



Active Citizens Fund

Final Evaluation Report

Consortium of the programme:

The Open Society Fund Prague, the Committee of Goodwill – Olga Havel Foundation and Scout Institute

Evaluator:

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Introduction

The Active Citizens Fund program in the Czech Republic was administered in 2019–2024 by a consortium of three organizations – The Open Society Fund Prague, the Committee of Good Will – Olga Havel Foundation and the Scout Institute. The program supported 305 projects with over CZK 300 million (EUR 13.5 million) in all 14 regions of the Czech Republic. Over the course of the program, more than 2.9 million people have been involved in improving life in the Czech Republic, 33 training events and meetings for applicants and supported organizations were held, and the consortium organized 13 international events with more than 300 participants from 159 Czech and international organizations.

The projects were divided into the following thematic areas: active citizenship, human rights, disadvantaged groups, gender equality and climate change. The focus of the projects was on civic participation, advocacy and watchdog activities, civic education and media literacy or strengthening NGOs in general. Calls were launched for strategic, mid-sized, action and matching grants. The strategic grants provided financial support of EUR 100-250,000 for projects of 3-4 years to implement systemic change. Mid-sized grants supported EUR 8-85,000 for projects of 1-2.5 years in length that responded to current issues. Action grants supported EUR 1-3,000 for projects of 1-12 months that addressed acute causes or strengthened the digital knowledge and skills of organizations. Matching grants provided up to EUR 4,000 for projects of 6-12 months to support communication activities to the public through crowdfunding campaigns.

This report is primarily based on questionnaires and case studies. Organizations that received a strategic or a mid-sized grant participated in the questionnaire survey. The case studies were then submitted by all organizations that had been supported by a grant under the program. In addition to this data, the report briefly analyzes the survey data from the grant application in the introduction and compares supported organizations with those not supported. In addition, for part of this sample, it tracks the baseline status at application with the status at the end of the program in 2024.

Methodologically, the report is more descriptive and presents the results of a specific sample of organizations within the program. In the text, we mostly work with the proportions of specific responses of organizations to the questions in the questionnaire, but other variables also appear – some questions form scales from which a numerical index can be constructed, some questions ask about the number of visitors to the website, for example. The mean values of such variables are then represented by the median, which is the middle value within the ascending order of values. Half of the values are above the median, half below it. We use the median because it is more difficult to skew it with atypical values than it is with the simple mean. Indeed, the values of many indicators are also distributed in our sample of organizations in such a way that a large fraction falls below the median and a few organizations significantly exceed it. Thus, the medians better represent the more “typical” values.

Where it was possible to construct a hypothesis about the existence of a change in a given indicator over time, however, we resort to inferential statistics and statistical tests in addition to descriptive statistics to answer the question of how far the findings can be generalized to the whole population of organizations applying for similar grants. Thus, there may be a situation where we see a clear difference between waves of measurements for our particular sample of organizations, but the difference is not so-called statistically significant. That is, in a world where there is no difference in the population as a whole, such a difference observed in our particular sample is not surprising (not unlikely) and we cannot therefore claim that there is a difference in the population.

It is important for interpretation that we analyse scale indices, counts, sums and similar indicators by so-called paired tests. These focus on shifts between measurements 'within' individual organizations and do not simply look at aggregate differences between two groups. So we look at the magnitude of the individual shifts and whether it is different from zero. However, these tests do not work with either the mean or the median, so the magnitude of the shift is difficult to quantify and interpret. Therefore, in this report we use the so-called common language effect size. Specifically, the probability of superiority, which tells us the probability of any positive change in a given indicator for an organization that would have gone through the same program with identical selection, evaluation, etc. A value of 50% indicates that there is equal probability of improvement and deterioration (i.e. no change has taken place), values above 50% indicate that positive change is more likely. A value of 100% means that it is certain that the organization will have a better outcome after participating in the program than before, while a value of 0% describes a situation where the value in the second wave will always be worse.

Active Citizens Fund Team
Schola Empirica Evaluation Team

30 October 2024

1 Comparison of supported and unsupported organizations

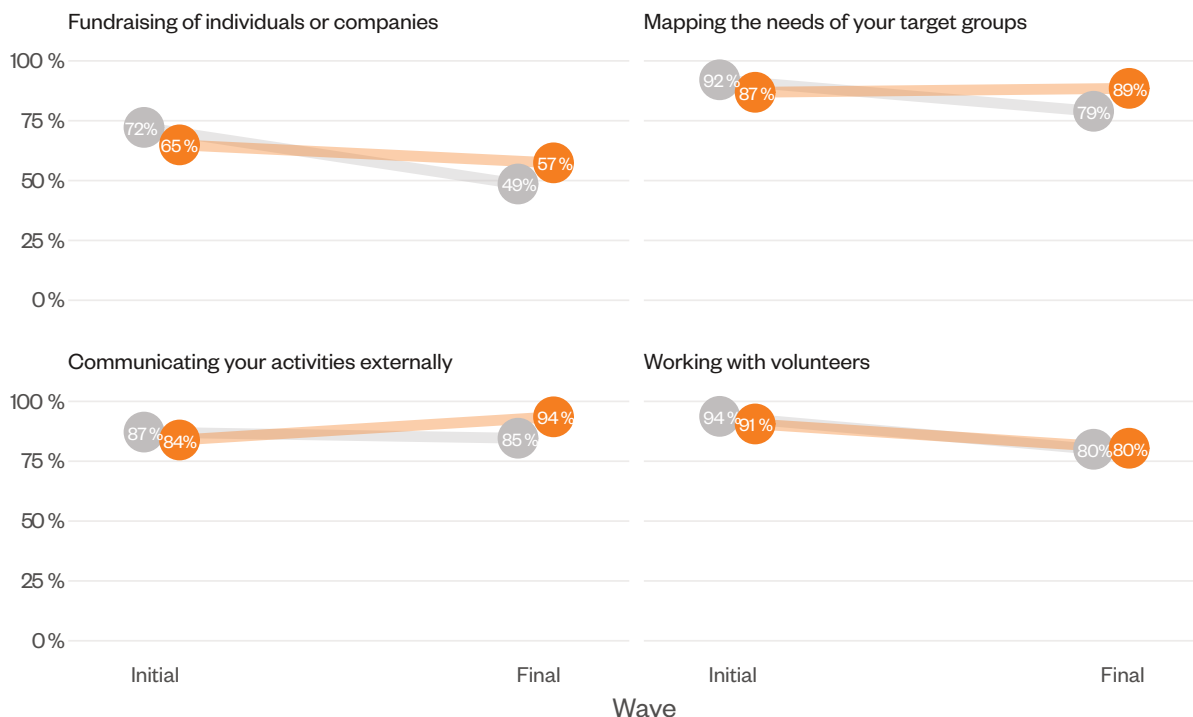
The first quantitative section of the report briefly discusses the data from the sub-section of the project grant application that we administered to the same sample again in 2024. As is to be expected in longitudinal research, only a portion of the original sample participated in the second measurement, and thus it is important to keep in mind when interpreting that this is likely not a representative sample of non-profit organizations and their development. Specifically, from the initial survey, we have data from 309 organizations that were not supported and questionnaires from 226 organizations that received support. We consider an organization to be supported if it received a grant for at least one requested project (multiple applications were possible). In the second and final wave, we collected data from 43 unsupported and 62 supported organizations. The following findings are based only on a dataset where both observations are available for each organization, so that we are comparing the same sample – thus we are tracking 39 unsupported and 62 supported organizations over time. The total sample in this section is therefore 101 organizations.

