooperation for commentary in February 2014. The whole process was ultimately focused rather on the territorial and sectorial focus of the assistance, rather than on its principles and tools. The general recommendations did not bring change beyond the adaptation to the changes in the EU and global development policy, which appeared in the previous years. The criteria for the assessment of terri-

tories were set in the scope corresponding to the assignment, without predetermining the result.²⁵ Moreover, the result was assessed by the individual actors as consensual, although unlike the ORS and FoRS, the PPZRS did not support a reduction in the number of sectors. The most important conclusion of the assessment thus appears to be primarily the plan to reduce the number of priority countries, which deserves full quotation: “[As a result of the medium-term assessment] the FDC will be terminated by 2017 in Mongolia and Serbia. Gradually it will be phased out in Afghanistan. By contrast, with regard to the developments in the Ukraine, the volume of FDC will be increased in Georgia. The volume of FDC to Moldova may be further increased, which could result in a synergic complementation of the activities carried out under the provision of assistance to the Ukraine with the aim of restoring and promoting its democratic transition in the period 2014–2016 (according to Government Resolution no. 167/2014) within the region.”²⁶

The medium-term assessment therefore ultimately took into account the developments in the Ukraine, whose prime mover was the rejection of the association agreement with the EU, and elaborated on their implications for other countries of the eastern neighbourhood, in particular Georgia and Moldova, where, moreover, cooperation thrives. Unlike the April version approved by the Minister’s advisory board, the draft document from January 2014 did not presume an increase in the assistance to Georgia and did not even mention the possibility of a withdrawal from Afghanistan (without giving evidence of “serious problems” – apparently as compensation or an expression of the new government’s decline in the emphasis on the transatlantic relations.²⁷ The Czech Republic, which unlike other Central European and Baltic countries is characterized by a greater emphasis on non-European countries, thus paradoxically returns to a bolder, politically and economically more focused emphasis on its immediate surroundings. The initial objectives of the ORS to reduce the number of countries to four programme countries, or rather four project countries, might be accomplished, if Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Georgia and Moldova, or Cambodia, Kosovo, Palestine and in the event of continuing political interest also the Ukraine had been selected for the period 2017+. Among the countries in the *phase out* category, the cooperation with Zambia will not be completely terminated, which also presents Zambia with the opportunity to return to the list of priority countries from which it was removed due to the absence of a Czech Embassy in Lusaka. However, the opening of a one-woman embassy in Phnom Penh for the development cooperation created a precedent even for this problem. The status of Myanmar/Burma remains a question. In terms of the volume of the transition and humanitarian aid, it would be a candidate for a project country. However, without a direct cooperation with the government and local authorities, the development cooperation in the spirit of the principles of the OECD makes no sense, and the NGOs would certainly protest against other forms of cooperation than again with local NGOs.

The disappearance of Mongolia from the list of the present programme countries may seem surprising, as it was in the top tier of the statistics in terms of the aid volume. This was caused, however, not only by the dismissive attitude of the former ambassador, but also a rapid economic growth, the focus on China and a fragmented co-

operation with the local government. The cutting down of cooperation with Serbia as a project country also makes sense in terms of its candidate status and the existence of other instruments of pre-accession assistance. Despite the complicated relations between the Ethiopian government and NGOs and the controversial entering of the Czech Republic into the country, which has a large number of donors in the time of the greatest emphasis on the concentration of aid, there are seven Czech NGOs operating at the moment in Ethiopia and the overall cooperation is positively assessed. Even when taking into account all the problems with Afghanistan (see the assessment of the Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team below), it is somewhat paradoxical that in 2013, a long-term programme of cooperation was approved after consultation with the Afghan government, for it to be announced only a year later that the cooperation is being phased out. Moreover, not even a semblance of a commercial follow-up had been achieved in Afghanistan, despite the initial expectations.

Although the efficiency of development cooperation in a broader sense of the term was the main criterion for the reassessment of Czech geographical priorities, it partially overlaps with the consequences of the pragmatic approach of Nečas's government and the MFA, which was well described in the *Strategy of Multilateral Development Cooperation Aid of the Czech Republic for the Period 2013 to 2017*²⁸, finally approved in February and analysed the previous edition of the yearbook. In addition, the MFA simultaneously began work on the *Strategy of Involving Czech Entities in Projects Financed by the EDF*, which it presented to the Council for Development Cooperation in 2013. Subsequently, it organized a related seminar in April. In contrast to the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) for candidate countries, the Government and the MFA are still concerned that Czech companies do not reach the tenders of the European Development Fund (EDF), to which the Czech Republic contributes hundreds of millions CZK per year. This yearbook regularly revisits this issue, which is framed by the insufficient identification with the European policy, and in 2013 the approval of EDF contributions sparked a somewhat awkward political conflict in the Senate. In 2015, the Czech Development Agency should even create a new financial instrument for the support of Czech companies. Within the Visegrad Group, the Czech Republic is again the first country in the region to develop a strategy; however, its comprehensiveness contrasts with the absence of a strategy for Czech political priorities within the relevant working group for Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) in the Council of the European Union.

THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

The Volume and Distribution of Development Aid

Detailed information on the volume and the breakdown of Czech development aid according to the instruments, territories and sectors is provided in the *Information on International Development Cooperation of the Czech Republic in 2013*.²⁹ This section focuses on the changes rather than the current state of the development cooperation

and on the quality rather than the quantity of aid. From a procedural aspect, nothing changed in 2013 with the exception of the above mentioned conceptual work. After the settlement of the recommendations in the working groups of the Council for FDC and after the inter-ministerial consultations, the MFA submitted, within the so-called Spring Package, the information on international development cooperation in the previous year and at the same time a detailed plan for the coming year and a comprehensive plan for the next two years. Humanitarian aid was also implemented without major changes and there was no *ad hoc* emergency assistance released by a government decision in 2013. Nearly two-fifths of the total volume were channelled through international and non-governmental organizations to Syria and its neighbouring countries, which took in hundreds of thousands of refugees of the civil war. More information on humanitarian aid in 2013 is provided by the overview of the MFA.³⁰ Not even in terms of the total volume of Czech aid had there been any significant changes. In 2013, the ODA/GNI ratio dropped to 0.11%, as the statistical indicator of ODA went down to 180 million CZK in absolute numbers.³¹ This indicator, however, cannot be identified either with the actual financial flow to developing countries, nor the actual budget expenditures. The decline in the ODA/GNI ratio by two tenths of a percentage point compared to 2010, however, does not lose its symbolic urgency in a situation, when according to the EU, it is supposed to reach 0.33% in 2015. The statistically reported volume of bilateral aid, which the Czech Republic can influence more than the multilateral aid, dropped by nearly a quarter billion, although this decline was caused by the termination of activities of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Logar, Afghanistan, as besides the relatively low costs of the civilian part of the mission, donors may report as official development assistance the much higher costs of the military part of the mission, which serves to protect and support the implementation of civilian development projects. Moreover, the methodology of reporting by individual countries may differ, because of its non-public nature given by alleged security reasons, and therefore it is unverifiable.

The termination of the PRT operation was also reflected in the gross distribution of aid among territories. Europe with its 39% share replaced Asia, but after deducting territorially “unspecified” aid, its share rises to almost a half. The share of aid to LDCs dropped to a fifth.³² It may be expected that this trend will continue in the context of a focus on Eastern Europe. In the debate on increasing the effectiveness of ODA, the Czech Republic has always been positioned seemingly between the Charibdis of the imperative to focus on the poorest people living mainly in non-European areas of the planet and the Scylla of the imperative to focus on the Czech comparative advantages in terms of the division of labour among the donors. So far, it has dealt with the choice between eradicating absolute poverty in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and the application of the principle of complementarity enshrined in the *Maastricht Treaty* and further elaborated by the *Lisbon Treaty*, by leaning towards the latter pole of national or regional specialization. It seems, however, that even without the statistical fluctuation caused by the Afghan war, the principle of specialization is growing stronger not only due to the emphasis on the free transfer of transition experience, but also due to the unwanted economic recession, which in

many European countries halted the expansion of the volume of aid since the beginning of the millennium.

In terms of sectors, the transition to OECD-style reporting confirms in particular the 1% share of biodiversity conservation, which the public tends to associate with the environment sector, even though it includes flood prevention projects as well. This has been repeatedly criticized by NGOs.³³ The Annual Report of the Czech Development Agency under its new management, however, offers a new perspective on the predominance of the water and waste management sectors, the access to sustainable energy sources and agriculture under the unifying label of green economy. Nevertheless, this innovative approach must be developed in more detail, and the positive impacts of the projects on the environment systematically analysed.³⁴ The number of projects implemented by the state administration sector through a new instrument of the CzDA is also increasing. These projects are implemented through the Czech public administration and its subordinate organizations, without the involvement of non-governmental organizations, as had often been the case in the past. The Cave Administration of the Czech Republic and the Research Institute of Balneology, for instance, cooperated with their counterparts in Georgia. Another example is a feasibility study of an industrial zone in Kosovo carried out by CzechInvest.

The Multiplication of Tools and Stagnation of Aid Volume

Two new tools of the CzDA that are supposed to be introduced in the following two years should strengthen the cooperation between public institutions and the private sector. These are for 2014 a grant procedure for feasibility studies of the private sector and for 2015 a tool for sending out experts to spread the Czech transition experience. These will probably be joined by an existing *B2B* support tool, which was initially implemented by the ORS as a pilot project but will be handed over to the CzDA after 2015. In the second round of *B2B*, as the development and economic partnership programme tends to be informally called, 600 companies were contacted and given four small projects in Serbia and two in Ethiopia. The number of new tools and programmes of the CzDA is thus growing in addition to traditional subsidies for platforms, NGOs, co-financing of trilateral projects, or a new tool that has been so far very positively assessed by the agency itself – the sending out of university teachers. In addition, CzDA also plans to provide funds for the promotion of the European Year of Development 2015. There is thus concern about the capacity of the Agency to manage so many different modalities of help. In addition to the increased demands associated with the accession to the DAC, the pressure influences the MFA as well. As many as 116 small local projects implemented by embassies in 50 countries, with an average value of less than a quarter of a million CZK, it takes an administrative capacity of the Czech diplomacy that is difficult to estimate. The introduction of electronic applications, however, relieved the embassies in processing the applications of nearly seven thousand applicants for a government scholarship programme for the study at Czech universities in 2013. The success rate was only two percent, which is proof of the impossibility of the Czech scholarship program to meet the demand. The current scholarship holders had a second meeting at the Czernin Palace.³⁵

