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# **Positive communication navigator**

How to gain the support of a (sceptical)  
public for civil society

# ● Summary

**The Czech public's trust in non-profit organizations has been steadily declining or stagnating since 2016.** In the last year, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) suffered from a slump in trust in all public institutions. Many NGO sectors and individual organizations enjoy great confidence, but public debate sometimes seems as if “non-profits” is a rude word. The breeding ground for this atmosphere is the fact that **people, above all, are still not clear about what civil society is** and what it brings them.

According to an extensive and unique survey of NGOs perception in the Czech Republic at the turn of 2019 and 2020, most polarizing or controversial issues divide society less than we think. It is estimated that 60-70% of the public do not have a clear or strong opinion and it is possible to convince them. There are 26% of active supporters of NGOs, and 12% of active opponents of “controversial” NGOs. **The goal of appropriate communication is to gain the favour of the remaining, i.e. undecided groups.** Usually, however, it is necessary to activate our own supporters and limit the influence of opponents by not strengthening their position by mistake, not giving them a chance to score.

## ○ How to find common ground?

Many authors recognize that **a good campaign or communication should not try to change people first, but:**

- to build on the values and needs of those we want to address
- to support their sense of importance, their self-confidence
- to try to influence primarily their behaviour and not their basic values and stereotypes

**We often do not perceive common values on which to build.** Even people who reject civic engagement do not trust politicians either and want someone

“people, above all, are still not clear about what civil society is”

“the goal of appropriate communication is to gain the favour of the remaining, i.e. undecided groups”

“we often do not perceive common values on which to build”

to watch over them or fight corruption more. And those who feel threatened by minorities and reject tolerance often lack “basic decency” in society or reject violence.

**To build on the society values does not mean compromising what we consider to be right.** The aim should be to find a common denominator. After this “door opening” you can only try to show a new perspective.

## ○ Offer hope

NGOs are full of people who share hope, seek solutions and are optimistic. That is why they point out the problems and negatives in order to solve them. Unfortunately, in communication, they often become those who discourage listeners, instead of inspiring them. The idea of hope-based communication is based on the opposite approach. Quite simply, it's not just about **presenting problems to people, but also inspiring visions of what the world might look like if things work out.**

## ○ Avoid the trap of frameworks and narratives

Non-profit organizations now fit into different frameworks, where they play both positive and negative roles. For active opponents of NGOs, who often associate them with topics such as minority integration and migration, the assessment of non-profits is based on the overall frameworks through which they see the world. It may be, for example, that “the West is corrupt”, “foreign countries want to use us”, “elites sell us whenever”, “social engineering has replaced common sense”, etc. **It is difficult to fight such strong narratives directly, by head-on collision.** It is not realistic to change them quickly. It is more effective to approach them indirectly and gradually replace or disrupt them with other frameworks.

This is because offensive **narratives often act as a trap. When we resist an attack, we often take on the narrative of the other party and actually**

**strengthen it.** Examples of such traps are labels such as “maskers” (as opposed to anti-maskers), “Prague Café” (pejorative sign for undefined group of Prague intellectuals) and “welcomers” (those who welcome migrants). We often adopt the language of populists and demagogues because we do not have our own catchy names.

## ○ Communication is not enough

Communication alone is important, but it is not enough. The most believable communication is that which is based on the very actions of the organization and its overall strategy. For example, the image of a “people-supported organization” cannot be built without trying to involve citizens. We describe various changes in strategy and communication in detail on several examples from the Czech Republic. They are united by the courage to change their established procedures or sub-goals and try to look at the topic differently, even with humour or “non-systemic” simplification.

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# ● What is this handbook for?

The unusual name “navigator” seems to us the most apt for this text. Firstly, because its content is intended for a turbulent atmosphere, in unfavourable times, when representatives of civic organizations, associations and foundations feel pressured by attacks and an uncertain future. At the same time, it is not a simple manual where you can proceed from the first to the last point, but rather a collection of inspirations and a signpost where to go for more information and detailed instructions.

The intention of the project, the result of which is also this publication, was to support the sharing of innovative and positive experience from PR and communication of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs). Especially those involved in promoting systemic change, or advocacy activities, in areas that are not very popular. However, we suspect that the problematic issues described here will be encountered at some point by a large number of NGOs from various places, small and large, professional and volunteer, and not just because part of the public tends to lump all NGOs together. Misinformation and criticism are met to varying degrees by all projects that enter the public debate, and we hope that the experience gained can be valuable to them as well.

However, this is not just another training in communication. If individual organizations better establish relationships with their supporters and others, it will increase **overall confidence in civil society organizations and, as a result, the whole society will benefit from it as well.**



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# ● **Distrustful society**

*How Czechs perceive civil society, non-governmental organizations and what threatens the future*

## ○ **We are not civil society**

As many people to whom this text is addressed confirm, the mood in society regarding democracy, human rights or NGOs has changed significantly over the last ten years. And the sociological data correspond to that to some extent. However, the situation is not a disaster or a revolution. Rather, it is more chaotic and unpredictable than before and brings many new risks. The overall value and political orientation of people is also changing. According to the data, they are becoming more closed, frightened, sceptical and less tolerant. This change is taking place mainly among middle-aged and older people, but it affects the whole society. However, the starting position was not great. As European surveys show, Czechs have previously been among the more conservative and less “public benefit” oriented countries in Europe.

### **Confidence in the non-profit sector also fell.**

Although it is not clear from the data of long-term measurements, what the respondents imagine under the name “non-profit organizations”, confidence in this concept first cooled around 2012 and has been

declining or stagnating since 2016.

This slump stopped before the COVID-19 pandemic, but only in the more economically secure and educated part of society. In the last year, a drop in confidence has affected all public institutions, including NGOs.

### **Critics of NGOs are given much more space in the media and politics.**

It is also related to the transformation of the media, which, in an effort to make them more attractive, more often give way to more radical voices, amplify them and help label and polarize the debate. The breeding ground for radical critics is that the public does not understand the work of NGOs very well, does not understand much of the term “non-profit sector” and also keeps its distance from civic engagement.<sup>1</sup>

Above all, the Czechs are still not clear about what civil society really is and what it brings them. It is then difficult to build support for promoting systemic change and good governance on these weak foundations.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, NGO confidence data come from research for the NeoN project. [Most NGOs in the Czech Republic have more support than they seem to have](#)

## ○ We like NGOs, but ...

The overall mood of society towards non-profit and charitable organizations is not tuned negatively or aggressively. However, the Czech population does not perceive NGOs as a whole and strongly distinguishes NGOs according to the topic they address:

**Most of society value "direct aid" activities** (social, humanitarian, educational and partly environmental NGOs). Active opponents of this subgroup of organizations form a relatively small group.

**However, the name or label “non-profit organization” itself has a relatively large group of opponents.** The group of NGOs, which are dedicated to promoting change through institutions and politicians or to the problems of minorities and foreigners, is also arousing criticism.

At the same time, there are relatively few in society who are willing to speak out in defence of the sector as a whole or in defence of its less popular topics.

## ○ Popularity no one knows about

The popularity of most NGOs is not as low as the attacks show. Some well-known and frequently challenged organizations, such as People in Need, Médecins Sans Frontières, as well as environmental and social assistance organizations, have a high level of trust in surveys. The bigger problem is therefore ignorance and misunderstanding of NGO activities. However, this cannot be interpreted as ignorance of the facts, but rather as a feeling that it is something distant, foreign, and a lack of interest in the subject. As a result, the discussion was dominated by a relatively small group of opponents, who can easily give the impression that something is controversial, unpopular, suspicious and dubious. Confidence is declining because it is difficult to find ways to respond to these demagogic attacks. At the same time, this populism does not only concern NGOs, but any groups that can be easily ostracized. Especially national, ethnic or linguistic minorities.