Organizations first indicated how satisfied they were with the implementation of a few selected activities, if they were engaged in them. Approximately 17% of organizations did not work with volunteers and approximately 10% did not fundraise from individuals or companies, with no difference in proportions between the supported and unsupported groups. More than 97% of organizations were involved in other areas. The following chart shows the proportions of organizations that were satisfied with the activity. If an organization did not develop an activity, it does not stand out in the graph for that activity. Therefore, these are always the proportions of organizations that rated satisfaction and carried out the activity.

The graph shows declining satisfaction for all activities for the unsupported group, while satisfaction increased for 2 of the 4 activities for the supported group. Where satisfaction fell, it was to a lesser extent than for the unsupported group, with the exception of ‘Working with volunteers’ where the fall was identical. However, the findings cannot be interpreted as a direct effect of grant support, which would require an experimental design – from the same population, half of the organizations would be randomly supported and tracked together with the control half over time (the only difference between the groups would then be the presence of support and the changes could be attributed to the effect of support).

Satisfaction of organizations with the activities developed

Proportions of responses expressing satisfaction of **supported** and **unsupported** organizations over time. We consider an organization with one or more supported projects as supported. Only responses from organizations that have developed the activity are included.

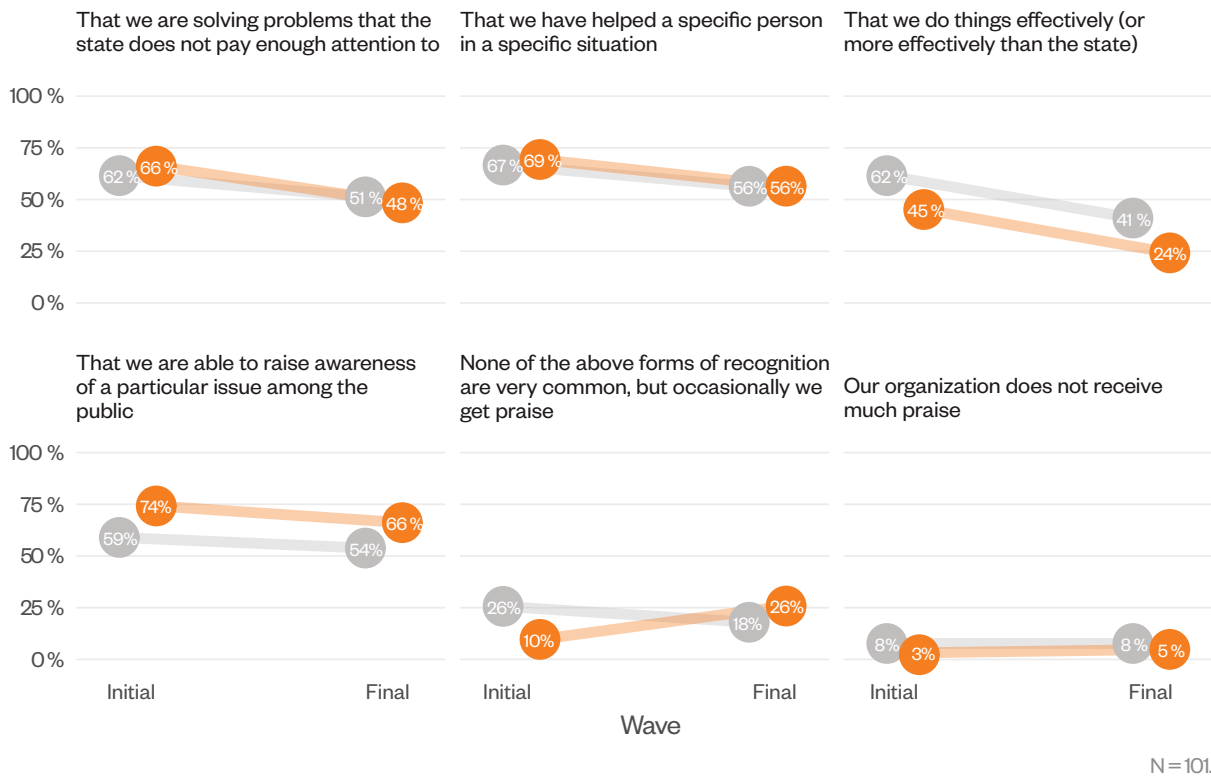


Satisfaction was rated on a six-point scale from "Very dissatisfied" to "Very satisfied". We consider the answers "Very satisfied", "Moderately satisfied" and "Somewhat satisfied" as agreeable answers. N = 101.

We also offered organizations a space to share the form of recorded appreciation of their work in the public space. Here the two groups were virtually comparable in development, except for the possibility of reflecting non-specific praise or recognition outside the remaining categories. Here, the proportion of endorsed responses increased by 16 p.p. in contrast to the decline in the unsupported group. The differences in the first wave are already to be expected from the nature of the selection of the groups – supported organizations were selected on the basis of a set of criteria that may relate to a number of different areas, such as raising public awareness of the organization’s theme.

Ways to recognise the work of organizations

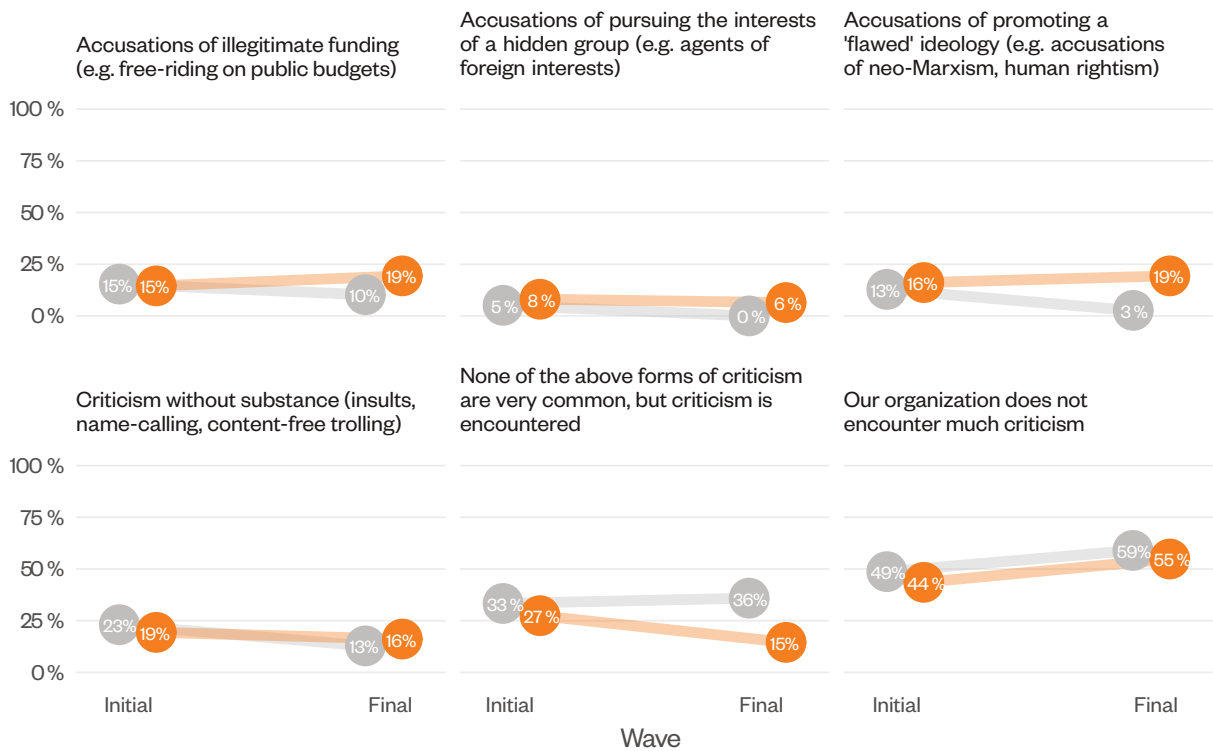
The most common form of praise or recognition that **supported** and **unsupported** organizations receive in the public space and its evolution over time. We consider an organization with one or more supported projects as supported.



