

# Possibilities of Non-governmental Non-profit Organisations and Volunteering in Solving the Covid-19 Pandemic and Emergency Events in the South Bohemian Region

Štěpán Kavan

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## Abstract:

In addition to state-guaranteed components, NGOs and volunteers are part of a system that can be used to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic and other emergencies. Non-governmental non-profit organisations are one of the forms of interest groups and can be described as a process of uniting the interests of citizens, which, for various reasons, are not secured by the state. The aim of the paper is (a) to examine the cooperation of crisis management staff of municipalities with extended powers with non-governmental non-profit organisations and volunteers in preparing for and solving emergencies, and (b) to find out the experience and forms of cooperation of crisis management staff of municipalities with extended powers with non-governmental non-profit organisations and volunteers in dealing with the Covid-19 epidemic in the conditions of the South Bohemian Region. The main research method was a survey in the form of questionnaires. The results of the study show that the cooperation of crisis management staff of individual municipalities with extended powers and non-governmental non-profit organisations/volunteers in the South Bohemian Region should focus on weaknesses and threats. The strategy is characterised by trying to eliminate weaknesses and avoid threats through logical constraints or reorganisations of the system.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, volunteering, integrated rescue system, emergency, non-governmental non-profit organisations, civil society, cooperation

## Introduction

The protection of society as a comprehensive set of measures is focused on human security. Due to their actions, emergency events lead to a breach of the state of security and, in more extensive manifestations, affect the whole society. To deal with emergencies, rescue and security forces have been set up in the Czech Republic whose priority mission is to save lives, health, property, and the environment. In addition to state-guaranteed units, non-governmental non-profit organisations (NGOs) are also involved in the preparation and resolution of emergencies. The

rules of cooperation and coordination pursuant to Act No. 239/2000 Coll., On the Integrated Rescue System and Amendments to Certain Acts, as amended, apply to their coordination in the case of emergency events. NGOs, which prepare and participate in dealing with emergencies on a longer-term and systematic basis, create platforms for cooperation and coordination focused on follow-up activities after rescue work, such as monitoring the affected area, humanitarian, psycho-social, material and financial assistance, counselling, and other professional assistance.<sup>1</sup> The term Panel of NGOs is used for this form of cooperation and cooperation of several NGOs. The term Panel of NGOs can be explained in terms of content as a space for discussion, a communication platform.<sup>2</sup>

The non-profit sector has a long and rich tradition in our territory.<sup>3</sup> Various foundations and associations have had a significant influence on the formation of national awareness. The association's activities between the First and Second World Wars were extensive. For example, the Masaryk League against Tuberculosis was established at that time. The tradition of associations was interrupted mainly by the communist totalitarian regime after 1948, when the property of non-governmental organisations was largely confiscated and the activities of associations were suppressed. The activities of individual organisations were directed to officially supported propaganda organisations, such as Pioneer and the Socialist Youth Union. These were associated and politically controlled in an entity called the National Front. A fundamental change in the development of the non-profit sector was the social events initiated on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1989, during the Velvet Revolution. In the following period, the original organisations were renewed and developed, and completely new organisations were also established. Some NGOs, in terms of their mission, identify with the idea of help and cooperation in disasters. Due to the common direction of several NGOs, certain groups are formed in order to streamline their activities.<sup>4</sup>

Public life, life together, community living, and living in solidarity are areas that have always interested man and society.<sup>5</sup> The creation of various associations between people brings requirements for social organisation and care for individuals or groups.<sup>6</sup> Public administration must increasingly respond to a wide range of democratic demands, such as the interest of citizens, their greater involvement in public affairs, greater transparency, and greater efficiency and quality.<sup>7</sup>

It is not only political parties that are involved in formulating, promoting, and realising interests in a democratic society. Various types of interest groups play an important role, participating in the formulation and promotion of specific interests. These are usually trade unions, professional organisations, but also various associations. Thanks to interest groups, the multi-layered space between the sphere of power and the state on the one hand and the citizens on the other expands and connects. NGOs, as one of the forms of interest groups, can be described as a process of merging/aggregating of specific interests of citizens. Such interests, for various reasons, are

1 Bohumila Baštecká et al., *Psychosociální krizová spolupráce* (Praha: Grada, 2013), 136.

2 Štěpán Kavan, 'Systém spolupráce nestátních neziskových organizací při řešení mimořádných událostí v České republice', *SPEKTRUM* 14, no. 2 (2014): 35–40.

3 Bohumila Baštecká et al., *Terénní krizová práce. Psychosociální intervenční týmy* (Praha: Grada, 2005), 71.

4 Štěpán Kavan et al., *Nestátní neziskové organizace, dobrovolnictví a možnosti spolupráce při mimořádných událostech* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidových novin, v tisku, předpokládaný rok vydání 2022), 81–83.

5 Jiří Dušek, 'International Cooperation of Regional Authorities of the Czech Republic: History, Presence and Future', in *18th International Colloquium on Regional Sciences. Conference Proceedings*, edited by Viktorie Klímová, Žitěk V. (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 2015), 300–305, <https://doi.org/10.5817/CZ.MUNI.P210-7861-2015-40>.

6 Lenka Maléřová et al., 'Teaching methods focusing on Simulation', in *18th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Geoconference SGEM*, (Albena: International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference SGEM, 2018), 273–280, <https://doi.org/10.5593/sgem2018/5.4/S22.035>.

