

## **Czech case study on co-production in the delivery of public good services**

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### **Abstract**

Modernisation of welfare state is ongoing in any European countries today and in the Czech Republic too. It is a political question, if the state should provide most welfare services or if services should be privatized and provided by the market according to neo-liberal dogma. Nevertheless, it is seen the third sector plays more or less serious role in the provision of public services when complements or alternates public sector and market in that role, in general. We can identify this phenomenon development by various methods theoretically or empirically, of course. But maybe, it would enable us to better understand above mentioned tendencies through the co-production, co-management and co-governance conceptual framework with Brandsen and Pestoff (2006).

What is the role of the third sector in public services provision and which are the manners of such services producing in the case of the Czech Republic? I have tried to identify a changing role and position of Czech Third Sector and Social Economy many times during some last years. Using co-production and co-management concept it gives me new opportunity to describe and determinate citizen's and client's involvement in production and benefits in some other way and new dimension.

In my study on common good services of "person and property security - fire safety" there is the phenomenon of *co-production* manifested by *co-management* as a type of cooperation in which the third sector has a direct influence on the nature of public services delivery. The Voluntary fire-fighting crews represent bodies of the third sector in the Czech Republic which produces common good services at local level in collaboration with the state. This case demonstrates the role of the third sector in public service production and the manner in which named service is produced and managed here traditionally. We can recognize an involvement of citizens creates the service delivery practices as well as the citizens and their social capital is themselves created by the service delivery. At the same time co-production of this service production and delivery refers to voluntary efforts by individual citizens.

Some questions are to be asked: (1) Are fire-safety and fire-effects maintenance activities recognizable to be a public service? (2) What are the specific characteristics of fire-safety service? (3) What is the history and present of this service delivery? (4) Which actors play their role here and in which manners? (5) What is the message of this study for the Third Sector and Social Economy development cognition in the Czech Republic and generally? Let us go and try to answer.

**Key words:** Co-management, co-production, common good services, fire-safety, public administration, social economy, social capital, Integrated System of Rescue, Fire-fighting crew, mutual found.

## **Introduction**

Suppose, wildfire is a matter of hardly predicted extraordinary incident whose destructive effects would press the person and communities socially down. Fire-fighting and fire-effects overcoming and maintenance postulate needs and an existence of some solidarity mechanisms because it is not easy to bear fair maintenance costs by individuals, and market doesn't operate it as well. Additionally, fire prevention stays traditionally to be municipal and state interest. In that way we can identify the fire-safety service as a service of common good and matter of some solidarity. That service is being usually and traditionally delivered by close cooperation of (associated) citizens with their municipality, of voluntary non-professionals with salaried professionals, of the municipality with the state, and of various bodies across economical sectors together. Specific character of such activities being in pool needs coordination toward rescue of people and property in dangerous situation. Naturally, it calls for effective strategic and operative co-management.

In the deep history fire-safety service and fire-effect maintenance was operated within citizen's mutual arrangement and wildfire-prevention costs had been a job of municipal and state guaranty, in the Czech countries as well. On one hand, tradition of Czech Voluntary fire-fighting crews (and Fire-insurance mutual founds) is rooted in our history of the end of eighteenth century at least. On the other hand public guaranty of fire-prevention and fire-fighting is elder because municipal mayor was usually bedded in position of fire-safety supervisor and intervention commander, from Mid-ages.

Till the Second World War this voluntary provided common good service and had been usually accompanied by mutual fire-insurance founding as written above. During period of central planed economy fire-insurance foundations were nationalised. But, it would be wonder, that Voluntary fire-fighting crews stay operated in many villages and small cities all that time cross the country in modus of co-management with the state as well as in modus of cooperation with state organisations producing the same service. Co-management and co-production follow after 1990 too.

Nowadays Czech fire-safety service is a complex matter of Public Crises Management and Integral System of Rescue being regulated by Law which covers the public and civil segment on semi-professional and professional level under state guaranty.

