



Annual Report 2003

Activities of The Environmental Law Service

The Environmental Law Service (EPS) is a non-governmental, non-profit, and non-political Public Interest Law organization that gathers together lawyers and law students. We see Public Interest Law (PIL below) to mean the participation of lawyers in activities that contribute to the protection of the public interest and human rights.

EPS works for free to defend the rights of citizens and the environment in the Czech Republic using the law and to influence pending legislation, the legal community, and law students in the direction of the public interest. EPS was founded in 1995 as a volunteer organization by students at the law school of Masaryk University in Brno. Since 1997, it has run on a professional basis.

In the course of our work, we try to achieve the following:

- effective protection for the rights of citizens and the associations they form to a good environment
- democratic, just, and open decision-making by state authorities
- better access to the courts for citizens who use the law to protect the public interest and human rights
- easy and quick access to information for citizens
- benefits for citizens, not narrow-interest lobbies, from new legislation
- better legal awareness among the public
- the involvement of lawyers and law school students in publicly beneficial activities
- the opening up of discussion on burning issues surrounding legal protection of public interests and human rights, and how to move towards their solution

Extensive information on EPS's activities and more can be found at **www.eps.cz**. For more information on EPS activities and cases, see **www.sedlakjan.cz**, **www.pilaw.cz** and on-line address of public interest law bulletin VIA IURIS **www.eps.cz/via**.

The GARDE Program Global Alliance for Responsibility, Democracy, and Equity (formerly “The Trade and Environment Program”)

Within the broader topic of societal developments surrounding globalization processes, we have—like the large international NGOs—started focusing on the issue of the actions of multinational corporations. This is a very current theme for us, because the Czech Republic is a country with a weak economy and is all the more susceptible to globalizing trends for this. Thus we often see a tight interweaving of the interests of political elites with those of multinationals, leading to the disregarding of the law, damage to the environment, and human rights infractions. Meanwhile, large foreign investments are supported at the expense of small and midsize companies and of communities. The program’s long-term aim is to create pressure on the State as the public institution that has the task of protecting public assets and public interests (among which we find e.g. the protection of the right to life, the right to a favorable environment, etc.), so that it better thinks through its support for foreign investment rather than succumbing to the economic influence that multinational corporations can create. We try through our activities to create the state of affairs where multinational corporations begin to behave responsibly.

176

legal filings could not stop the construction of the NEMAK aluminum foundry in Havraň

A plant for constructing aluminum motor heads, run by the multinational NEMAK, was sited—insensibly and in conflict with the law on protection of the nation’s “soil bank”—near Havraň, on the last territory unaffected by mining in the surroundings of the city of Most. NEMAK originally chose Plzeň as the site for its investment, but strong resistance against the company’s plan arose among citizens, as well as the ministry of environment: the production of aluminum components is connected with environmental and health risks. When NEMAK failed in Plzeň, it moved onward, with the help of the Czech cabinet, to unemployment-ridden North Bohemia, to the immediate vicinity of the very fertile fields of the family of farmer Jan Rajter. He turned to us in 2001, and from that day, we have been preparing for him all legal filings and personally taking part in many administrative and court proceedings regarding the NEMAK plant, as well as structures in the Joseph industrial zone, which the city government of Most is building for NEMAK.

All of our objections to the placement of a plant on good-quality agricultural soil were confirmed as far back as 2002 by Ombudsman Otakar Motejl. He suggested that the relevant administrative proceedings be renewed, but the offices with the right to act did not respond. The regional court in Ústí nad Labem also twice confirmed we were right.

Along with the CEE Bankwatch Network and Hnutí DUHA (Friends of the Earth Czech Republic) we turned to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which was to co-finance the NEMAK project, and informed it of the risks that are connected with NEMAK’s

activities in the Czech Republic. Our argumentation won through—in June of 2003, the EBRD announced that it is abandoning its plans to financially support the aluminum-plant project.

We prepared a total of 176 legal filings in the NEMAK case by the end of 2003, including filings regarding constitutional infractions to the Constitutional Court, filings for review of administrative decisions to the High Administrative Court, and many suits. Regardless, we did not succeed in preventing construction of the 1st stage of NEMAK—a factory with a capacity of 150 thousand motor heads per year. In fact, it launched test operation in October 2003, celebrated with a gala event with the premier’s participation. Although an administrative land-use decision regarding plans to increase the plant’s capacity tenfold, to 1.6 million motor heads a year, was annulled by the regional authorities on the basis of an EPS appeal, repeat proceedings permitted it for good.

In 2002, we drafted a proposal for a local referendum for the citizens of Havraň. A positive result from the referendum had a realistic chance of stopping the construction of the NEMAK plant. However, the community’s Communist then-mayor illegally refused to call the referendum. We thus drafted a complaint to the Constitutional Court. The Court lay silent for nearly a year before finally ordering an oral meeting (a stage reached only by a minimum of constitutional complaints). After this, however, it rejected the constitutional complaint via a significantly non-standard approach. Thus not even the Constitutional Court found enough courage, and it too succumbed to political pressures and interests in preserving one of the largest foreign investments in the Czech Republic.

Over 200 articles have appeared regarding the NEMAK case, and it has appeared several times in the main news program of the national television station and in other journalistic programs. In light of the fact that the use of the laws alone has shown itself to be insufficient for the NEMAK case, we decided for a major media drive surrounding this whole issue: photographer Ibra Ibrahimović, who gained national renown for his documentation of an environmental tragedy in nearby Libkovice, offered to photograph the fate of the Rajter family for us. And thus,

after several months of hard work, arose the traveling exhibition entitled “Farmer Rajter’s Story—From Collectivization to Globalization.” This exhibition had its premiere in June, 2003 in Hradec Králové, then moved closed to the “scene of the crime” in Ústí nad Labem, then in November and December was right before the eyes of politicians—senators—as it was mounted in the Senate’s meeting room. Afterwards, the exhibition traveled to the renowned Václav Špála Gallery on the avenue Národní třída in Prague, where former president Václav Havel became a patron of the entire project. The exhibition-series’ media impact was amplified by the recognition that Ibra Ibrahimovič received from the international jury at Czech Press Photo 2003, where the photograph “Jan Rajter with little Vašík in the Mrzlice pasture” obtained the competition’s grand prize, the “Crystal Eye,” and the series as a whole prevailed in the “Everyday Life” category. The exhibition’s travels did not end with the year 2003; thanks to great interest in it, continuations in other cities in the Czech Republic and abroad are planned. The exhibition is supplemented by an informational portal, <http://www.sedlakjan.cz/>, where visitors can gain information both on the case itself and on issues closely related to it: multinationals’ responsibility, and nations’ investment support.