7 Nadežda Jankelová et al., *Moderné trendy v manažmente organizácií miestnej samosprávy ako nástroj trvalo udržateľného rozvoja* (Brno: MSD, 2018), 45–48.

not provided by the state in the form of public administration, that is, state administration and self-government. It is a specialised type of organisation of the interests of a certain group of citizens. NGOs can then be described as the voluntary formation of a social unit with certain goals and certain internal divisions (organisations), which seeks to realise the individual, material, and ideological interests of its members in terms of needs, benefits, and justification. It is done within the social unit – small club / local associations, or vis-à-vis other groups, organisations, and institutions – a large union / central organisation.<sup>8</sup> These groups operate on the basis of civil society and, usually, without political responsibility.

It is necessary to examine the issue of NGOs and volunteering in a broader view of emergencies and disasters. Disaster management is a key activity in risk preparation and management. Disasters not only have undeniable human consequences, but can cause significant financial, environmental, and social losses.<sup>9</sup> Crisis preparedness includes anticipating disasters of any type, considering various aspects such as early identification and risk assessment, and identification of all available resources, skills assessment, and training. The preparatory phase is only one of four phases defined in the American National Governors Association (NGA) disaster management cycle: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.<sup>10</sup> In individual phases, it is appropriate and possible to involve NGOs and volunteers to varying degrees. From an educational point of view, it can be considered necessary to teach the topic of civic engagement and assistance in emergency response in addition to emergency preparedness training and good principles of behaviour in emergency events.

To mitigate damage, it is important not only to develop damage prevention through measures such as strengthening critical infrastructure and security forces, but also to ensure that individuals and organisations, including citizens, are able to respond to disasters through acquired disaster management training, which improves knowledge about reactions to individual crisis situations.<sup>11</sup> The following activities are involved in disaster management: self-help efforts – individuals and their families; mutual assistance – local community; and public assistance – disaster responders. All involved have their own roles and should therefore acquire disaster management literacy through joint disaster protection training.<sup>12</sup>

Emergency responses aim to alleviate human suffering and material loss through an effective response. The correct response must be triggered and performed on a system basis:<sup>13</sup> the right quality, the right source, the right cost, the right quantity, the right place, and the right time. Many approaches to disaster management, especially the ones applied by rescue services, focus only on short- and medium-term decisions that cover days or weeks to overcome the harmful consequences of one event at a time. One of the advantages of NGOs is the possibility of their long-term operation. Partnerships between NGOs are based on mutual trust and cooperation. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies identifies data collected by other

8 Blanka Říchová, *Úvod do současné politologie. Srovnávací analýza demokratických politických systémů* (Praha: Portál, 2002), 118.

9 Šárka Kročová, 'Protection of aquatic ecosystems against accidents in the Czech Republic', *Inžynieria Mineralna* 36, no. 2 (2015): 225–230.

10 Méryl Paquay et al., 'Disaster management training in the Euregio-Meuse-Rhine: What can we learn from each other to improve cross-border practices?', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 10, no. 56 (April 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2021.102134>.

11 Kota Tomoyasu et al., 'Attempt to Typify Disaster Educational Programs – Case Study of the Disaster Management Education Challenge Plan', *Journal of Disaster Research* 10, no. 2 (2014): 210–216, <https://doi.org/10.20965/jdr.2015.p0210>.

12 Stacy Peerbolte et al., 'Disaster management and the critical thinking skills of local emergency managers: correlations with age, gender, education, and years in occupation', *Disasters* 37, no. 1 (2013): 48–60, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2012.01291.x>.

13 Douglas Alem et al., 'Building disaster preparedness and response capacity in humanitarian supply chains using the Social Vulnerability Index', *European Journal of Operational Research* 292, no. 1 (2021): 250–275, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2020.10.016>.

NGOs (information related to the nature and impacts of disasters on natural and socio-economic systems) as an essential tool for disaster management.<sup>14</sup>

The complexity of current emergencies creates a challenge for crisis communication. Communication is an integral part of management and decision-making in crisis situations and needs to be developed as much as possible. Crisis situations usually require the rapid response of those responsible who are under time pressure. Crisis communication has its origins in public relations and is based on a strategy of public perception of the event. It seeks to explain a specific crisis event to determine the likely consequences and the procedure to ensure damage reduction. Crisis communication aims to reduce uncertainty, respond to crisis situations, address the situation, and learn from it. Effective communication must not be one-way and all actors must be involved, including NGOs. The crisis situation requires the crisis management authorities to be open to the public. Conflicts between individual subjects cause confusion, create uncertainty, and thus worsen the course of the crisis situation.<sup>15</sup> In practice, system failures and inefficient teamwork can lead to serious crisis management errors.<sup>16</sup> Lessons from disasters are based on the experience of public administration, NGOs, and crisis management authorities. The goal is to deal effectively with future threats.<sup>17</sup>

## Objective and Methodology

To carry out the research and a systematic approach to solving the subject matter, the research goals for the practical part were formulated by the author. The main goal is to examine the cooperation of crisis management staff of municipalities with extended powers (hereinafter MEPs) in the South Bohemian Region with NGOs and volunteers in preparing for and dealing with emergencies. The secondary goal is to find out the experience and forms of cooperation of MEP crisis management staff in the South Bohemian Region with NGOs and volunteers on the basis of experience in dealing with the Covid-19 epidemic.