### Excite the fans, but do not discourage others

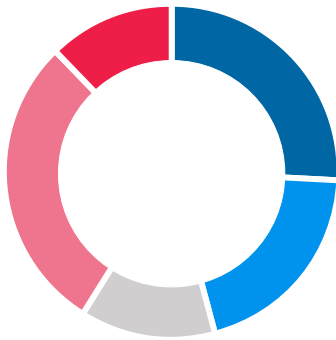
The general way to **prevent further damage to civil society** in the eyes of public by politicians and some media is:

- **to visibly mobilize NGO supporters** (i.e. offer them a way to express their position publicly and strengthen the relationship) so that the sector does not appear less popular than it actually is,
- and at the same time to make the main communication of NGOs **understandable for the socially passive and culturally conservative segments of society**, so that this mobilization can appeal to them.

It should also help to diversify NGO communication according to society segments and NGO topics.



## Segmentation of Czech society according to attitudes towards NGOs



- **26%, Active supporters:** they stand for NGOs in all thematic areas and often contribute.
- **20%, Passive supporters:** positive attitude towards most NGOs (neutral to “political” issues). Passive in contributing and non-financial activity.
- **13%, Alienated:** neutral attitude towards all areas of NGOs. Politically passive, with no interest in social issues.
- **29%, Distinguishing:** they support areas of NGOs selectively. They perceive areas such as foreigners/minorities and politics/state/democracy negatively.
- **12%, Active opponents of modern NGOs:** they do not support any area of NGO functioning. They have a negative attitude towards NGOs in particular in the field of foreigners, politics, but also in the areas of the position of women in society and ecology and the environment.

## ○ We do not feel like citizens

The data confirm the suspicion that has prevailed among NGO experts for a long time, i.e. that Czechs **do not understand civic engagement**. Therefore, the public rejects a number of public appearances of NGOs as too aggressive, it is suspicious of their

dealings with politicians, of protests, demonstrations, etc.

In general, the public does not understand **what “watchdog”, “advocacy activities”, “civic lobbying” is**, how these are needed, and also do not have a clear name for these activities.

However, people negative to NGOs are often **anti-establishment-oriented** (for example, they call more for the fight against corruption, etc.), but they take NGOs as part of elites or establishments (e.g. they have the impression that many NGOs work for state money against the interests of ordinary people). Thus, paradoxically, for example, supporters of “direct democracy” are attacking those who are striving for more political freedom and better enforcement of rights for citizens. Supply does not meet demand. This may be due to a different “language” or style - NGOs usually strive for constructive advocacy, while critical segments of the public often live with the feeling that institutions cannot be improved gradually. The framing of the “elites who betrayed”, which is popular in political discourse today, is thus easily used to criticize NGOs.

## ○ The topic is the basis

Many organizations focus on defending their activities by explaining how their organization works and how it is funded. Research suggests that this may not be effective in addressing critical segments of society in order to improve the image of NGOs. The majority of society is more influenced by the overall framework of public debate and opinion on social issues than by the specific functioning of organizations.

Each topic is differently popular, and organizations can hardly be more popular than their dominant topic. Building a common strategy for NGOs therefore means **creating a strategy for each of the dominant thematic areas**.

## ○ How to take the initiative?

Research shows that **politicians are the strongest source of information** for many critical citizens because they do not have other opinion leaders in this area. There are no strong NGO supporters in politics who have influence at the level of the chairman of a political party. This is understandable - NGOs are often an unpleasant control over their activities.

The likelihood that politicians will change their overall perception is not very high. There is a better chance that they will mobilize on the basis of individual topics (drought, corruption) and not in general for NGOs. But **relationships** built on individual topics can help.

Political debate primarily revolves around simple and often substitute battles. At present, there is a general dispute over “non-profits that take in too much money” or “political non-profits” put forward by NGO critics.

**Offer something else instead of division**  
**It is not realistic to expect substitute disputes over NGOs to go away on their own without being replaced by another dividing line.**

Proponents of NGOs must come up with a different “dispute”, a different framework for the NGO debate that will be strong enough for politicians and the media. Such a “duel” could be, for example, a requirement for citizens to have more rights to control “their” political representatives, to depoliticise public funding for NGOs, to increase transparency in politicians’ grant decisions, or, more appropriately, for greater security in the funding of service NGOs, because NGOs substitute for the state and know the problems at the level of citizens, which can create a completely different view. This new view should draw critics into another debate. None of these requirements will be without controversy and

risk for the recipients of public funds. However, an acceptable risk needs to be taken to prevent greater risks.

The media also prefer to present social problems as a long-term duel of two forces. Unfortunately, **the symbolic battle for NGOs will not disappear even from the media** unless it is replaced by another conflict.

## ○ What will be next?

Weak support for the general idea of NGOs is not a new phenomenon. Critics tend to use the historically insufficient relationship between Czech citizens and engaged organizations.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the economic recession, triggered by the COVID-19 global pandemic, will not favour the positive public perception of many NGOs and the suspicion of “something foreign and elitist” will increase. E.g. environmental NGOs can become a whipping-boy for economic stagnation and unemployment. Confidence in NGOs in the economic crisis between 2008 and 2009 fell sharply, although not as strongly as confidence in international and financial institutions. On the other hand, there is hope that NGOs will seize the opportunity. This will be greater interest of the media and politicians in social issues at a time of economic recovery.

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<sup>2</sup> “Civil society organizations (CSOs) are generally perceived by the general public as unreliable partners who focus on their own problems and ignore the real problems and needs of citizens,” conclude their analysis of data from 2008 and 2010 Navrátil and Pospíšil. They add that this also applies surprisingly to a group that is involved in the activities of some NGOs (contributors, volunteers). NAVRÁTIL, Jiří and POSPÍŠIL Miroslav. Dreams of Civil Society Twenty Years After: The Case of the Czech Republic. In ISTR (International Society for Third Sector Research). Democratization, Marketization, and the Third Sector. Conference Working Papers Series - Volume VIII - Siena, Italy, 2012. Baltimore: ISTR, 2013. 29 p.

# ● How to find common ground?

*A little theory and practice on communication and campaign strategy*

Many people, who have dozens and hundreds of campaigns behind them, successes and failures, are puzzled by the question in the title of the chapter. Many of them have written great guides and run important workshops. It does not make sense to repeat their advice here in detail if you have a chance to read the original sources that we mention in the notes. Please take the following tips as inspiration on all the sources and approaches that exist, how to use them and how to combine them.

Good advice is usually simple and can sometimes sound like banality. It's because they're universal advice. The stumbling block occurs where they are to be put into practice. We often find that practice and theory act as two different worlds, or that we cannot apply important principles in practice because we have to compromise because of money, time, relationships or other constraints.

There is often little room for experimentation in the work of NGOs. We don't want to lose our supporters and we don't have time and money to waste. Therefore, we will now focus mainly on how to apply these general and well-known principles in the Czech context and for the Czech audience. And how to learn from the attempts of others.

## ○ Who to talk to?

A simple equation of communication says that you have to **activate your supporters, neutralize opponents and convince a large enough part of society.**<sup>3</sup>

However, each campaign is different and very different paths can lead to success. A small group of very active supporters is often enough. This Navigator is designed to build trust in a "majority" society. Therefore, we will focus primarily on cases where the intention is to address a large part of society.

Although there it is no rule, most of the so-called polarizing questions divide society less than we think. It is estimated that 60-70% of the public do not have a clear or strong opinion and it is possible to convince them. If we look at the data on the overall perception of NGOs, there are 26% active supporters, and 12% active opponents of "controversial" NGOs. The goal of appropriate communication is to gain the favour of the undecided ones. Usually, however, it is necessary to activate our own supporters and limit the influence of opponents by not strengthening their position by mistake, not giving them a chance to score.