The development cooperation implemented by various institutions of the Czech public administration in geographically remote territories, most often with the involvement of another Czech entity as a mediator, often complicates the communication, as well as the deadlines required by legislation and other restrictions in both donor and partner countries. Moreover, the financial year sometimes places constraints on the already limited timeframe for work, which is given by the tropical or continental climate (the rainy season and frosts make some areas hardly accessible). Further delays may be caused by deferred co-financing by another donor or the partners themselves. The need for flexibility thus conflicts with the need for planning and the bureaucratic oversight of public finances. Along with the new tools, the already existing volume of foreign projects puts great strain on the capacity of the Czech Development Agency to implement its plan fully and on time. In 2013, the CzDA implemented 86 projects, 36 of which were in the form of grants and 37 in the form of a public tendering procedure, the rest of the projects were implemented by the state administration.³⁶ The CzDA also seemingly managed to use 92% of the approved project funds. However, if we take into account the formal transfer of funds to other organizations, this percentage drops to 89%. If we take account of the total amount of overrides or unused funds, the transfers amount to 26%.³⁷ Thus, for the reasons listed above, a total of a quarter of the funds is not spent in accordance with the government-approved plan. In this difficult situation, where the Agency is still lacking an integrated information and accounting system for its operations, and is unable to “spend” 80 million CZK, it is difficult for the actors to urge the Ministry of Finance to increase development aid. On the other hand, these leftovers allow for minor emergency untied donations such as to the Afghan Archaeological Institute, or in a greater extent (and through Czech entities), the funding of the assistance to Ukraine in 2015.³⁸ Overall, there were approximately 250 diverse entities in 2013 that directly contributed to the implementation of the bilateral development cooperation, and many of whom took part in multiple projects. Therefore the question, whether such fragmentation is adequate for a relatively small ODA budget, remains open. In 2014, the CzDA plans to request the initiation of a screening by the European Commission for Delegated Cooperation, which demonstrates its confidence that it meets EU accounting standards. Even though this authorization would open the door for the financing of projects from the European Commission budget, at the same time, it would place an additional burden on the capacity of the CzDA.

From a financial perspective and “*given the current economic situation and the necessary austerity measures regarding the state budget*”, not only the development cooperation working draft plan of May 2014 for the year 2015, but also the medium-term plan for 2017, envisage a further stagnation of the budget for bilateral cooperation amounting to a total of 807 million CZK including scholarships, of which 561 million CZK is earmarked for bilateral projects, 50 million CZK for transition policy projects and 73 million CZK for humanitarian aid. Although the plan notes the failure to meet the commitments, it points out that none of the EU-13 countries meet them. For the period until 2017, it predicts only a negligible increase in the ODA/GNI ratio to 0.12%, which is, however, only due to the increase in the contribution to the EU,

which depends on the GNI, and to the increase of payments to the EDF as a result of the budget increase in the new financial perspective (due to repeated delays specifically until 2015).³⁹ Although the EU Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs repeatedly called on member states to respect their commitments, because their failure to do so discredits the EU in the world, this requirement did not appear in the follow-up documents submitted by the MFA. Despite the growth outlook of the Czech economy and the expected increase in tax collection, the MFA continued to content itself with partial innovations within the current scope of assistance and kept looking for additional resources outside of the system. When viewed in the context of a larger picture, however, the problems of the Czech system are diminished by the overwhelming success of project funding from the Emerging Donors Challenge Fund of the U.S. government (other donor countries in our region were not that successful).⁴⁰ The United State Agency for International Development (USAID) also very positively assessed the cooperation with the CzDA in the Bosnian FARMA project.

The Sustainability of the Czech Development Cooperation Projects

An analysis of the growing number of Czech projects implemented in the previous years, pointed in particular to their chronically low level of sustainability. Few multiannual projects actually had a follow-up project. The *Sustainability of Czech Foreign Development Cooperation Projects* actually became the title of a study prepared by the non-governmental platform FoRS in 2013.⁴¹ A number of recommendations presented in the publication point to the fact that it was very complicated to ensure the sustainability of these projects. Among the recommendations was, for example, the suggestion to provide a sustainability plan for each project. However, this would further burden the administration of the Agency and individual implementers. In the view of the FoRS, complex projects should not be based on tenders of the CzDA, but on grants provided to third-party entities, since the current legal framework allegedly does not allow for sufficient flexibility. This recommendation, however, goes against the recognized principles of ownership and partnership between the donor and the partner-country government or local authorities under the Paris Declaration. In particular, however, it follows from the fact that Czech aid is tied and foreign civil-society organizations still need a Czech mediator. The formulation of projects takes place in Prague and not on location, because the Czech Development Agency still does not have local offices. As far as the identification is concerned, the Agency again has to rely on diplomats with often diverging interests.

Most of the currently assessed projects were implemented already by the Czech Development Agency and not in the competence of individual ministries, which also translated into their higher quality. However, the fluctuation of quality between the individual assessment reports still presents a certain limitation. In any case, two projects in Awassa, Ethiopia, aimed at soil erosion protection and were assessed in a generally positive manner. In the first case, however, because of the lack of a business plan, the supplementary manufacturing of stoves that was supposed to lower the usage of wood and generate income for the local population to compensate for the losses incurred by the environmental protection (affecting local women the most), came to nothing.⁴² In

the second case, the sustainability problem was present as well, related to the fact that some of the activities and their benefits ended with the departure of the Czech implementer.⁴³ A health-care project aiming at the education of midwives in Zambia was also positively assessed, with the prospect of verifiable impact on reducing child and maternal mortality.⁴⁴ A project with a similar aim in Cambodia was also successful, and so was a social project aimed at the visually impaired in Kosovo. The assessment of a Georgian project aimed at the diagnosis of breast cancer points to the problem that the local health-care sector is unable to provide treatment despite early diagnosis.⁴⁵ The Czech assistance has thus paradoxically created new expectations and problems.

