

The image of environmental NGOs in Czech Republic and how to improve it

Environmental NGOs and society

Ai Nishimura
Antonio Montalbán Espinosa
Ho Kwan Lok Alan



Table of contents

Introduction.....	3
Background and Definitions.....	3
Method.....	3
Image of Environmental NGOs in Czech Republic.....	4
Image improval.....	11
Conclusion.....	13
References.....	15

Introduction

Today, there are negative images such as less popular and dependent to environment NGOs in Czech Republic, while there are also positive images. Improving problems Czech environmental NGOs have would lead to solving their negative images. They are faced with the some problems: how they make their influence larger not only regionally but also internationally, how they improve the public motivation and trust, and how they can become independent from government funds. Those images and the solutions to the problems they have are discussed in the below.

Background and Definitions

Overall, in 2012, there were nearly 115,000 NGOs in the Czech Republic, including areas in human rights, gender equality and environmental protection (NGO Partnership Portal, 2014). The maturity of Czech civil society is growing.

Furthermore, Public Opinion Research Centre (2015) described that 51% of the Czech population thought that the concern for the environmental protection of the Republic was appropriate while 41% agreed that it was insufficient. It shows that there is a diverse view of protecting the environment within the Czech population, which could increase the difficulties of conducting environmental protection work here, as the majority was satisfied with the present situation. More details of the image of Czech environmental NGOs, and its room for improvement are analysed below.

In this essay, image is defined into general image and specific image. Former is researched through three particular dimensions—international dimensions, regional dimension and national dimension. It comprehensively forms the general image of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic. In term of specific image, 5 significant NGOs from the Czech Republic are investigated in depth, which aims at building the detailed description of the NGOs' image.

Method

By reviewing academic journals, news and public opinion polls from international, regional and national community, the general image of the Czech environmental NGOs are formed. Information of the specific image is mainly researched from analysing official sources, such as annual report and financial statement provided by the NGOs.

In addition to the part of giving suggestions to the Czech environmental NGOs to improve their image, problems of its image are firstly summarized. Local and foreign examples are used as the reference for establishing the solutions.

Image of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic

The whole part is divided into general image and specific image.

General Image

By reviewing academic journal, public opinion polls, news, and projects focus on building image, general images of the environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic are described below. As mentioned above, image is divided into international, regional and national image.

International dimension

Continuously, environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic are received different kinds of support from the international society, which indirectly represents its positive image - trustable, well-organized and functional. Jancar-Webster (1998) points out that there is a close relationship between Czech NGOs and international organizations, such as International Union for Conservation of Nature, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Open Society Foundation and the Environment Partnership. These groups provide both technical and financial support, including grants. By strengthening the connection, a globally positive image, reputation, and even better publicity of Czech environmental NGOs are formed.

There are also some examples of countries in different regions receive aids from the environmental NGOs of the Czech Republic. Arnika, a Czech environmental NGOs, offered financial grants to the environmental active groups in Kazakhstan, which is a country in the Central Asia (Czech NGOs helping environmental groups in Kazakhstan, 2015). These funds were used for local environmental projects, such as reducing the negative effects given by several waste landfills in the Country and illegal trade of the horns of the endangered saiga antelope. Gradually, the international image of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic becomes more positive in the community worldwide because of the foreign helps provided.

Regional dimension

As the Czech Republic is located in the East Central Europe, the regional image should be in term of the Europe. Although the environmental NGOs of the Czech Republic have relatively small power of influence on the European level, it has an image of active participation. For instance, after the Czech Republic joined the European Union, 13 Czech environmental NGOs established the full partnership with members of the Green 10 (Pleines and Bušková, 2007). It includes ten of the biggest environmental NGOs on the European level, such as Greenpeace, World Wide Fund for Nature and the Friend of the Earth Europe. In fact, it occupies only 4% of the influence in the whole organization. Although it has fairly limited influence, the communication and cooperation network between the Region and locals have still been strengthened.

Furthermore, funding from the European Union can simultaneously prove the positive image of the Czech environmental NGOs. Jancar-Webster (1998) investigated that 66% environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic obtained funding from the EU, which occupied approximately 40% of its budgets on average. This shows that environmental NGOs from the Czech Republic have a positive image, which is highly trusted and heavily supported by the European Union.