Next, we asked about the exact opposite of the above – the form of perceived criticism. In contrast to praise, organizations generally encounter criticism less frequently, in the order of one to low tens of percentages (about 50% of organizations do not record much criticism, while only about 5% of organizations remain subjectively without praise). The development in the supported group is more negative than in the comparison group in all 4 specific types of criticism, while there has been a decrease in non-specific criticism. The largest increase in supported organizations is in the increase in accusations of promoting criticism of unacceptable ideology.

Ways of criticism of the work of organizations

The most common form of criticism that **supported** and **unsupported** organizations face in the public space and its evolution over time. We consider an organization with one or more supported projects as supported.



N = 101.

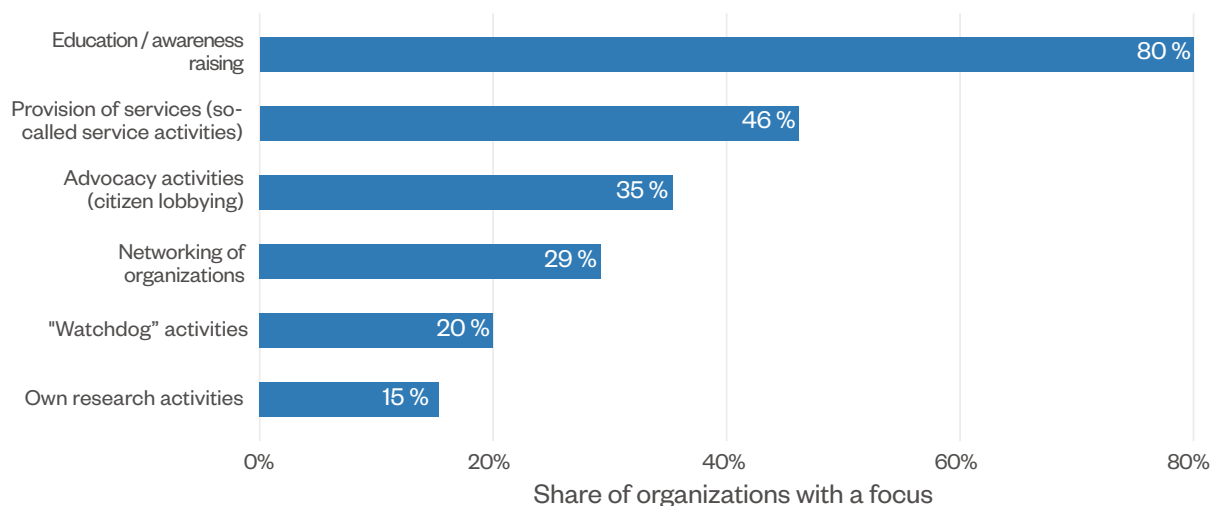
2 Supported organizations

The main quantitative part of this report focuses on describing and analyzing the evolution of all supported organizations that participated in the questionnaire survey organized in two waves between 2020 and 2024. 175 organizations participated in at least one wave, and we have data for both waves from 130 organizations. In order to interpret the differences between the waves as a shift in time, the following text is based only on data from those organizations that participated in both waves. Thus, we are looking at a completely identical sample.

2.1 Focus and target groups of organizations

The focus of the organizations in our sample is described in the graph below. Educating the wider public about their issues is clearly the most frequently chosen option, with other activities mentioned noticeably less. Approximately half of the sample report a 'service delivery' focus. A third say they are involved in advocacy activities or networking. One in five organizations are engaged in so-called watchdog activities, with by far the smallest proportion engaged in research. Organizations could select more than one option, which is why the sum of the percentages in each category is higher than 100%.

Main purpose or focus of the organization



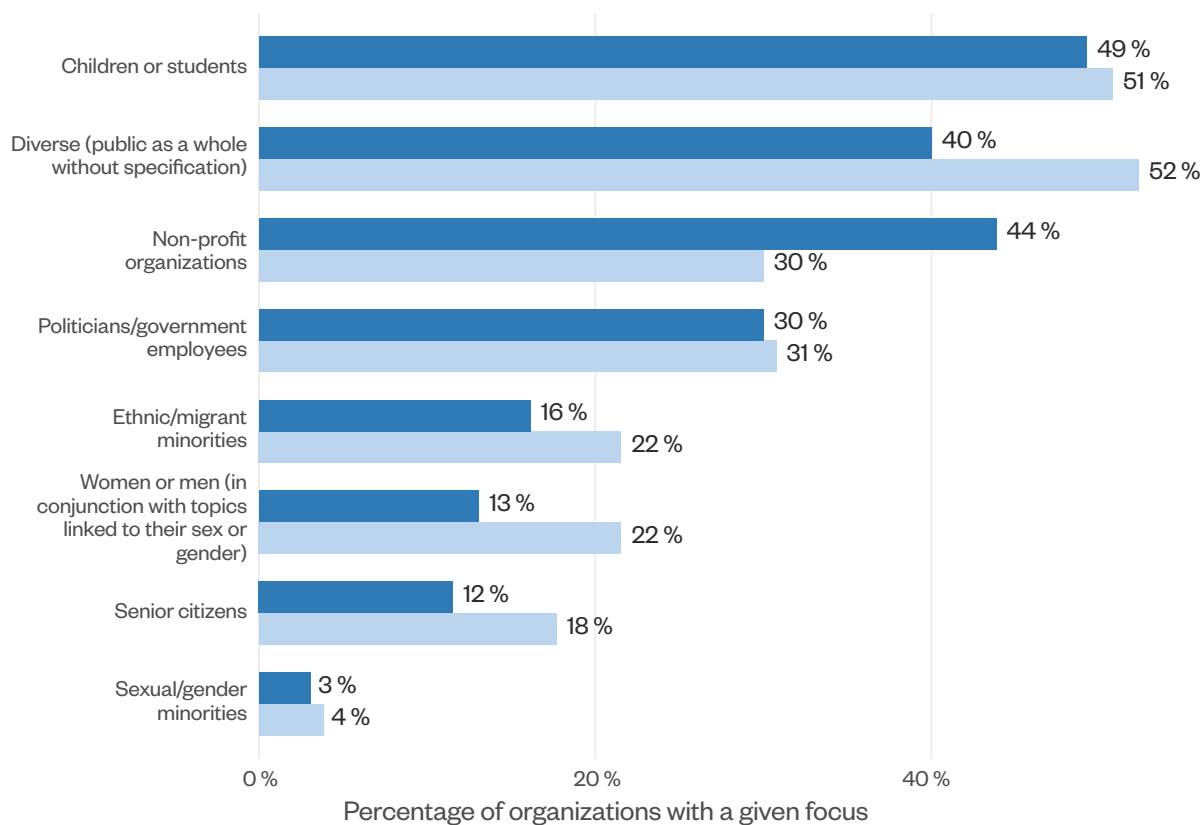
Organizations could select more than one option. N = 130.

