

tistical offices acknowledged that they could not vouch for the quality of the data and that they essentially trust the provider organisations to submit accurate data. The good news is that the representatives of these offices seem willing to share data to a large extent.

It was suggested that the impressive collection of data sources compiled by Pospíšil and his colleagues be elaborated by two more columns, which would try to address the questions of a) the quality of data and b) the accessibility of data. Right now, answers to these questions are tentatively available only for foundations.

It was noted during the discussion that whatever data are currently available are almost exclusively hard data. The kind of soft data that would allow the interested public to assess the internal workings of non-profits, and thus facilitate the accountability and transparency of non-profits, does not seem to exist, although it was suggested that time trends of volunteer hours and donations could be used as an indicator of the degree of trustworthiness that the third sector, and even certain organisations, enjoy. There was no agreement though on this issue.

It became clear during the discussion that there are two very different notions about what constitutes desirable data. One is informed by the wish to understand the third sector from the perspective of a social policy maker; e.g. looking at what the scope of the sector is, how it has grown, and where it has grown. The other is informed by the wish to address accountability and transparency issues. It is not clear whether these two goals are incompatible per se, but they contributed to a sense of puzzlement on both sides of the debate.

The workshop ended with a discussion among those interested about the possibility of a doctoral study programme that would integrate the doctoral study programmes of various disciplines (economics, sociology, philosophy, law). Such programmes have been proposed by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, and they seem to represent

a laudable attempt to foster interdisciplinary work on topics, such as the third sector, social capital, trust and growth. It was decided that the idea was interesting enough to be pursued further.

Overall, the workshop fulfilled its purpose of gathering together a diverse group of people concerned with non-profit issues. While there was no tangible outcome, the workshop served its intended function. It encouraged a debate that, if continued, is likely to contribute to a better understanding of the issues reflected in the titles of the two sessions: the transparency and accountability of NGOs, and the availability of NGOs-related data. Additional information about the workshop is accessible at home.cerge-ei.cz/brhlkocova/npos.

Andreas Ortman

The European Science Foundation – A Platform for the Integration of East European Social Scientists into the European Research Space

The European Science Foundation (ESF) is a European association of national organisations (research councils, academies and other national scientific institutions) responsible in their respective countries for the support of scientific research. Established in 1974, as of 2003 the Foundation comprised 76 member organisations from 29 countries. It is a non-governmental organisation, although its member organisations are usually publicly funded agencies.

The scientific work sponsored by the ESF includes research in the medical sciences, the life and environmental sciences, the physical and engineering sciences, the humanities and the social sciences. In these domains, there are five 'Standing Committees' for the individual disciplines, made up of scientists nominated by the member organisations, which are responsible for identifying scientific priorities, formulating strategies and developing research agendas. There

are also a number of Expert Committees that provide additional advice in areas requiring special attention.

The Standing Committee for the Social Sciences covers a wide domain of disciplines, including:

- psychology, cognitive sciences
- pedagogy, education research
- social anthropology
- sociology
- women's studies
- economics
- business and administrative sciences
- geography
- demography
- environmental sciences
- law
- political sciences
- communication sciences
- international relations
- social statistics and informatics.

ESF employs a number of instruments in its activities. The principal one is the *ESF Collaborative Research Programmes* (EUROCORES), which are aimed at co-ordinating European research funding on priority topics through a joint call for proposals and a single peer review system. *ESF Scientific Forward Looks* enable Europe's scientific community to develop medium to long-term perspectives and analyses of future developments in multidisciplinary topics viewed at a European level. Another action line is that of *Research Infrastructures*, aimed at providing scientific advice and assessments on topics covering medium-scale and large infrastructure facilities. The Foundation also employs four principal networking instruments. *ESF Exploratory Workshops* enable scientists to come together and to examine topical scientific issues. *ESF Scientific Networks*, interdisciplinary in character, are orientated towards co-ordinating activities in order to stimulate and consolidate the European scientific community in specific fields. *ESF Scientific Programmes* are long-term activities focused on specific themes. They bring together re-

search projects carried out by multinational teams of researchers. While Exploratory Workshops and Networks are funded from the ESF general budget, programmes are funded on an 'à la carte' basis by participating member organisations. *The European Research Conferences* (EURESCO) Programme consists of a series of top-level scientific meetings whose aim is to stimulate discussion towards exploring research frontiers.