Subsequently, research questions were asked:

- How do MEP crisis management staff in the South Bohemian Region cooperate with individual NGOs and volunteers in dealing with emergencies?
- How do the crisis management staff of the MEP in the South Bohemian Region evaluate the solution to the crisis situation of the Covid-19 epidemic in terms of cooperation with NGOs and volunteers from the public?

The objectives of the work in the theoretical part are fulfilled mainly through document analysis and content analysis, with the addition of the author's own experience with NGOs, volunteering, emergencies, crisis situations, and a system of solutions involving all entities.

The form of qualitative research was chosen as the basic approach for processing the subject.

14 Jessica Omukuti et al., 'The value of secondary use of data generated by non-governmental organisations for disaster risk management research: Evidence from the Caribbean', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 10, no. 56 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2021.102114>.

15 Pauliina Palttala et al., 'Communication Gaps in Disaster Management: Perceptions by Experts from Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations', *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 20, no. 1 (March 2012): 2–12, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5973.2011.00656.x>.

16 Sarah Rudy et al., 'Team Management Training Using Crisis Resource Management Results in Perceived Benefits by Healthcare Workers', *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing* 38, no. 5 (2007): 224, <https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20070901-08>.

17 Hu Xiangnan et al., 'Disaster policy and emergency management reforms in China: From Wenchuan earthquake to Jiuzhaigou earthquake', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 10, no. 52 (January 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2020.101964>.



Qualitative research is a process of seeking understanding based on different methodological traditions of examining a given social or human problem. The researcher creates a comprehensive, holistic picture, analyses various types of texts, informs about the views of research participants, and conducts research in natural conditions.

From the methodological point of view, a search of literary sources, analysis of selected information sources, subsequent evaluation of the obtained information and synthesis of individual information were used for processing. The induction-generalisation method was used to draw general conclusions from the partial findings.

The main research method was a survey in the form of questionnaires, which was used to obtain information from selected NGOs and volunteers. The questionnaire can be considered as one of the most widespread research techniques. The advantage of the questionnaire application was easy and quick administration, and the possibility of personal anonymity (but not institutional). The disadvantage can be seen in the formulation of questions that may not be suitable for everyone and in a certain subjectivity of statements.

For the objectives of the work in the empirical part, when examining the involvement of NGOs and volunteers, a self-designed questionnaire was used. The questionnaire had a fixed structure – it was a specific set of written questions, which respondents answered in closed questions (yes/no), in closed dichotomous questions (marking of several variants), or in a selection question with one or more answers (disjunctive and conjunctive, or an enumeration question with order), in open-ended questions (with the possibility of one's own answer), and in scaling questions (important to unimportant, determining the extent or intensity of the phenomenon). The structure of the questionnaire also included filter questions, where the respondent commented only on facts relevant to him. In the final part of the questionnaire, projection questions were used where the question was not focused on the respondent's own attitude, but in a figurative sense on another subject. The selection of respondents for qualitative research was made as:

- intentional – the sample corresponded to the research objectives,
- summary – the decision that NGOs and volunteers will be addressed in the research was made at the same time before the start of the survey,
- based on the willingness of respondents to participate in the research.

The evaluation of information from qualitative research is as diverse as the conclusions obtained. During the processing, the technique of simple enumeration was used<sup>18</sup> when the frequency and intensity of occurrence of a certain character/element was monitored. Another approach to sorting data was to create categories and typologies. The procedure was implemented with an emphasis on finding and creating more general categories, under which it was possible to include more cases. At the same time, these categories were definable and interpretable.

A SWOT analysis was used to further process the information obtained. The SWOT analysis, or the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, originated in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States. SWOT is an abbreviation of the English original: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. It is a useful and very versatile analytical technique for understanding and interpreting strengths and weaknesses and for identifying opportunities and

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18 Jiří Reichel, *Kapitoly metodologie sociálních výzkumů* (Praha: Grada, 2009), 48.

threats.<sup>19</sup> It is most often used in business as a strategic tool for company development.<sup>20</sup>

The SWOT analysis consists of the evaluation and analysis of the current state of the assessed entity/topic, its internal environment, and the current situation around the assessed entity, that is, the external environment. The point is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment, that is, what the entity is good at and in what it lags behind, and the opportunities and threats found in the external environment, that is, the entity cannot influence them.<sup>21</sup> First, the strengths that are perceived as internal forces are analysed. Above-standard skills, knowledge, potential, and resources which can be used for the benefit of the company in the future are determined. Weaknesses are the opposite of strengths. This area mainly includes the internal weaknesses of the organisation/issues addressed in which better results could be achieved. Potential possibilities for improvement were chosen as opportunities, providing their proper use. External facts that could be successful in the future have been identified. Threats are external conditions that can make it difficult or even threaten the achievement of goals. Threats have been identified as negative aspects that must be taken into account and systematically prevented.<sup>22</sup>

After listing strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, each item was evaluated. Based on the performed interpretation, the researched issue was assigned the appropriate meaning and value and its complex picture was created. For strengths and opportunities, a positive scale from 1 to 5 was used, where 5 means the highest satisfaction and 1 the lowest satisfaction. For weaknesses and threats, a negative scale was used from -1, which means the least dissatisfaction, to -5, which is the greatest dissatisfaction.