Voluntary segment of fire-safety producers involves citizen initiatives and non-monetary sources at local level. An activity and technical equipment of Voluntary fire-fighting crews is co-financed by member's fee, by support of public finance (in great deal), by philanthropy, and by some non-distributed profit being produced by crews own activities at market. Some financial sources (non-distributed profit) are produced at the same time by Mutual fire-insurance company which is controlled by Association of voluntary fire-fighting crews for that reason.

Some dates:

In Czech fire-fighting service there work about 87 000 fire-fighters today, including about 9 000 professionals (within the state Fire-fighting and rescue crew) and about 78 000 volunteers (within about 370 voluntary crews in villages and small cities).

In the area of the Czech Republic (78 864 square kilometres) there live about 10,2 million citizens (including about 5 million men and 5,2 million women) which settled in about 6 250 domicile-municipalities in January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007.

## Co-production and co-management in the case of fire-fighting common good service in the Czech Republic

### a) History

It seems, common security in the case of fire-fighting was the matter of citizen's mutual self-help and mutual support as well as the matter of public policy and service anytime and anywhere. As the wildfire was very dangerous for the city life in the old time, public authorities were usually forced to regulate fire-prevention and fire-fighting via supervision and public notices, and sometimes also via paid fire-fighting crews. By literature<sup>1</sup>, there were public professional fire-fighting crews and voluntary craftsmen fire-fighting crews organised in the old Roma already; the first voluntary fire-fighting crews in modern fashion appeared in Philadelphia (U.S.A.) in **1736**.

Some voluntary fire-fighting crews were founded very early also in the area of the Czech countries; one of them was founded in Líš'any village in **1871**<sup>2</sup> or in Velký Šenov city in **1879**<sup>3</sup>, for example. "Central fire-fighting union" of the Czech kingdom country was associated also in **1879** and "Fire-fighter's mutual insurance company" in **1900**. After First World War it was "Confederation of Czechoslovak voluntary firemen" associated **1919**.

The fire-safety of city or village was organized by mayor. He was responsible (by Law) to prevent wildfire and he was a commander through fair actions, at that time. But the responsibility of fire-fighting was held by voluntary crews. In the voluntary fire-fighting crews associated citizens had served, only machine-man and commander served as a paid public person sometimes. In some bigger cities, there were public fire-fighting crews served by professional paid men.

In **1942**, during the Second World War, state Regiment of fire-fighting policy was settled being administrated by Gendarmerie and forced by German Reich authorities for training, exercise and activities.

After the War the system was covered by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Interior and operated via National boards per both voluntary and professional fire-fighting bodies. Firemen were given by magistracy status. In **1958** state responsibility of fire-fighting was decentralized down to voluntary "Czechoslovak fire-fighting alliance" (such system worked till 1985), and schools for fire-fighters were founded.

At the beginning of seventies the proportion of fire-fighters activities started to change: the portion of technical actions had overgrowth number of fire-intervention. Great rate of fire-fighters activity nowadays is mostly oriented to technical intervention (traffic accidents, natural disaster, reduction of various obstacle effects, person and animal rescue, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> [[http://www.dh.cz/ostatni/ohen\\_a\\_clovek\\_v\\_zrcadle\\_doby.htm](http://www.dh.cz/ostatni/ohen_a_clovek_v_zrcadle_doby.htm)], Nitra, J.: (*Fire and person in mirror of the time*, visited 20.8.2007

<sup>2</sup> [<http://www.sweb.cz/sdhlistany/sdh1.htm>] and [<http://sweb.cz/sdhlistany/akce.htm>], visited 9.9.2007

<sup>3</sup> [<http://www.hasicivelskenov.unas.cz/Soubory/Historie.htm>], visited 9.9.2007

In 1985 new Fire-fighting Code was issued and it is held practically till now. New Law governs the duties of both physical and legal bodies as well as competences of Fire-fighters as supervisors. After 1995, the state professional “Fire-fighting and rescue crew” was newly established and headed by the Czech Ministry of Interior. The new system of Crises Management, Emergency solution and citizen’s security Planning, and Integral System of Rescue were created. New collection of relevant Codes came in 2000<sup>4</sup>.