ESF pays for its activities through the contributions of its membership organisations. These are made both to the ESF general budget, to which member organisations contribute at a rate calculated on the basis of their country's GDP, and to the specific scientific programmes and projects in which member organisations decide to participate. The European Commission contributes partial funding of European Research Conferences.

Until the early 1990s, ESF had (with the exception of Turkey) only Western European members. After the demise of the communist regimes, organisations from the former Soviet bloc countries started to join. Nine of them - Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia - are currently represented in the ESF.

The Czech Republic is represented by the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. The two Czech member organisations co-ordinate their activities in the ESF and they also contribute equal financial resources for ESF membership fees and other expenditures stemming from participation. A joint committee for co-operation with the ESF decides on strategic issues of co-operation and co-ordinates activities of both member organisations. While the Academy of Sciences is primarily responsible for mediating contact with ESF activities for academic research institutes, the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic provides the same service for universities and other institutions of higher learning. Co-operation was estab-

lished with all five ESF Standing Committees, including the *Standing Committee for the Social Sciences* (SCSS) and the *Standing Committee for the Humanities* (SCH). Czech scholars are now represented in all these bodies and they have become involved in most of the above-mentioned ESF activities. Access to the two most prestigious instruments – the Collaborative Research Programmes and the Scientific Programmes, where additional financial contribution is required from member organisations intending to participate, is limited by the availability of the required resources.

As regards the social sciences, Czech scholars have so far taken part in four ESF Scientific Programmes.

1. *Social Variations in Health Expectancy in Europe* (HEIES) (1999–2003), the aim of which was to achieve an understanding of the complexities of causes behind inequalities in health in order to determine where the chain of causation could potentially be broken. The programme was successfully concluded in 2003.

2. *Changing Media – Changing Europe* (MEDIA) (2000–2004). This interdisciplinary Programme, involving both social scientists and humanities researchers, is focusing on networking researchers around four main themes: citizenship and consumerism (media, the public sphere and the market), culture-commerce (media between cultural policy and industrial policy), convergence-fragmentation (media, technology and the information society), homogenisation-diversity (media and cultural identities).

3. *Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences* (QMSS) (2003–2007) aims to advance knowledge in the methods of analysing increasingly complex social scientific data – such as the large pan-European data sets – and thus to advance comparative quantitative social science. This is achieved through a series of workshops and seminars, which train junior social scientists in the latest methods of analysis of longitudinal data, cross-national cross-sectional data, network

data, intervention data, and issues of measurement, data collection and data quality.

4. *European Social Cognition Network* (ESCON) (2003–2008). Its objective is to enhance European scientific collaboration in the field of social cognition by calling on the expertise and knowledge of European researchers on the frontiers of research, and by helping to lay the foundation for an advanced European research training programme in social cognition for young scholars.

An important component of Czech cooperation with the ESF is the participation of Czech sociologists in the *European Social Survey* (ESS) Programme. This large infrastructural project, initiated by the ESF Standing Committee for the Social Sciences and set up under its auspices, is aimed at conducting, every second year, a representative nationwide survey in European countries, focusing on themes of European relevance and organised in a rigorously comparative manner. Twenty-three European countries participated in the first round of the survey in 2002, including Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and, of course, the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic, the survey was organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences and the data, together with datasets from other participating countries, have already been made freely available on-line for academic use at <http://ess.nsd.uib.no>. In addition to a number of core items (demographic characteristics, education, occupation, financial and household circumstances, attitudinal data on political interest and participation, socio-political orientations, and on moral, political and social values, well-being, social inclusion/exclusion, public trust in government, issues of governance and efficacy of institutions, national, ethnic and religious allegiance), it also includes data on rotating items – immigration, asylum-seekers, political knowledge. The second round of the ESS, scheduled for 2004, is soon to begin. Up to twenty-eight countries are expected to take part. In this case, the rotating items include

questions on family, health, economic values and morality. As in several other countries that joined the ESS, in the Czech Republic also it is a major problem to find a way in which to secure stable and continual financing of this highly important, yet costly project.

Other instances of Czech participation in ESF activities could equally be mentioned.

Both for the Czechs, and for their colleagues from other ex-communist European countries, the European Science Foundation has proved to be an effective and intellectually challenging platform for their integration into the wider European research space.

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