The following principles and examples focus on this group of undecided.

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<sup>3</sup>It is difficult to recommend a comprehensive communication guide. For example, this simple formula comes from a project <https://workingnarratives.org/>

## ○ Don't change people

Many NGO communications are based on the idea that its basis should be persuasion. We, who know how to deal with problems, try to convince those who are not interested, do not understand things and do not want to improve things. Often our dream would be to change these people to think and behave at least a little like us. Unfortunately, this is a long-distance run. So long that it often has no horizon and it looks like we're running a little backwards.

Therefore, the idea that a good campaign or communication should not try to change people can be considered the most important rule.

This means three specific things, which we will introduce one by one:

- to build on the values and needs of those we want to address
- to support their sense of importance, their self-confidence
- to try to influence primarily their behaviour and not their basic values and stereotypes

### **Behaviour or thinking?**

A number of psychological studies show that attitudes change in the opposite direction than we think.<sup>4</sup> More often, we change behaviour first (“we start sorting waste”) and only then we change the image of ourselves (“I behave ecologically”), our identity, rather than the other way around. Therefore, it is better not to try to change somebody's mind, but rather to call for appropriate behaviour.

However, this does not mean succumbing to the prejudices we want to break down in communication. Rather, it is usually not effective to break down these prejudices directly, by frontal impact that triggers self-defence or a strong information filter at the recipient.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Rose summarizes this most thoroughly in his book *How to win campaigns*, which is the source of many of the ideas outlined here. His model is briefly described here, for example [http://www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/VBCOP\\_unifying\\_strategy\\_model.pdf](http://www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/VBCOP_unifying_strategy_model.pdf)

## ○ We are all the same in something

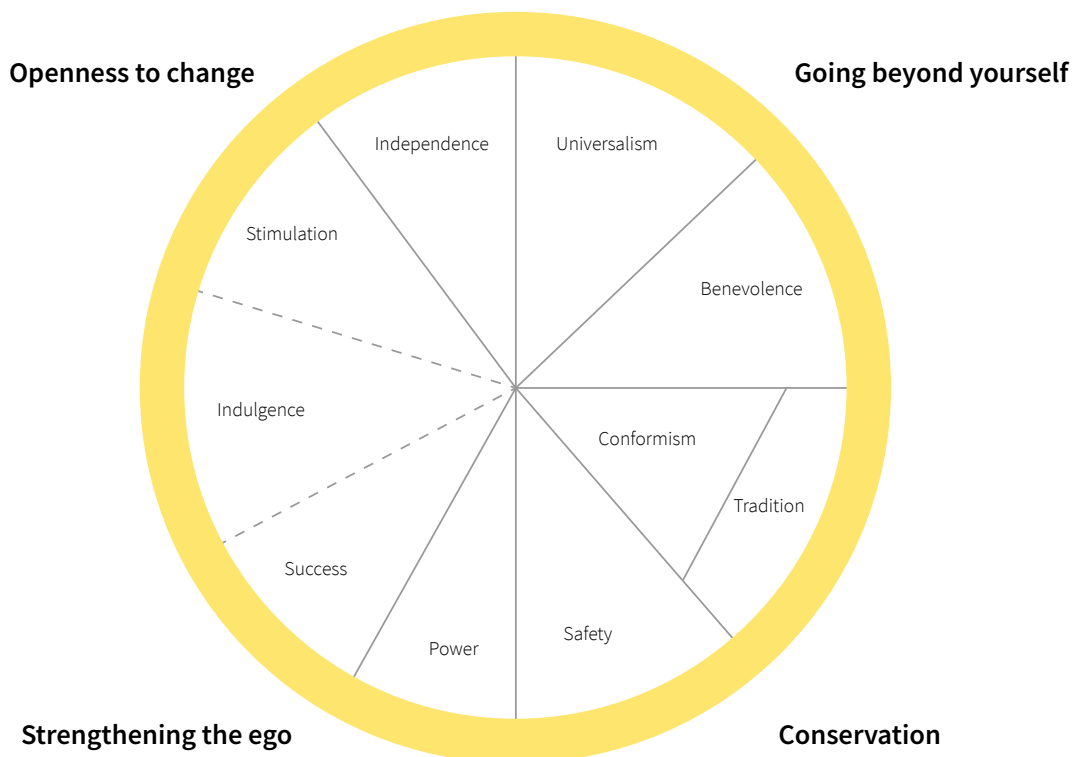
When we focus on our goal (“to achieve change in society”), we usually perceive the different values of our supporters and “the others”. We realize that our core value, on which we build our commitment (such as justice, the need to help others, solidarity), is not so important to others. We feel that society is divided into “us and them”. Incidentally, the same feeling is used for manipulation by populists and demagogues who try to polarize society for their purposes.

At the same time, it is forgotten that most of us also have values in which we are very close (“family protection”, “sense of togetherness”). We can start from these values. It is important to focus not only on the values that we perceive significantly and differently, and which therefore give us an identity.

### Value communication

This method of communication is sometimes called “value-based communication”. An analysis of the values of psychologist Salomon Schwarz, for example, is a useful tool for this<sup>5</sup>. The international research European Social Survey can be used to map these values. Among other things, it shows that people primarily oriented to the “common good” are a small group in the population. Most of us are focused primarily on security, success, adventure, influence, etc.<sup>6</sup>

But it is not necessary to look for a clear list of values and their precise quantification and classification. It is often enough to build on intuition and understanding for others. To talk to a few people in a pub or train station.



<sup>5</sup> <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1116&context=orpc>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

## Smoking destroys beauty

For young people, communication about the harmfulness of smoking has been ineffective for a long time, because when you are a teenager, death or lung cancer is so far away that you feel that you may never even die. For greater effect, several campaigns have focused on what really bothers young people. For example, that smoking is against their main interest - to look good. The campaigns point to bad breath, bad skin and teeth, less chance of getting a girl/boy.

## Conservative refugees

An analysis of European migration campaigns has shown that while critics use value communication heavily, proponents of a balanced migration policy don't do it too much. Rather, they communicate facts and arguments. An example of a fairly successful campaign appealing to values is a series of posters showing immigrants in Austria in the roles of conservative professions such as doctors, fire-fighters, police officers, soldiers, etc. Migration is directly linked to conservative values such as country safety, family protection, dutiful work etc.

## Don't mess with Texas

Perhaps the most well-known use of values in the public campaign is the efforts of the US state of Texas to reduce garbage on highways. The survey found that the waste is most often thrown away by young men between the ages of 18 and 35, who usually do not want a better world, but to be "macho" enough. The slogan "Don't mess with Texas" was emotionally close and stylish for this group and contributed to a significant drop in discarded garbage.

## Collections and traditions

Another way to reach out to conservative citizens who are afraid of the unknown is to combine communication with local traditions. Charity and solidarity have always been part of our culture, for example in the form of carol singers (to which the Three Kings Collection refers, for example), just its external appearance is changing.

Communication based on audience values works because we listen the most to what we think ourselves. In commercial advertising, this approach is called "insight-based". For example, the survey identifies a statement that most people agree with ("debts are to be paid", "honesty is supposed to pay off", "natural is better") and an argument to sell the product is then added to it. The advantage is to have an insight that is not worn down yet, and therefore will interest people.

Building on a society values does not mean compromising what we think is right. Your goal should be to find a common denominator. That is, the values where you, your goals, and your audience meet.

## ○ What will it bring me?

Precisely because “doing the common good” is not the primary value for most people, it is good to explain the benefits of civil society in a language that shows tangible benefits for everyone. Our survey of civil society demonstrates a frequent complaint that NGOs only help a small group of people. It is paradoxical for a sector that strives to be “generally beneficial”. The problem is that what is “good for all” in the work of NGOs is often too abstract for citizens to perceive as “good for me”.