National dimension

On the national level, the image of the environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic is analysed in term of academic journals, public opinion poll and news.

Financially, the NGOs also have a healthy image. In details, 75% organization received money from the Czech government. Averagely, it takes up nearly 30% of the budget (Císař, 2010). It reflects that the government trusted the NGOs. According to Fagin (2000), by gaining the trust from the governmental sector, government in the Czech Republic conducted several projects to provide supports for the NGOs, including setting up Civil Society Development Foundation, re-building the Green Parliament and the Legislative Group. All of the actions led by the authority proves that the environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic has a good, positive and healthy image.

The national image of Czech environmental NGOs from the public opinion poll is different from the evidence stated above. A public opinion poll described that 42% of the citizen distrusted non-profit organizations, including environmental NGOs (Public Opinion Research Centre, 2014). It is a relatively high percentage of distrust towards the NGOs in the Czech Republic, which shows a negative image of it.

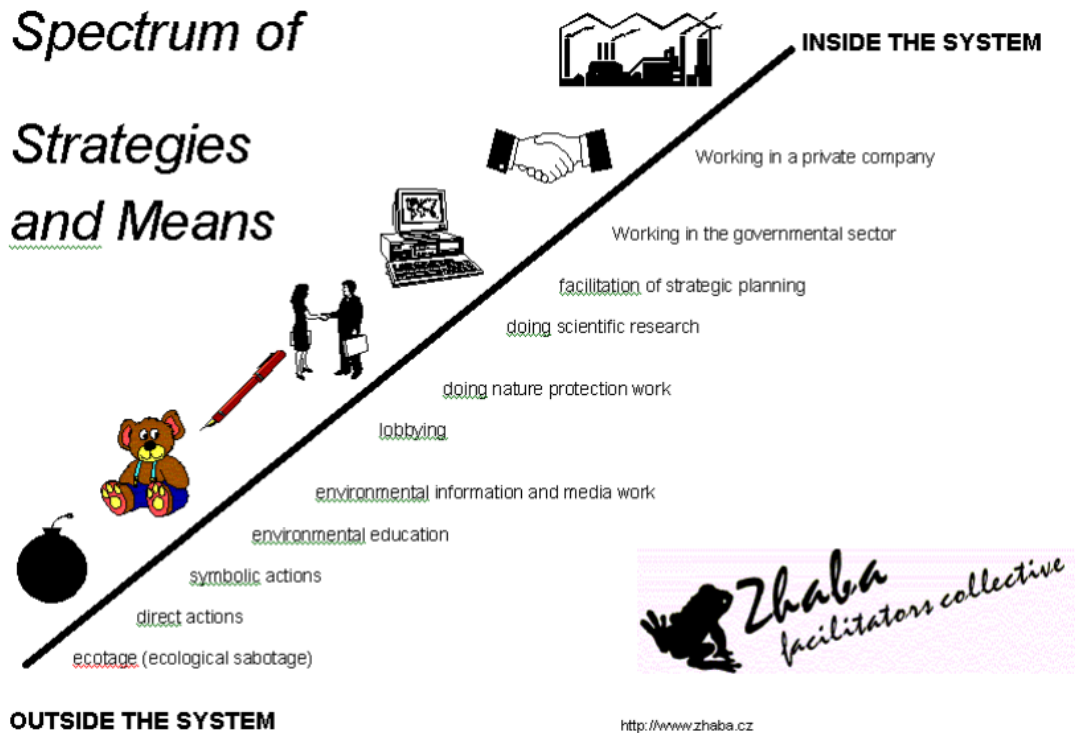
Moreover, statistics showed that 51% of the interviewees agreed that “It is difficult for them to do something for the environment personally.” (Public Opinion Research Centre, 2013). Additionally, 27% of the citizens participated in activities related to environmental protection in the last five years. Only 12% of the population is willing to donate money to support those groups or movements aim at protecting the environment. Although environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic is heavily funded by the government, most of the statistics stated above shows that it does not have a popular image, well-known reputation and high publicity in the whole society, which is a totally different picture by comparing with its international and regional image.