In addition, under the option "Other", organizations reported a wide range of other focuses and activities, particularly on community development (7), volunteering (5), culture and media (5), education (1), human rights (3) and systemic change (2).

If we look at the focus of organizations through the eyes of the target group, we find that neither option dominates, either in the initial wave or in the final one. Half of the organizations are dedicated to children and students, but almost half cannot clearly specify the target group; its scope is broad (although there has been a decline in this category by about 10 percentage points over time). Approximately one third listed non-profit organizations as a target group in the initial wave, but in the final measurement this was almost 15 p.p. more, the biggest shift. One-third of organizations list politicians or government employees with no change over time. Other options were less frequently selected by organizations, with less than twenty-five per cent representation. These include ethnic minorities, gender-specific groups (i.e., targeting representatives of one group directly), the elderly, and low units of percent of organizations targeting sexual or gender minorities. The first three target groups mentioned have seen further declines over time to levels of around 15%.

Target groups of organizations

Proportion of organizations with a given focus in the initial and final waves.



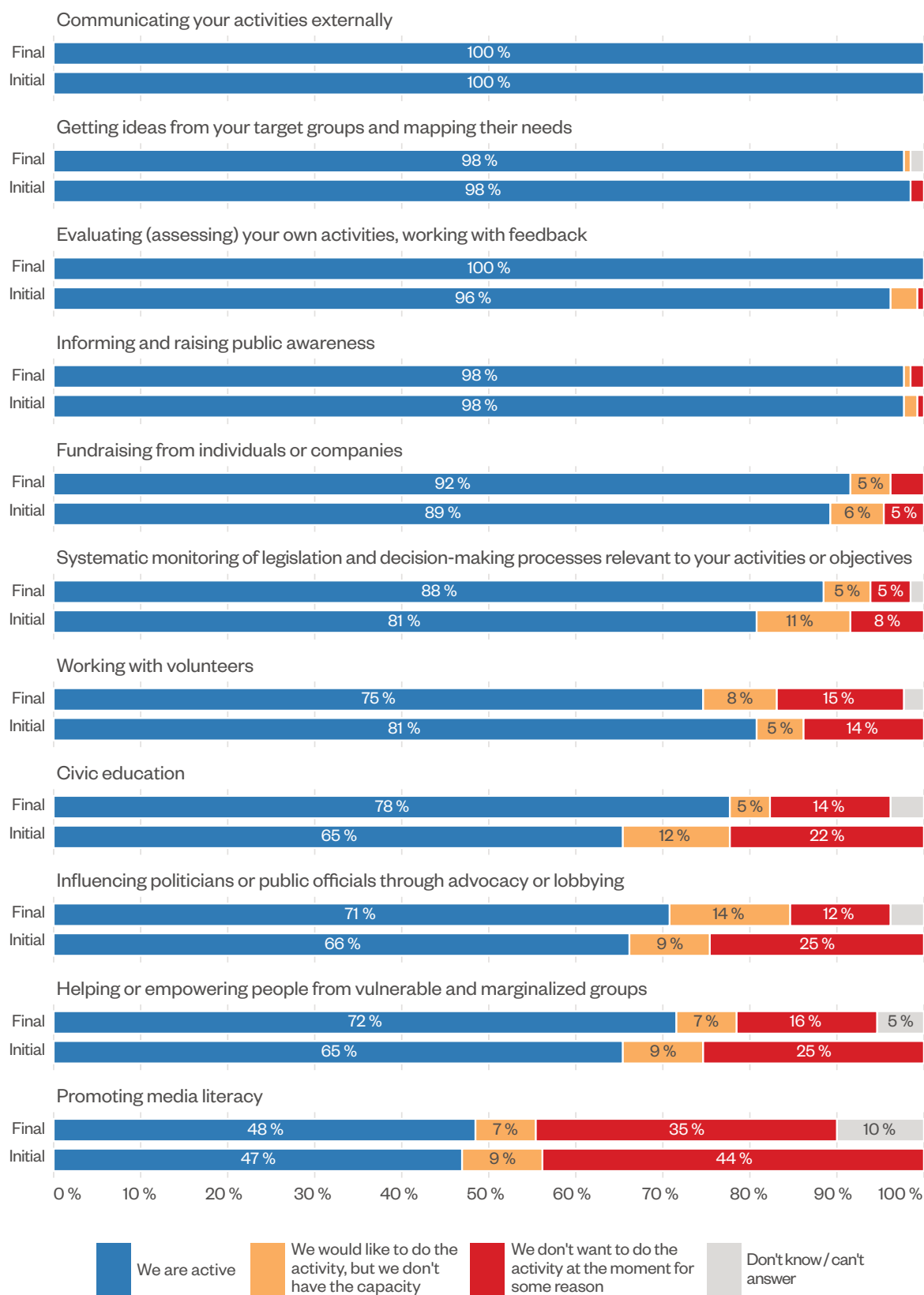
Organizations could select more than one option. N = 130.

Under the option “Other”, on the contrary, they usually mentioned very specific groups that are difficult to summarize concisely. These include socially disadvantaged and excluded groups (11), people with disabilities or special needs (13), educators and educational institutions, including parents (13), carers of disabled or vulnerable children (9), journalists, civic activists (6), local and state governments (5), and individual sub-groups such as people with criminal histories, livestock farmers, criminal justice professionals, substance users, homeless people, people with chronic illnesses, etc. Quite often, groups within an organization overlap, and some mention that specific groups depend on current projects and can vary and change over time.

2.2 Satisfaction with selected activities

In the questionnaire, organizations were offered the opportunity to comment on their satisfaction with a total of 11 activities or tools that they may undertake or use. We used a six-point Likert scale ranging from “Very dissatisfied” to “Very satisfied”. Organizations could also select “We do not develop this activity at all in the organization.” The percentage of organizations that do develop the activity is shown in the following graph. At the same time, we also add the reasons why organizations did not develop the activity. We break down the results by measurement wave.

