

European Comision  
Commisioner  
**Nicolas Schmit**  
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200, 1049  
Brussels  
Belgium

Prague, 16 November 2020

Dear Commissioner Schmit,

We are writing you as providers of social services, human rights organizations, organizations working with children and young people, representatives of the academic sector, public administration and people with experience of homelessness or users of social services. We are concerned about the process of preparing the distribution of ESIF allocations in the Czech Republic for the next programming period and we want to ask you for the support and firm position of the EC in negotiating allocations with the Czech government.

The Czech Republic still faces a number of social challenges, such as **under-representation of women with children and vulnerable groups in the labor market, regional poverty concentration and growth in socially excluded localities, over-indebtedness, homelessness and housing exclusion, population aging, predominance of institutional care over community support, and other structural problems**. The European Social Fund in the Czech Republic significantly contributes to the progress in solving these problems: It helped to create 1,500 children's groups for 20,000 children and micro-nurseries. European funds have helped to ensure that children without families do not have to grow up in orphanages, to the transformation of mental health care, to support the integration of the Roma population. The OPZ program educates 3,000 nurses and 1,250 medical staff and pharmacists. OPZ also helps in supporting the solution of homelessness, victims of crime, or single parents. In many respects, ESF funds in the Czech Republic provide basic public services.

Developments in recent weeks have shown that the Czech government is not fully aware of the seriousness of the social situation and the need for ESF funding. **On 14 October 2020, a proposal for the allocation of ESIF funds for the 2021–2027 programming period was submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic, which reduced support from the originally proposed EUR 1.6 billion to EUR 1 billion**. Investments in social peace and cohesion were to be largely replaced by investments in concrete without any justification. This proposal was not accepted by the government, but a month later the members of the Monitoring Committee of the Operational Program Employment were informed that the ESF+ allocation will be reduced by 10% (in favor of the Cohesion Fund) and that the OPZ+ program will now be further prepared. None of the proposals was based on any analyses or strategic documents of the Czech Republic and the EU.

**We consider the reduction to be inadequate for three main reasons.** Firstly, **a large part of the social problem still persists** and now is certainly not a good time to slow down in their efforts to solve them. Secondly, as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, **we expect the economic situation of many people to deteriorate** due to the negative effects of the incipient economic crisis. These people will need social services and employment support to avoid falling into long-term poverty and social exclusion. The third reason for maintaining the allocation is the **aging of the population and the new possibility to finance projects for seniors from ESF+ resources.**

**Random and unjustified changes in the long-term planned allocations for the 2021–2027 programming period before its start are, in our view, inadmissible.** In addition to myopia when preferring to invest in concrete over people, there is a risk of serious problems with drawing ESIF funds, because reallocation proposals are not accompanied by a quality assessment of absorption capacity. If the Czech Republic decides during the next programming period for partial reallocations, either due to poor drawing in a specific area or unexpected events, it is, in our opinion, legitimate, but the changes proposed now are not legitimate.

Dear Commissioner Schmit,

we believe that, like us, you are aware of the need to continue structural changes in the social field in the Czech Republic, as well as the future risks of demographic and economic development. We would therefore like to ask you to use all your possibilities to maintain or increase the ESF + allocation in the Czech Republic for the next programming period.

Yours sincerely,

Iva Kuchyňková and Štěpán Ripka

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**Platforma pro sociální bydlení / Platform for Social Housing**

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## List of organizations that joined the content of the letter:



### Caritas Czech Republic

An organization providing social and health services to people in distress or acute emergency, a member of the global organization Caritas



### Platform for social housing

Association enforcing the law on social housing and the Housing First program



### Association of Educators in Social Work (ASVSP)

Society associating higher professional and higher education institutions or their parts that offer education in social work in the Czech Republic



### One second after

A group defending the interests of children and young people growing up in institutional care



### Children of the full moon

An association of parents and other family members of children with autism spectrum disorder



### Assistance

Support for people with physical and combined disabilities and their independent life in a regular day environment



### Prevent99

South Bohemian organization providing services to young people at risk of addiction



### Life 90

Organizations providing services to support and promote the independence of seniors



### Gerontological Institute

Analytical, educational, conceptual, conference and consulting activities in the field of old age and aging. Old age from the perspective of science and experts



### Child and family association

Association of 86 organizations operating in the field of care for children at risk



### J&T Foundation

Help and counseling for families with children in an unfavorable situation



**SOS Children's Village**  
The oldest non-profit organization helping endangered children in the Czech Republic



**Center for Social Issues - SPOT**  
Association focused on urban policy in order to ensure a dignified coexistence of city dwellers



**Diaconate ČCE**  
Provider of social services under the banner of the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church, member of the international platform Eurodiaconia



**Silesian Diaconate**  
Provider of social services and assistance to the needy in the Moravian-Silesian region



**Hope**  
One of the oldest Czech non-profit organizations caring mainly for the homeless and the elderly.



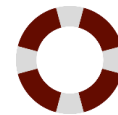
**RUBIKON Center**  
Organizations helping people with criminal backgrounds to integrate into society



**Salvation Army**  
An international Christian organization helping people in need



**Fokus Prague**  
The largest non-profit organization in the Czech Republic supporting people with experience of mental illness



**INSTITUTE FOR DEBT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION**

**Institute for Debt Prevention and Resolution**  
An independent think-tank focused on the issue of household indebtedness, executions and personal bankruptcies



**Hnutí Křesťan a práce**  
Movement Christian and labour  
[www.hkan.cz](http://www.hkan.cz)

**Movement Christian and Labor**  
A movement striving for the practical application of the social teaching of the church and for solving the current problems of our society Member of the European Christian Worker Movement



**Association of Christian Seniors**  
An association that pursues the spiritual and material good not only of the elderly



### **Revival**

An organization focused on reviving the rule of law, monitoring decision-making processes and promoting a support active citizenship



### **Czech Council of Children and Youth**

The umbrella organization of the association of children and youth in the Czech Republic



### **Association of Organizations in the field of penitentiary**

Connecting different actors in the field of penitentiary and criminal justice and contributing to systematic changes in the field of criminal justice

**ASOCIACE  
ORGANIZACÍ  
V OBLASTI  
VĚZEŇSTVÍ**



### **IQ Roma service**

Support for the possibilities, opportunities and determination of the Roma on the way to their growth and social application



### **ČOSIV - Czech Professional Society for Inclusive Education**

Association supporting the development of inclusive education in the Czech educational system



### **Valika child and family center**

Help for vulnerable children and their families in the form of social activation services

### **European Renaissance Institute**

Institution which deals with the issue of cohesion and harmonization of life of citizens of the European Union



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

### **EAPN CR**

An independent network of organizations and groups involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in rural areas



Pomáháme dětem. Nabízíme řešení.

### **Lumos**

An organization focused on the deinstitutionalization and unification of the care system for children at risk



### **Aslido**

Emancipation of homeless people through their involvement in solving housing needs and opening a dialogue between all actors involved in homelessness