The results of several successive humanitarian (and in the Czech system thus only one-year lasting) projects in Burma appear to be more problematic. Their sustainability proved to be very limited for a number of reasons. The lower availability of natural resources caused by the Nargis cyclone caused a migration of the affected fishermen, resulting in the abandoning of their homes that had been built by a non-governmental organization. To further complicate matters, a part of the houses was built on the land of the local political elite, to whom the poor now have to pay rent. Moreover, the locals have grown accustomed to the assistance – after the cyclone there was a lack of construction material for the repairs and it is generally difficult to make a living in the region.⁴⁶ However, the humanitarian and thus short-term nature of this type of aid should be taken into account. Fundamental problems of sustainability are also revealed by the methodically looser (and thus partly inaccurate) assessment of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar, carried out by the head of the embassy in Kabul. According to the official statement, out of the 141 large reconstruction and 107 small rapid impact projects “*only 3 projects failed to be completed for security or other reasons [...]*”.⁴⁷ However, the assessment itself points out that success means primarily the spending of the allocated funds. There is no guarantee that the projects have had a real impact on poverty in the region, let alone that these effects are sustainable.⁴⁸ The constructed security structures sometimes were damaged despite the fact that the PRT had the advantage of implementing projects on a small and relatively secure territory of the province between the Shank air base and the capital of the province Pul-i-Alam, where almost half of the projects were eventually implemented. On the other hand, a number of civilian buildings that have been constructed still are not being used. Overall, the assessment indicates that the results of the PRT mission were “*ambiguous*”.⁴⁹ Furthermore, according to a statement for the media of the last head of the civil part of the mission, Magdalena Pokludová, the perception of the mission by the partners was not unambiguous. Pokludová herself chose to identify as its positive elements rather the cooperation between the MFA and the Ministry of Defence. The assessment of the domestic platforms is discussed in the section devoted to the actors. The involvement of the Czech Evaluation Company in the FoRS promises a better quality of assessments, the more so that, for example, a treatment of the cross-sectorial principles is often completely absent from the assessment reports. In 2014 a “meta-assessment” of the assessments will take place, intended to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Transparency, Coherence and the EU Dimension of Czech Development Policy

An equally important aspect is the transparency of development cooperation and its communication to the public. In the Aid Transparency Index, published by the British organization Publish What You Fund, the Czech Republic ranked 35th, side by side with agencies and donors with a “poor” rating, i.e. approximately in the middle of the rankings.⁵⁰ Among the “new” EU member states, the Czech Republic still proved to be the best, also aided by the fact that it reached a respectable 18th place in the ranking of bilateral donors and thus was even ahead of some “old” member states. The MFA and the CzDA are also slowly preparing for joining the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). No great progress has taken place in the area of the coherence of development policies, either. According to CONCORD – the European platform of non-governmental development organizations – the Czech Republic is one of the countries with weak political commitments, which admittedly do have established inter-ministerial coordination structures, but no monitoring tools.⁵¹ Even at the EU level the Czech Republic is not among the states that actively promote the topic of coherence. In 2013, two events took place, separated from each other only by a short time. The first one was the presentation of a biennial report of the European Commission at the November Council for FDC by the EC’s Zdeňka Dobiášová. Shortly before that, an internal workshop was organized at the Ministry of Agriculture as the result of “*the implementation of the task that was assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture by the Council for FDC in November 2011*”. However, there was no follow-up discussion to the workshop.⁵² Regardless of the legitimate methodological criticism of the *Commitment to Development Index* indicator, which was in 2013 for the first time also calculated for the Czech Republic by a Washington-based think-tank, the incoherence of Czech development policy is precisely what appears to be the key issue, as was seen on the ranking of the Czech Republic, which took the third place from the bottom (before Japan and Korea), i.e. a worse place than Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, primarily due to its significant arms exports to developing countries.⁵³ The coherence of development policy is not even mentioned in the medium-term assessment of the development cooperation strategy.

Although the Czech Republic gets involved in many activities of international organizations through the MFA and other ministries, the Council for FDC unfortunately does not serve as a platform for their convergence. The ministries usually only provide information without a further discussion. Only the EU agenda is getting more attention, mainly due to its impact that may even be of a legislative nature. In 2013, the EU agenda was dominated by the implementation of the so-called Agenda for Change and the preparation of the common EU position on the global development agenda beyond 2015. Under the new common EU approach to development, it is the topic of a joint programming of member states that is gaining ground, even though some states criticize it as lacking transparency. In the CODEV working group of the Council of the EU, the Czech Republic promoted particularly the emphasis on human rights, good governance and joint programming. Its position, in fact, coincided especially with that of Poland and Slovakia, and in the area of human rights also with

the position of the Scandinavian countries. Despite the tradition of criticism of direct budget support, the MFA remains hesitant in conditioning help by their observance. In 2013, it also did not support the human-rights approach to development, presumably because of its implicit inclusion of economic and social rights. The Czech Republic and Poland also actively proposed a regular inclusion of the topic of the development agenda after 2015, with the argument that the EU should speak with one voice. The need to create a strong common position is shown, for instance, by the lengthy search for a compromise position regarding sexual and reproductive rights. Finally, a small as possible manoeuvring room for the big states in the framework of multilateral negotiations is advantageous for the small states. The Czech Republic also supports the revision of the definition of ODA across the member states, so that it also includes other than public sources. Despite the reluctance of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, the Czech Republic, together with the countries of the Visegrad Group and Sweden, traditionally supported the inclusion of the Eastern Partnership in the CODEV meetings, although the majority position on this initiative puts it in the political committees.⁵⁴ After the relative failure of promoting the transfer of the transition experience to the European Union programmes, the Czech Republic moved closer to their specification. This was represented by the MFA's intention to send a Czech diplomat to the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), in the form of the so-called secondment, who would elaborate on them for the Commission. However, there was essentially no interest in this topic at home and no candidates were found to apply for the position.⁵⁵

THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFYING AND CHARACTERIZING THE KEY ACTORS

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Compromise Solution for Deploying Development Staff Abroad