Activities developed by organizations or tools used



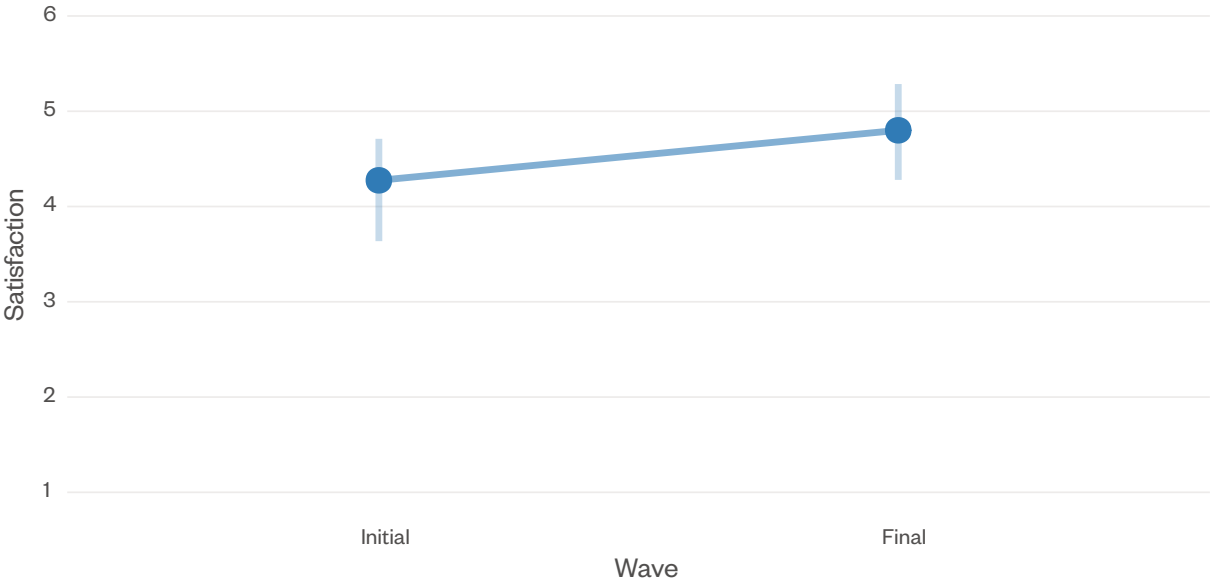
N = 130.

Organizations typically used 9 of the 11 activities or tools offered. Thus, from the rated activities or tools that organizations actually develop or use, we calculated averages that can be considered an index of general satisfaction. The following graph shows the evolution of this general satisfaction, with a positive

change being statistically significant¹. Applying the results to the wider population, the probability of any improvement for organizations that would have undergone the same program and been selected in the same way is 84%.

General satisfaction with the activities developed is increasing

Medians of average satisfaction of individual organizations



Vertical segments represent the 25th to 75th percentiles of each organization's values. N = 130.

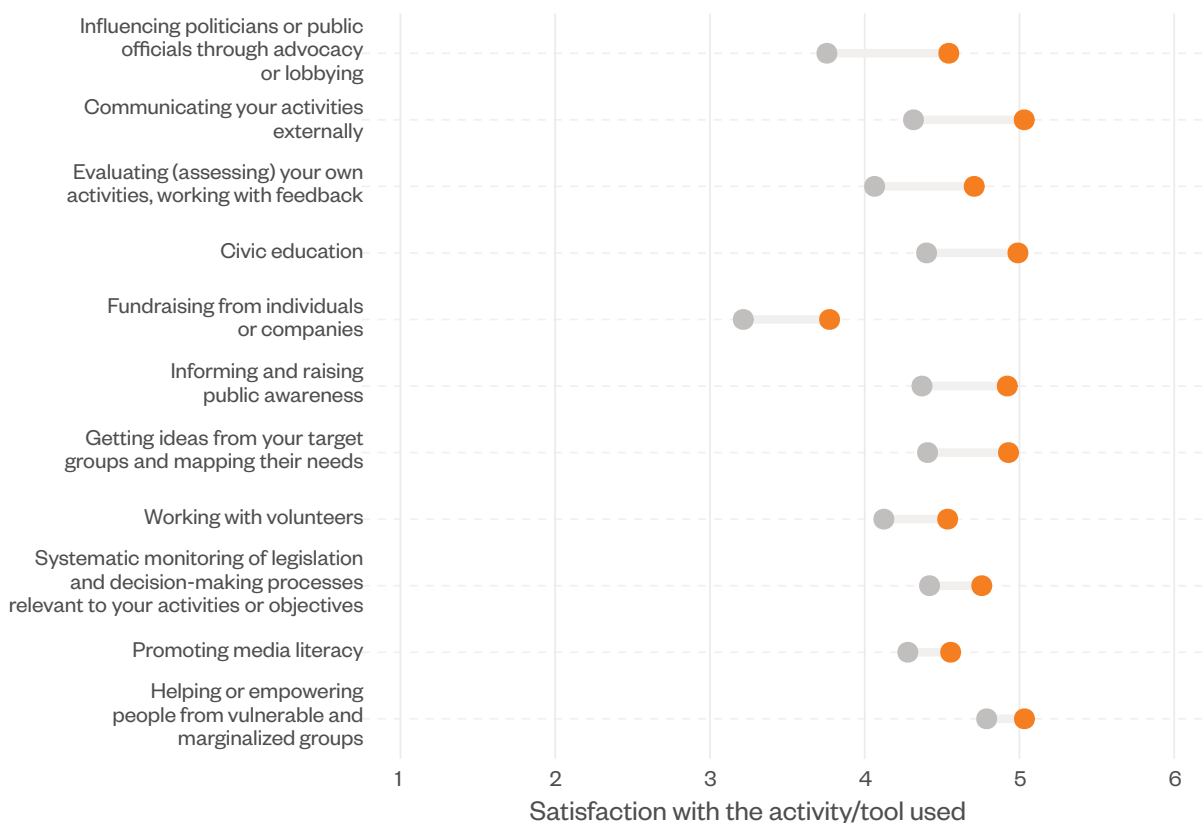
The following graph shows the shifts in satisfaction with the activities developed or tools used. All items showed an increase in satisfaction, with 7 of them increasing by more than half a point on a six-point scale. The graph ranks the items by the magnitude of the shift.

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1 Specifically, the Wilcoxon test yields $V = 6,945.0$; $p < 0.001$.