1.6

billion crowns in investment incentives for illegal production of color picture tubes in the LG. Philips Displays factory

Within the GARDE program, we focused in 2003 on the largest foreign “greenfield” investment in the Czech Republic at the turn of the millennium: the construction of a wide-screen television plant by LG. Philips Displays in Hranice. This case became nationally famous due to local homeowner Markéta Regecová, whose case—which involved the highest state officials, including then-premier Miloš Zeman—almost perfectly jibed with the large set of doubts and problems that exist regarding the plant’s construction and operation. The factory, a recipient of a mighty dose of investment support in an amount exceeding 1.6 billion crowns, and which has been producing screens “like on an assembly line” for over two years already, has not even received its post-construction certificate—and thus has remained in test operation.

On the basis of a legal analysis, we determined that Philips has been manufacturing screens via test operation since September of 2001, without having an approved safety program for prevention of serious accidents, or liability insurance for any damages that could result from a serious accident. A safety program is essential in order to commence a factory’s operation, because of its vital contents: a thorough evaluation of the risks involved in a serious accident and its possible consequences for the factory’s surroundings. This is especially true here: the Philips plant works en masse with dangerous chemical substances. We turned to the regional authority in Olomouc with filings calling for the commencement of proceedings that would forbid operation of the Philips plant and apply sanctions for the lack of insurance. Their aim is to force

this Korean-Dutch concern to begin respecting the Czech code of law. The regional authority's response to this over two-year-long infringing of the law on prevention of serious accidents was entirely buck passing: yes, Philips broke the law, but we will not fine them for it.

On the basis of the media's attention to the entire case and after yet another dangerous-substances leak from the plant into the Bečva River, the Czech Environmental Inspectorate ran a week-long inspection of the Philips plant, resulting in the launching of fining proceedings by the Water and Air Protection and Waste department. Thanks to other EPS legal filings, Philips then began publicizing information on the plant's effect on the environment on the Web. Because the entire case is quite serious, and we have also found other problems with the plant, we will continue tending to this case in the year to come.

Other cases:

- Towards the end of the nineties, DANONE began labeling its yogurts as "BIO." In the Czech Republic, as well as in other EU countries, the BIO label is intended for the marking of the products on bio-agriculture. By using the BIO mark on its yogurts, Danone took advantage of the reputation of products that come from the bio-agriculture system. In doing so, it obviously injured the producers of bio foods, since thanks its abuse of the BIO label, they lost customers who, in the belief that such yogurts have the qualities one attaches to bio foods, used their buying potential to buy products that in reality had nothing at all to do with bio-agriculture. The act in question deceived consumers.
- Together with the ARS AEQUI ET BONI citizen's group, the company KEZ, o.p.s., and bio-foods processor PRO-BIO, s.r.o., we made use of the Czech commercial code's provisions on unfair competition, and filed suit in the name of bio-farmers against Danone. An appeal on the case was still ongoing in 2003.
- On the territory of the village of Nošovice, about one kilometer as the crow flies from the Beskydy Protected Natural Area (CHKO) and directly neighboring the Skalická Morávka streambed, which has pending National Natural Heritage status, there long was a plan for the construction of a strategic industrial zone about 270 hectares in size. Even the Czech cabinet placed its blessing on the project, via a resolution. However, a small acreage of agriculture plots in the area, which employs up to 150 people in the high season, is home to the members of Zemědělské družstvo vlastníků, the Agricultural Owners' Cooperative. A portion of its members decided not to sell their land. There long was talk of the largest Korean automobile company, Hyundai Motors, perhaps investing here. This giant's investment plans here dissipated, but the Moravian-Silesian Administrative Region, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and CzechInvest, the Czech foreign-investments agency, earnestly sought another strategic investor. They thus tried, through pressure and various threats, to force the cooperative's members to sell their land. EPS offered consultations to the citizens of Nošovice for a long period, and supported them in their conviction not to sell their land.
- At the start of 2003, however, the Czech cabinet came with a recipe for bypassing problems with the buying of properties for industrial zones. This was its plan for having strategic industrial zones automatically defined as "publicly beneficial zones" and their existence as a "public interest." It would thus be possible to expropriate land for the needs of industrial zones. Then no-one would need to discuss at all with the "disobedient" citizens of Nošovice, and their land would simply be taken. EPS monitored the cabinet's legislative proposals in this field, especially the proposal for a new construction act. No work at all on implementing the recipe proposed by the government has taken place so far. At the end of 2003, it was clear that the state's attempt to build an industrial zone in Nošovice had hit a wall thanks to the cooperative's members' resistance, and that the project absolutely will not take place.



The RIGHT TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT Program

The right to a clean environment is guaranteed in the Czech constitution, via its inclusion of the Declaration of Basic Human Rights and Freedoms. Despite this, it is still nearly impossible to achieve direct protection of the environment via the bodies of public power, especially the courts. The most important barriers are the deficient legislation on access to justice in matters with an environmental impact and the courts' lack of willingness to progressively interpret legal regulations, as well as insufficient usage of the existing possibilities by the "victims" of environmental impacts. This program's aim is to offer legal aid to citizens and communities in cases of ongoing or planned projects that damage their environment or otherwise represent a serious burden for them. The program also includes a "Consulting Center for the Environment," which offers citizens, NGOs, and other entities consulting and counsel via one-off phone, e-mail, and postal consultations and the sending of sample legal filings, informational materials, and the like.

500

times increase in dioxin levels near the Spolana plant

In 2003, we took the first legal steps in a case involving the escape of several thousand tons of highly dangerous chemical from a Spolana chemical plant caused by the 2002 floods and highly irresponsible behavior by the firm's management. The company had ignored a pre-flood call by Greenpeace to solve the problem of old environmental burdens in its buildings that lying in the flood-risk zone (from where chemicals did indeed escape during the flood), kept information secret, and downplayed the consequences of the toxic-substances leak.

We made contact with local citizens who live and farm in the plant's direct vicinity. Their home and their property is situated in the lowest part of the locality, and thus leaks from the Spolana operations frequently damage their property. As a result of this long-term exposure, there is, among other things, a ban on the use of some of their fields for both agriculture and husbandry, due to dioxin contamination. The case thus has a significant social layer—due to the contamination of their land, the family has lost a significant economic source (including the chance of its sale or using it for subsistence farming) and furthermore was recently a victim of flooding. Not only did the floods mean a further coating of their property with harmful substances, but also their residence was practically destroyed.

In cooperation with Greenpeace, Arnika, and local inhabitants, we filed a crime complaint pointing to the conta-

mination of the Černínovsko nature reserve with toxic substances. However, the police suspended its processing. In its decision, it unfortunately did not concern itself at all with the effect of the measured concentrations of dangerous substances on the environment, but solely on the possible direct threat to human lives or health. In the sediment of the cut-off meander of the Elbe near the Spolana plant, meanwhile, the dioxin content was up to five hundred times the value considered by the Ministry of Environment as normal. These substances can seriously threaten the fauna population in the preserve, as they can cause cancer, reduced reproductive capability and resistance to diseases, and other serious damage.