## **b) Structure of Czech fire-fighting system, its actors and network, cooperation**

New Czech fire-fighting Law (2000) makes the fire-safety system very homogenous in action, though very heterogeneous in bodies (as follows).

The **Integral System of Rescue** (ISR) is aimed to provide fire-saving citizen’s life and health as well as property (via fire-prevention and fire-fighting) and to provide effective helping in occasion of any extraordinary accidents. The professional **Fire-fighting and rescue crew of the Czech Republic** (FRC) is a pillar of the ISR. They are semi-professional **Voluntary fire-fighting crews** (VFC) in villages and small cities with their Associations, and firm’s professional and voluntary fire-fighting crews; who are the main actors of the IRS system.

Citizen’s and firm’s voluntary fire-fighting crews (being formally citizen’s association) deliver public service in close cooperation with state professional fire-fighting crew (being formally unit of state administration), item under state guaranty within ISR. It means voluntary and professional fire-fighting crews co-operate together with the Policy of the Czech Republic being a partner of state, regional and municipal administration. Another non-profit, non-for-profit and for-profit partners<sup>5</sup> of ISR cooperate “in call or task” agreement regime. Common person and firms are also the bodies within co-ordination system when necessary. All the system of fire-safety services is headed and guaranteed by the Ministry of Interior and operated within the public Crises Management.

The Integral System of Rescue doesn’t cover only fire-prevention and fire-fighting, but also a rescue of person and property in case of natural disaster, traffic accident, and other extraordinary accidents. In the case of wildfire or accident, there is the territory of demarkation in which any crew is to operate and to co-operate. Within the system of ISR co-management is deep and multilateral.

The **Fire-fighter and rescue crew of the Czech Republic** (FRC) provides their basic common good services. FRC additionally plays serious role as a public authority being authorised by Law to provide: state’s supervision on fire-security provision; strategic fire-fighting and rescue planning in coordination with partners; activity co-operation and co-ordination with Association of Czech, Moravian and Silesian fire-fighters and other partners; publicity and enlightenment; education and training both professional firemen and voluntary firemen (their machine-men and commander especially); financial support to voluntary fire-fighters crew’s technique-equipment; other assignments. FRC co-organizes fighting-power co-ordination exercises and fire-fighter’s sport performance with volunteers together.

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<sup>4</sup> 2000 namely: the Fire-fighting and rescue crew of the Czech Republic Code; the Integral System of Rescue Code; the Crises Management Code; the Public health safety Code; the Prevention of major chemical accident Code. (The Fire-safety Code comes from 1985).

<sup>5</sup> For example: Mountain rescue services, Mine rescue service, Cave rescue service, Health rescue service, and others which are some voluntary and some professional bodies.

By the way, FRC provides central emergency call both by national No. 150 and European No. 112 (Mobil and stationary phone systems which covers all the area of the Czech Republic). No. 112 operates fully and systematically from 2003.

Activity and equipment of FRC is fully financed by public finance sources. FRC organisational structure is headed by general management board at Ministry of Interior. FRC includes 14 regional crew-branches subsidized to regional authority.

**Voluntary fire-fighters crews (VFC)** associate citizens to provide respectable common good services on voluntary base. VFC represents citizen's mutual solidary initiative which is semi-professional. Any crew is relatively autonomous being formally citizen's association under patronage of related municipality. VFC provides fire-fighting and rescue across its own field and share in providing their activities in cooperation with other VFC, with FRC, with Policy and with other partners. Its activity towards elimination of wildfire risk, fire-effects and effects of other extraordinary accidents aids to life, health and property saving. VFC involve young people into fire-fighting activities and play serious role in local culture and sport.