In 2013, there were no changes in the positions of the deputy minister or the Director of the Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid and despite the expected increase in the agenda associated with the joining of the DAC, the staff of the department stayed at 13 employees under the lead of long-time director Zuzana Hlavičková. However, a gradual increase in capacity may be observed at embassies in priority countries. The Czech Embassy in Phnom Penh was opened primarily because of the development cooperation agenda and it is led by the Chargée d'affaires and former desk officer of the ORS Jana Gašparíková. A few years ago, such an embassy opening, even with this minimalist approach, would have been unthinkable for the MFA. The fact that the Cambodian embassy belongs to the first wave of new openings or re-openings after years of cutting down the Czech network of embassies, also serves as a proof of the success of the Development Department. However, it is still a compromise solution, because diplomats, even with experience in development cooperation, cannot replace project managers of the Czech Development Agency and their main and possibly only advantage lies in a better project monitoring. Without

the transfer of the management at key stages of the project cycle directly to the partner countries, the projects cannot become more sustainable, and it is not possible to take advantage of the positive impacts of untied help. Still, both the logistics section of the MFA, as well as the former management of the CzDA, resisted the establishment of CzDA foreign representations. The posts of development diplomats are created in various ways, either by the creation of new posts or by a transfer of agenda, sometimes they even share the development and the economic agenda. Thus, in order to be successful, not only their experience with development cooperation, but also the attitude of the head of the mission are crucial. At the end of 2013, the posts of development diplomats already existed in most priority countries and in the following year, a meeting of development diplomats should take place in Prague. The session of the Council for FDC took place with an unchanged frequency of five times a year.

The Czech Development Agency and the Change of its Top Management

Not only because of the above discussed complexity of international development cooperation, but also in the context of the approach to the establishment of its foreign offices, the administration of the financial line of *B2B* or in the creation of the information and accounting system with the financial assistance of the European Union, the Czech Development Agency under the leadership of Michal Pastvinský began to reach its own limits. However, this does not in any way diminish the merit of the CzDA in the period of his lead, as the Agency managed to implement projects worth half-a-billion CZK without any legal problems or any known allegations of corruption and wastefulness. This appraisal is even more valid, as former employees confess that corruption pressures on the Agency did initially appear, notably through one of the companies that provided legal services for the agency's public procurement contracts. Despite the fact that strategy making processes, which had in the past relied on the Development Centre of the IIR, was fully transferred to the MFA and the Agency was left only with an implementing role, the MFA had to leave the CzDA (as an organizational body of the government) too much autonomy. Its only formal lever is in fact the appointment of its director. The MFA's pressure for reforms to keep pace with the increased emphasis on efficiency, would, however, not always fall on fertile ground in the Agency. Indeed, with the capacity of the Agency being further scaled down to approximately 17 staff, one desk officer is responsible for the administration of a budget of about fifty million CZK. In this situation, it was understandable that the Agency's management focused primarily on the smooth processing of grant procedures and public procurement contracts, while neglecting, for instance, cross-sectorial topics and decentralization. At the end of March 2013, a planned selection procedure for a new director of the CzDA was announced in accordance with the statute changed in the previous year. Michal Kaplan became the new director. He is the former head of external relations at the Permanent Representation in Brussels, with previous experience from the Czech mission to the OECD as well as from the Department of Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid of the MFA. He identified as his priorities to the Council for FDC the knowledge of the partner countries and the principles of professionalism, efficiency, transparency and partnership. More specifi-

cally, as the greatest challenge, he pointed out the introduction of process management with IT support. There were no other personnel changes in the context of the appointment of the new director.

NGOs and Academia

There was no significant change in the role of the non-governmental platform FoRS in 2013 either, thanks to the leading role of its secretariat. Moreover, the new Chairman of the administrative board, Oldřich Pospíšil, was unable to perform his activities directly due to his health problems. One of the first independent assessments held that the continuity of the positions of FoRS is reinforced by the fact that it adopts the positions of the European meta-platform CONCORD, without its member organizations being aware of it. For this reason, in the area of advocacy activities, which its members consider to be of key importance, there is allegedly not a particularly strong ownership of attitudes, and thus the FoRS serves its members primarily as a service organization.⁵⁶ The FoRS secretariat, however, disagreed with this interpretation of the assessment report, whose quality it criticized, and pointed out the participation of its members in the consultations on the medium-term assessment of the FDC strategy. In 2013, FoRS drafted and submitted 16 positions on domestic issues to the MFA, which were positively assessed by the member organizations and represented the very service provided by the secretariat and the administrative board. However, this does not contradict the findings of the assessment report, which criticized the weak link between the administrative board of FoRS and its membership base. Despite the general emphasis on development effectiveness in line with international trends and a commitment to the interests of the NGOs, the platform understandably emphasizes the promotion of civil-society activities and fundraising in the instruments and sectors which are relevant to it. The assessment report commissioned by the MFA, however, very positively assessed the platform and lowered the highest possible rating only in one out of five categories.

The dependence on funding from institutional donors thus remains the biggest problem of the FoRS. Despite a more diverse portfolio of donors, the platform's links to private corporate and individual donors are still weak. Beyond the dozens of regular and special recommendations, opinions and meetings with the ORS and the participation in the Council for FDC, the February letter to the then Prime Minister Nečas is worth mentioning among the advocacy activities. The letter focused on the role of development cooperation in the context of the EU financial framework for 2014–2020. It should be noted that non-governmental organizations, which are to a large extent still financed by the state or the European Union, are also an important employer, including the humanitarian organizations. On the one hand, however, there is the largest such organization, the People in Need (*Člověk v tísni*), which reportedly has approximately 30 Czechs abroad and hundreds of local employees at present.⁵⁷ On the other hand, most of the fifty members are small organizations that often still work on a volunteering basis. Also important to mention is that FoRS organized the second humanitarian congress, held in October in Olomouc, among other activities. From the news in the academic sector, it is worth noting that a new paid master's programme

in International Development Studies in English has been established at the Palacký University in Olomouc. The yearly tuition fee is 1,200 EUR.