The státní zástupce (roughly: district attorney) for the area, Prague-East, did not react to our filing against the Czech Police's decision to suspend investigation of the contamination of the land and domestic animals with dioxins and PCBs in a case involving one of the affected families in the village of Libiš. This despite the fact that it received the complaint as early as April 2003, and an EPS lawyer supplemented the complaint a total of four times with further information, such as the results of analyses by the State Veterinary Administration that found that limits for PCBs, DDT, and HCB were significantly exceeded in the eggs of chickens raised by farmers from Libiš. Control values from Libiš also gave testimony of a long-term burden on the local environment.

Other cases:

- A company named Agroservis is planning to build a high-capacity pork breeding plant in the village of Dolní Dubňany, on the site of a former barn. It would hold 5200 pigs. Both the village government and the majority of its citizens take a negative stance towards the project, since they fear the stench, pollution of the water table and the air, and increased traffic it would bring. The EIA process went in the investor's favor in spite of the fact that the village, its individual citizens, and a citizen's group formed by local people, to which we have been offering significant legal aid since 2002, filed an extensive and well-explained official complaint. In connection with the oral negotiations and the construction-permit proceedings, a demonstration took place in the village, and received national television coverage. We succeeded in suspending, then halting the proceedings for the land-use permit and construction permit, and on the basis of an appeal, official statements of assent to the construction from the water and air protection authorities were withdrawn. Thus the invest will have to file a new construction-permit request. The village of Dolní Dubňany is also, with our aid, trying to stop the investor's plan by changing the village's land-use plan, but in the process it is colliding with absolute unwillingness on the part of the land-use planning authorities higher in the administrative structure.
- On the basis of an appeal by a local citizen, represented by an EPS lawyer, the Ostrava branch of the Ministry of Environment annulled the Ostrava Regional Authority's agreement for the start of test operation of a structure in Chotěbuz that received its permit as a "small hydro-power plant with an aluminum processing line." This is because the line is being operated with no certificate of post-construction testing, and greatly burdens its neighbors with noise and stench. The organ of appeal stated agreement with our argumentation, which was founded mainly on the fact that the permit that was issued was based on materials that were entirely insufficient from the standpoint of the new atmosphere act. At present, the operation is shut down.
- In Liberec, we offered legal services to a group of citizens suffering from excessive noise as a result of the unlawful approach of the administrative authorities (city hall and the regional public health officer). Traffic for an industrial zone was brought into their area even though the state and the capacity of the local road are visibly incapable of handling the extra traffic. In 2002, the fact that traffic exceeds lawful noise limits was officially confirmed. No post-construction certificate exists for the road; it operates on the basis of a permit for preliminary operation. The regional authority took action on our call for a review of the construction office's original decision and changed the decision such that traffic on the road will be one-way until a post-construction certificate is obtained. The investor (The Roads and Highways Directorate) has appealed the decision.
- In Blansko, we helped a citizen's association comment an investment plan for anti-flooding adjustments to the course of the Svitava River (the decision is currently in the EIA fact-finding phase). The project is controversial for the lack of a clear connection to other anti-flooding measures, a rather outdated technical conception (blanket use of artificial reinforcement of the banks with stone, lowering of the bottom, impact on greenery), and the investor's unwillingness to perform a biological evaluation. The citizen's association is signed up for the administrative proceedings that tie into the plan, and the investor and city hall have given preliminary consent for adjustments to details of the plan.

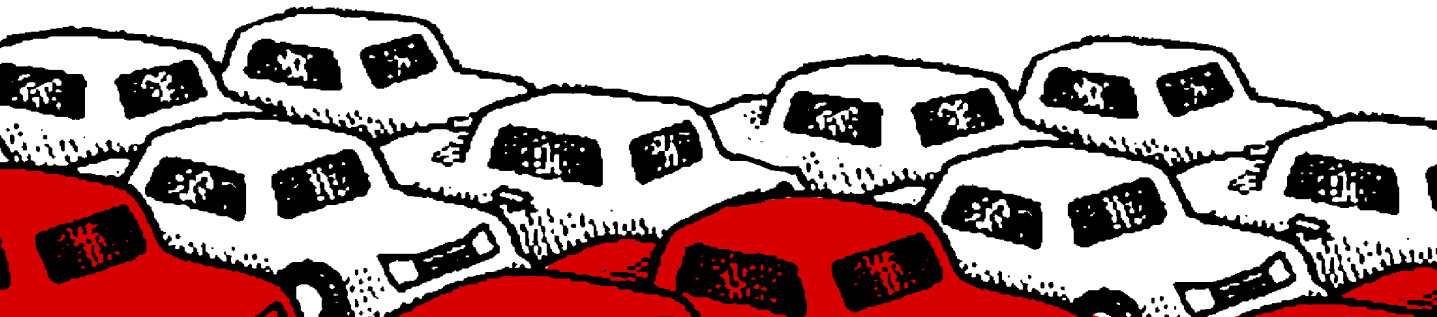
491

legal questions answered by the Environmental Counseling Center

Besides the cases that this program covers systematically and in the long term, EPS runs an “Environmental Counseling Center” whose functioning is now stabilizing. The Center involves an EPS lawyer and volunteers from among students at the Brno law school—generally graduates of our Human Rights Schools—who offer primarily one-off replies and consultations in response to phone, e-mail, and postal queries by the public—individuals, NGOs, and communities. The Center’s staff and volunteers also often send off a variety of sample legal filings and compose some of the relatively simple legal filings (e.g. complaints on steps by a construction office, appeals in right-to-information disputes, and short legal analyses).

The TRANSPORT Program

While the negative impacts of various industrial fields are falling in recent years, the share of transport in environmental pollution is, in light of the tremendous growth in the number of motor vehicles here, constantly increasing. One result of this is pressure for the construction of new transport infrastructure. Often this means projects first drafted in the 1960s, which do not meet modern environmental protection requirements and run new highway routes through protected natural areas. Meanwhile, these are often environmentally priceless sites, which are to become a part of the NATURA 2000 network of protected areas as the Czech Republic enters the European Union. The program's aim is to contribute to a state where transport structures' negative impact on the environment is minimized. The program's intent is to achieve this goal primarily by offering legal aid to non-governmental environmental organizations that systematically cover the transportation issue, and by offering handing of occasional key, precedential cases.



88.5

-- kilometers of planned highways that we have tried to make more environmentally friendly

The D8 highway from Prague to Dresden is to be routed through the České středohoří Protected Natural Area, and to be routed aboveground. All it would take to save this valuable territory, meanwhile, is to use a tunnel for at least part of the route. At present, just two sections remain until the highway is complete. Ombudsman Otakar Motejl has stated agreement with our objections by confirming that the authorities committed errors in several cases when planning the highway, e.g. the Ministry of Environment decided to grant an exception for the D8's construction without considering other variants for its routing as the law demands. The Ombudsman thus suggested, in accord with our demands, that the effects of this structure on the České středohoří CHKO be softened as much as possible. The construction of the D8 has also become the subject of a court dispute, where we and other environmental organizations filed a suit at the Ústí regional court against the land-use decision regarding the highway's routing. Due to the Czech courts' overall slowness, this case was still open at the end of 2003.