Voluntary fire-fighters crews' activity and equipment is financed mainly by public finance support. It is co-financed by member's fee, by philanthropy, by their own activities at the open market and by non-distributed profit of themselves controlled by non-for-profit enterprises. There are engaged some non-monetary sources (voluntary work, self-help etc.) into account, as well.

Members of voluntary fire-fighting crews are associated into three Associations. The biggest one is the "**Association of Czech, Moravian and Silesian fire-fighters**"<sup>6</sup>. Other ones are the "**Czech firemen union**" and the "**Moravian firemen union**". They are formally citizen's associations.

### c) **Voluntary fire-fighting sector network**

Network of voluntary fire-fighting sector is large, cross co-governed and heterogeneous. It contains bodies across economical sectors. It is possible to understand it as field of social economy. We can find there not only above mentioned bodies, but many others, for example:

- Fire-fighter educational institutions;
- Granting founds (the **Found for fire-fighting movement support**; the **Firemen and policemen found** - supporting children surviving the fire-fighter which perish in connection with being of service);
- Fire-fighters trade unions,
- **Professional chamber of Fire-fighters** (It is voluntary association of fire-fighter technique-equipment providers which are profit and non-for-profit bodies);
- **Association of fire-fighter officers** (It is voluntary association – a member of European Federation of Fire-fighter Officers Association);
- **Fire-fighter's Mutual Insurance, Co.** (It is non-for-profit body which is founded and controlled by Association of Voluntary Fire-fighter crews. Its profit is non-distributed but proposed for fire-fighting technique improvement of Voluntary fire-fighting crews).

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<sup>6</sup> [<http://www.dh.cz/>] visited 10.6.2007

- Others.

## Conclusion

This case study shows providers, procedures, activities and actions which are *co-managed* by public authorities and private bodies jointly and systematically (both voluntarily and by the Law).

Fire-fighting was at any time common good service whose effective providing needs large coordination and cooperation of anybody concerned, including citizens and their volunteers, municipal authorities, and enterprise bodies. We can speak about co-management cross sectors. Naturally, that co-management is a part of that service providing manners (though tangible provider would represent only one of the sectors in locality concerned).

Furnished by power, public authorities functionally collaborate and coordinate strategic and operational appropriate activities with each other and with their partners to catch the common purpose and benefits. Furnished by creative ability and enthusiasm, citizen's volunteers not only provide common good service but also make their community stronger. Power, which is hidden both in such systematic cooperation and co-management and in citizen's voluntary solidarity, we can understand maybe through high overflow accident in the Czech Republic 2002.

We can recognize an involvement of citizens which creates the service delivery practices as well as the citizens and their social capital is themselves created by the service delivery.

By the way, this case of co-production can certify thesis about role of institutional heritage which usually play hidden but serious role in the development of social-economy environment of each country.

What about answer to questions lay above?

- (1) We can identify above mentioned fire-fighting and fire-effects maintenance activities as public service or as common good services of fire-safety and rescue.
- (2) We can identify co-management and co-production as a characteristic feature of fire-safety service delivery manners.
- (3) Fire-fighting service delivery has its own old tradition. We can identify its institutional heritage within service providing manners in the Czech Republic till now.
- (4) We can identify actors, which play their role in fire-fighting sector, as heterogeneous bodies. They create their own network (with participation and co-government) voluntary as well as by Law.
- (5) This case study confirms anticipation of better understanding of the third sector position tendencies through the co-production, co-management and co-governance conceptual framework.

It seems social economy is being active in the Czech Republic not only nowadays but all the time, though maybe it is somewhat and sometime hidden in their varying specific modality. It seems it is valid in other Central and East European countries as well. It would be matter of understanding relevant concepts, phenomenon and tendencies.

The Third sector developing in the Czech Republic and in the Central and East European countries is evident. By the way, we can see that mutuality and solidarity continue to play their role here but maybe more informal and hidden. Mutual societies and founds as a body of social economy exist in the Czech Republic in some variety.

Co-production and co-management as a manner of public services delivery system are recognizable here.

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