Overcoming this “abstract good” will help if you find groups in society that have a clear interest in making good things work in general. Because we often rely on overly abstract or diffuse naming of benefits for society in communication, it can happen that public opinion is overwhelmed by small and very active groups that are motivated by a strong private interest. And the silent majority remain silent.

### Who minds smoke

This example shows how important it is to properly identify a group that can be most interested in a good idea in general and that can also offer good speakers to the general public. As long as smoking reduction campaigns in Britain focused on general health protection, smoking restrictions in restaurants have not been very successful. The situation has improved when restaurant staff suffering from second-hand smoke have joined the advocacy activities, followed by the trade unions that defend these staff.

## Address pollution

Polluted air in big cities leads to major health problems, and yet it is difficult to persuade the public and politicians to introduce even mild measures. The London campaign Address pollution has “personalized” the effects of pollution and linked them to the importance we attach to housing choices and property prices. Through clever advertising, it led advertising servers to also state a simple scale for housing ads for how dangerous the air is in the locality. The campaign had an impact on legislation and new measures.<sup>7</sup>

## Who makes money on transparency

This is, of course, a provocative question. The whole society earns on the transparency of the state. But even though this is a fairly popular topic, the situation is not improving much in practice. Chambers of foreign investors and companies (especially the American Chamber of Commerce - AmCham) have become one of the drivers of the new Public Procurement Act in the Czech Republic. These companies may be most affected by the risk of corruption because it puts them at a disadvantage against domestic competition. Of course, this is not without the risk that opponents dishonour the pursuit of transparency as something that should help control the Czech economy from abroad. But without business support, the chances of anti-corruption organizations are even lower.

<sup>7</sup> <https://campaignsoftheworld.com/digital/addresspollution-org/>



## ○ No one wants to be lectured

Although it is said that “only fools do not change their mind”, in fact, to admit a mistake, to change one’s view is actually very unpleasant for everyone. It threatens our self-esteem and identity. Whether we like it or not, we take most of the discussions personally.

Therefore, it is better for many people to come up with the wildest conspiracy theory than to compromise their beliefs. Than to say I am wrong about fundamental things. When we convince someone, it is very likely that they perceive us as condescending, that they think we consider them fools.

Communication based on common values is the basis for someone who is sceptical about your intention to listen to you at all<sup>8</sup>.

Although we do not think that we will humiliate someone in communication, it sometimes happens against our will. For example, the common reaction of governments and NGOs to misinformation is to focus on facts, myths and their refutation. According to experience not only from the Czech Republic, the reaction to the facts is often a surprising rejection and aggressive discussion. The other party often perceives the presentation of facts as instructive and paternalistic, as if those addressed were said to be stupid or racist.<sup>9</sup> These reactions lead to many activists closing in on themselves and addressing only the already convinced.

## ○ Nobody wants to lose

Although this does not seem so from the endless streams of swearing and complaints in the media and on social media, people are not really essentially focused on the negative experience of the world. On the contrary, they want to win, be well, look good, be loved, etc. And they hope that it will turn out well for them. According to statistics, even coldly pragmatic stock market traders are exaggerating optimism about stock developments.<sup>10</sup>

NGOs are full of people who share hope, seek solutions and are optimistic. That is why they point out the problems and negatives in order to solve them. Unfortunately, in communication, they often become those who discourage listeners, instead of inspiring them. The idea of hope-based communication is based on the opposite approach<sup>11</sup>. Quite simply, it’s not just about presenting problems to people, but also inspiring visions of what the world might look like if things work out.

There are two practical obstacles to this approach. First of all, we have a problem with “brighter tomorrows” in the Czech Republic in general since the days of building socialism, and the Czechs are characterized by unprecedented scepticism. Although in the international comparison of sociological surveys we are not so different, for example, from the French or Italians.<sup>12</sup> Second, scandal, injustice, or crisis is a moment that activates supporters and creates story and interest. Positive news often fades.

The best approach seems to be to use both sides of the matter, both problem and solution. To arouse indignation at the situation, but never forget the need to show strength, confidence, victory, hope or a way to win.

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<sup>8</sup> The feeling of recognition is the strongest human motivation. Let’s leave aside the debate about different needs, their hierarchy, etc. What most often drives us forward is recognition from family, colleagues, friends and society. Military units and social media are based on this.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2014/03/Fair-deal-on-migration\\_Mar2013\\_11970.pdf](https://www.ippr.org/files/images/media/files/publication/2014/03/Fair-deal-on-migration_Mar2013_11970.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Taleb, Nassim Nicholas (2007). The black swan : the impact of the highly improbable. New York :Random House

<sup>11</sup> It is definitely not the only project, but this one is probably most focused on positive communication <https://www.hope-based.com/>

<sup>12</sup> A comparison can be found, for example, in the regular Eurobarometer. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home>



## Hope-based communication

We will borrow these examples from the Hope-based communication project. They also demonstrate that showing the positive does not mean covering up the negative. Amnesty International has found that the public understandably associates only negative things with human rights, such as victims, violations of rights, and imprisonment. On the contrary, it tried to show in its communication cases where it managed to win a trial, where people celebrate free elections, newly acquired rights, etc. Human rights activists are in fact often very optimistic people with great internal energy, and the campaign better showed this side of their personality.<sup>13</sup>

## The Czechs are helping Syrian refugees

The Czechs are helping Syrian refugees. Don't you believe? Director Jan Látal's documentary spot<sup>14</sup> showed with a hidden camera that even though the internet is full of hateful comments, ordinary citizens help families on the run when they meet them in person. The good in us is better supported by communication that shows that helping is normal and common, than criticism that we don't help enough. The principle of positive pressure of the majority is used on both public transport signs ("Most people do not drive illegally") and, for example, in the name of the "Czechs help" campaign. A similar and appropriate approach was chosen by People in Need campaign, where it thanked the Czechs for development and humanitarian aid on billboards. (However, its disadvantage was that it divided the message into two phases that people did not connect, which turned out to be a fundamental mistake in the overall impression and impact of the campaign.)

## The Tap Tap band

Projects for people with disabilities can show obstacles, but also unprecedented talent and benefits of disability. Examples are The Tap Tap band, Children of the Full Moon document and others. In general, this sector abandoned presentation of the people with disabilities only as victims. And not only because of the disadvantaged people themselves, but also because it is not the most effective communication.

## ○ Trendy words “narrative” and “framework”

When discussing a case, when it comes to words such as “narratives” and “frameworks”, it is clear that the solution will not be easy. This is the most “esoteric” part of communication. Although it is very important, it is not at all easy to grasp it practically. There are entire libraries of literature about narratives and frameworks. Here we will try to look at them as practically as possible.

The basis of this view of public opinion is the assumption that we always perceive the information that comes to us through some stable “framework”<sup>15</sup>. In other words, a filter, a stereotype or a world view. When the information fits into the framework, we notice it, when it does not fit into it, we tend to ignore it. We interpret unclear events according to the framework.

Examples of frameworks that civil society faces are, for example, the view that debts are always to be paid, that those who do not want mainly to earn money are suspicious, that the West always deceives us, that Muslims are aggressive and primitive, that all politicians steal, etc.

<sup>13</sup> <https://youtu.be/qiN44jElqAI>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5jdi0r18P4>

<sup>15</sup> One of the most influential definitions comes from the sociologist Goffman. According to him, a framework is an interpretive scheme that allows a person to perceive, identify, define and name an infinite number of individual phenomena, which he/she defines in terms of this framework. Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.