Social Entrepreneurship

Of the three development platforms assessed in the area of sustainability, the Fair Trade Association received the best rating because as the only one – surprisingly also in contrast to the platform of companies – it is able to create its own revenues through the certification of so-called fair trade. The only recommendation by the assessment was to improve its media work and further focus on the local level.⁵⁸ The example of Litoměřice as the largest Czech fair trade town shows the positive results of the campaign: more than a half of its population knows fair trade and more than a quarter has purchased such a product.⁵⁹

The Private Sector

Similarly to both of the above-discussed platforms, the business platform as well represents primarily an interest group. The assessment of the activity of the Business Platform for International Development Cooperation (PPZRS), despite its high financial efficiency, paradoxically brought the worst results in terms of sustainability. According to the PPZRS, this is given by the small number of companies that participate in development cooperation, despite the fact that the private sector accounts for about 60% of the implementation of bilateral projects. The members, who make up about 80% of all implementers, thus cover the running costs of the platform, however, the PPZRS needs government subsidies to attract the attention of other companies. The assessment praises some services of the PPZRS, such as its newsletter, on the other hand it criticizes the fact that it is “insufficiently open”, as despite public funding, it provides some services solely to its members.⁶⁰ The platform responded by publishing an announcement on its website saying that it provides publications on request. Otherwise, the platform has moved from the strategy of the Czech export promotion in development cooperation by the private sector to development investment. It also supports the tool of feasibility studies, which has only begun to emerge, but criticizes the new “B2B” tool as a non-systemic support for Czech companies instead of promoting a particular partnership of a Czech company with a company in the developing country. The PPZRS above all lacks a development financial institution that would be able to finance the local partners’ purchase of Czech goods and services. The role of the Czech Export Bank is said to be insufficient in this area. For the private sector, the public-procurement contracts of the CzDA and other donors remain the basis for financing, because even in otherwise uninsurable territories the Czech entities thus carry little business risk.

In terms of the sector priorities for international development cooperation, the PPZRS thus logically criticizes that infrastructure construction was omitted from the sectorial focus of the Czech Republic. Due to its high costs, however, this sector appears to be unsuitable for small donors. The platform, among other activities, organized a seminar in March on the commercial follow-up of development cooperation projects. This area, however, is still in its infancy. According to the Ministry of Industry

and Trade, follow-up commercial contracts allegedly resulted from the Aid for Trade programme.⁶¹ The PPZRS itself gave only five examples of commercial follow-up, in most cases, the “commercial” aspect is connected to the financing by other donors, again from public sources such as the EU, EBRD and UNIDO, so that their sustainability remains limited. The highest possible level of commercial follow-up so far is represented by the production by a Moldovan company under a Czech license and commercial contracts for a geological survey for the Mongolian-Russian mining giant GOK Erdenet. The PPZRS also actively participated in the formulation of an opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the role of the private sector in development after 2015, which was part of a European Commission’s consultation.

With regard to the narrow specialization and varying interests of the platforms, it is not surprising that mutual cooperation between the non-governmental and private sector is also in its early stages. The focus of the FoRS on this area nevertheless shows that given the declining tendency of public funding and the long-term unsustainability of development aid as a whole, the NGOs are aware that the role of the private sector in development is bound to grow, and therefore they try to cultivate it by promoting the development of the private sector in the countries of the South and even to maintain and redefine the controversial term of “commercial follow-up” in this direction. In this context, the polarization in Czech development cooperation between the idealistic approach of the NGOs and the profit-oriented pragmatic approach of the companies became slightly dulled with the MFA’s increasing emphasis on effectiveness and with the decreasing funding. A part of the NGOs in FoRS are already at the forefront of exploring new ways of coexistence.⁶²

The Czech Parliament

Given its legislative power, the parliament should rank second on the list of the actors of international development cooperation, right behind the MFA and the government. Due to the high degree of bureaucratization of the development policy, however, the parliament plays no systematic role, and when it does, it does not initiate action. A politicization and polarization of the development cooperation system occurs rarely, mostly through the prism of Czech business interests or the development policy of the European Union, framed more as an internally oriented policy of the EU than an externally focused policy towards the global South. Moreover, after the enactment of the FDC Act, the development policy of the European Union only appears in the plenary discussions of both chambers of parliament, because its international contractual base is subject to their ratification. A similar situation largely applies to the relevant committees of both, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

Regarding the Chamber of Deputies, the ending Foreign Affairs Committee led by David Vodrážka only met four times in 2013 before the autumn elections, and it paid no attention to development cooperation whatsoever. The international development cooperation was a part of the agenda of the Subcommittee for Compatriot Relations, the Presentation of the Czech Republic Abroad and External Economic Relations. On the initiative of the FoRS, the Subcommittee convened a meeting on 16 January,

which in addition to the FoRS representatives, was also attended by representatives of the MFA. In January 2013, ČSSD deputy Robin Böhnisch at the same time stated that “[in] the Czech Republic, we are quite a bit self-absorbed and this also applies to development aid. The parliament dodged the debate on this issue as it was considered a government topic. Recently, however, a subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee was established that deals with this issue”. However, unlike other committees, the subcommittee did not even have listed members and no information on its activity is publicly available.⁶³ The newly elected Chamber of Deputies also formally restored it alongside traditional subcommittees focused on economic diplomacy and compatriot communities abroad. The four-member subcommittee is led by ANO 2011 deputy and former rector of the VUT, Karel Rais, who was newly elected to the Chamber of Deputies. However, again there is no available information on its activities.