We initiated the "Litoměřice Appeal," a document that urges the relevant state authorities to promote the tunnel variant for the D8's routing. A total of 56 Czech environmental organizations attached their signatures to this declaration. Another activity of EPS in the transportation field is participation in the preparing of documents that will serve as a resource for a campaign of CEE Bankwatch Network that is working to bring pan-European attention to the fact that the European Investment Bank is planning to

offer the Czech Republic a loan for the construction of the D8 highway.

The original plan for the Prague-Hradec Králové highway D11 would mean a major impact on the Libický luh national nature reserve. The planned routing is directly overland instead of as an elevated road, even though the latter option would mean that this wetland, one of the country's last few, could be preserved for future generations. So far, we have achieved a partial success through a court case at the High Administrative Court in Brno that finally resolved the matter of EPS's dispute with the Regional Office of the Central Bohemia Region regarding the unlawful exclusion of the organization Svoboda zvířat from the D11's land-use proceedings. The Prague City Court has already ruled in our favor twice, but officials are still not giving up hope that they will dispose of their watchdog and coat Libický luh in concrete with no witnesses. The High Court's ruling is precedential in that it clearly sets the conditions for the public's participation in decision-making proceedings of this type. On the basis of the court's decision, the land-use proceedings regarding the construction of this highway should be re-opened. We plan in the new proceedings to work for improving the future highway's "permeability" for local fauna.

51

specially protected plant species on Slavíkovy ostrovy—river islands near Přelouč—are under threat

An ill-considered plan to make the Elbe navigable into Pardubice is threatening one of the few remaining remnants of nature in this part of the Elbe Valley: Slavíkovy ostrovy, islands in a river near the small city of Přelouč. In December of 2003, Minister of Environment Libor Ambrožek granted an exception to ministry rules for the project of making the Elbe navigable into Pardubice. Despite studies speaking against the project by a number of institutions, including the Czech Republic Nature and Landscape Protection Agency, as well as an official statement against granting an exception by the ministry's own officials, Ambrožek took this step and thus sealed the fate of 51 endangered/strongly endangered species of flora and fauna on the Slavíkovy Islands. This case, meanwhile, is a textbook example of the entangling of the state administration with the private interests of politicians in communities and in the nation's administrative regions. The leadership of the Pardubice Region and of Přelouč is heavily lobbying in favor of the construction of the Přelouč Locks. Both organizations, meanwhile, are shareholders of the company Přístav Pardubice a.s. (Pardubice Port Inc.), founded with the aim of building a river port and transshipment point in Pardubice. Without the Přelouč Locks, a port in Pardubice is unthinkable.

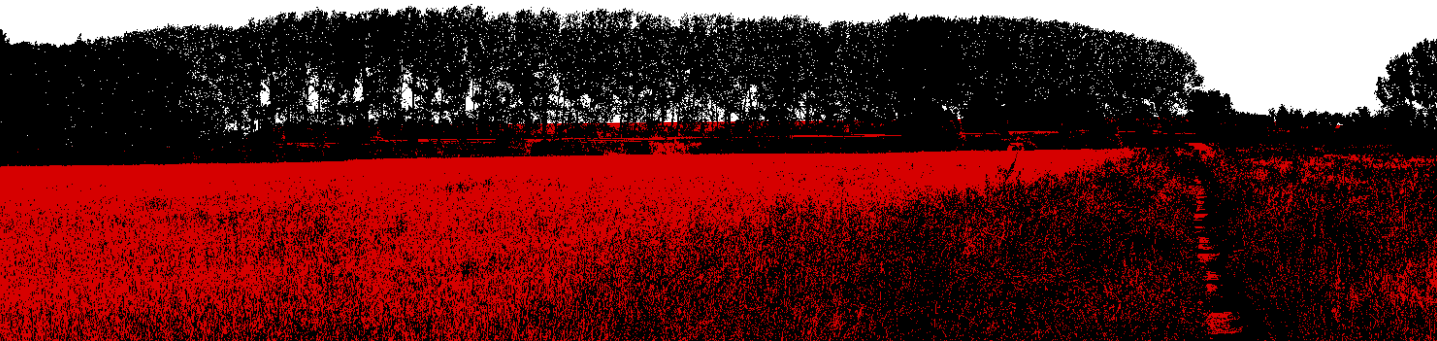
Other cases:

Since the minister has given the green light to making the Elbe navigable into Pardubice, he has given up any possibility of effectively preventing the megalomaniac and environmentally devastating plan for building the Elbe branch of the Danube-Oder-Elbe canal, that is, for making the Elbe navigable all the way to Germany. And yet the ministry disagrees with making the Elbe navigable elsewhere in the country, in North Bohemia, and claims that it only supports making it navigable in the Prague-Pardubice segment. In light of the fact that a high-speed train corridor has been built on that link and a highway is being completed as well, this step is either boundless naiveté, or exceptionally disadvantageous business. What is most absurd is that the territory is to be proposed as a part of the EU's NATURA 2000 nature preservation system under the EC Habitat Directive. This will be valid on our territory after our EU entry in May of 2004.

EPS also took part in preparations for a regional land-use plan that, besides the project for making the Elbe navigable into Pardubice, contains other environmentally questionable plans that have not undergone a valid EIA: besides the Danube-Oder-Elbe project, these include e.g. the liquidation of the core zone of the "bird protection region" (per the EU Birds Directive) near Komárov and a plan for a 2000 MW power plant. EPS has taken part in the composing of a large amount number of comments on the Strategical Environmental Assessment (SEA, "strategic EIA") documentation as well.

The SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS Program

This program's aim is to protect the most valuable parts of Czech nature—national parks, specially protected areas (CHKO), and reservations, but also other areas in the Czech Republic that have natural value but do not have official protection. Its goal is to serve as a shield against reckless issuing of exceptions, agreements, and permits for commercial use of natural resources, megalomaniac projects for recreational facilities, and similarly destructive activities. Within this program, we work to ensure that environmental-protection, economic, and social interests are all weighed responsibly and on the basis of sufficient and solid information, and to raise our country above the situation where economic arguments are nearly automatically treated as having the greatest weight.



18

holes' worth of golf course under the Hluboká nad Vltavou chateau

Since 1999, EPS has been taking part in administrative proceedings regarding the permits for an 18-hole golf-course project that would be placed in the English-style park beneath the Hluboká nad Vltavou chateau, which in experts' words represents a "territory with irreplaceable esthetic value." Since the project carries a risk of changing local hydrological and biological conditions, this official nature park with sixty specially-protected trees and a large number of endangered species may be in serious danger.