Frameworks have different abstractness and strengths. From common positive and negative stereotypes (“doctors are honest”, “Roma don’t work”) to meta-frameworks (“the average person is not thought of, everyone else has benefits”), which bring many different stereotypes together and make a more comprehensive story about who we are, where we go, what is wrong and who is to blame.

These frameworks often take the form of stories, or simple “explanations” of what is happening in the world. And here we can no longer avoid the word narrative. If the narrative is to be convincing, it must

include: what the problem is, what caused it, who is to blame, who sees it correctly (who is the positive hero) and how it should be addressed. Such a narrative can be both negative “we have small salaries, because our politicians have sold all the factories abroad, as politician XY says, we should nationalize it again and expel investors”, and positive and constructive (“we are doing well because we have handy Czech hands and if dumb-heads didn’t rule us, we would have been the best in the world for a long time”).

## Frameworks not suitable for civil society

What meta-frameworks or meta-narratives look like in the sceptical part of society is not described and quantified in detail. But we can deduce that the advantage for NGOs was that one of the main frameworks of the 1990s was the belief that we must catch up with the West and that everything in the West is rather good, or that we must leave everything to the market and freedom. These frameworks were so strong that they temporarily overpowered the fact that the market was distorted by state intervention and corruption, that competition was often unfair, that the functioning of justice and judiciary was neglected, etc. The first frameworks were also exhausted by the fact that many dreams eventually hit reality. Many people have been disillusioned that everything from abroad is suspicious, that everyone steals, that everyone has to fight only for themselves. Although only ten to twenty percent of society firmly believe this, it can influence a lot of indecisive neighbours and acquaintances. Especially if they are heard more in public.

Although the frameworks and narratives are vague and difficult to grasp, repeated empirical studies show that they do have a strong impact on our perceptions and, consequently, on our decisions.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Empirical studies have repeatedly shown that frameworks have the ability to keep the topic in the public awareness, to influence political decisions and how the topic is viewed. See Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1984). Choices, values, and frames. *American Psychologist*, 39(4), 341–350. Nebo Price, V., & Tewksbury, D. (1997). News values and public opinion: A theoretical account of media priming and framing. In G. Barnett & F. J. Boster (Eds.), *Progress in the communication sciences* (pp. 173-212). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.

## ○ There are no small frameworks

It is difficult to describe how such a framework or narrative generally looks like, how to recognize it when you encounter it, and how to identify what a framework is not. It can be said with certainty that the framework always presents the world as two poles (good and bad, ours and theirs, traditional and disruptive, etc.), resists the facts and helps us to orient ourselves in the world and information.

The problem is that there are a lot of small and big frameworks in society. People are often confronted with frameworks that can even contradict each other in specific situations. For example, when dealing with debt relief and the powers of executors, the stereotypes “we must be strict on debtors” and at the same time “executors are immoral bullies” collide. It always depends on which framework a person or society is most likely to use when a new reality comes up. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we often saw the “Chinese are uncivilized, that is why they caused a pandemic” framework, which, even under pressure from events and influential opinion makers, overpowered the “West is weak and chaotic, China can get things right” framework.

It is important that we approach phenomena according to the framework with which we connect them the most. Non-profit organizations now fit into different frameworks, where they play both positive and negative roles. For active opponents, who often associate NGOs with the issue of foreigners, minorities and migration, the assessment of non-profits is often based on the overall frameworks through which they see the world. It may be, for example, that “the West is corrupt”, “foreign countries want to use us”, “elites sell us whenever”, “social engineering has replaced common sense”, etc.

For the sake of simplicity, we will continue to inaccurately call narratives and frameworks only narratives so that we do not get lost in it.

### Narratives from the migration debate in Germany

As an example from research in Germany shows, it is best to try to identify narratives empirically on the basis of a qualitative and quantitative probe. It turns out that there are many frameworks and some overlap and combine, some are marginal.<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Source: <http://www.narrativechange.org/toolkit/01-understanding-power-frames>

## ○ Narrative as a trap

Why are frameworks and narratives so much talked about? Because when you look at public debate through the lens of narratives, it changes your approach to that debate. It is difficult to fight strong narratives directly, by head-on collision, or to change them quickly. It is more effective to approach them indirectly and gradually replace or disrupt them.

This is because narratives often act as a trap. When we resist an attack, we often take on the narrative of the other party and actually strengthen it. This can be clearly seen in the debates, which will gradually shrink to labelling. When the label catches on, it is difficult to escape it. Examples are “maskers” (as opposed to anti-maskers), “Prague Café” (pejorative sign for undefined group of Prague intellectuals) and “welcomers” (those who welcome migrants). We often adopt the language of populists and demagogues because we do not have our own catchy names. And we don’t have them, because we don’t want to put people in a box.

## ○ Three paths that lead around

**How to react to a negative narrative? In practice, this means either:**

- adapting to it, but breaking away from its negative effects
- or finding another, more advantageous narrative that your audience trusts
- or building competition to the current narrative, a story that explains things differently and may gradually become dominant for the public

*These procedures intersect in practice and therefore their division into three groups is rather for the sake of clarity.*

### **a) To change your “brand” or main message to fit the right side of the narrative**

This approach is almost impossible if you are already

put in a box in the minds of people. “Reversing polarity”, i.e. moving from the category of the bad to the good, can only be made through cosmetic, language-level or strategic changes. If “non-profits” are considered by some people as a “foreign or unnatural element”, it is possible to emphasize that they are more of an association of volunteers, i.e. something more traditional, “more natural”.

If the main framework of critics is “environmentalists complicate our economic development with nonsense”, then it is possible to focus on “green jobs”, “green business” or “green savings”. If climate activists are blamed for “protecting nature at the expense of people”, you can oppose with “protecting the future of our children, families” etc.

There is always the question of how much it will be believable and effective. One of the founding fathers of the theory of frameworks and narratives even claims that it is counter-productive.<sup>18</sup> According to him, this still strengthens the strength of the framework brought by opponents (e.g. nature versus economy), even though you want to overcome it. However, our experience shows that sometimes there is no other way just because of how little communication power NGOs have.

### **Not (eco)logical**

An interesting example of the dynamics and variability of narratives in the Czech Republic are renewable energy sources (RES) and electric vehicles (EV). At a time when the public no longer considered climate measures unnecessary, opponents focused on the fact that RES and EV were “illogical and dysfunctional nonsense”, although green technologies are often much more efficient and logical. “Proven and working against the illogical and nonsensical” is a new framework that moves the debate elsewhere and requires new responses. This does not necessarily mean that advocates of EV or RES could or should have acted differently, only that there is a need for a flexible response to how narratives change and shift.

<sup>18</sup> George Lakoff, Political mind. Lakoff cites as an example that American Democrats should not use intimidation through war and violence, because the Republican Party will always benefit from this. We saw the consequences of the prevailing safety framework vs. tolerance in the USA in the election of President Donald Trump.

## **b) to replace the toxic narrative with another that the target group already shares and make it more important to the audience**

This means basing what you do on stereotypes that the public understands more. For example, we see that people who reject civic engagement, on the other hand, do not trust politicians and want a greater fight against corruption. Thus, instead of “non-profits get involved in politics because they want power”, advocacy can be presented as “non-profits guard politicians because politicians cannot be blindly trusted.” (Of course, it’s not enough to just change promotional materials to make it a broad view.)

People who feel threatened by minorities and reject tolerance often lack decency in society or reject violence. Thus, the initiative to protect minorities from racist attacks can be re-framed into a campaign against street violence so that it addresses even those we would not otherwise be able to reach, or at least weakens their criticism. And we are moving from the tolerance value to the safety value. And, of course, it is necessary to consider carefully whether this will have negative consequences for the matter itself. It is ideal if activities and campaigns based on both values (tolerance and violence) coexist in society and they complement each other.

