

Politicians: Konečná, Poche, Zdechovský



Source: European Parliament official website

VOLUNTEERING MEASUREMENTS – Mr. Poche argues that volunteering has a positive impact on state economy because the volunteers, individuals or groups, contribute to the national GDP even though it is hard to define the exact scale. Mr. Zdechovský agrees that volunteering is surely measurable economically similarly to formal professional commitments, and also by non-economic models transported from other social sciences that can support correct and valuable measurement. Ms. Konečná puts even more precisely that the outcomes of volunteering count among indicators of social welfare ISEW or WBF (well-being framework) that complexly measure quality of life in the society.

VOLUNTEERING AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSABILITY – Mr. Poche claims that the majority of big companies operating in the CR have a volunteering programme. He, however, adds that there are still some possibilities for improvement and it should certainly become a part of corporate culture. Ms. Konečná argues that the companies support NGOs just on purpose, for good presentation, not for a good idea. Even Mr. Zdechovský thinks that the Czech companies do not support volunteering enough and therefore they should cooperate with other international actors.

RESEARCH VALUE – Mr. Poche believes that some less formal kinds of volunteering are not involved in the research or statistics and that this is a gap that should be focused on. Mr. Zdechovský claims that the research has to be first and foremost financed and performed by the special funds and for this case, volunteering should have just an additional value. Ms. Konečná disagree with the fact that the key programme for education and research Erasmus+ does not include a support for volunteering of people older than 50 years in new programming period.

VOLUNTARY RESOURCES – Mr. Zdechovský reminds that the EU supports volunteering and non-profit sector by structural funds and European Voluntary Service. Mr. Poche thinks that the problem is not the amount of money, but more in the lack of knowledge of some organisation and potential beneficiaries about the allocation of the funds. Ms. Konečná mentions an example of the greatest European anti-racism network (involved more than 550 organisations in 47 countries of Europe since 1992) UNITED for Intercultural Action that did not get a cent on administration expenses in 2014 neither in 2015, so it had to terminate their work. And all that happened when racism and xenophobia in Europe rise as we can see now.

PARTICIPATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS – Mr. Poche suggests that the implementation of the system should be firstly on national level, and then it would be transferred to local level. Mr. Zdechovský adds that the European level has broader impact and can mediate a transnational cooperation while the local level has deeper effects and it can focus on smaller projects. Ms.

Konečná underlines that NGOs are usually not consulted at all, or very late in the last level of policy making when it is possible no more to change the concept. She says that sometimes only “befriended” NGOs are invited to roundtable by the competent authority.

TOWARDS THE VOLUNTEERING PARLIAMENTARY INTERGROUP – Both Mr. Poche and Ms. Konečná agrees that it is not necessary to create the EPI for improvement of the volunteering concept. Mr. Zdechovský, however, points that the closer cooperation in this matter will generally help with promotion of the topic.

SKILLS, TRAINING, LEARNING AND EUROPEAN PASSPORT – Mr. Zdechovský claims that the volunteer participation rate should be definitely presented as a positive tool of self-education and personal development. Mr. Poche, however, thinks that it is not possible to make an obligation out of volunteering. Ms. Konečná even believes that the volunteering service should be definitely part of the European Passport.

TRANS-NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING – Mr. Zdechovský believes that the popularity of this form of social interaction will rise in the future and Mr. Poche already thinks that it is also popular among young people. Ms. Konečná reminds that we have many programmes for students and programmes for volunteer work or internship that can be a good step forwards. However, the specific program for older volunteers who are not on labour market anymore is still missing.

2015, THE YEAR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND EUROPEAN COOPERATION – Mr. Poche and Mr. Zdechovský agree that volunteering is one part of the project European Year for Development although it is not the main issue. Ms. Konečná argues that the volunteers helping to improve civil society should not, however, be forced on labour market to unpleasant employment if they can contribute more in the fields invisible to labour market.

EMPLOYMENT AND ANSWERS TO POVERTY – Mr. Poche believes that first and foremost it is necessary to start an economic growth that set the conditions for establishment of new job opportunities. Ms. Konečná adds that young people have to be supported in their efforts to gain a good job in regard to their education, because they usually struggle with lack of needed experience for enterprises. Mr. Zdechovský thinks that all young people willing to be successful in their field of expertise should have such an experience.