The whole case has become a true textbook of illegality, corruption, local clientelism, and political influencing of the activities of the state administration. Local environmental initiatives have even composed a diagram of interlocking relationships between the individual actors—businessmen, bureaucrats, and politicians who are breaking national and moral laws to ensure the investor gets its way.

The illegalities decried in EPS's filings have been confirmed three times by the Ministry of Environment as well as by the Office of the Ombudsman, which pronounced that "the whole proceedings are in conflict with the basic principles of a democratic state under the rule of law and with good governance, and amount to a deliberate side-stepping of the law." The Ombudsman sharply criticized the activities of the City Office, District Office, and Regional Office, and declared them the perpetrators of the unlawful state of affairs. Despite this, the legal nihilism of the Hluboká bureaucrats has sunk merrily onwards, bottoming out for the moment with the "granting" of a permit in secret (and thus illegally) without informing the participants in the proceedings. We will continue working on this case in 2004 as well.

59

million crowns to be wasted in the Nové Mlýny reservoir case

Intervention by the Ombudsman's office has brought hope in the case of the "drowned" islands in the Nové Mlýny reservoir (and the 60 hectares of renewed wetlands forest that lived upon them). Already in 2002, he reviewed the case on our request, and reached the opinion that the law had been broken. Now the Ombudsman is working towards an actual solution to the problem. He has both turned to the Czech cabinet and both called, with the weight of his authority, for it to stop the "war" between the ministries of environment and agriculture, and initiated the founding of a commission that will, if founded, be composed of representatives of all parties involved and will investigate the background of the case and find a solution for it. The latter step cannot, however, be seen as entirely positive, because it is clear that the Ministry of Agriculture will want to abuse the commission in order to definitively destroy the biotope in question, thus robbing the necessary lowering of the water level of any practical sense. Our cassation complaint submitted to the High Administrative Court in Brno, meanwhile, still remains unresolved.

Not without interest here is the fact that the construction of the islands was financed from state funds and cost taxpayers approximately 59 million crowns. Thanks to the raising of the level to 170.35 m above sea level that Povodí Moravy performed on the basis of a decision by the Ministry of Agriculture, the islands will soon be irrecoverable and this hardly small sum will have been spent for nothing. Meanwhile, it has been confirmed that the water level on the middle reservoir can be lowered to 169.50 meters above sea level without any threat to water-management interests.

Other cases:

- In the unique, strictly protected primeval spruce forests in the core zones of the Šumava national park, termite-infested trees were felled last year once again despite scientists' protests. Post-clearcut clearings are growing on and on and mysterious lumber thefts are taking place, as well as illegal hauling off of entire trees. Confirmation that this is not the mere subjective opinion of a few radical environmentalists came in the form of a report issued by the prestigious (and moderate) International Union for the Conservation of Nature in September of 2002, stating that the Šumava park does not meet international standards for national parks. The IUCN report also recommends that no action against termites be taken in the most valuable parts of the national park. We are taking part in numerous related permit processes and, together with Hnutí DUHA, we are legally attacking the decision allowing the logging. Our legal steps have even taken us as far as a complaint to the Constitutional Court.
- The Village of Čeladná, in the unique environment of the Beskydy mountains, is to become a golf center with a 27-hole course—the largest in the country—if a company named Prosper Trading, a.s., supported by the village leadership, gets its way. The regional civic association Beskydčan has, with the help of a lawyer from EPS, taken part in at least 15 sets of administrative proceedings, where its aim has been to achieve an objective evaluation of the course's construction on the character of the landscape (to which end we ordered the drafting of a white paper) and above all to force the constructor to present a detailed list of the chemicals to be used on the course and of their influences on the environment. Because these demands were not met, and the course received its permit despite a number of missing documents, we filed a total of four official administrative complaints against the decision during 2003. Meanwhile, the investor went on the counterattack and filed what was essentially a libel suit against his opponents; the Regional Court in Ostrava rejected it, however, on the basis of EPS's arguments.
- We also helped Beskydčan to achieve one of its largest successes to date, when, after many years and numerous administrative proceedings, the Minister of Environment finally decided not to grant an exception for the operation of an illegal ski run on the highest mountain in the Beskydys—Lysá hora. With the arrival of modern equipment (snowmobiles and snow groomers), the ski run's negative impacts on the environment in the core zone of the Beskydy Protected Natural Area (CHKO) would greatly increase, and thus it was necessary to fight against this impending source of soil erosion in the most valuable parts of the mountains in the courts.
- The city hall in Znojmo is promoting a project to build a municipal swimming pool/water park in the direct vicinity of a baroque monastery in Louka u Znojma. The local Beautification Committee has pointed to the structure's poor siting, the lack of an evaluation of the monastery's cultural value, and the bias among the staff at the building office, who are deciding on matters in which the city government, their employer, has a significant economic and political interest. After our appeal, the construction permit for the pool was annulled, but unfortunately the Znojmo government almost simultaneously had the monastery's wall—which had national-heritage protection—torn down. An administrative court will be handling the case, on the basis of an EPS appeal.

- The villages of Pozlovice, Provodov, and Horní Lhota u Luhačovice, as well as local citizens' associations, have received legal aid from EPS in their efforts to prevent the plans of energy company Jihomoravská energetika to build high-tension wires across the Baroque pilgrimage site in Provodov, which is the most naturally and esthetically valuable part of the Vizovické Hills and the Bílé Karpaty Protected Natural Area. We drafted an evaluation for the affected villages of the possible routes

a legal approach aiming to make the investor responsible for making this construction environmentally could take. In practice, “environmentally friendly” here would mean using wooden poles of a lower height and using cables. The villages and associations will be working towards these aims in administrative proceedings with our help. We also took part in drafting a complaint to the Ombudsman regarding the unlawful course of the EIA process.

LEGISLATION Program

The aim of our activities within this program is to eliminate undemocratic and discriminatory provisions in draft legislation and to contribute to expanding the possibilities for public participation in decision-making surrounding public-interest matters, including access to justice. Our goal is to promote, for public-interest decision-making processes, a legal framework of such a nature as to enable effective supervision of state power by the civic public and ensure democratic, just, and open decision making. In the course of the program, we often communicate with ministries and MPs, as well as senators, regions, and communities. Alongside other non-governmental organizations we also take part in lobbying and in generating publicity surrounding the laws that are the most important from the standpoint of ensuring that civic society works, and works well.