Specific Image

From outside the system to inside the system

Following up, a research have been done in order to expose the most notable NGOs and group foundations that are currently active in the Czech Republic. 5 NGOs are selected for review. The main goal is to expose these NGOs covering all the spectrum of actions in order to understand their image by investigating the activities they do and how these have an effect on the community. Of course, these NGOs interact between each others

covering all the spectrum by specialising on different activities and complementing each others on different levels.



• The Nadace Partnerství

Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation, in short Environmental Partnership is a leading Czech foundation and NGO supporting sustainable development projects throughout the country. It has supported 2100 projects since its founding in 1991. They focus on supporting NGO's, cities and schools in their environmental efforts, encourage inter-sector cooperation and the participation of citizens in public affairs.

Their main objective is to raise awareness on the general public, by the support of main topics focused on education and awareness. Their major projects are:

- Tree of Life, which helps communities plant trees.
- Greenways, recreational trails for hiking and biking throughout the country;
- Public Spaces assist municipalities in creating aesthetically pleasing public spaces;
- Sustainable Transport Programme focuses on sustainable means of transportation
- Schools for Sustainable Development involves school kids in initiatives such as local culture and nature preservation;
- Partnership for the Kolín Region focuses on sustainable development in this area.

- Energy Alternatives program looks at nuclear energy.

It enables people to protect and improve their environment. For this purpose, it distributes grants, runs education programmes and provides professional services (by means of Partnership public benefit organization, a sister subsidiary public benefit corporation).

Their focus is on the issues of environmental protection, sustainable transport and tourism, tree and water protection and quality public spaces. Together with four affiliated foundations in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia we form Environmental Partnership Association (EPA). Over 20 years of its existence, Environmental Partnership has distributed more than 238 million crowns (cca 12,5 million USD) among 2,722 projects in the Czech Republic alone.

The Environmental Partnership are able to provide different services to the public like tours, site visits and excursions focused on low energy architecture, city gardens and local viticulture for expert and interested groups. Furthermore, they also grant services in a more specific way, such as grant management for governmental agencies and corporate donor, corporate volunteers engagement and competence building sessions for employees or drafting mobility plans.

• **Zeleny Kruh**

This NGO is an association of 29 important ecological NGOs in the Czech Republic. Their main focus is on ecology, but with the cooperation with other NGOs they also engaged in development issues, climate protection, the conditions for the existence and funding of NGOs and transparent funding from the structural funds.

Green circle was founded in November 1989 and is one of the oldest umbrella and NGOs in the country. Their way of supporting and helping developing projects from these NGOs is through law related activities, such as Monitoring of laws and processes that have an impact on the protection and quality of the environment or affect the ability of the public to participate in environmental decision-making, coordination of legislative campaigns or by doing a complete overview of the legislation for member organizations.

Recently they started a new project in coordination with others NGO, which the main objective is to improve the public image of environmental NGOs. The project aims to strengthen the positive image of environmental organizations and civic activism among the Czech public. This project is supported by Civil Society Development Foundation, and also by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through EEA (European Environment Agency).

- **Arnika**

Brief introduction of Arnika

Arnika, environmental NGO which has role of uniting those who are looking for more improved environment, is working under their important principles, which are public involvement, getting contacts between Arnika itself and media, and finally, argument which is done professionally (Arnika, n.d.). The measures Arnika uses are environmental issues announcement in media, making up public events, information booths, leaflets publishing, and receiving financial support by not only individual and associations but also municipalities (Arnika, n.d.). In addition, it works by lobbying and by helping so that public can have something to do with Arnika's activity (Arnika, n.d.).

Images of Arnika

Arnika is NGO which gives close images to local people. For example, Arnika has campaign, "Paint for tree-lined avenues" (Arnika, 2015, para.4). Elementary school students were the participants of this campaign (Arnika, 2015). The money over 350,000 crowns was collected through cooperation by 770 people from 2009 to 2015 (Arnika, 2015). In addition, Arnika succeeded in getting local road worker to succeed to its action in the long run (Arnika, 2015). Through activities like this, Arnika and local people can connect with each other deeply. Therefore, the image of Arnika is close to local people.

