



2030 Agenda – Finnish and Czech private sector and the civil society addressing global challenges

Summary and main ideas

The seminar held on the Czech Presidency of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was well received by its participants. From the Czech perspective it added value not only because of having opportunity to share the priority topic of the Presidency with Finnish public, but also (within relatively short time frame) it covered its full range having presented the issue of participation and partnerships of different sectors in a compact and interactive debate. Its main findings and inspirational ideas of participants are mentioned in further text.

Main findings from the discussion

- 1) Sustainability must make sense also economically. Only solutions taking the economic impacts and benefits into account can deliver necessary transformation to sustainability.
- 2) People long for happiness. Sustainability must be perceived as an opportunity, not as a constraint.
- 3) Transformation of the non-governmental sphere. Citizens' initiatives are organized today via social networks rather than through regular NGOs.
- 4) The importance of participation and cooperation across sectors. It is necessary to prevent creation of barriers between professionals on the one hand and the public on the other hand, and at the same time to find sustainable solutions to seek synergies between activities and ways of thinking in governmental, non-governmental and private spheres; the role of municipalities and their proximity to citizens is increasing.
- 5) Both the Czech Republic and Finland are able to contribute to Agenda 2030 by innovative and scalable solutions. Transforming the demolition waste into new building material or operating model for cities and regions for creation of sustainable well-being from a circular and carbon neutral economy are just the examples.
- 6) The inclusive bilateral continuous dialogues, like between the Czech Republic and Finland, have a scalable potential in mutual interconnection with number of other European and non-European countries enabling both experiences sharing and the coordination for great international fora.

Ideas from the panel

Role of private sector

Markus Tuukkanen from Finish Water Forum has warned that companies are taking their business decisions with a 10 to 20 year-long perspective. If the legislator sets the legal framework so that the investment in sustainable development is attractive at this time, they will follow. In this spirit, also the investment director of Taaleri Private Equity Funds, Mr. Tero Luoma, spoke out: "In the world of finance, private investment in sustainable development is nowadays a reality for investment such as green energy or waste recycling." The intervention of Aape Pohjavirta, founder of the FUNZI mobile phone learning system, followed: "...education is the only way to change reality for the better. Nevertheless, this education must be based on the thinking of the future, not the past. Anything that is not based on mobile technologies does simply have no value..." The business environment in the Czech Republic favours the innovation within circular economy and enables fast internationalisation of the most original solutions. One of the examples of such solutions is recyclable demolition waste handling. Petr Marek, the project manager of the ERCTech company presented its patented technology transforming demolition waste into valuable construction material. This solution is particularly well fitting in countries where robotic demolition waste separation takes place including Finland.

Role of the non-governmental sector

NGO representatives from the both Czech and Finnish side provided interesting points of view on the role of the non-governmental sector underlined also with some criticism. Petr Lebeda, CEO of Glopolis, drew attention to the imminent emergence of the gap between elites in pursuit of sustainable development, whether from the governmental non-profit or academic sector, and the public who does not understand their complex language. Some requirements in the area of sustainable development or gender, although correct, they are treated too far from understanding of the public. This opens up opportunities for populism. Sustainable development, however, cannot work without healthy democracy and public participation. Lebeda stressed the need for greater readiness for cooperation between different sectors, including the non-government sphere. The issue of sustainable development is too broad and it will never be possible to address just one approach. It is therefore necessary to maintain mutual respect and openness. Jussi Kanner of the KEPA NGO Platform of NGOs has made reference to the fact that NGOs should not only be watchdogs in relation to firms and politicians but should themselves be more involved in inter-sectoral cooperation for the fulfilment of the idea of sustainable development having a courage to put the usual way of communication in doubts.

Role of youth

During the discussion, Peter Lebeda highlighted youth's insecurity stemming from the absence of great narratives. Kateřina Fialkova called for youth participation (beside social networking activities) at standard democratic processes because it is only possible way of influencing political decisions. The other speakers then highlighted the advantage of the young people that they are not "framed" in their social roles yet thus they can see social problems with greater "helicopter view".

Experience with the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the government level

The presence of experts involved in the A2030 implementation in both countries was beneficial. There have been long-term contacts and exchanges of experience between the secretariats of the two government co-ordinating bodies. Aneta Haimannová of the Central Committee of the Czech Republic presented experiences with the involvement of the non-governmental sector in the implementation of the A2030 in CZ. Finnish Secretary-General of the National Commission for Sustainable Development Annika Lindblom summed up the most significant conclusions resulting from the Finnish experience of sustainable development policy:

- 1) Coherence of sustainable development policies is a key factor for the success of implementation
- 2) The implementation process is as important as its outcome given the experience and knowledge it brings
- 3) Importance of social consensus on the understanding of the role of sustainable development
- 4) The need to feel ownership of sustainable development on the public's side
- 5) Importance of the whole-of-government/whole-of society approach.

In this context, Finnish MP Aila Paloniemi stressed the positive experience with moving the agenda of sustainable development from the Ministry of Environment under PMs office.

Experience with the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the regional level

Reducing consumption of natural resources and saving money on grassroots level and at the same creating wealth on a larger scale is one of today's biggest challenges. The concept called resource wisdom could be the way of harnessing the two seemingly contradictory requirement. This scalable operating model for cities and regions designed to create sustainable well-being from a circular and carbon neutral economy is, according to the Maria Lumela, Chairman of Board of City of Jyväskylä, an innovative and relevant Finnish contribution to the Agenda 2030.