The pairwise evaluation method was used to determine the relative importance of the parameters of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. A weighting factor was calculated for each item, which expressed the importance of individual items in the given category. The higher the weight, the more importance was placed on the item in the category and vice versa. The sum of the weights in each category must be equal to 1. In calculating the weighting, the individual criteria were compared with each other. A more important criterion for the given problem was selected from each pair. The Fuller's triangle was chosen as the system for pairwise comparisons. Ratings and weights are then multiplied by each other. The results in each category are added up, then the internal part is added up separately, that is, strengths and weaknesses, and then, separately, the external part of the analysis, that is, opportunities and threats. These two results are then subtracted from each other to obtain the final balance of the SWOT analysis.<sup>23</sup>

## Results

This chapter focuses on examining the cooperation of the MEP crisis management worker, NGOs and volunteers in the preparation and resolution of emergencies, as well as the involvement of NGOs. The limitation of the study lies in the implementation of the survey in the South Bohemian Region and the reflection on the solution of the pandemic crisis situation in the spring of 2020.

19 Paul Newton and Helen Bristoll, *SWOT Analysis* (PESTEL ANALYSIS, 2013), 22, <http://www.free-management-ebooks.com/dldebk-pdf/fme-pestle-analysis.pdf>.

20 Lawrence Fine, *The SWOT Analysis: Using your Strength to overcome Weaknesses, Using Opportunities to overcome Threats* (North Charleston SC: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2009), 24.

21 Alan Sarsby, *SWOT Analysis: A Guide to SWOT for Business Studies Students* (Oakland UK: Spectaris Ltd., 2016), 11.

22 Štěpán Kavan, *Ochrana člověka a společnosti – vývoj vzdělávání v bezpečnostních tématech* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidových novin, 2020), 208, <https://doi.org/10.32725/zsf.2020.74227530>.

23 Dan Shewan, 'How to Do a SWOT Analysis for Your Small Business (with Examples)', WordStream, Google, September 1, 2022, <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/12/20/swot-analysis>.

The South Bohemian Region is one of the 14 higher territorial self-governing units in the Czech Republic, where the city of Prague is an independent unit, albeit with the position of a region. The cooperation of the MEP with NGOs and volunteers is a case study that aims at a specific area of dealing with emergencies and crisis situations with a focus on a defined area. The study then analyses, monitors, and processes the selected topic and all its relevant aspects. The case study gathered a relatively large amount of information from crisis workers in the MEP, NGOs, and volunteers. The case study is based on the assumption that a thorough examination of one case will help to understand similar cases.

The survey at the MEP level focused on the experience of cooperation between MEP crisis management staff and NGOs and volunteers. The mayor of the MEP and the municipal office of the MEP have certain tasks set for the preparation of the administrative district of the MEP according to the Crisis Management Act § 18–19, for example, the mayor of the MEP organises the preparation of the administrative district of MEP for crisis situations and participates in their solution.<sup>24</sup> In order to fulfil the tasks stipulated by law, the municipal office of the MEP establishes a crisis management workplace. Employees of Crisis Management Department 17 of the MEP in the South Bohemian Region were respondents in the survey. These staff are usually the secretaries of the MEP Security Council and of the MEP Crisis Staff. These employees can be expected to have relevant knowledge in the field of crisis management at the MEP level and an overview of possible cooperation with NGOs and volunteers in emergencies and crisis situations.

The survey with respondents was conducted in the period from 18<sup>th</sup> March to 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 epidemic, the continuing state of emergency and the associated crisis measures, such as restrictions on free movement and meetings, a remote form of survey via e-mail communication was launched. The original research plan envisaged the implementation of semi-structured interviews. A request for the completion of structured questions was sent to individual respondents as an alternative form of interview, which was also attached to the request. Most respondents answered the questions within one week upon receipt, and some were reminded through a request for answers. The result was a 100% return on answers and obtaining information from all the MEPs in the South Bohemian Region.

The survey was conducted in the form of qualitative research. The survey was conducted with the staff of the South Bohemian MEPs in the form of e-mail communication with pre-prepared closed and open questions. These were focused on their views and on the experience of dealing with emergencies with the involvement of NGOs and volunteers. The questions were also focused on the experience with the solution of the Covid-19 epidemic in the South Bohemian region. Subsequently, an analysis of the answers was performed and a SWOT analysis was prepared from the information obtained by the survey. As part of the SWOT analysis, an overview of the weaknesses and strengths of the crisis management system in individual MEPs in the South Bohemian Region was compiled and opportunities and threats were summarised. By compiling Fuller's triangle, a pairwise evaluation and calculation of the values of individual characteristics was performed. Respondents stated that in preparation for extraordinary events they cooperate most with regional associations of the CRC (in 14 cases), Caritas CR (in six cases), Diaconia of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (in two cases) and with ADRA (in one case). In 15 cases, MEP crisis management staff have had experience with NGOs and public volunteers within the MEP administrative district in the event of a real emergency, resp. crisis situation. Cooperation in dealing

24 Act No. 240/2000 Coll., § 18–19.

with the consequences of extraordinary events was mentioned 16 times in case of the regional association of the CRC, 10 times in case of Caritas CR, three times in case of ADRA and three times in case of Diaconia of Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. Some local NGOs were also listed, e.g., Ledax, THEiA, YMCA.