196

sections in the cabinet's draft for the Administrative Code

In 2002, an extensive EPS media and lobbying campaign contributed to the turning down of the cabinet's proposal for a new Administrative Code, which represented perhaps the most drastic reduction to citizens' rights in relation to officials since 1989. The new governmental proposal, presented in 2003, contains in comparison with its predecessor several minor, positive changes, most notably the abandonment of actually making inequality among participants a state of affairs demanded by law. Its overall conception, however, has not changed too much. Its opponents complain it is still complicated, disorganized, overly detailed (the draft of the Code has 196 sections, while the current Code has only 85), hard to read, and full of vague legal terms that are easy to abuse. Meanwhile, the Administrative Code regulates the basic rules for the activities of practically all bodies within the state administration, and even though it is an abstract and hard-to-digest piece of procedural law for the "non-legal" public, it has a greater impact on the daily lives of most people than numerous other laws to which the public (as well as the media) give far greater attention.

In cooperation with the NGO Ateliér pro životní prostředí (The Environment Studio), we reacted by drafting our own amended version of the existing administrative code, which was then presented as a parliamentary proposal. In April of 2003, the amendment, rather than the government proposal, surprisingly received the support of the lower house's constitutional-law committee. However, the lower house decided at its June meeting to send both bills back to committee. Negotiations on the bill were then suspended, because the Ministry agreed that the objections of excessive complexity and incomprehensibility in the

cabinet proposal (both by EPS and by the Association of [Administrative] Regions of the Czech Republic) were founded, and stated that it would adjust its proposal to take the objections into account. In November, however, Interior came with a proposal that once again brought only minor changes. In the same month, the Cabinet Human Rights Committee accepted, on the basis of EPS work, recommendations corresponding with the majority of the most important statements and proposals presented by the critics of the new administrative code. After very long negotiations, the cabinet proposal was approved in Spring of 2004, with the smallest possible majority.

74

MPs voted to strike public participation in decision making out of the law or: another attack successfully deflected

In the course of negotiations on the "Euroamendment" of Act no. 114/1992 Sb., on the protection of nature and the landscape, which was to have incorporated the European system of protected areas called NATURA 2000 in the Czech legal code, MPs from the political parties ČSSD and ODS presented two change proposals that amounted to the latest in a series of attacks on the possibility for public participation in decision making regarding major environmental impacts. And this was the most serious attack out of every one since 1992. The proposal by MP Ladislav Skopal (ČSSD) would have meant the elimination of the possibility for civic associations to participate in administrative proceedings in which nature and landscape protection interests can be affected. MP Zajíček (ODS), meanwhile, "only" went so far as to recommend restricting

this right to land-use proceedings alone. A number of environmental organizations, including EPS, actively spoke out against these efforts. EPS' contributions include preparing materials for MPs that prove that contrary to accusations by the provisions' proponents, NGOs are not the "main guilty party" behind the stretching out of administrative proceedings and preparing the text of a declaration speaking out against attempts to restrict public participation in decision-making, which received the support of over seventy mayors and city councilors across the country, a number of other individuals, and over 120 NGOs of national, regional, and local importance. The change proposals were just barely (by a 77 to 74 majority) turned down in the third reading, which amounted to a very important victory for environmental organizations.

Other legislative activities:

- A change proposal by ČSSD member of parliament and former minister of transport and communications Jaromír Schling would have the validity of the nature and landscape protection act, that is, the validity of the nature protection rules that apply for national parks, reservations, and protected natural areas, completely removed by water channels of international importance. This means that construction would always, in all cases, have priority over nature protection. The amendment is the latest in a series of "laws to order"—its aim is to ensure smooth permit processes for the constructing of waterworks on the Elbe, which are to be built on the last remaining sections of "natural" river in the Labské pískovce Protected Natural Area. Its long-term aim is to help the permit processes over the course of the controversial Danube-Oder-Elbe megaproject. Local environmental organizations have taken a stand against the amendment, and EPS has drafted a legal analysis of the amendment's conflict with Czech and European law and participated in lobbying in the Senate, which has turned down the most dangerous part of the "Schling Amendment."
- Restrictions to public participation and to access to information were given the green light through the vote on the new act on genetically modified organisms. MPs restricted the right to information in those places where genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are being cultivated; they eliminated civic associations' possibilities for participating in permit proceedings for open-air cultivating of genetically modified organisms, and NGOs' representation in the expert commission of the Ministry of Environment, which issues official statements in GMO cases. MPs were unfortunately not swayed by our arguments stating that the amendment is in conflict with the new EU guideline on information on the environment.
- In December of 2003, the lower house accepted by a vast majority the draft highways and communications act into its second reading. Nearly all MPs from ČSSD, KSČM, and KDU-ČSL (the social democrats, communists, and Christian democrats) voted in favor of the provisions. The act's proponents expect it to speed up construction of the Czech Republic's highway network. To this end, it will restrict public participation and speed up the purchase or expropriation of land for transport structures, even below the minimum guaranteed to property owners by the constitution. The draft of the act also states, for a particular list of highways, that they are "public-interest structures," and states what their routes are to be (rather than the usual course of an expert evaluation of the most economically and environmentally beneficial routes). EPS ordered from prof. JUDr. Aleš Gerloch, a teacher at the Charles University Law School and an expert on constitutional law, a legal analysis of the draft. Gerloch's analysis clearly states that the draft of the act is in conflict with the Constitution and significantly cuts into landowners' property rights in that it does not allow their thorough protection in the courts. Besides ordering the study, EPS has also prepared its own counterproposal, which was sent to members of the cabinet and parliament, and has taken part in lobbying activities.

- In July, we unsuccessfully tried to achieve a change to the contents of the public health protection act regarding provisions on protection from sound pollution. The amendment was presented by its proponents as a technical “Euro-amendment,” but beneath this general statement were also changes worsening the existing, already unsatisfactory standard for legal protection from noise pollution (e.g. a significant softening of the conditions for granting exceptions when limits are not observed). We prepared documents regarding the bill for senators and informed the media on the subject. Because of our work, the problem became a subject of debate in the Senate’s Health Committee, but in the end the bill was approved unchanged by both the committee and the Senate.
- The case of the public health protection act is a prime example of uncoordinated and poor work by ministries, which deliberately present their drafts late and justify them to Parliament insufficiently. EPS also works to bring attention to these problems as such, and lobbies for a change to the Cabinet Legislation Rules so as to bind the cabinet and ministries to make their legislative proposals public in a timely manner and to deal properly with objections raised by the public.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW SECTOR Program

Within this program, we closely cooperate with sister organization the League of Human Rights in the framework of the PILA (Public Interest Law Association) platform. On the basis of practical experience, we work towards better promotion of the PIL concept in the Czech Republic. We wish thereby to help improve legal protection for people, groups, and values that the law, lawyers, and institutions have for various reasons forgotten. In our opinion, it is necessary and possible to undertake new activities to strengthen the law as a tool for solving urgent societal problems. Our aim is to:

- open up and expand discussion among experts and the public regarding public interest law (PIL) and its various parts
- eliminate the “closed-mindedness” of law professionals in public institutions
- increase the professional training and the quality of decision-making within the bodies of public power
- expand access to justice and to good-quality, affordable legal aid
- increase the count of PIL lawyers, their professionalism, and their social status



2400

minutes of action at the Human Rights School

- In September of 2003, EPS organized the fifth annual Human Rights School in the Kozí Horka hotel by the Brno Reservoir. Twenty-three law students from every law school in the Czech Republic received a chance to look into the mirror of legal reality via interactive learning. In the course of a simulated land-use proceeding regarding the permit process for a supermarket on the site of a suburban park, they transported themselves to mythical Chomoutov, a city full of bureaucratic corruption and ill will. Participants took on the roles of investors, councilors, local property owners, and environmental activists, and tested their legal knowledge, because we prepared for them, in a condensed form, the various “traps” within administrative proceedings that we encounter during our real-life environmental cases quite often.
- During the 2400 minutes of the school’s varied program, students also tried out the role of judge, state attorney, and lawyer in a court case on the fate of a young man who had committed a race crime. They received a chance to negotiate with officials regarding the provision of information, or with police officers regarding the release of illegally detained persons. We also tried during the School to, for example, dispel several myths regarding domestic violence and to make students familiar with the issue of the legal protection of children. In most blocks, students could try out their knowledge in many practical examples. Naturally, discussions with interesting guests were also a part of the School. This year’s invitation was accepted by, for example, Deputy Ombudsman Anna Šabatová, newsman Petr Uhl, Dutch environmental lawyer Joost Rutteman, judge at the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic JUDr. Antonín Drašík, and Brno’s Deputy City Attorney, JUDr. Jan Sladký.
- Students of the School then went on to organize, and partially prepare the program for, a one-weekend continuation to the School that took place at the end of November at the law school at Olomouc University.

Other activities focusing on work with students:

- The six most active participants of the 2002 Human Rights School received a chance to participate in a two-week study stay in the Netherlands in March thanks to our cooperation with Milieukontakt Oost-Europa. In their packed program, they visited the courts, state and non-state institutions, non-governmental organizations, and lawyers working to protect the environment and human rights. Among their activities was a visit to a lecture and discussion on the topic of human rights protection, which took place at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights at the Utrecht law school, as well as getting acquainted with various systems for providing free and accessible legal aid in Holland (Rechtshulp, Rechtswinkels, Social Lawyers). A very interesting point on the program was a visit to a court session with Slobodan Milošević at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in Den Haag, which issues rulings on war crimes committed during the Balkan conflict.
- According to plan, we launched in 2003 the teaching of a new elective, entitled “Public Interest Law—Public Participation in the Protection of the Public Interest” at the law school of Palacký University in Olomouc. The students took part in an introductory lecture, four interactive blocks (domestic violence, children’s rights, public participation in the protection of the environment, international institutions/monitoring of police activities) and a lecture by professor Edwin Rekosh from Public Interest Law Initiative. In order to be graded for the course, students had to prepare a research paper. During the last block, we had questionnaires distributed among students so they could evaluate the quality of the course. On their basis and on the basis of feedback from lecturers, we decided to found an environment-and-administration legal clinic starting in 2005. The Public Interest Law course will run in 2004 as well, and then will be replaced by the legal clinic.

854

readers of the public interest law magazine VIA IURIS

In 2003, six issues of the public interest law bulletin VIA IURIS were published. This bulletin informs on current environmental and human-rights cases, legislative proposals, interesting decisions by officials and the courts, and events that have an impact on the field of promoting the public interest using the law. The list of subscribers to VIA IURIS in 2003 included 854 individuals and organizations. Another several thousand visitors read VIA IURIS on-line at the address <http://www.eps.cz/via>.

Other activities:

- We worked intensively on the preparation of the first Public Interest Law (PIL) conference in the Czech Republic. The conference's main topic was access to justice in the course of protecting human rights and the public interest. Preparations in 2003 advanced to the stage of setting a detailed program and acquiring contributions from renowned lawyers. We succeeded in ensuring participation by e.g. Prague university pedagogues Doc. Vladimír Mikule and Bohuslav Repík (who is also a former judge at the European Human Rights Court) and teacher at University of Oregon John Bonine. We also prepared a new look for the homepage of PILA (<http://www.pilaw.cz>).

The EDUCATION Program

In this program, our aim is to transfer the experience and practical insights that we have gained through participation in numerous court and administrative proceedings connected with protecting the environment and human rights to people who are systematically and actively working—some using the laws, some not—to solve various environmental problems in their localities. Thus each year we organize training events like the Spring School of Public Participation in Decision-Making, seminars for grassroots activists and workers at non-governmental organizations, and as needed for other groups. Our aim here is to develop society's legal awareness by informing as broad as possible a part of the public. We publish legal publications on the problems that citizens encounter most often when protecting the environment; we publish case studies, and on our several web sites, we also offer other useful information.

25

activists at the Summer School of Public Participation

- In February of 2003 in Tábor, in a space kindly made available by the University of South Bohemia, the Spring School of Public Participation took place. 25 local activists from across the country reacted to our invitation to attend the school and learned much about the mysteries of Czech administrative law and possibilities and pitfalls involved in public participation in decision-making. The School's tightly packed program included the time-tested day-long role-play on the permit process in the mythical, bureaucracy-plagued city of Chomoutov.
- In the course of the "School of Civic Initiative" cycle of trainings organized by Hnutí DUHA, a training on the basics of law took place in May of 2003. Seventeen active people who are trying, either under the banners of various NGO's or independently, to stir the still waters of public life in various corners of the Czech Republic, met in Nadějkov, not far from the small city of Tábor. They worked their way under EPS guidance through the thick jungle that is the structure of public power in our state, learned what administrative proceedings are good for and what their timelines are, and tried to obtain information at government offices in simulated cases.
- At the beginning of 2003, the reform of the Czech public administration was completed; among other things, it brought major shifts of competencies among individual offices. The aim of our new publication, "Stát, kraj, obec a občan při ochraně životního prostředí" (The State, the Region, the Community, and the Citizen in Environmental Protection) is to give an overview of the individual offices, regions, and municipalities in a form understandable for laymen. The reader will find in this brochure information on which office is competent to respond to her questions and comments regarding the protection of the environment, which should enable her to more effectively become involved in decision-making by state authorities.
- EPS has become involved in a project by the South Bohemian branch of Společnost pro trvale udržitelný život (The Association for Sustainable Life), whose aim is to obtain precedent-setting court decisions in the field of free access to information. Together we have submitted several dozen requests for information, mainly at municipal and city offices. The requests deliberately focused on information where it could be expected that the authorities would not want to make it public: information on construction-permit proceedings, information on special bonuses provided to various functionaries in cities and municipalities, copies of communities' property-law contracts, information on waste handling systems, copies of flood plans, etc.
- We drafted two case studies: The first, on activities by EPS and other NGOs during the preparing of the cabinet proposal for the Administrative Code in 2000-2002. Another case study, drafted by EPS in 2003, covered in a similar way the case of the NEMAK Europe s.r.o. aluminum plant in Havraň.
- Extensive information on EPS's activities and more can be found at <http://www.eps.cz>. For more information on EPS activities, see <http://www.sedlakjan.cz> and <http://www.pilaw.cz>.