## **c) to strengthen or create a competitive narrative that eliminates the toxic one**

This is a similar situation to the previous point. The difference is that narratives more explicitly exclude each other and there is a need to work more on this “competitive” view.

### **Who takes our freedom?**

Examples are the narratives “West/EU take our freedom” and “non-democratic countries (Russia, China) are trying to control us”. So it is the same value (freedom), but in each narrative, someone else is to blame for it. In the second

story, we do not say explicitly that the EU no longer deprives us of freedom, but attention shifts elsewhere, the story has a different culprit, different heroes.

A similar shift in narratives has taken place since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. China was first perceived as the culprit, and later the West became an incompetent cause of the problem in the eyes of the public, overshadowing and obscuring China’s role. China’s own disinformation activities have contributed significantly to this.

Another example is the “end of cheap work” campaign, which has replaced the “free market will solve everything” framework for part of the public. Although the question is to what extent these frameworks exclude each other or just pass each other.

## **The culprit**

It is important to realize that society is naturally looking for the culprit for the various fictitious and real hardships it perceives. Populist politicians are adept at offering a culprit who is external and remote, thus unable to defend itself (typically any minorities, elites, foreigners and the like). Unless we offer the public another explanation of who is responsible for their situation (unfortunately they are often political leaders, bureaucracies, but sometimes globalization or a weak state, for example), it is difficult to meet this natural need.

In practice, it is quite demanding and it requires a large “quantity” of communication. The previous example shows how slowly these views change. Although neither Russia nor China is popular with citizens, Eurosceptics still do not consider them a threat. The downside may be that the competitive narrative is negative, not positive.

## ○ Enter the open door

From the above, it might seem that the key to success is to say something different than I think. But it is not so. The key is to find common ground so that some communication can take place at all. The basis of communication and cooperation is to establish at least minimal contact. If you manage to have someone listen to you, you can start explaining your intention. It is not a pretence, but an opening of a door. The Narrative change<sup>19</sup> manual recommends practical steps to work with narratives in a campaign.

### **a) Focus on citizens who can be persuaded and their frameworks/narratives**

An estimated 15% of citizens have a clear view on either side of a social dispute. 60-70% do not have a clear opinion on most things and lean towards the opinions of people around them or opinion leaders who are louder. Even among the remaining 15%, there are a large number of people who have only clear emotions, not a developed set of arguments. Not even in such long-established divisions of society as the relationship with the European Union, the inclination to the East or the West, or in revolutionary events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The indecisive group (movable middle) is usually not very different from the “average” citizen, does not follow any specific media and has no specific prejudices. Of course, it is more efficient to further divide this group according to the interests, values and relationship to your topic, but it is not necessary.

### **b) Find positive values that can be built on**

Research, interviews, or just doing a joint exercise to map the values and connect them into thematic clusters can help you with this. If we can believe the movie narrative, all the strategist of the Brexit campaign had to do was go to the pub a few times and chat with regulars.

<sup>19</sup> <https://narrativechange.org/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.narrativechange.org/toolkit/step-1-finding-focus-and-opening>

### **c) Focus on what your intention has to do with these values**

While it may seem that such an overlap cannot be found, it usually does exist.

### **d) Find a good start and an opportunity to address this undecided group**

It can be a cultural event, a nationally significant day, an entertaining video, but also some public proposal for politicians, etc. It should be a very “low-threshold” start, where no one feels part of the political struggle. The undecided group should take note of your message, which should include the positive side and the solution, not just the problems.

### **e) Identify clear goals<sup>20</sup> you want to achieve**

Part of this goal should be the fact that through action or another element, people not only establish themselves in their stereotype, but discover a new perspective. This is how public benefit communication differs from regular advertising. This “ending” is as important as breaking the ice and starting a dialogue.



# ○ Narrative is not just about communication

Although we have talked about communication so far, we have kept one unpleasant truth from you. Communication alone is important, but it is not enough. The most believable communication is that which is based on the very actions of the organization and its overall strategy. For example, the image of a “people’s organization” cannot be built without trying to involve citizens.

## Narrow your goal

The topic of executions is crucial for the Czech Republic, but in practice it is only slowly changing. It turns out that it is not enough just to draw attention to iniquities and demand a comprehensive reform. This is probably because the topic is too complex for the average voter and a small percentage of people whose voice is lost in the face of powerful business interests have a personal negative experience. Activists have therefore had success with “side streets”, whether it was the predator loan rankings of People in Need which brought companies and their need to look better into play, the Execution map of Radek Hábl and Open Society, or the campaign to abolish executions imposed on minors.

## Corruption reconstruction

Undoubtedly an interesting example is the Reconstruction of the State platform, which largely redraws the functioning of anti-corruption organizations in the Czech Republic. Although not without controversy and negatives, it brought several new moments of operation, active pressure on politicians through advertising and during election, the

involvement of volunteers in communicating with politicians, building a broad coalition for a list of proposals that was much more detailed than before (and on which the parliamentary commitment was based). All this required not only a change in communication, but a change in the functioning of many organizations.

The JustLab Center, which has prepared a handbook for the coalition of human rights organizations for dealing with populist attacks<sup>21</sup>, divides strategic changes in organizations into three areas:

### 1. Community

to build “member” organizations, i.e. a network of small supporters (not necessarily financial) who feel involved in decision-making and processes, who spread information, act as ambassadors of the topic, but also send suggestions and feedback, etc. A practical manual on how the non-profit organizations can systematically build a circle of their supporters was published by the OSF Foundation.

### 2. Cooperation

to involve other and maybe non-traditional players in the campaign, such as pubs, interest groups, leisure organizations, but also companies, municipalities, etc.

### 3. Cultural or entertainment elements

to communicate through popular arts and entertainment so that the people of the silent majority are not afraid to join and not only feel the negative emotions associated with political struggles. This can take the form of various roadshows, sports matches, concerts, exhibitions, but also the renewal of traditions, monuments, etc.

<sup>21</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5adfc952ec4eb743393ebbbd/t/5dd02977b9f8cf5cdf663572/1573923264828/BeTheNarrative\\_2019.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5adfc952ec4eb743393ebbbd/t/5dd02977b9f8cf5cdf663572/1573923264828/BeTheNarrative_2019.pdf)

# ● Examples of Czech campaigns

As the content of this Navigator is primarily the translation of theory into practice, we will try to show the general principles on detailed examples of Czech campaigns. We chose these campaigns mainly from those in which one of the team of authors and collaborators participated. Sure, there are a number of better and more successful campaigns, but the aim was not to offer a “best of”, but examples on which important detail can be shown and the pros and cons can be carefully considered. We would be happy if you send us tips on other examples that illustrate the above principles, and thus help us to expand and further illustrate the Navigator.

## ○ This is a real scandal

Topic: Child executions

### ⊗ Problem

For a long time, Czech society was plagued by a wild system of executions, which put a large part of the population in a debt trap and did not let them out. This is slowly improving. But the changes are still quite partial and quite slow. Unfortunately, the public does not understand the issue and can easily be influenced. There are two views that collide in the society - “we must be strict on debtors” and “executors or lenders are off the leash”. Thanks to half-truths and manipulations, politicians manage to emphasize the first sight at the expense of the second one.

### 🗒️ Need and values

While we do not have much sympathy for debtors in general, because living on debt is traditionally seen as risky and profligate, children who are not responsible for their debts are innocent victims whom society sympathizes with without any doubt.

### 📄 Tactics

Thousands of children are facing executions in the Czech Republic. Together, the organizations have set themselves an ambitious goal - to amend the Civil Code.

Within a limited budget, a communication strategy based on a strong and emotional message was created for People in Need. The campaign was launched before the drafting of the amendment and the typical property that children have - toys - became its symbol. In the case of the campaign, the toys that were confiscated. With this symbol, the campaign took to the streets of cities and shopping centres throughout the Czech Republic, negotiated the support of major media houses and involved well-known influencers. The importance of the topic was supported by the fact that each confiscated toy had its own real story.