The majority of respondents who worked with NGOs and volunteers stated that their experience was based on two situations – during the floods (10 respondents) and the current coronavirus epidemic (11 respondents). Another mentioned experience of cooperation with NGOs and volunteers was the extraordinary event during the explosion of an apartment building in Lenora (1 respondent).

Cooperation between NGOs and ORP lay, for example, in the distribution of personal protective equipment, nursing services, coordination of work with volunteers and their registration, material assistance (distribution of dryers, cleaning products, etc.), and the provision of other necessary human resources. NGOs provided care for the homeless within emergency accommodation, provided services for quarantined and isolated people (shopping, etc.), assisted in the hospital laundromat, hospital, vaccination centre, trained volunteers for the necessary work, and provided psychosocial assistance to residents.

According to the respondents, the communication with NGOs and volunteers in each MEP was different. The answers were very diverse. Almost everyone evaluated cooperation and communication positively. Some said that there were a lot of unknown situations in dealing with the epidemic and that they tried to deal with everything quickly. Considering volunteers, the assigned tasks were performed without delay and with great willingness. Communication with NGOs took place by telephone, e-mail, or in person. Persons from the ranks of employees of the municipal authorities were assigned to register the offers of volunteers. The necessary tasks were issued through the crisis staffs and, at the same time, feedback on their fulfilment was provided in this way.

When evaluating the cooperation of MEPs with NGOs, 15 respondents stated that the cooperation is important. Two respondents evaluated the cooperation as unimportant. The MEP crisis management staff stated that NGOs can be involved in relation to the preparation and resolution of the consequences of an emergency, especially in the area of:

- care for citizens in both social and health security,
- vaccination accompaniments,
- evacuation,
- care for citizens in field conditions,
- material distribution,
- assistance in dealing with the consequences of the flood,
- individual care for the elderly,
- assistance in caring for the homeless,
- local field investigations,
- psychological and social assistance in a crisis situation,
- organisation of volunteer work,
- consulting,
- humanitarian aid,
- cleaning work,
- assistance in coordinating emergency accommodation and meals.



Considering the answers of the respondents, it is clear that the strongest aspects of cooperation between MEPs and NGOs are belonging, the opportunity to use a large number of volunteers, rapid communication, and the provision of the necessary material resources in order to overcome the emergency. The probe participants also stated that the advantages of cooperation with NGOs include professional help, enthusiasm of volunteers for work, empathy, and experience with volunteering. Another advantage is that local NGOs know their scope and can draw attention to the needs that should be addressed in cooperation with the city. In some MEPs, cooperation has been established for a long time and is implemented even outside crisis situations.

Respondents mentioned insufficient financial resources, insufficient numbers of staff, and missing material for the first days of the emergency among the most common shortcomings and weaknesses of cooperation between MEPs and NGOs.

The probe participants recommended better preparation and planning of some procedures and better communication, providing feedback, 'less talk and promises, more work done by NGOs (the work which they so often point to as being something admirable)', not neglecting the necessary volunteers, and giving them appropriate priority in the distribution of tools for the performance of the activity or, for example, preferential vaccination.

A total of 10 respondents stated that a common problem is the ignorance of MEP crisis management staff about the possibilities of NGOs. It is necessary to inform staff more precisely what is and is not possible, how volunteers are deployed (for example, in terms of contracts, provision of personal protective equipment, etc.), what the capacities of the NGO are, restrictions, etc. An administrative burden related to the preparation for possible cooperation is a certain obstacle in deploying the necessary forces in the field. Among the answers was the criticism of NGOs – 'NGOs dictate the requirements under which they are willing/able to participate in real help, which I consider unacceptable given the nature of such an organisation, which presents itself as "volunteering".'

Seven respondents stated that the epidemic had led to closer contacts and possible cooperation in the future. Cooperation with the local CRC in České Budějovice as the coordinator of the Panel of NGOs of the South Bohemian Region with almost all MEPs has improved. Some crisis management staff have realised the need for closer cooperation – for example, to integrate an NGO worker into the MEP crisis staff, which has also happened in several cases. Most respondents expressed gratitude to NGOs for their willingness to help.

## Survey Evaluation – SWOT Analysis

The evaluation of the information obtained from the survey was performed by the method of SWOT analysis and subsequent pairwise comparison using an expert estimate according to the Fuller method. It is summarised in Tables 1–9.

Table 1: Strengths

Area	Criteria
Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belonging</li> <li>2. A large number of one-time volunteers</li> <li>3. A permanent base of volunteers and members</li> <li>4. Qualified members</li> <li>5. Material resources</li> <li>6. Ability of rapid actions</li> <li>7. Experience with volunteering</li> <li>8. Knowledge of the MEP</li> <li>9. Long-term cooperation</li> <li>10. Participation in MEP crisis staff meetings</li> <li>11. A wide range of activities</li> <li>12. MEP coverage</li> <li>13. The possibility of using forces and resources of NGOs</li> </ol>

Source: own processing

Explanation of and commentary on the individual criteria listed in the table:

- Belonging – MEP staff gained closer ties and new contacts for future cooperation thanks to the cooperation with NGOs.
- A large number of one-off volunteers – public volunteers in cooperation with the MEP provide the necessary human resources to overcome the emergency.
- Permanent base of volunteers and members – NGOs have their certified volunteers and members who are able to provide assistance for the MEP immediately after activation.
- Qualified members – NGOs have qualified members who are able to provide professional assistance.
- Material resources – NGOs are able to provide the missing material resources using humanitarian warehouses to overcome emergencies or crisis situations.
- Ability of fast action – the enthusiasm of the volunteers for the work and their time possibilities allow them to provide assistance almost immediately after receiving a request from the MEP.
- Experience with volunteering – this is the experience of NGO members gained in humanitarian aid in recent years (e.g., during floods), which allows for more effective solutions to current emergencies.
- Knowledge of the MEP – local NGOs know their scope and can draw attention to the needs which have to be covered in cooperation with the town/city.
- Long-term cooperation – in some MEPs, cooperation with NGOs has been established for a long time and is implemented even outside crisis situations.
- Participation in crisis staff meetings – in some MEPs, selected members of NGOs participate in MEP crisis staff meetings.
- A wide range of activities – NGOs offer various forms of assistance, such as medical, technical, psychosocial.
- MEP NGO coverage – NGOs are deployed in each MEP.
- The possibility of using forces and resources of NGOs as needed – NGOs are able to intervene outside their territory.

Table 2: Evaluation of strengths using the Fuller method

Strengths	Frequency	Weighting factor	Self evaluation	Criterion strength calculation
1. Belonging	4	0.05	3	0.15
2. Large number of volunteers	3	0.04	2	0.08
3. Permanent base of volunteers and members	9	0.12	4	0.46
4. Qualified members	3	0.04	2	0.08
5. Material sources	11	0.14	5	0.71
6. Fast action	9	0.12	4	0.46
7. Experience with volunteering	6	0.08	3	0.23
8. Knowledge of the MEP	2	0.03	1	0.03
9. Long-term cooperation	11	0.14	5	0.71
10. Participation in MEP crisis staff meeting	3	0.04	2	0.08
11. Wide range of activities	7	0.09	4	0.36
12. MEP coverage	4	0.05	3	0.15
13. Possibilities of summoning forces and resources	6	0.08	3	0.23
<b>Resulting values</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>3.72</b>

Source: own processing

Table 3: Weaknesses

Area	Criteria
Weaknesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ignorance of competencies</li> <li>2. Insufficient feedback</li> <li>3. Too many rules and regulations</li> <li>4. Insufficient funding</li> <li>5. Insufficient material for the first days of an emergency</li> <li>6. Limited resources to cover a larger affected area</li> <li>7. Charged services</li> <li>8. Unpreparedness of MEPs and NGOs for an epidemic crisis situation</li> <li>9. Different levels of possibilities of individual NGOs</li> <li>10. Lack of personal protective equipment in warehouses</li> </ol>

Source: own processing

Explanation of and commentary on the individual criteria listed in the table:

- The MEP does not know the competencies of NGOs – some crisis management staff do not know what activities NGOs can provide and what the conditions are of such provision.
- Insufficient feedback – crisis management staff face insufficient feedback on the work done by NGOs.
- Too many regulations and ordinances – many laws and implementing regulations have been issued in the area of an emergency, the fulfilment of which is hampered by the system of co-operation between the MEP and NGOs (administration).

- Insufficient funding – crisis management staff face insufficient funds for dealing with an emergency or crisis situation and to support NGOs.
- Insufficient material for the first days of an emergency – NGOs do not have a sufficient or required amount of material for their voluntary activities within the MEP during the first days of an emergency or crisis situation.
- Limited resources to cover a larger affected area – some MEPs do not have sufficient staffing and resources to assist in a major emergency and have to seek assistance from neighbouring MEPs.
- Charged services of NGOs – some NGOs charge for their services and the addressees subsequently reject these services and lean towards organisations that carry out their activities free of charge.
- Unpreparedness of MEPs and NGOs for an epidemic crisis situation – workers have experience only with floods, and, to a limited extent, with bird flu.
- Different levels of possibilities of individual NGOs – individual NGOs are unevenly equipped with material, technology, and trained staff and are unevenly distributed in the South Bohemian Region.
- Lack of personal protective equipment in warehouses – NGOs did not have supplies of personal protective equipment for the first weeks of the epidemic.

Table 4: Evaluation of weaknesses using the Fuller method

Weaknesses										Frequency	Weighting factor	Self-evaluation	Criterion strength calculation
1. Ignorance of competence	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	0.09	-3	-0.3
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
2. Insufficient feedback		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	0.09	-3	-0.3
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
3. Too many regulations			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	0.04	-2	-0.1
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
4. Insufficient financial resources				4	4	4	4	4	4	8	0.18	-5	-0.9
				5	6	7	8	9	10				
5. Insufficient material for the first days of an emergency					5	5	5	5	5	7	0.16	-5	-0.8
					6	7	8	9	10				
6. Limited resources for larger areas						6	6	6	6	6	0.13	-5	-0.7
						7	8	9	10				
7. Paid services							7	7	7	3	0.07	-2	-0.1
							8	9	10				
8. Unpreparedness for an epidemic crisis situation								8	8	1	0.02	-1	0.0
								9	10				
9. Different levels of NGO abilities									9	1	0.02	-1	0.0
									10				
10. Lack of personal protective equipment in warehouses										9	0.2	-5	-1.0
Resulting values										45	1		-4.13