The development agenda was thus dealt with by the Foreign Affairs Committee only in the context of the debate prior to the ratification of the *Internal Agreement between the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the European Union, Represented within the Council, on the Financing of the Aid of the European Union under the Multiannual Financial Framework for the Period of 2014–2020, under the ACP-EU, and on the Allocation of Financial Assistance for the Overseas Countries and Territories, to which Part Four of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union Applies*.⁶⁴ Under the terms of the Agreement, the Czech Republic will contribute nearly 750 million EUR to the 11th EDF (thus again outside of the regular EU budget) in the forthcoming seven-year financial framework. This represents 0.8% of the Fund, while the Czech population accounts for about 2% of the total population of the EU. Even ten years after the Czech accession, the principle of solidarity between member states is thus still maintained. In a discussion with the representatives of the MFA at the Committee, the argument that the share of Czech companies in the EDF contracts was minimal was presented as a leitmotif. The Committee Chairman and former head of the MFA, K. Schwarzenberg, proposed the drawing up of a strategy that already existed at the MFA (see above). The Committee unanimously recommended the ratification, which was followed up on at the plenary session four days later, without any discussion. No one voted against, with only 13 deputies abstaining from the vote.⁶⁵

Apparently due to time constraints, the proposal was not dealt with by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, but by the Economic Committee only a day later.⁶⁶ After the introduction of the proposal by the MFA representative, again, only the low participation of the Czech entities in the implementation was noted, but there was no debate on the meaning or the strategy of the development fund. Surprisingly, however, the topic was politicized and polarized on the very next day at the Senate plenary session. Senator Vladimír Dryml, who had been expelled from the President’s SPOZ party (and formerly a member of the ČSSD) and in this series of yearbooks as the former deputy of Health Minister David Rath associated with the embezzlement of development aid for Zambia, sharply criticized the increase of the Czech contribution by hundreds of millions. As an argument, he presented the lack of

financial resources for social policy in the Czech Republic – an argument previously used only by extreme right-wing parties. The then Foreign Minister Kohout only referred to the obligations stemming from the accession negotiations and the mandatory nature of the contributions to the Fund (in fact, EDF contributions are only quasi-mandatory). Eventually, 10 senators abstained from voting and besides Dryml, only the former Communist-Party member, Senator Jaroslav Doubrava (Severočeši), voted against the ratification. Both senators are known for their racist views. This unique polarization thus caused actual politicization of the development agenda, which is otherwise deemed to be an agenda for bureaucrats by the parliament. In a situation of a Europe-wide radicalization of the anti-EU movement, this event highlights the danger that the long-standing lack of politicization and public debate on this topic could easily turn into xenophobic populist resistance, in the Czech context as yet fortunately rare. Neither the Senate debate, nor the vote, were covered by the media, nor was there any reaction to it by any political party or the civil society.

THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND THE MEDIA

In terms of public attitudes to development cooperation, a public survey carried out by the end of the year directly in Czech households by NMS Market Research for the FoRS, yielded interesting data and as well as methodological inconsistencies.⁶⁷ Sociological studies focusing on public support for development cooperation are inherently unreliable for several reasons. Their objective as such is to get answers that would legitimize the provision of development aid, which is consciously or unconsciously reflected in the wording of the questions, in spite of all efforts of the contractors for neutrality. The sequence of questions and the added context often create a symbolic pressure on the respondents who do not want to reveal their ignorance of the issue. The term “aid” itself, moreover, is generally seen as an ethically positively charged notion, which is difficult to take a stand against. Finally, the widely declared willingness to contribute to development cooperation through higher taxation or the purchase of more expensive goods, such as the so-called fair trade products, does not commit to anything. Ultimately, it is clear that it influences consumer and civil behaviour rather less significantly than the surveys suggest. Opinion polls thus make sense especially when monitoring the year-on-year development of responses or in comparison to other countries.

Nevertheless, the FoRS survey still brought a number of interesting findings. Among all the non-governmental organizations, the second place after the Red Cross was taken by ADRA with the spontaneous knowledge of 16%. Although – or perhaps because – this position could have been the result of the ongoing fund-raising campaign for the Philippines, this shows a huge public awareness of those humanitarian organizations that are given preferential treatment, especially by television. Although 66% of the population claim to know ADRA, People in Need was still ahead with 85% of the respondents.

The statistically unambiguous results were confirmed by Charita with 51% and Světlo pro svět (Light for the World) with 17%; in the latter case, however, it may be possible that the respondents confused it for the Světluška (Firefly) charity, which enjoys extensive media coverage. Therefore it would be premature to conclude that the development-oriented organizations ranked better than the humanitarian ones. On the contrary, it seems that the Czech population favours humanitarian aid to development aid, but traditionally it is not clear to what extent it is able to distinguish between the two. In any case, it is crucial to guarantee to the public that the aid will not be misused. The survey also clearly confirmed the overwhelming support for Africa as the primary target of aid. The majority of respondents consider the amount of bilateral funding to be adequate with a slight preference for an increase. More than a half of the respondents are even willing to buy more expensive goods, if it is more fair and considerate, however, their behaviour does not reflect this viewpoint. Moreover, this number is also in contrast with the 28% given by the Eurobarometer survey from the previous year. Willingness to buy more expensive goods was more frequently declared by lower income groups.⁶⁸ The costs of development assistance were inappropriately compared with the costs of the activities of the parliament in the questionnaire, and therefore it remains uncertain if the support for increasing aid was actually valid. In the end, the survey recommended to suppress the human-rights aspects of development cooperation, because they do not trigger a response and might even discourage some groups. Due to the greater preference for aid for Africa, the NMS Market Research also recommended to showcase more African projects, probably at the expense of other projects. It is interesting, that a quarter of the support comes from universities as the primary providers of aid and only that there is only a minimal support of companies, who are the leaders in this field.