Satisfaction with all activities developed has increased over time

Shifts in average satisfaction with each activity



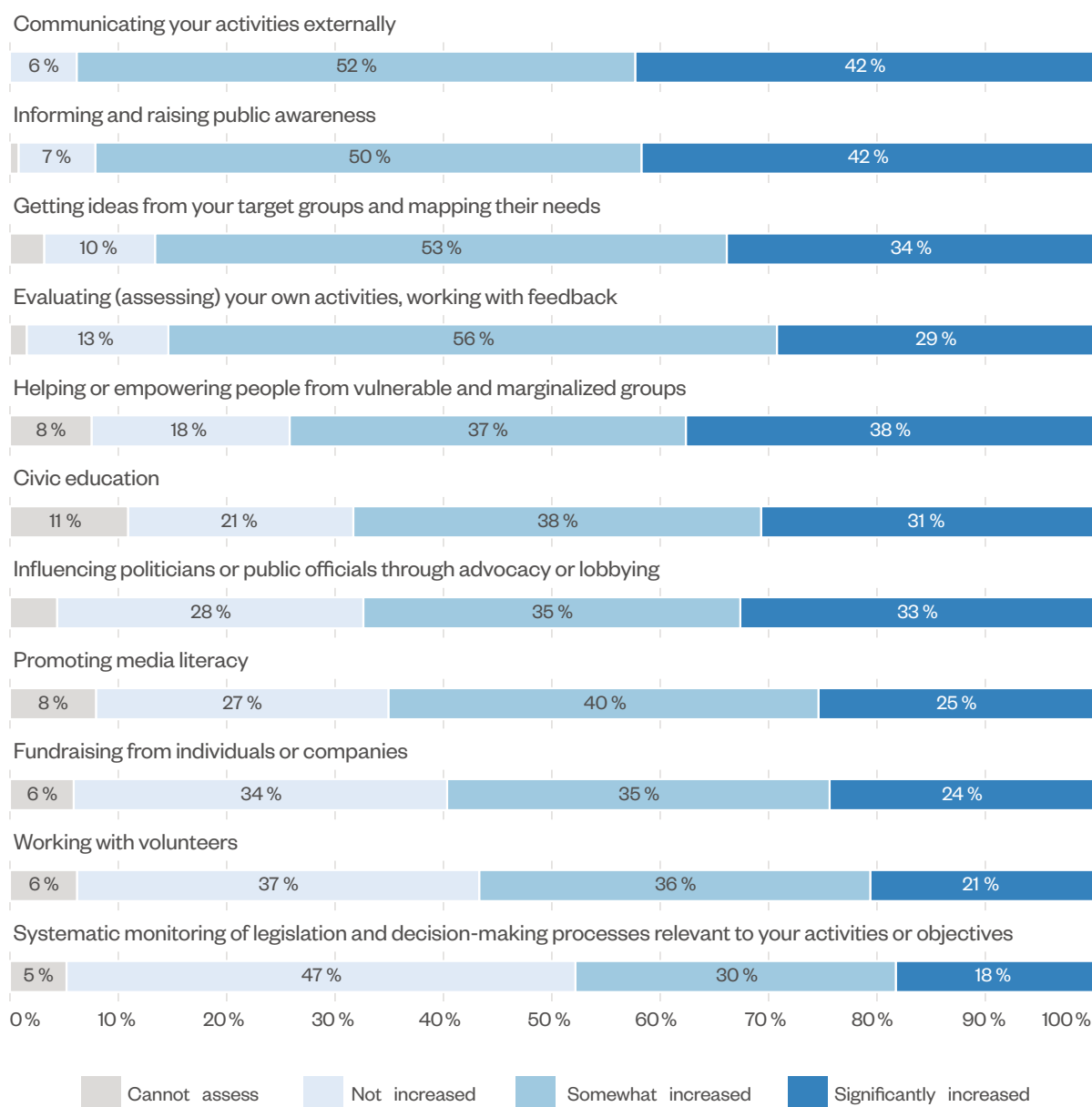
Satisfaction was rated on a six-point scale, where 1 indicates "Very dissatisfied" and 6 "Very satisfied". N = 130.

At the end of the project, we also asked the organizations if and how they perceived a subjective shift in their individual activities, specifically as a direct result of their involvement in the Active Citizens Fund program. Respondents answered on a three-point scale of 'Not increased' to 'Significantly increased', with an option for 'Cannot assess'. The following chart summarizes how organizations perceive the role of the Active Citizens Fund program in their shift in each activity. We have ranked the results by the representation of agreement categories, i.e. items with high levels of agreement with the shift as a result of the Active Citizens Fund program are at the top of the chart.

The chart shows that an overwhelming majority of organizations perceive a positive impact of the Active Citizens Fund program on all activities except one – "Systematically monitor legislation and decision-making processes relevant to your activities or goals" – which is perceived by organizations as the activity least positively impacted by the program. In contrast, the greatest positive impact of the Active Citizens Fund program on the shift is perceived by organizations in the area of communicating their activities externally; here 94% of organizations perceived any positive shift as a result of the Active Citizens Fund program, with a full 42% even talking about a significant increase in competence in the activity.

Subjective shift in individual activities as a result of the program

Do organizations feel that their competence in the following areas has increased as a result of their involvement in the program?



Organizations have always assessed the impact only on those activities they are developing in their organization. N = 130.

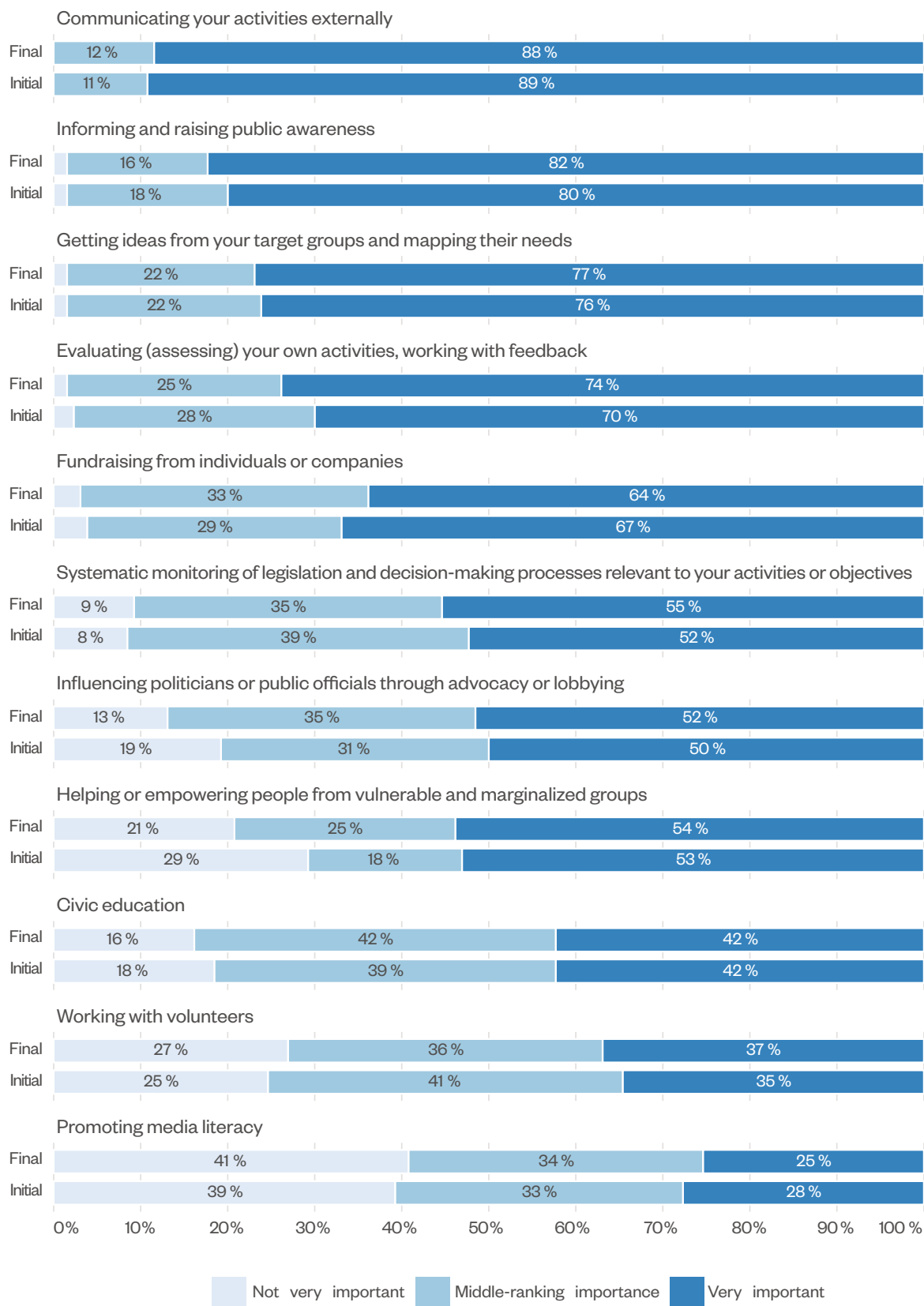
In the open-ended responses where organizations described specific manifestations of the observed shift, a number of specific examples from the above categories emerged. By far the most frequently commented on activities are fundraising and donor communications (developing strategies, attracting new donors, improving campaigns and long-term funding), external communications/PR/public awareness (strengthening the organizations' presence through social media, media and redesigned or completely new websites), needs mapping and training (internal and external). However, there were also advocacy activities (e.g. the possibility of organizing a round table in the Senate of the Czech Republic, consultations within the advocacy forum, etc.). The answers also included topics that did not fall directly into the categories of the closed question above. These included, for example, the digitization and modernization of internal processes, the creation of strategic plans, or building partnerships and networking with other organizations.