Source: own processing



Table 5: Opportunities

Area	Criteria
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Improve the motivation system</li><li>2. Perform analyses and evaluations of cooperation between NGOs and MEPs</li><li>3. Simplification of administration</li><li>4. Greater media coverage</li><li>5. Develop a better system of communication with new volunteers from the public</li><li>6. Enforce the participation of NGOs in regular exercises in model situations</li><li>7. Increase the stock of personal protective equipment</li><li>8. Training offers and education</li></ol>

Source: own processing

Explanation of and commentary on the individual criteria listed in the table:

- Improve the motivation system – it would be appropriate to financially evaluate and motivate volunteers for work well-done, so that they have the motivation to work together on a long-term basis and have the opportunity for professional growth based on good results of their work.
- Perform analyses and evaluations of cooperation between NGOs and MEPs – in order to improve future cooperation, it is important to jointly evaluate and analyse the work carried out within the cooperation.
- Simplification of administration – in the event of an emergency or crisis situation, it would be easier for staff to reduce the number of administrative tasks and focus on the ability of rapid action and calling of members of NGOs or volunteers from the public.
- Greater media coverage of activities – in the first wave of the epidemic, the public was not sufficiently informed about the cooperation of NGOs with MEPs.
- Develop a better system of communication with new volunteers from the public – set up one specific workplace with more employees for this activity, so that there are no problems in communication with these one-off volunteers.
- Enforce the participation of NGOs in regular exercises in model situations – thus ensuring better preparedness of NGOs and MEP staff for similar crisis situations.
- Increase the stock of personal protective equipment – in case of emergency, ensure its sufficiency for professionals, NGO members and volunteers.
- Training offers and education – make educational seminars more accessible to volunteers and members of NGOs, set up courses for crisis management, etc.

Table 6: Evaluation of opportunities using the Fuller method

Opportunities								Frequency	Weighting factor	Self-evaluation	Criterion strength calculation
1. Improve the motivation system	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0.07	2	0.14
2. Perform analyses and evaluations of cooperation	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	3	0.11	3	0.32
3. Simplification of administration			3	3	3	3	3	1	0.04	1	0.04
4. Greater media coverage				4	4	4	4	4	0.14	4	0.57
5. A better system of communication					5	5	5	5	0.18	5	0.89
6. Participation in regular exercises						6	6	3	0.11	3	0.32
7. Increase the stock of personal protective equipment							7	7	0.25	5	1.25
8. Training offers and education								3	0.11	3	0.32
<b>Resulting values</b>								28	1		3.86

Source: own processing

Table 7: Threats

Area	Criteria
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of volunteers</li> <li>2. Insufficient knowledge of NGO competencies</li> <li>3. Departure of trained members</li> <li>4. Insufficient financial and social evaluation</li> <li>5. Low level of cooperation with municipal authorities and MEPs</li> <li>6. Poor communication network</li> <li>7. Poor coordination of new one-off volunteers</li> </ol>

Source: own processing

Explanation and commentary of the individual criteria listed in the table:

- Lack of volunteers – a decrease in public interest in volunteering and a loss of public motivation could lead to a crisis in covering the necessary activities in the event of an emergency and crisis situation.
- Insufficient knowledge of NGO competencies – ignorance of crisis management staff about the possibilities of NGOs can cause volunteers to distrust the effective system and demotivate to provide the necessary assistance.
- Departure of trained members – the departure of trained and experienced permanent members could lead to a situation where the necessary activities (which could positively affect the course of resolving a crisis situation or emergency) are not provided.
- Insufficient financial and social evaluation – this fact could be one of the reasons for the departure of experienced and trained NGO members.
- Low level of cooperation with municipal authorities and MEPs – in the case of inefficient use of NGOs within municipalities or MEPs, demotivation of individual NGOs could occur due to

a feeling of uselessness.

- Poor communication network – chaos and a bad communication system can be one of the reasons for the reluctance of NGOs to cooperate within the MEP.
- Poor coordination of new one-off volunteers – a sense of uselessness due to poor communication and coordination of public volunteers with motivation to help could lead to demotivation of the public for volunteering and a loss of the number of volunteers needed.

Table 8: Threat assessment using the Fuller method

Threats							Frequency	Weighting factor	Self-evaluation	Criterion strength calculation
1. Lack of volunteers	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	0.14	-4	-0.57
	2	3	4	5	6	7				
2. Insufficient knowledge of NGO competencies		2	2	2	2	2	1	0.05	-1	-0.05
		3	4	5	6	7				
3. Departure of trained members			3	3	3	3	5	0.24	-5	-1.19
			4	5	6	7				
4. Insufficient evaluation				4	4	4	1	0.05	-1	-0.05
				5	6	7				
5. Low level of cooperation with municipal authorities					5	5	6	0.29	-5	-1.43
					6	7				
6. Poor communication network						6	3	0.14	-4	-0.57
						7				
7. Poor coordination of volunteers							2	0.1	-2	-0.19
Resulting values							21	1		-4.05

Source: own processing

Table 9: Summary results of the SWOT analysis

Overall results of the SWOT analysis			
Strengths	3.72	Opportunities	3.86
Weaknesses	-4.13	Threats	-4.05
Internal factors in total	-0.41	External factors in total	-0.19
The final number of the SWOT analysis	-0.6		

Source: own processing

Internal factors reached a total value of -0.41 and external factors counted for -0.19. The total final number of the SWOT analysis is -0.6. According to the obtained results, it is clear that external factors prevail over internal factors.