Even though the MFA itself considers the support of politicians and the public to be of key importance, it only devotes 1 million CZK annually to the area of information provision and awareness raising. The non-governmental platform itself chose to leave public awareness-raising to the de-facto defunct campaign *Česko proti chudobě* (*Czechia Against Poverty*), and thus the raising of awareness about development cooperation remains the responsibility of the individual organizations. These are, however, not particularly inclined to break with their routine and stereotypical perception of aid as charity, when raising funds for their activities. In this respect, the Slovak non-governmental platform and its campaign *Ži fěr* (Live Fair) with a focus on the coherence of personal attitudes deserves to be appreciated.⁶⁹ In any case, the Czech state is practically not involved in this area and there is a failure of coordination in the non-governmental sector. Nevertheless, the theme of commercial follow-up of development cooperation did appear in the media⁷⁰, even if it is often a stereotypical presentation of assistance where the Czechs teach the African what to do.⁷¹ Critical views of the development assistance in the mainstream media are rather rare.⁷² In 2013, only on the pages of the *A2* magazine was there an ideologically charged debate about the role of *Člověk v tísní*.⁷³ The media often take over topics of the global South, including the assistance, from the media of the North, but without discussing the impact on the Czech Republic and its policy.⁷⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Since its establishment in 1995, the international development cooperation may be described as a reactive as well as neutral component of Czech foreign policy, in other words a foreign policy agenda, to which it adapts. The Czech Republic does not reject development policy as such, but at the same time is not proactive. Its attitudes at a higher level, particularly in the EU, which may seem to be proactive, are actually a reaction to the current course of the majority of member states, which has gradually consolidated as *the agreed language* of this shared policy of the European Union. This applies in particular to the territorial focus on sub-Saharan Africa and the emphasis on the amount of aid provided. In recent years, the Czech diplomacy has also been particularly careful not to be perceived as offensive in those areas. However, its negligible share of EU aid leads to the fact that it has no capacity to proactively take part in the creation of the European policy in this spirit. If there is indifference in some agendas, for instance in the area of the development policy coherence or gender as a cross-cutting issue, the MFA has always performed at least a formal role and remained in the category of adaptation. The reason for this behaviour is the fact that for the Czech Republic, unlike other “new” member states, it is the membership in the OECD that remains key in the field of development cooperation. From the MFA’s perspective, the accession to the DAC in May 2013 served as a motivation to cover all agendas and thus it gave the international development cooperation a hallmark of technical quality.

The high degree of bureaucratic decision-making, which had been adopted even by non-governmental organizations due to the high dependence on public funding, shows that the problem of foreign aid is not so much the external legitimacy as it is the internal promotion of the policy. Development cooperation, in its majority paid for by a Czech contribution and provided by the European Union and other international organizations, was in 2013 primarily polarized and only at the next level was it politicized by autonomist attitudes in the parliament. The politicization, moreover, stems mostly from an EU, and thus a rather internal framing of policy. The internal polarization between the actors of international development cooperation declined as a result of the external threat to budgets; the threat is even stronger, as development aid is competing within the same MFA budget envelope with the already weakened financing of key foreign policy activities of Czech diplomacy. However, this weakened, internally based polarization also dulls impulses from within the development policy constituency that would lead to greater public and political support for the development policy. The year 2014 will fully show whether the potential for greater politicization will bring an ideological shift in the new ruling coalition in combination with the external impulses of 2015, i.e. the European Year of Development and the finale of the debate on the global development framework, which will replace the Millennium Development Goals.

Endnotes

- ¹ I would like to thank Zuzana Hlavičková, the director, for the interview and for her comments to a draft version of this text, 23 April 2014, and also Petr Halaxa, desk officer of the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the MFA; two employees of the Czech Development Agency, 9 April 2014 and 3 June 2014; Jana Milěřová, the director of the FoRS – Czech Forum for Development Cooperation, 11 April 2014; and Věra Venclíková, executive director of the Business Platform for International Cooperation, 11 April 2014. If there are any factual errors and faulty interpretation, the responsibility remains my own.
- ² *Česko dostalo punc bohaté země*. *Ekonom*, 30. 5. 2013.
- ³ *Ministr Kohout v projevu k velvyslancům: Společným jmenovatelem je důvěryhodnost, spolehlivost a profesionalita*, 26. 8. 2012. On-line: mojepanstvo.pl/dane/crawler_pages/427388.
- ⁴ See Horký-Hlucháň, Ondřej (2013): Rozvojový rozměr české zahraniční politiky. In: Kořan, Michal–Ditrych, Ondřej a kol.: *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2012. Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, pp. 286–305.
- ⁵ See the government resolution of 12 March 2014 no. 167 on the provision of assistance to Ukraine in its reconstruction and the support of its democratic transition in the years 2014 to 2016.
- ⁶ For more on the emergence of the selection of project countries see Horký, Ondřej (2009): Rozvojový rozměr české zahraniční politiky: Nástroj zahraniční politiky nebo snižování globální chudoby? In: Kořan, Michal a kol.: *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2008. Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, pp. 349–350.
- ⁷ Compare with the chapter *Sub-Saharan Africa in Czech Foreign Policy*.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
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