Next, we asked how important the activities discussed were to the organizations in relation to their objectives in general (regardless of whether they are currently developing them). The chart below again shows the activities ranked by importance, with a distinction made on the wave of measurement (but

the differences over time are virtually nil here). It can be seen that the first 4 items rank completely overlap with the perception of the positive impact of the Active Citizens Fund program. It can therefore be concluded that organizations perceive the support as well set up. Probably the greatest discrepancy between the perceived importance and positive impact of the Active Citizens Fund program is for the activity “Systematic monitoring of legislation and decision-making processes relevant to your activities or objectives”. This is perceived as important by 91% of organizations, but only 48% of them believe that the Active Citizens Fund program has made a positive difference in this area.

Importance of individual activities for achieving the organization's objectives

Do organizations consider these activities important to them?



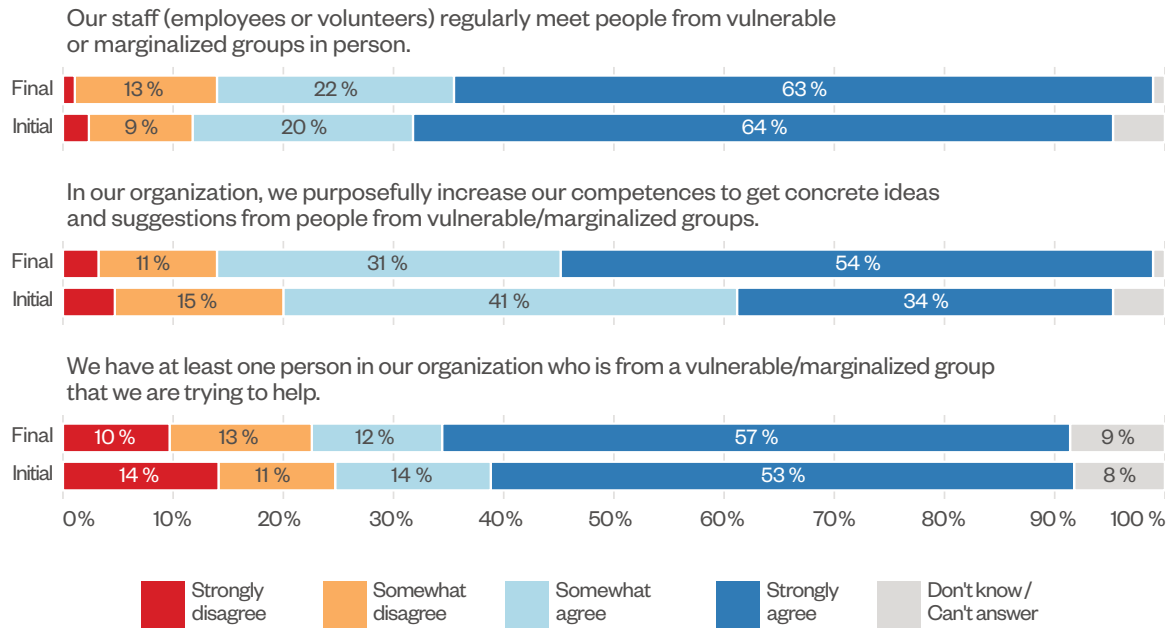
Organizations have always assessed the impact on all activities regardless of whether they are currently undertaking them. N = 130.

We deliberately asked more detailed questions on the topic of empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Specific questions were only administered if organizations were addressing this issue. There was a more significant change only for the item related to organizations' efforts to purposefully increase

their competencies to solicit ideas and input from these communities. Although the level of overall agreement increased by units of p.p., agreement was more decisive and organizations consolidated their attitudes to some extent.

Empowering vulnerable and marginalized groups

Organizations' attitudes towards individual statements



Only organizations that work on this issue were able to comment. N = 89.

2.3 Communication

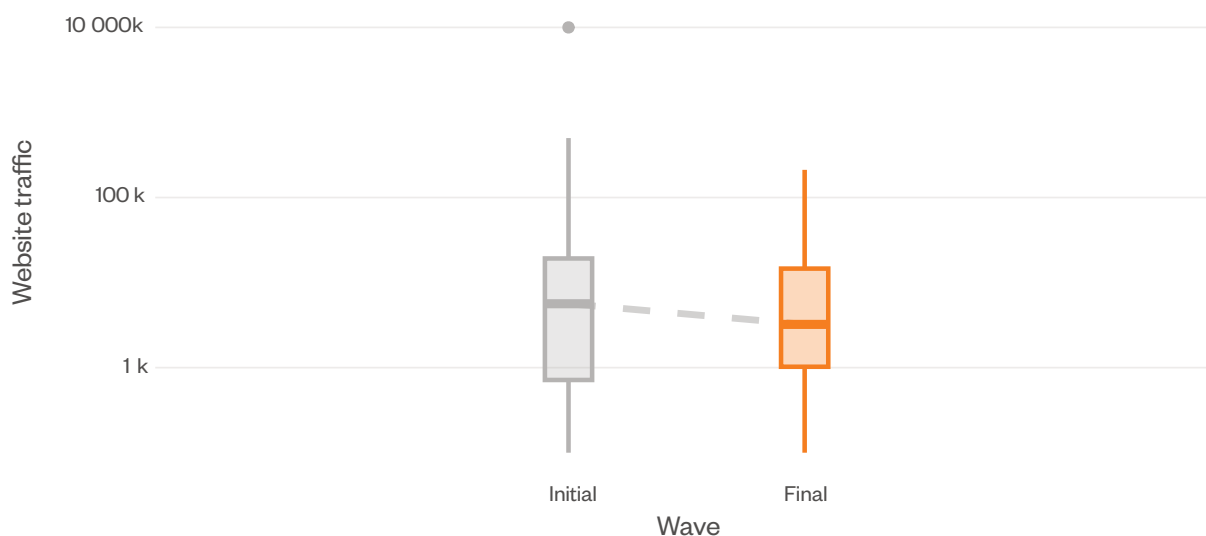
The median number of visitors to the organizations' main websites dropped from 5,650 to 3,300 between measurement waves, as can be seen in the graph below. However, a formal statistical test does not prove a significant change between waves²; the probability of a positive change for a randomly selected organization is 46%, which is only slightly away from the "random" 50%.

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2 V = 398.5; p = 0.683.

