



MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR  
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC






**ASOCIACE  
PRO INTERKULTURNÍ PRÁCI**




# **Civic participation of foreigners in the Czech Republic** (practical recommendations)

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# CIVIL SOCIETY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING, INTERCULTURAL WORK

**Civil society** is a theoretical concept that can be defined as a space between the state, the free market and private life, which is designed for free association and communication between people. Civil society is composed of civil society organizations (often called non-governmental organizations, or NGOs) that represent its organized part as well as less formal forms/manifestations of individual and group association, such as **social movements, public gatherings, civic initiatives, etc.**

 *Civil society organizations are very diverse. They can be active in many areas, such as environmental protection, social services, health care, human rights, humanitarian assistance, leisure activities, and more.*



**Civil society organizations** (for example, associations, foundations, clubs, etc.) can play a number of useful **roles** in a society, e.g. advocacy, innovation, provision of services, community building, support of pluralism and solidarity, and others. Civil society as a whole is also an important part of **the democratic state**. Not only because civil society offers citizens an opportunity to express their opinions, but also because it can be a watchdog and opponent of the state and economic power if the rights and freedoms of citizens are oppressed.

 *Civil society in the Czech Republic is relatively advanced, although it is still going through certain development. In 2016, there were 130,000 civil society organizations in the CR, in comparison with 1989, when there were only 537 (Czech Statistical Office). Organizations are also often grouped according to their functions into service-oriented, advocacy, and philanthropic organizations. Larger organizations can perform several functions simultaneously.*

Types of NGOs in the CR according to their function		
Service-oriented	Social care, health care Education and research Humanitarian assistance and charity Culture Development and humanitarian assistance	not membership-based (in most cases)
Advocacy	Environment protection Human rights protection Promotion of equality and non-discrimination Minority rights protection Animal protection Consumer rights protection Fight against corruption, etc. Cultural activities	membership-based or not membership-based
Hobby and leisure time	Sport Free time Bee keepers, hunters, gardeners Community associations Other	membership-based
Philanthropic	Provision of grants and donations	not membership-based (in most cases)



The essence of civil society is the **voluntary association of people** to pursue various goals while acting within the law. The association of people should not restrict rights of others and should not be primarily aimed at profit or exercise of formal political power (Skovajsa et al., 2010). People can come together to achieve social and political changes, provide services that are lacking in a society, promote interests of vulnerable groups, or to follow up on their interests and hobbies, etc. In addition to association and communication there are also less tangible, but essential parts of civil society, such as values, social norms, etc.

**Civic participation** can be defined as individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern (Adler, Goggin, 2005). Political participation, especially in its informal manifestations, can be considered a part of civic participation as well. Formal political participation includes, for example, the right to vote or membership in political parties.



*Informal civic participation offers plenty of opportunities to get involved in public life. It's up to you which activity you choose or initiate. It is necessary, however, to act within the law.*



*Support the environment*



*Community activity*



*Art workshop*



*Bike ride*



*Demonstration*

Volunteering plays a great role in both formal (in civil society organizations) and informal civic participation. A volunteer is a person who, without remuneration, by his/her own will, helps people around and participates in community activities in his/her free time (Dobrovolnik.cz). Informal volunteering can happen anywhere and pretty much any of us can be an informal volunteer. Formal volunteering usually takes place in civil society organizations or other institutions (such as hospitals) that address volunteers with a specific offer and later provide premises and support for the volunteering. Since 2003 a Volunteer Service Act (Act no. 86/2014 Coll.) in the Czech Republic has set the conditions for organized volunteering.



*HESTIA has been dedicated to the development of volunteering since 1993. This organization also runs the largest portal of volunteering opportunities in the Czech Republic - dobrovolnik.cz - where you can find offers to suit your interests.*



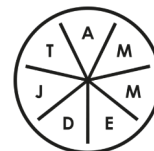
<http://www.hest.cz/cs-CZ/>



<https://www.dobrovolnik.cz/>



<https://www.inexsda.cz/cs/>



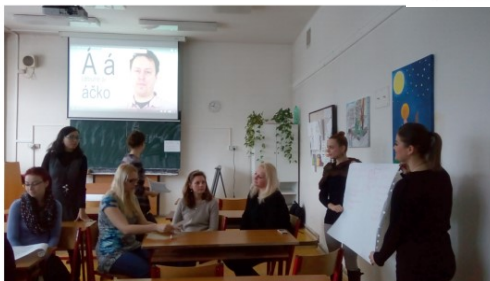
<http://www.tamjdem.cz/cs/>



*A few more tips for organizations that promote volunteering:*

**Intercultural work** is a discipline within the helping professions. Its aim is to help eliminate socio-cultural and language barriers in communication between public institutions and migrants, and contribute to a harmonious and just coexistence in a culturally diverse society. We believe that intercultural work can also be a tool for civic participation of migrants in their new country.