The resulting placement of external and internal factors in the strategic position in the SWOT matrix helps to determine appropriate measures for future improvement of existing conditions. The result shows that the cooperation of crisis management staff of individual MEPs and NGOs in the South Bohemian Region should focus on the WT strategy, weaknesses and threats. The strategy is characterised by trying to eliminate weaknesses and avoid threats through logical constraints or reorganisations of the system, so that the system of cooperation does not have to fight for survival.

## Conclusion

The basis of smooth cooperation of NGOs with other entities in the preparation and resolution of emergencies is mutual knowledge of procedures, resources, and methods of work. The relationship between citizens and public administration is complicated in democratic societies. Citizens have a dual role in relationship with public administration. On the one hand, they are the object of its activities, they must respect its decisions about measures and regulations. On the other hand, they are a source of legitimacy of public administration, as they are a source of all state power.<sup>25</sup> One way of civic engagement is NGO association and volunteering. In this way, the members of society participate in the administration of public affairs and directly or indirectly in the formation of public life and politics. Civic participation in the form of permanent or occasional activities in emergencies forms a set of opportunities for citizens to actively express their views and solidarity. The societal value of NGOs and volunteering is generally based on the ability to contribute and participate in solving social problems. The legal regulations of the Czech Republic enable the participation of citizens, define the basic framework for the activities of NGOs and volunteering, and define the institutionalised forms in the given area.

The involvement of NGOs and volunteers is the implementation of democracy; it is about associating and supporting social new approaches, where the state adapts to the requirements of society. This is a strong factor in the education of citizens. NGOs create places where citizens educate and motivate each other for the good of society, but also for public benefit needs and goals. They can be described as a school of civic awareness.

NGOs and volunteering are perceived as a distinctive space of society, which has its limits and limited possibilities/capacities, but they cannot be replaced by anything. During the Covid-19 epidemic, new, thus far unresolved and untested situations emerged in the field of volunteering, to which predetermined regulations and rules often did not directly respond. In practice, questions have arisen as to how to interpret and apply existing rules or whether it is necessary to change them.

One of the goals of resilience – the resilience of society – is to strengthen local capacities, which is an area where volunteering can mean real support. The assistance of volunteers in disaster preparedness and recovery planning will specifically contribute to laying the foundations for sustainable development procedures in the context of pre-crisis and post-crisis humanitarian aid operations. A volunteer offers help to others who need support or help. The assistance can be offered through non-governmental non-profit organisations or volunteer centres or as a stand-alone activity. Volunteering is aimed at creating beneficial or innovative things, but above all at building relationships. The volunteer also develops and enriches himself, creates new things, and meets new people.

During extraordinary events, representatives of NGOs, local governments, and emergency services meet regularly. It is desirable that all actors involved in this network cooperate with regard to the needs of the event and in accordance with a mutually agreed procedure. The purpose of the co-operation is to pass information from the field to the coordination centre / crisis staff, to the mayors in the affected localities, but also to the public, which offers assistance. This concerns both the possibility of material and volunteer assistance, but also the division of the area into individual sectors and the responsibility of individual NGOs for activities in defined localities.<sup>26</sup>

25 Daniel Čermák et al., *Spolupráce, partnerství a participace v místní veřejné správě: význam, praxe, příslib* (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2011), 36.

26 Pracovní skupina při Ministerstvu vnitra České republiky Dobrovolnictví při mimořádných událostech, *Pravidla dobrovolnické pomoci*



The NGO panel should not be an enclosed space only for contractually bound partners. Other NGOs involved in dealing with emergencies should be directed to the NGO Panel system and cooperate within this coordination.

As part of the systemic scientific approach, our own survey was carried out in order to find out the current state and approach to NGOs and volunteering within the South Bohemian Region in connection with emergencies. The research was carried out as a systematic examination of social phenomena in order to obtain knowledge that describes and explains the current approach in the area of the involvement of NGOs and volunteers in the preparation and resolution of emergencies. The research part included a systematic process of gathering information, synthesising existing knowledge, and achieving increased knowledge.<sup>27</sup> The aim was to gain a unified view of the subject of the study – NGOs and volunteering – in the preparation and resolution of emergencies. On the one hand, the aim was to isolate the individual security issues, and on the other hand, the individual areas were left in the context of other areas as much as possible. Understanding human vulnerability as a result of emergencies is increasingly based on the recognition or non-recognition of the socio-economic and institutional-political forces that shape people's lives and force them to adopt a way of life that can be risky.

## Contact

**PhDr. Štěpán Kavan, Ph.D.**

Faculty of Health and Social Sciences

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

J. Boreckého 1167/27, 370 11 České Budějovice

stepan.kavan@email.cz

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*při mimořádných událostech* (Praha: MV ČR, 2013).

27 Nate Jensen et al. 'The Influence of Rapidly Guessed Item Responses on Teacher Value-Added Estimates: Implications for Policy and Practice', *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 40, no. 2 (June 2018): 267–284, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373718759600>.