S

environmental law organizations from the New Europe have formed a new network

- In connection with the approaching entry into the European Union, several Central European environmental law organizations have felt the need to coordinate in several matters their approach towards EU organs and exchange information on possibilities that EU norms offer for protection of the environment. With the help of our traditional partner, Dutch organization Milieukontakt Oost – Europa, for the moment 5 organizations are taking part in building the network: EPS, the Slovak Centrum pre podporu miestneho aktivizmu (CEPA), Environmental Management and Law Association (EMLA) from Hungary, Environmental Law Center (ELC) from Poland, and Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) from Estonia.
- The international NGO The Regional Environmental Center (REC) has chosen EPS staff to be among its trainers for a network of lawyers from the Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Macedonia), who are founding new environmental law NNO's, called ELACs (Environmental Law Advocacy Centres), in the framework of a European Union project called the Balkan Stability Pact. The REC initiative aims for the transfer of experience from countries where non-governmental promotion of environmental law is in one sense or another developed to countries where—understandably—this sector could not develop so quickly after the fall of the Iron Curtain. EPS representatives also took part in a working meeting with staff from the newly-founded Bulgarian law NGO BELAAC in Sofia.
- Thanks to our membership in the E-LAW (Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide) network, we have received a chance to partake of information and experience from practically the whole world. In April, an EPS representative took part in the traditional annual meeting of E-LAW, which took place in Oregon in the USA.
- EPS lawyers also took part in several international conferences and internships abroad: e.g. the negotiations of the task force of the Aarhus Access to Justice Convention in Brussels, an internship in the organization Unabhängiges Institut für Umweltfragen (UfU) in Berlin, where they collected materials on the issue of public interest suits, and a trip to Brussels and Amsterdam during which they studied European environmental law and its use by non-governmental organizations.
- We are cooperating with many domestic non-governmental organizations, especially regarding the handling of particular cases. Our traditional partners include e.g. Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic (logging in the Šumava National Park, protection of villages from brown coal mining), Děti Zěmě - Children of the Earth (D8 highway in the České středohoří Protected Natural Area), Greenpeace and Arnika (the Spolana case), Beskydčan (golf course in the Beskydys), Calla (golf course in the Hluboká nad Vltavou chateau park), and Ochrana vod (environmentally insensitive regulation of rivers in North Moravia). During our legislative activities we often cooperate with other environmental lawyers, and especially with Ateliér pro životní prostředí (The Environment Studio). EPS is a member of Green Circle, a national association of environmental NGOs.



staff members at EPS

In 2003, EPS had eleven permanent employees, including eight lawyers. Volunteers—students at the law school under Masaryk University in Brno—help us as well. We have offices in Brno and Tábor, and we also enjoy the use of office space in Prague alongside the League of Human Rights.

Members and Employees of EPS

EPS Brno is a second home to:

Pavel Černý – lawyer

Martin Fadrný – lawyer

Pavel Franc- lawyer

Lukáš Matějka – lawyer

Jiří Nezhyba- lawyer

Radek Schmidt – civil service employee

EPS's volunteers and external partners

EPS Tábor is a second home to:

Vítězslav Dohnal – lawyer

Pavel Doucha – lawyer

Martin Prokop – lawyer

Michael Kousal – participation in admin. proceedings

Jana Benešová – administrative staff

Eva Kozinská – accountant

Who Helped Us during Our Work?

Gwendolyn Albert, Petr Černý, Filip Dienstbier, Lukáš Dlabáček, Berenika Dobiášová, Antonín Draštík, Aleš Gerloch, Dominika Glacová, Alex Gurtai, Jan Haverkamp, Jana Hradílková, Ibra Ibrahimovič, Petra Jarošová, František Korbel, Lubomír Kroupa, Paul Kosterink, Eva Kováčechová, Marta Kozáková, Monika Ladmanová, Tomáš Mráz, Edwin Reko-sh, Jan Sladký, Helena Svatošová, Anna Šabatová, Jana Tomášová, Miloš Tuháček, Petr Uhl, Lucie Vojnová, Anouk Vorselman, Imrich Vozár, Helena Wágnerová

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How We Managed Our Money in 2003

EXPENDITURES

	in EUR
office supplies, software	6 079
equipment	4 680
overhead costs	2 332
literature	2 730
communication costs	16 240
print, copies, propagation	17 714
schools and seminars	1 012
office rent	7 779
travel costs	8 480
legal fees and services	10 861
expertises	13 851
labor costs	81 855
taxes, health and social insurance	28 923
donations	10 801
bank fees	991
others (exch. rate losts, penalty, refreshment...)	9 663
total expenditures	223 983

INCOMES

	in EUR
own incomes	6 927
governmental and semi-governmental grants:	
Employment Agency Bureau	827
Delegation of EU in CR - PHARE	32 040
MATRA programme of Dutch ministry of foreign affairs	67 610
Dutch Ministry of Environment	1 336
private grants:	
Open Society Fund Prague	52 792
Open Society Institute Budapest	10 172
Open Society Institute New York	6 758
Regional Environmental Centre	3 857
Environmental Partnership for Central Europe	3 257
C. S. MOTT Foundation	24 310
VIA Foundation	3 416
Ashoka	10 043
donations	494
bank interest	578
others (exch. rate profit, property sales)	4 067
total incomes	228 484

profit

4 501

Support our country's lawyers fighting lawlessness

- Do you have a soft spot for the Czech Republic...do you care about how Czech national authorities decide on projects that can devastate the Czech environment?
- Are you worried about this nation's trends of legal capriciousness, closed-minded decision making by the state administration, and a problematic approach to legal protection in matters that affect us all?
- Are you a little angered by the ulterior motive and unsystematicness of the various Czech legislative proposals that restrict citizens' rights and public participation in decision making during proceedings that affect the protection of the environment and other public interests?
- Are you also angered by corruption, back-scratching, and abuse of power by Czech public officials, who waste taxpayers' money and destroy the nation's common natural and cultural heritage to obtain mere momentary and often doubtful profit for commercial entities?

More on the Web: <http://www.fondeps.cz>

We offer our services for free, because we want to make legal aid accessible even to those who otherwise could not afford it. We wish to choose our cases on the basis of their importance, not of the solvency of our "clients." EPS is to date financed almost entirely from the funds of foreign foundations, some of which, however, are gradually leaving Central Europe.

Your support for our activities thus may be extremely important.

Contact EPS regarding how to transfer funds to them internationally.