**"Participatory and community intercultural work"** is one of the approaches in intercultural work (see [Recommendations for the development of intercultural work in the Czech Republic](#), in Czech only). Participatory and community intercultural work focuses on strengthening the opportunities and interests of migrants in public affairs. It also aims at working with the community of people/communities who live together in the same space (a house, a district, a municipality) including persons with migrant background or a migrant community that shares similar interests and goals. Participatory and community intercultural work is based on the idea that the involvement of migrants in civil society, and the places they live, can be a source of support for individuals and a powerful tool for positive change in the world. Intercultural workers may be members of the local community (but it is not a requirement), e.g. they live in the same neighborhood, have good relations with neighbors and have a very good idea of the situation of people who live there. It is important that intercultural workers have people's trust and are able to bring people of different interests and attitudes together.



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF FOREIGNERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC (LEGAL BACKGROUND)

Legal basics of civic and political participation can be found in the Constitution of the Czech Republic. According to the **Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Art. 17-23)** some rights are available to all people, regardless of their nationality. For example, according to Art. 17 (2):

*Everyone has the right to express his/her opinion in speech, in writing, in the press, in pictures, or in any other form, as well as freely to seek, receive, and disseminate ideas and information irrespective of the frontiers of the State.*

Art. 20 (1) provides that:

*The right of association is guaranteed. Everybody has the right to associate together with others in clubs, societies, and other associations.*

The exercise of other rights, however, has certain restrictions, for example on the grounds of full age, legal capacity, or even citizenship. Some rights thus remain the privilege of **citizens of the Czech Republic or the EU**. To the right is an overview of main political rights contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and the rights to exercise them.

<i>the right to freedom of expression</i>	everyone
<i>the right for information</i>	everyone
<i>the right to petition</i>	everyone
<i>the right of assembly</i>	everyone
<i>the right of association</i>	in civil society organizations - everyone in political parties - citizens of the CR
<i>the right to vote</i>	citizens of the CR
<i>the right to resistance</i>	everyone

With the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU, citizens of other EU countries acquired certain political rights as well. They have the right to vote at the municipal level and to become members of political parties (if the statute of the party allows it).

**The Convention on the Participation of Immigrants in Public Life at a Local Level** (Council of Europe, 1992) also addresses the question of political rights of migrants. In 2015 it was ratified only in a limited version in the Czech Republic. It accepts the contents of Part A, which deals with freedoms of expression, assembly and association, including the involvement of foreigners in public inquiries, public planning, and other consultation processes. Part B, which deals with the participation of foreigners in advisory bodies at the local level (the removal of obstacles to the establishment of such institutions and support of their creation in areas with a high proportion of foreigners in the population) and Part C, which deals with the right to vote at municipal level, for foreigners who meet the same statutory requirements as citizens and have been residing legally in the CR in the last five years before the election, were not ratified in the Czech Republic.



***The restrictions on participation of citizens from countries outside the EU are connected especially to formal political participation.***

*Citizens of countries outside the EU have no voting rights in the Czech Republic, they cannot be members of political parties or run for political office.*





*Citizens of countries outside the EU can participate in civil society organizations in the CR, as e.g. volunteers, members. They can be on the Board of Directors or other body of the organization and can establish civil society organizations. Informal civic and political participation in all its manifestations is accessible for all migrants - citizens of countries outside the EU.*



#### STANOVY ZAPSANÉHO SPOLKU

#### ASOCIACE PRO INTERKULTURNÍ PRÁCI, Z. S.

##### PREAMBULE

Asociace pro interkulturní práci, z. s. (dále jen Asociace) je sdružením interkulturních pracovníků a pracovníků a dalších osob, které přispívají k rozvoji interkulturní práce v ČR. Posláním organizace je podporovat rozvoj interkulturní práce a přispívat k harmonickému a spravedlivému soužití v kulturně rozmanité společnosti.

##### ČL. I

##### ÚVODNÍ USTANOVENÍ

(1) Název spolku: Asociace pro interkulturní práci, z. s. (dále též „spolek“).  
Anglický ekvivalent (jména spolku) je Association for intercultural work.



# ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ASSOCIATION, FUNDRAISING

One of the most widespread types of civil society organizations in the Czech Republic is an association (spolek). Previously, this kind of organization was termed a civic association (občanské sdružení). Since 2014, the Civil Code has changed and with it the treatment of civil society organizations in the country.

**The association**, according to the new Civil Code (NOZ), is a self governing group of people aimed at realizing a common interest. The law governs associations in § 214 et seq. The main principles of the association include:

- ❖ Common interest
- ❖ Voluntary membership
- ❖ Members of the association are not liable for the debts of the association
- ❖ The main activities of the association may only be connected with fulfillment and protection of those interests based on which the association was founded (this cannot be business or entrepreneurship, which can be a secondary activity).
- ❖ Profit can only be used to support association's activities.

In order to establish an association, it is necessary:

- ❖ to have 3 interested people
- ❖ to agree on the contents of the Statute:
  - a) the name and address of the association
  - b) the purpose of the association
  - c) the rights and obligations of members to the association, resp., the commencement of rights and obligations
  - d) a statutory body

**An association is established by entering into the public register [www.justice.cz](http://www.justice.cz).** The proposal for the registration of the association, together with supporting documents, is administered to the public register by founders or the person designated by the inaugural meeting: <https://or.justice.cz/ias/ui/podani>.

**More information about the establishment of an association can be found at the links below (In Czech only):**

[Poradna Frank Bold](#)

[Portál veřejné správy](#)



*The founders of an association can also be foreigners living in the Czech Republic. Czech citizenship is not a prerequisite for the establishment of the association.*

*For example, people who come from different parts of the world are active in these organizations.*



Other types of civil society organizations include: public benefit organizations (they cannot be established anymore), institutes, legal entities of registered churches and religious societies, foundations and endowment funds.

After the establishment of a civil society organization it is necessary to ensure its **funding**, which is done through **fundraising**. There are many sources of funding. Let's have a look at a few of them.

## Funding from public/state budgets

This funding is provided by the State (e.g. by Ministries) or local authorities (e.g. by Municipalities, City Halls). The funding from relevant lines of the national budget is allocated in the forms of grants in the main areas of state subsidy policy.

 Here you can have a look at the [Main areas of state subsidy policy towards non-profit organizations for 2017](#) (In Czech only).

In practice this means that an organization can apply for funding based on projects that comply with rules, themes and priorities of a particular grant procedure. For example, if you would like to apply for funding within the subsidy program "Integration of Foreigners in 2017", announced by the Ministry of the Interior, you have to study the rules and conditions of the grant, and then send the MoI a grant request, together with a description of the project and the budget. A lot of organizations might compete for the grant and there is no legal right for it. Usually subsidies from public funds operate in the so-called co financing regime, when it is necessary to provide additional sources of funding for your project, e.g. 10-30% of the total budget. In addition, quite often a history of the existence and activities of the organization is required. Therefore, in some cases, a newly founded association cannot apply for grants in the beginning of its existence.

In the framework of public budgets an organization can also apply for funds allocated outside of state subsidies, such as public procurement, service contracts, etc.

Among other important sources of public funding are grants from the funds and programs of the European Union. These funds are received in a similar way as government subsidies - in an open competition on the basis of a project application.

Civil society organizations in the Czech Republic can apply for funding at the European structural and investment funds, such as the European Social Fund. In the capital city of Prague one can apply for funding at the Operational Programme Prague - Growth Pole of the Czech Republic.

<https://www.esfcr.cz/>

<http://penizeproprahu.cz/>

An important source of funding for youth work and education is Erasmus +, which allows the exchange of students, teachers and lecturers, and closer cooperation between educational institutions in the EU.



*Financial subsidies from European structural and investment funds in the Czech Republic are distributed through ministries or other local institutions. The application is always submitted in the Czech language. Additional funds within the EU can be requested directly at the European Commission, which has its own subsidies and grants. In these cases, usually larger international projects are supported, where the language of communication is English. It is possible to write an application for the project in English as well.*

[http://ec.europa.eu/contracts\\_grants/grants\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/grants_en.htm)



## Foundations and endowment funds

Foundations and endowment funds exist in the Czech Republic as well as abroad. They provide an additional source of funding for civil society organizations. In most cases, foundations provide funding for activities related to their mission and the reason for their establishment. For example, in the Czech Republic, **Via Foundation** has the following mission: *to engage in community development and spread the art of giving in the Czech Republic*. Through its calls for proposals the foundation primarily supports community life and philanthropy (charity-giving).