However, Arnika are faced with difficulty. For example, through a campaign, Arnika try to realize that local people can have something to do more with decision-making process, and try to stop the current situation that the public financial resources are used for incinerators, and the number of incinerators will be large by appealing to both citizens and politicians on first hand (Arnika, n.d.). In opinion of Arnika, it is incinerators and landfills which cause previous material destruction and are throwing away waste in the long run (Arnika, n.d.). Now, there is a plan received by Czech government, "new national Waste management plan" ("Friends," 2015, para.2). It is a plan from 2015 to 2024, which has established recycling target in 2020 which is small and about municipal solid waste ("Friends," 2015). However, the target-setting leads to high concentration on facilities, for example, incinerators, which is to dispose of the waste ("Friends," 2015). In announcement of Veolia Czech Republic's Director, incinerators construction was concentrated on as important for itself ("Friends," 2015). From this fact, Arnika is, sometimes, faced with difficulties to achieve its goals sufficiently and effectively in Czech Republic.

In terms of finance, the image of Arnika is dependence on specific sectors. According to Arnika (2010), the size of EEA grants which are through NROS was larger than any other money given by major donors including Czech donors in 2009. European Union subsidies accounted for 24 % of total profits in 2009 and grants given by foreign funds accounted for 28, 6 % (Arnika, 2010). However, the donations given by individuals and members was only accounted for 6, 7 % of total incomes, while Arnika could collected

money by state subsidies which was 16, 3 % in 2009 (Arnika, 2010). From this fact, Arnika would give image which is dependent on governmental sectors.

- **Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody (ČSOP)**

Brief introduction of this NGOs

Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody (ČSOP), civic association founded in 1979, regards, for example, nature protection, environmental education and sustainable life assistance as important, belonging to IUCN, and to the UNEP Czech National Committee as a founding member (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2010). This NGO has a lot of publications, informational brochures, membership magazine and so on (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2008).

Images of ČSOP

People can see positive and popular image of ČSOP in Czech Republic. This can be seen from examples of its campaign, growing number of the participants in it, and large number of the participants in its project. As an example, there was a competition by ČSOP to decide the gardens which are living, and to make not only competitors but also the public know dangerous kinds of gardens for animal from over 1,100 gardens in Czech Republic (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2015, p.40). The number of competitors became larger through this competition (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2015, p.40). In taking another example of the campaigns, this NGO has a campaign, which is done on international scale, for motivating people to protect the environment around them through events which are organized for cleaning the places around them (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2015). Under this project, every year, there is cooperation by approximately 35 million-volunteers who come from many countries whose number is over 130 (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2015). The image of this NGO is also good internationally.

On the other hands, this NGOs has been paying attention to professional activities rather than participation which is done directly by, for example, voluntary action, which is for getting financial support (Carmin, & Jehlička, 2005, p.412). Not only have the norm which is about civic engagement but also bond of trust been losing from ČSOP (Carmin, & Jehlička, 2005, p.412). Carmin and Jehlička (2005) said that “the lower levels of membership and emphasis on professionalization also suggest that a broader reduction of participatory practices in Czech society may be taking place” (p.412). This would also lead to negative image of this NGO in Czech Republic.

Certainly, ČSOP seeks donation from those who are interested in their work for ČSOP (Česky Svaz Ochránců Přírody, 2015). However, in terms of finance, the image of this NGO is dependence on specific resources. It was sometimes grants and membership fees which led to the NGOs stability (Carmin, & Jehlička, 2005, p.404). According to Duijvelaar (1996), the percentage of the grants given by government was 80 of total budgets in 1996, while the rest of 20 % was collected through businesses whose breakdown was 10 percent sponsoring and 10 percent membership fees. With grants, it

is corporate sponsorships and making dues-pay members' number larger which are focused on toward keeping this association stable (Carmin, & Jehlička, 2005, p.412).

- **Hnutí Duha**

Brief introduction of Hnutí Duha

Hnutí Duha is a NGO whose campaigns are in order to solve various environment matters from energy to agriculture (Friends of the Earth Europe, n.d.). Hnutí Duha has two centers (CEE Bankwatch Network, 2011). One is in Prague for not only media but also lobbying and the other one is in Brno for co-ordination (CEE Bankwatch Network, 2011). Hnutí Duha has campaigns such as lobbying, and grassroots mobilizations under advocacy activities (Friends of the Earth Europe, n.d.). In some cases, for example, the way this NGO had used was non-violent action such as blockade in Temelín where nuclear power plant had been under construction, for disagreeing with nuclear power (World Information Service on Energy, 1997).