### 📄 Results

In addition to the great media interest, the campaign succeeded in making a group of deputies across political parties who prepared an amendment to



the Civil Code concerning liability for debts and faster debt relief for children. It was approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. No one voted against or abstained from voting.

## Discussion

The campaign is interesting because it narrows the goal of advocacy to what can be more easily achieved. Sometimes you need to temporarily reduce your efforts to what is really scandalous, where it is difficult to disagree with your arguments.

Therefore, in this campaign, we are primarily interested in the question of whether it is right to temporarily limit our goals to the “most striking” part of the problem and the “easier” requirement. Will it work for us? In our opinion, it is also effective in the long run, but unfortunately there are no numbers or arguments from this campaign with which we could prove it.

According to Martin Kovalčík, who led the campaign, the discussion on the topic of children’s executions had a great impact on the overall atmosphere, and this contributed to things starting to change. The information reached the deputies, no one was willing to go against the campaign. While it is completely different with other topics, there was great media interest and public opinion was clearly on the side of NGOs. This could help the overall problem of debt relief, especially if they were a lesser-known organization than People in Need. Although they reached a new audience and new partners, they did not perceive such a change that would affect the overall perception of the issue of executions. On the other hand, no data are available for this claim, because the public’s relationship to the topic is not repeatedly monitored over time. After the success with children’s executions, there have been several attempts to change the issue of debt relief and executions in legislation, and these have been partially successful. So at least it is clear that this sub-campaign would not block further changes.

## Ecology for sceptics

Topic: Coal burning

## Problem

Environmental organizations have long struggled with the fact that Czechs like to protect nature, but global environmental problems are often too remote for them. Climate change is not a topic that would massively infuriate them. That is why, for example, they are not very interested in shutting down coal power plants or in renewables - two measures that can mitigate climate change.

The Czechs are afraid of the proposed measures, renewable resources, rising prices and job losses. They perceive the limitation or closure of coal power plants as a hazard with the Czech Republic’s energy dependence and as a step that cannot help the world too much and is not important. They are not very aware of the negative effects of coal power plants, both on the climate and on health and the landscape. What strategies does an organization like Greenpeace choose? In addition to normal activities, it also tries to find an interesting detour. It often chooses the following strategies:

- To talk to people who already know the organization through another topic. For example, the topic of the flooding of nature with plastics, which annoys even sceptical Czechs who distrust NGOs.
- To approach the conservative target group through communication - for example through comedy.
- To focus on values other than caring for the planet, such as family, and the immediate health impacts of burning coal on it.

Example of a new form of addressing

## Miners at home office

### Campaign goals:

Gain broad public support for the termination of coal mining in the Czech Republic.

### Need and values

Naturally, most people do not want to be constantly confronted with problems that occur almost constantly in our world. We have enough of our own problems and we want to relax and laugh after a whole day of hard work, not educating ourselves by absorbing new facts. The comedic and entertaining form is thus much more digestible for us.

### Tactics

The Greenpeace campaign started with a 17-minute video about the miners, whom their boss unexpectedly sent to the home office one day. The absurd story of how they cope with this new reality is based on admitted exaggeration from the very beginning. The comedy genre deals with a traditionally serious topic, without heavy persuasive arguments, facts and figures. In addition, the story ends with a happy ending (miners find another and even better job) and thus lacks the usual catastrophic visions of the negative effects of human activity on the environment.

### Results

The video had ten times the reach of Greenpeace videos on average. More than 250,000 users watched most of the video. The biggest change compared to the audience, which Greenpeace normally manages to reach, was the greater reach of men - usually 60-80% of followers are women, while in this campaign, 77% of the followers were men. Older age groups and other regions were also reached - the highest number of views was in the Moravian-Silesian region - traditionally associated with mining, not in Prague as in the case of all other Greenpeace campaigns.

Example of focusing on other values

## You won't run away from coal

### Campaign goals:

To obtain supporters for the closure of the Chvaletice coal power plant. To reach a wide target group.

### The needs of the undecided audience

Czechs value the Czech landscape and nature and are willing to get involved in terms of pollution and threats to nature or health. Above all, the health of the family is a great motivation.

### Tactics

This Greenpeace campaign is about health protection. Of all the messages, the main emphasis was on how air is polluted in the Czech Republic and how it shortens the lives of its citizens. The creative part of the campaign focused on the visualization of "pollution" in the form of ubiquitous smoke in situations that are emotional for representatives of young families from higher income groups: running, swimming, children's sports, trips to the countryside. The main motto was "You won't run away from coal".<sup>22</sup>

### Results

The campaign did not achieve above-average results compared to other Greenpeace campaigns, but according to the campaigners, it wasn't caused so much by the poor focus of the campaign, but rather by its elaboration.

### Discussion

Protecting nature and the planet is a tricky topic. Sometimes it absolutely thrills the public, other times it is impossible to explain it for a long time and it comes across a lot of myths. And that's quite frustrating. Many examples show that materializing the problem, narrowing it down, but also a certain

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynC2bedjs2A>

positive and confident tonality help. However, this is not a complete novelty. The events of environmental organizations often rely on a combination of interesting experience, community, adrenaline, creativity and, of course, interest in the cause.

An important element that environmental organizations try to include in reaching out to the audience is to offer solutions, instead of just talking about problems and situations that seem hopeless to many people. These campaigns do not fully fulfil this, but at the same time they are not only apocalyptic.

## Who cares about poor countries?

Topic: Development cooperation

We chose the Diaconia ECCB campaign because thanks to it we had the opportunity to directly monitor empirically and experimentally who responds positively to the messages on development cooperation.

### Goals:

Awareness-raising in the field of development aid for the “undecided middle”, i.e. people who do not express themselves much on this issue and do not have a strong opinion. The long-term campaign includes information materials, workshops and an educational video for the general public.

## Problem

Development cooperation is a very complex and distant topic for citizens if it is not presented as immediate humanitarian aid in disasters. It is difficult to gain interest in this topic and explain that it benefits not only the final beneficiaries, but the overall situation in the world as well, and how it relates to us in the Czech Republic. Critics and sceptics often denigrate development cooperation with attacks “why don’t you help at home?”

## Need and values

Today, we forget how interconnected the world is

and that mainly we, the people in rich parts of the world, benefit from this interconnection. We are a little afraid of this dependence and at the same time it inspires us a bit, because despite a closed nature, we like exotic things (travelling, gastronomy).

## Tactics

To show that development aid brings something to everyone, but not to reduce it only to prevent problems (such as migration). The way was found through the food. The central creative message is the spot, which shows an ordinary Czech who consumes chilli peppers grown in a poor country where a development organization operates. Part of the video’s distribution was experimenting with the different target groups that the video focused on.

## Results

The organization rated the video as successful. It worked the most on YouTube, it also achieved good numbers on Facebook, Instagram was the least effective. The target group on YouTube called “news readers”, i.e. people with an interest in politics, was the most successful, then a group related to religion on Facebook. On Instagram, it was a group with an interest in ecology. Interestingly, the results did not differ much according to age (it was limited to 25-55 years) and gender.

Most of the video was seen by 160,000 viewers, out of 900,000 addressed. Thanks to targeting the number of video views (not the number of responses), Facebook selected people whose comments did not contain extreme responses as an audience. This is an important fact: Facebook algorithms are set up so that in paid advertising, they can more often target people who are actively commenting and therefore have a strong opinion. This again distorts how we perceive society.

