



# **“Strengthening the Networking on Public Health in Czech Republic” Workshop**

**Prague, Czech Republic, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2006**

*Organised by:*

**European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)**

**Civic Alliance – Latvia (CAL)**

**Association of Non-governmental, Non-profit Organizations Active in the Areas of Social Assistance and Social Health (SKOK)**



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The presentations are available at <http://www.ephaproject.eu/a/2120>

## Table of Contents

<u>Table of Contents.....</u>	<u>2</u>
Background information.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Aim of Workshop.....	3
Objectives of Workshop .....	3
Project Framework .....	3
Process of the Workshop.....	3
Presentations.....	5
Part I: Introduction.....	5
Part II. Lobbying the EU institutions: Why and How? .....	6
<b>Work in groups.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Presentation of the first group.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Presentation of the second group.....</b>	<b>7</b>
EPHA Conclusion.....	8
Part III: Conclusion and evaluation.....	8
<b>Evaluation.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Organizing training on several days focused on practical lobbying methods and showing experiences of successful lobbying activities:.....	8
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Future plan – Suggestions by SKOK.....</b>	<b>8</b>





## Background information

### Introduction

The Civic Alliance Latvia (CAL), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and the Association of Non-governmental, Non-profit Organizations Active in the Areas of Social Assistance and Social Health (SKOK) organised the Workshop “*Strengthening the Networking on Public Health in Czech Republic*” on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic.

### Aim of Workshop

The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness of NGOs in Czech Republic on the importance of participating in the decision making process at EU level on public health issues and developing mutual cooperation in national level.

### Objectives of Workshop

- To offer information on public health activities in Czech Republic;
- To introduce EPHA as a European network;
- To inform on NGO lobbying opportunities at EU level and explain the legislative process;
- To facilitate a discussion forum between the participants;
- To organise practical activities for participants on lobbying strategies.

### Project Framework

The workshop was organised within the framework of the project “Development of national platforms on public health in 10 new EU member states” implemented by the European Public Health Alliance and Civic Alliance Latvia. The aim of the project is to promote the participation of NGOs working on health-related issues in the 10 new member states in decision-making bodies in national and EU level, by strengthening the development of national platforms.

The workshop in Prague is the third capacity building activity organised within the framework of the project<sup>1</sup>.

### Process of the Workshop<sup>2</sup>

In total, 28 representatives attended the workshop from 24 different Czech organizations (NGOs, institute of public health, patient organizations, etc).

In order to fulfill the above mentioned objectives in most effective way the workshop was divided into 3 parts:

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the project activities, please read <http://www.eph.org/r/97>

<sup>2</sup> Presentations and list of participants are available at <http://www.eph.org/a/2120>



- 1) An Introduction aimed to give an overview of the workshop, provide short introduction of the project and to allow several Czech organisations to speak about their experience in participating in decision-making processes;
- 2) Presentations on NGO lobbying in EU in order to provide participants with information on NGO lobbying opportunities in EU institutions.
- 3) Some practical activities where participants designed a lobbying strategy into two working groups.

The communication languages were Czech and English.



## Presentations

### Part I: Introduction

1. Renata Dohnalova, project manager of the host organisation SKOK, welcomed participants and speakers.
2. Milena Černa, SKOK director introduced her organisation. SKOK exists since 1996 as an association of 70 social and health NGOs. She highlighted that networking is very important in order to achieve political changes. Besides, some of the main benefits of NGOs values are flexibility and the opportunity to react rapidly. SKOK is also an active member of the European Anti-Poverty Network, which has provided valuable insight in EU fund raising.
3. The third speaker presented EPHA and the project “Development of national platforms on public health in 10 new EU member states”. Agnese Knabe presented the European Public Health Alliance, its objectives, structure, membership as well as how EPHA works. The second presentation covered the above-mentioned project: aim, objectives and activities.
4. The following presentation introduced the activities of the Civilia Foundation. The organisation was initiated at the end of the 1980s by NGOs from the Netherlands which aimed to build local civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. They focused on services towards people living with disabilities. Jaroslava Jones pointed out in conclusion that necessity of establishing NGO platforms at national, local and regional level in order to collaborate with public institutions and to participate in decision-making processes.
5. The National Institute of Public Health presented the European-wide project led by EuroHealthnet, entitled 'Capacity Building for Public Health and Health Promotion in Central and Eastern Europe and candidate countries'. The objectives and activities of the project are focused on capacity building activities for national health agencies and to establish mutual cooperation between them. This project has similar features as EPHA project. Eva Ulicna suggested to develop information exchange and cooperation between the two projects.