Image of Hnutí Duha

First, image to Hnutí Duha is positive. For example, it can be seen from a festival held in central Prague whose goal was boost of recognition to Hnutí Duha campaign, which was for Czech climate law by putting pressure (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2012). In the festival, there were several thousand people participants (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2012). The influence of the Hnutí Duha campaign held for Czech climate law is becoming larger, cooperating with businesses with which, such as, the Czech Green Building Council has something to do (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2012). This would establish good image to this NGO.

While Hnutí Duha has positive image as stated above, it, sometimes, gives also negative image in accordance with measure it uses. Blockade Hnutí Duha takes, sometimes, gives people negative images to Hnutí Duha itself. According to Jehlicka (2001), most media and citizens thought that blockades are actions which appeal to emotions and which are not rational at all in 1990s (p.8). The number of people who participated in blockades by Hnutí Duha and other NGOs in Temelín nuclear power plant was small (Jehlicka, 2001, pp.7-8). Hnutí Duha has a risk that its action lead to damaging its good images. This would lead to negative images of Hnutí Duha .

In terms of finance, secure image can be seen from Hnutí Duha in Czech and international place. In 2014, the grants accounted for nearly 50 % of the total revenue (Hnutí Duha, 2015, p.1). Donation by supporters of Hnutí Duha accounted for about 40 % of total income in 2014 (Hnutí Duha, 2015, p.1). As for financial resource, in addition to grants by many government sources, it is grants by not only Czech but also international foundations which give money resource to this NGO for its projects (Hnutí Duha, n.d.). And this NGO has cooperative relationships with other NGOs such as Greenpeace, and financial support by, such as, EU and The European Social Fund in the Czech Republic (Hnutí Duha, n.d.). In addition, it has memberships with Zelený kruh,

and Friends of the Earth Europe (Hnutí Duha, n.d.). These relationships gives this NGO's image of strong ties with organizations.

Image improval

As the image of Czech environmental NGOs is given in term of international dimension, regional dimension and national dimension, the suggestions for improving the image are also constructed on the basis of these three dimension.

Improving international and regional image

In term of limited international and regional influence mentioned above, it is not necessary that the local Czech environmental NGOs need to have huge influence towards the whole international and regional society. But, appropriate level of influence could assist their work in the local level, such as improving the bargaining power with the local government, building up solutions for national and transnational problems, conducting scientific researches, and even direct actions. Both financial and technical supports could be come with a more mature relationship between local Czech environmental NGOs, and international and regional organizations.

In details, Betsill and Corell (2008) suggests that NGOs could improve its international and regional influence by giving more active communication with other actors, including both environmental protection groups and other actors related to different parts of the Spectrum. 2015 Paris Climate Conference or the Conferences of Parties and Natural Resources Defense Council could be the examples of former. The examples for the latter are organizations inside and outside the region. For instance, World Trade Organization and World Health Organization are the international organizations, which recently started to focus on environmental issues. In Europe, European Partners for the Environment and Partnership for European Environmental Research are two of the potential targets. Within other regions, Union of South American Nations, African Union, Central Asia Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations could also be one of the choices. As the awareness of environmental issues in the international society and different regions is keeping raising, more and more international and regional organization would have the tendency to build and strengthen the partnership with environmental NGOs from different parts of the world, including environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic. International and regional image could be continuously improved.

Improving national image

The points should be addressed, lacking of public trust and awareness to participate in the environmental protection works, and high dependence on the governmental source of finance.

As far as the general public is concerned about the environmental issues nowadays, there is a low individual approach to these matters in a general level. Due to the lack of

trust of these NGOs, and low public awareness of these NGOs projects and goals, the public image is restricted to a limited part of the population which are willing to get involved in the matter.

This is one of the main solutions why in order to improve the image of these NGOs to the public they must get involved into the education system, allowing the following generations to get a grip of the current environmental situation and raise awareness for future projects. Of course, if there is a local awareness coming from this younger generation, it will make a deeper impact into the Czech society than any other foreign policies or programmes. By educating young people in this matter, they will continue to address these matters, and get involving in those actions with the following generations, ending the general misunderstanding of the NGOs and their work that is currently happening nowadays.