## Discussion

The experience from a small part of the campaign shows what possibilities and at the same time obstacles the targeting of communication through social media gives. With paid promotion, you can target people who are potentially inclined to your message quite well, even if they are not fans of your organization or NGOs in general. And according to

statistics, for example, on Facebook, there are quite a few of these people. On the other hand, these statistics and descriptions of target groups are intentionally very superficial, so much of the work still depends on intuition and the trial-and-error method. It also shows how to fit the line between thinking about our own interests as well as the interests of people in poorer countries.

On the other hand, it is good to add that doing only awareness-raising campaigns today that do not try to continue working with the respondents is a bit of a luxury. The campaign has a number of activities, but has not sought to take advantage of what digital advertising has to offer. Information overload means that for real education, the audience needs to be addressed repeatedly with the same message, or involved in some way interactively. Likewise, the campaign unfortunately did not have the capacity to follow more what people did in response to the campaign. What time did they spend on the website, or what else interested them.

## **System change even outside the system**

Topic: foster care and institutional care

The campaign is interesting because, in order to achieve systemic change, it first focuses on the necessary conditions for change and on building a base of supporters.

### **Problem**

The Czech Republic is the only EU country that places small children in institutions and generally makes little use of foster care and prevention of family problems. At the same time, the abolition of infant institutions does not have much support, because it creates a feeling of insecurity and encounters distrust of foster parents. These attitudes have a strong lobby among politicians, doctors, etc. Those who seek reform are portrayed as extremists and experimenters. This is despite the fact that the search for alternatives to institutions has a tradition of over half a century in our country.

### **Need and values**

When someone takes care of children, it's great. Children need a family and belong to it. Everyone agrees on this, including those who support the staff of infant institutions.

### **Tactics**

Instead of just fighting directly for systemic change, Good start organization embarked on the "Thanks to foster care" campaign, which primarily improved the image of temporary foster parents and sought those interested in foster care. By sharing positive stories from families, it was possible to create an atmosphere of hope and understanding that gained many supporters and followers.

### **Results**

This low-threshold activity has managed to attract a large number of supportive audiences, including politicians and celebrities, for the controversial topic. Even in communication with them, it was clear that "abolishing infant institutions" was too radical a measure for them, on which they did not yet have a clear opinion. But foster care support is acceptable, it opens up and brings this topic closer to them.

The campaign was a media success. Above all, sharing the stories of parents and children worked. On the other hand, the spots did not have such an effect. Two ministries supported banning the placement of healthy children in infant institutions, and the draft changes were forwarded to the Chamber of Deputies for discussion.

### **Discussion**

The campaign confirmed that human stories are more important to the public than systemic change. Trying for the second without the first is very challenging. The campaign could make more use of its popularity by visibly binding politicians in advance to support foster care, thus relieving them of some of the fears and misunderstandings for systemic change. On the other hand, it is understandable that any public affiliation with politicians is not without controversy and organizations prefer to avoid it.

# ● Don't be afraid and learn

This text is hopefully full of conclusions. Making one big conclusion from them will always be too simplistic. So let's try to look at the content from another angle.

What connects the different stories described? For example the fact that **if “it” doesn't work one way, you have to try other ways**. An active civil society should be tolerant and open even to itself. So that NGOs are not afraid to experiment, so that different attempts can be made side by side to address similar goals. But at the same time, it is good to map this creative chaos well and **have good data, without which it is difficult to learn and move on**.

When one tries to address the general public, it often means walking on the thin line between what one would like to achieve in an ideal world and what is attractive to the public. Such a situation presents an unpleasant dilemma for many people. They feel that they are doing something they do not fully believe. Hopefully, we have been able to outline in this text that this unpleasant feeling can often be given by boxes imposed on us by someone else. **That it is not good to imagine in advance that our efforts are actually without a chance, but on the contrary, it is good not to be afraid to choose the battles that can be won. And at the same time, not to lose sight of the overall goal.**

This text was intended to show that some dilemmas stem from the fact that we each use different words for things, that we are based on different stereotypes, even though we agree on specific steps more often than we expect. It is not good to underestimate the division of society or polarization, nor to overestimate it. Interesting research on data about American society has shown that, on the one hand, supporters of one political party believe that their opponents from the other political party are radical, on the other hand, in their attitudes to public affairs, both groups are more similar than they think.<sup>23</sup>

Those who differ in their attitudes according to the data are politically active people, people who are actively interested in things, on both sides of the imaginary barricade. This is a small percentage of society, but with a big impact on how we perceive it. When we come out of these small groups, we will probably see things differently.

This is not to say that different values do not exist and that inequality or injustice takes place only on a symbolic level. On the contrary, symbolic battles often obscure real problems.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/20/opinion/polarization-politics-americans.html>

# the way to the **SCEPTIC PUBLIC**

## **HOW NOT TO CLOSE THE DOORS FOR YOURSELF**

- **AM I TRYING TO CHANGE PEOPLE?**

It is easier to change people's behaviour and their thinking based on it than vice versa. When you are trying to change their thinking straight away, prepare for a very long journey.

- **AM I ALSO AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE TOPIC?**

If you don't want to talk only to experts, it's better to reach out to others with entertaining or non-political content or an interesting experience.

- **DO I LECTURE OTHERS?**

No one wants to be considered a fool. The important thing is not to blame people for what they think.

## **HOW TO GET SOMEBODY INTERESTED**

- **DO YOU KNOW THE VALUES OF THE UNDECIDED?**

When you start from what is important for the hesitant majority, you will be better off communicating on an emotional level.

- **WHAT'S IN FOR THEM?**

The common good is often too general. Try to imagine what the addressed people will specifically get for themselves.

- **DO I (ALSO) SHOW POSITIVE EMOTIONS?**

No one wants to lose forever. In addition to problems, there is a need to show hope.

## **HOW TO SCORE, BUT NOT AN OWN GOAL**

- **DON'T I FALL INTO A TRAP?**

By only responding to the views of your opponents, you can enhance their worldview, even as you try to disprove it.

- **DO I ALSO HAVE A GOAL WHERE I CAN WIN?**

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. But your supporters will be strengthened more by at least some winnings.

## **HOW NOT TO FALL INTO OBLIVION**

- **DO I GIVE A CHANCE TO THE SUPPORTERS?**

Even if there is no time for that, it is good to give people the voice and the space to really get involved.

- **AM I LOOKING FOR AN ALLY?**

Interesting allies are often a prerequisite for success.

- **DO I USE STORIES?**

Unfortunately, numbers, arguments, paragraphs and brochures do not win in a public debate unless they are united by a simple, interesting and believable story.

- **AM I TRYING AND TESTING?**

If you're worried if your idea isn't exaggerated, you should give it a try.

# Useful sources

Summary of research on the perception of non-governmental non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic 2019/2020 for the NeoN platform

[https://www.glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1287/english\\_version\\_of\\_summary\\_of\\_neon\\_research-1.pdf](https://www.glopolis.org/site/assets/files/1287/english_version_of_summary_of_neon_research-1.pdf)

Hope-based communication: a positive approach to communication based on hope for promoting social change

<https://www.hope-based.com/about>

A guide to effective narrative changes in the field of human rights

<https://www.justlabs.org/be-the-narrative>

Signpost of tools and instructions on how to change frameworks for communicating social topics (contains a set of tools for various topics)

<https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>

Inspiration and resources to harness the power of narratives and stories to build communities or fight injustice

<https://workingnarratives.org/>

How to win campaigns: a guide for strategic campaign management

<http://www.campaignstrategy.org/>

A guide on how to talk about human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic

<https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/human-rights-under-corona-guide/302>

Stakeholder mapping: tools for mapping stakeholders and entities, for their strategic and proactive involvement

<https://www.boreal-is.com/blog/stakeholder-mapping-identify-stakeholders/>

Practical and conceptual materials for understanding power relations in promoting social change

<https://www.powercube.net/>