Most foundations and endowment funds operate on the basis of the so-called calls for proposals that are publicly announced. Civil society organizations can compete for funding within these calls. As in the case of state subsidies it is necessary to fill in the project application and apply for funding. Some foundations can be addressed with a specific project, activity, etc. outside the calls for proposal. Foundation staff will assess whether the proposed activity is consistent with the mission and activities of the foundation and will decide whether to provide funding or not. For example, in the Czech Republic, the **Karel Janecek Foundation**, which focuses on supporting the development of an active civil society and a healthily functioning state in the Czech Republic, as well as supporting education and social innovation in the country, enables organizations and individuals to send a request for funding outside of the calls for proposals.



There are also foreign foundations that finance activities of civil society organizations in the Czech Republic, for example the **Visegrad Fund**, **Czech-German Future Fund**, and the **Open Society Foundation** (including its Czech branch).




<http://visegradfund.org/home/>



<http://www.fondbudoucnosti.cz/>



<http://osf.cz/cs/>

 *There are also several corporate foundations that have been established by commercial entities in the Czech Republic. Usually these foundations support projects and activities that are related to the company's activities in the framework of the so-called Corporate Social Responsibility.*



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## Donations and other profit of civil society organizations

In addition to competing for grants and subsidies, civil society organizations can also address individual donors. This is done through public collections, charity events, the establishment of a network of supporters of your organization, or even crowdfunding. Anyone interested in your activities can contribute. All contributions should be donated transparently and kept in the organization's accounting. In addition to individual donors, you can also reach out to companies that occasionally provide financial contributions. Companies can also provide support through volunteering of their employees, or by providing a non-financial donation (such as furniture, technical equipment, providing space for organizing your event, etc.).

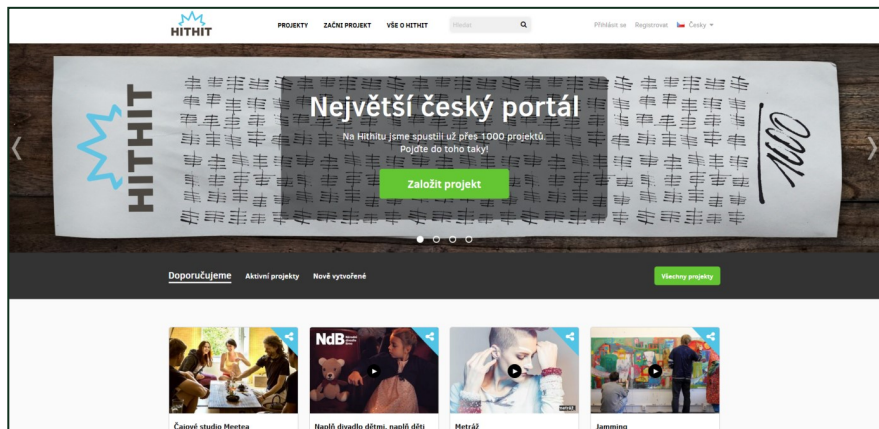


*So-called crowdfunding has become popular in the Czech Republic in recent years. It is an online tool for obtaining financial contributions for a particular activity or project. You need to determine the amount of contribution necessary, create an engaging description of the activity, and decide what you*

*will offer to your contributors as a reward for their donation (this may be your publications, an activity or service you offer). For example, in 2016, Auto\*Mat, which organizes a street festival Different City Experience, successfully supported the festival by using crowdfunding.*

<http://zazitmestojinak.cz/>

You can also use special web portals that promote crowdfunding.



<https://www.hithit.com/cs/home>



<https://www.startovac.cz/>

Civil society organizations can also have income from their own profitable activities. This income mostly comes from sales of their own products and services, or the organization of various events, e.g. balls, auctions. The income can also come from membership fees (for associations) or property (e.g. rent).

It is important to note that in all these cases it is always a secondary economic activity of a civil society organization. The main activities of civil society organizations must always be nonprofit. Profit from secondary activities can only be used for the management of civil society organizations or its main activities. Profit cannot be divided (for example, between members).

## Literature

Adler, Richard P., Judy Goggin. 2005. What do we mean by "civic engagement"? *Journal of Transformative Education* 3 (3): 236-253.

Skovajsa, M. a kol. (2010): Občanský sektor. Organizovaná občanská společnost v České republice. Praha: Portál.

<https://www.czso.cz/> - Český statistický úřad

<https://www.dobrovolnik.cz/> - Dobrovolnik.cz