On the other hand, the problem of low willingness and trust must be dealt with in order to improve the current situation. This is an urgent matter to attend, and the first steps to follow are to offer an open and clean view of the financial status of the NGOs, as well as the detailed overview of the projects and the goals accomplished. This will make the population gain trust into these organizations, because they will show total transparency and their full-clean objective of improving the actual environmental situation.

In terms of finance, for example, large funding from the EU, and the Czech government as stated above also points that Czech environmental NGOs are dependent on government funds largely. Czech environmental NGOs do not rely on individual support so much as stated above. Certainly it is not necessary to be independent from government funds completely, but it is desirable to focus on individual donations in order to establish independent images of environmental NGOs in Czech Republic.

Today, Greenpeace and World Wide Fund for Nature are two of the good examples. Greenpeace is a NGO which is campaigning by cooperating with individual supporters, and by grants from foundations without government donations and corporation donations. Therefore, Greenpeace can keep independent (Greenpeace International, n.d.). It has more than 3 million individual supporters in all over the worlds who contribute to Greenpeace campaigns (Greenpeace International, n.d., p.24). The large number of individual supports is also key to independent image. It is needed to take measures to rise the number of the NGOs supporters. The followings are examples to think the way to get individual donations. If taking examples of Greenpeace Greece, it succeeded in collecting \$11,958 thanks to 600 people in one month through its crowdfunding campaign, convincing people to donate for doing their activities (MobLab Team, 2013). WWF has a campaign which use technologies people are attached to, such as Twitter (Rakos, 2015). Within one week, it made it possible for WWF to get signing up by over 30,000 people toward the campaign which is for fundraising ("Social Charity," 2015). It also has a campaign so that people can fundraise easily by selecting one way for fundraising and making individual's fundraising campaigns on Internet,

which is for WWF (WWF, n.d.). In one of the events, there are 1620 fundraiser and \$50,029 was raised for WWF works (WWF, n.d.).

Those methods can be the reference for Czech environmental NGOs to count on individual donations and to establish independent images. For maintaining of the large number of individuals, it is necessary to attract the public by using the today's tendency. As Greenpeace is, Czech environmental NGOs need to get individual donations more by taking such points into consideration. Czech environmental NGOs can establish independent image through getting individual donations more than now as one of the methods.

Therefore, by reviewing different examples, suggestions aim at improving the international, regional and national image of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic are given.

Conclusion

To conclude, the general image of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic is quite diverse. On both international and regional dimension, it receives different kinds of support from those societies, including both technical and financial helps. It also have an active participation of the international and regional organization, such as G10 on the European Union level. These actions shows a positive and active image image of the NGOs.

On local dimension, the statistics show that the Czech environmental NGOs has relatively high dependence of the governmental funds. The supports from the general public are absent, such as trust towards the organizations, the awareness of environmental protection and individual donation.

In term of specific image of the Czech environmental NGOs, 5 organizations are selected for in-depth analysis, including the Nadace Partnerství, Zelený Kruh, Arnika, Český Svaz Ochránců Přírody (Czech Union for Nature Conservation) and Huní Duha, from the inside system side to the outside system side throughout the Spectrum of Strategies and Means. It generally confirms the finding stated in the general image with sophisticated details.

There are several problems found in the research. The Czech environmental NGOs has extremely limited influence in the international and regional organizations. It also does not have enough support and trust from the general public in the Czech Republic.

In suggestions, more active communication between different sector should be one of the solutions for improving its international and regional image, including both environmental and non-environmental sectors.

On the national level, Czech environmental NGOs also need to attract not only government but also individuals and communities so that they can do their works sufficiently. On an educational level a lot of work must be done in order to increase public awareness on the community. By this means the public will increase its concerns towards the environmental issues that occurs nowadays, raising their willingness to support these NGOs and to accomplish the goals ahead of us.

Furthermore, the NGOs must do also their part of the work, by being clean and transparent towards the public. In this way, they can attract more funds and support on different levels, but always having in mind that the public reacts to facts and the accomplish of goals. Without tangible results, people lose interest.

By reviewing the general and specific image of the environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic, and giving the solutions which try to tackle the current problems faced the NGOs founded in the image part, the research question “What is the image of environmental NGOs in the Czech Republic? and How could that be improved?” is answer and analysed in depth.

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