6. Health Action International concluded the session by presenting HAI activities towards increasing access to essential medicines and improving the rational use of medicines.

## **Part II. Lobbying the EU institutions: Why and How?**

The aim of the second part of the workshop was to give an overview of the lobbying activities at EU level and the interaction between national NGOs and the European decision-making process. Anne Hoel first presented the role of the main EU institutions (the European Commission the European Council and the European Commission) as well as the particular role of NGOs within this framework, which can influence the decision-making process at every stage of the procedure.



Explaining the legislative competences of each of the bodies, Anne motivated participants to work towards national government (ministers) and Members of the European Parliament. She also explained the necessity and effectiveness of joining forces within alliances and platforms in order to speak up with one voice and one message.

The discussion raised questions about the way individual organisations can be involved in lobbying and can take part in EPHA. EPHA's democratic structures and ways to ensure that all members' voices are presented was further explored. The issue of funding in order to advocate effectively at EU level was of particular concern for participants who expressed it as a pitfall to access Brussels.

### **Work in groups**

Anne presented a case study (the Health and Consumer Programme) on which participants were then invited to draw their own lobbying strategy. In order to ensure a smooth working process, participants were divided into 2 groups. This session provided lively debates about the most effective ways and methods for lobbying at EU and national level.



The following key examples were given in order to foster the work of the working groups:

What is your target audience?	Possible activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The European Commission</li> <li>- The European Parliament</li> <li>- The Council of Ministers</li> <li>- Other NGOs</li> <li>- EPHA members</li> <li>- Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would you meet the 732 MEPs?</li> <li>- Would you talk to each representative of Member States? or meet each government?</li> <li>- Would you organise sit-in protests in front of the European Council?</li> <li>- Would you involve citizens?</li> </ul>

### Presentation of the first group

The first group of participants identified the following strategy as most effective:

- They would first gather more information on the interaction between national and European institutions;
- They would create partnership and form coalitions with other NGOs, identify opponents and monitor their activities and reactions;
- Based on the above mentioned information, they would create targeted information materials for their members to raise awareness and gather support and establish a time frame;
- They would as well infiltrate other networks in a very informal way, as well as organise events for the national Czech Ministry of health for instance in order to create personal contacts with civil servants They would thus focus on approaching and lobbying the national level so that their views are taken on board at the European Council;
- They would then approach European networks and build on existing structures. They would come to Brussels and demonstrate, inviting the media.

### Presentation of the second group

The second group would first raise awareness on the issue at EU level and monitor the situation. They would also use some existing cross-government settings such as the Vesegrad platform. They would also target Czech representatives at EU level (Czech Commissioner, Czech MEPs, Czech Permanent Representative, etc...). They





would try to raise awareness within the civil society community as well. With regard to the national level, they would contact the Permanent Representative, trying to create a coalition with other NGOs and raise awareness. They would also be in close contact with MEPs.

The strategies of both groups were made with understanding and well structured and also clearly represented.

### **EPHA Conclusion**

Anne concluded the session by briefly giving some definitions of lobbying and showing what EPHA has done with regard to the Health and Consumer Programme.

## **Part III: Conclusion and evaluation**

### **Evaluation**

The final part of the workshop gave the floor to participants for comments on the workshop and ways forward. The following ideas were expressed:

- Organizing training on several days focused on practical lobbying methods and showing experiences of successful lobbying activities;
- More information on synergies between organisations at European and national level, as well as on other European-wide organisations working on social themes;
- Organising a subsequent workshop on how to cooperate at national level;
- Exploring the possibility to create a network of organisations working on health, social and welfare issues in the Czech Republic.

### **Results**

The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness on networking - cooperation between the NGOs in order to take an active role in decision-making processes at national as well as European levels. Consequently the participants realised the need to develop networks among NGOs dealing with different topics and spheres of activities, as well as the necessity for closer collaboration. Participants expressed that the ideal model could be to combine social, public health and welfare issues.

### **Future plan – Suggestions by SKOK**

SKOK suggested that regular workshops at national level for better exchange of experiences could be organised to help improving channels



for dissemination of useful information. An extension of the members base could be envisaged towards organisation working on health issues.

One of the aims of our new project in frame of the program Transition Facility (EU resources) will be strengthening of networking in the area health and social care. Issues from the workshop help us to prepare contents and intention of the project.