Website traffic does not change significantly

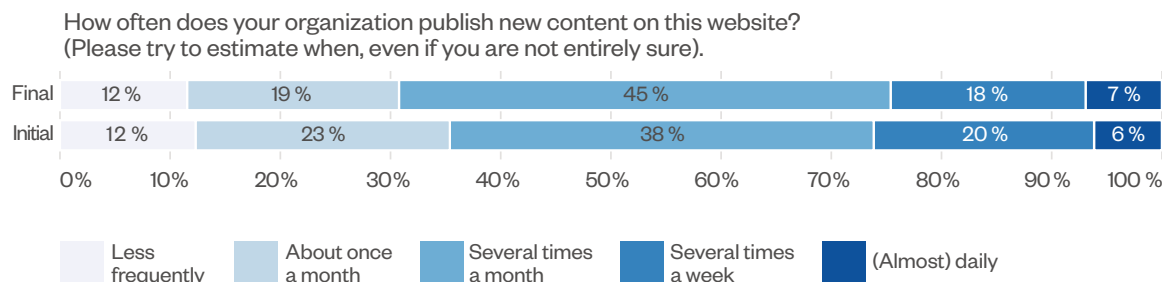
Number of unique visitors to the main websites of organizations that provided information in both waves



Results are on a logarithmic scale due to significant outliers and skewed distribution of visitor numbers. Organizations that indicated that they did not have the information or were unable to track it down are not included. N = 42.

The frequency with which new content is published on the main website has not changed over time³. Organizations add content most often at a frequency of several times a month.

Frequency of publishing new content on the website



N = 130.

The next part concerns communication through newsletters, which are intended for people outside the organization. In the first wave, 78 organizations (i.e. 60%) used them, in the second wave 87 (i.e. 67%).

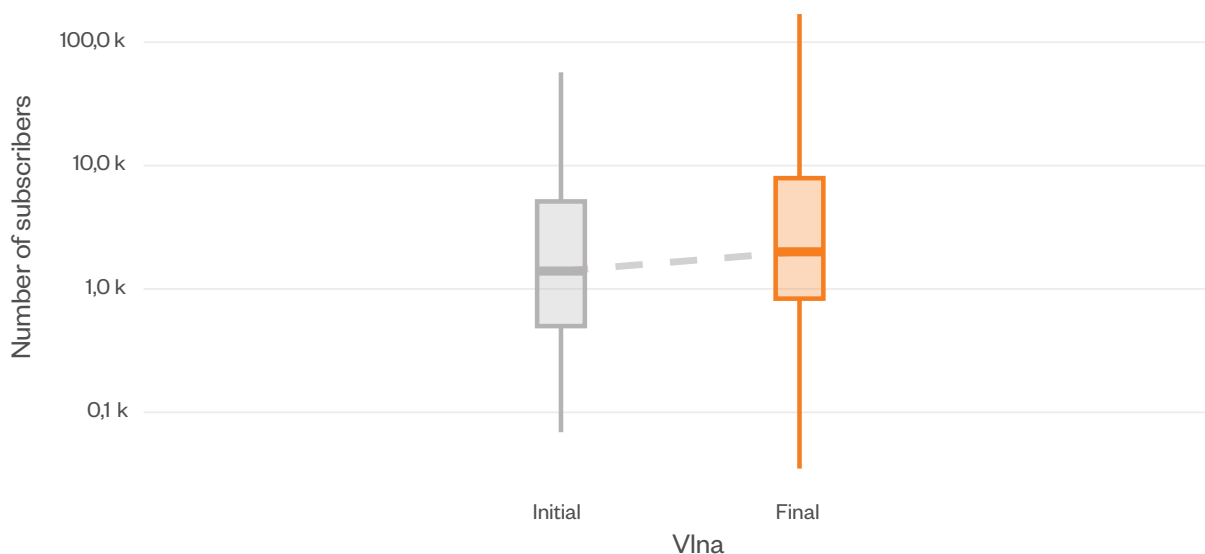
In addition to the number of organizations using newsletters for communication, there was also a shift in the number of subscribers – the median increased from 1,400 to 2,000, as again described in the graph below. The formal test also shows a statistically significant shift⁴; the probability of a positive change for a randomly selected organization is 69%.

³ According to χ^2 test of independence: $\chi^2(4, N = 130) = 1.322$; $p = 0.858$.

⁴ $V = 1,475.0$; $p = 0.009$.

The number of newsletter subscribers is growing over time

Approximate number of subscribers to the newsletters of organizations that have included information in both waves



Results are on a logarithmic scale due to the skewed distribution of the number of subscribers. Organizations that indicated that they did not have the information or were unable to track it down are not included. N = 68.

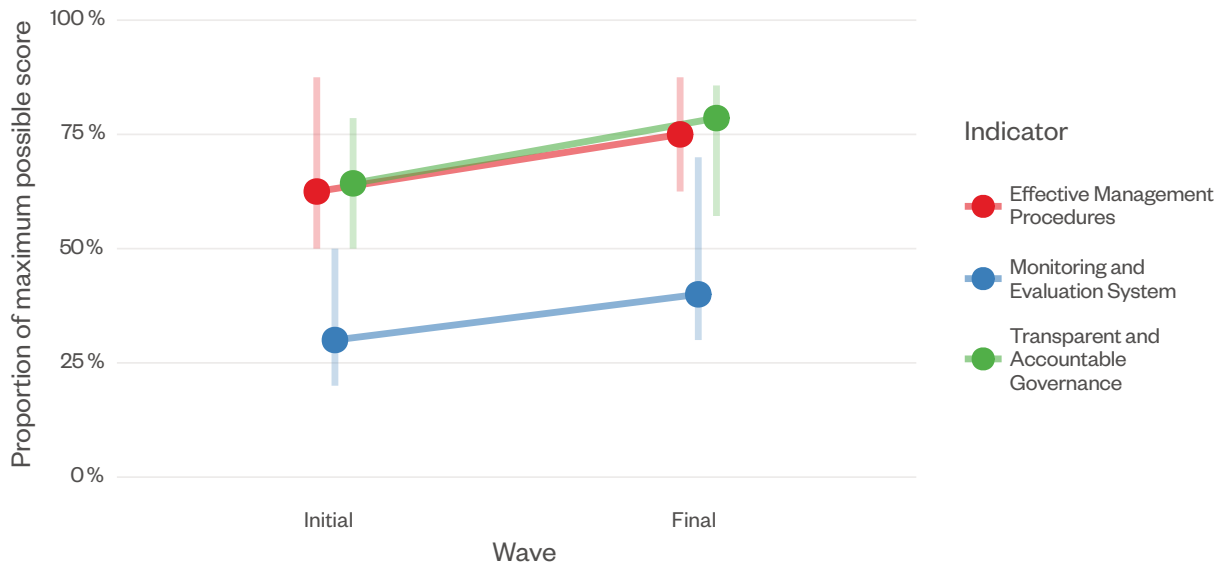
2.4 Internal processes in the organization

The following section analyzes the development of organizations in the indicators defined by the Civil Society Results Manual (CSRM⁵). These are 1) Transparent and Accountable Governance, 2) Monitoring and Evaluation System, and 3) Effective Management Procedures, and we measured each area with several items. Organizations rated the extent to which each statement corresponded to their current situation on a three-point scale. Because the indicators differ in the number of items, we divided the raw score for each by the maximum possible score for comparability. We then use this proportion to assess the evolution over time, which we visualize in the following graph. It can be seen that for our particular sample of organizations, there has been a shift in the median for all indicators, with the largest shift in the “Transparent and Accountable Governance” domain (but the median shifts are virtually identical).

5 <https://eeagrants.org/sites/default/files/resources/Results%20Manual%20updated%202021%20-%20final.pdf>

The monitored indicators are increasing over time

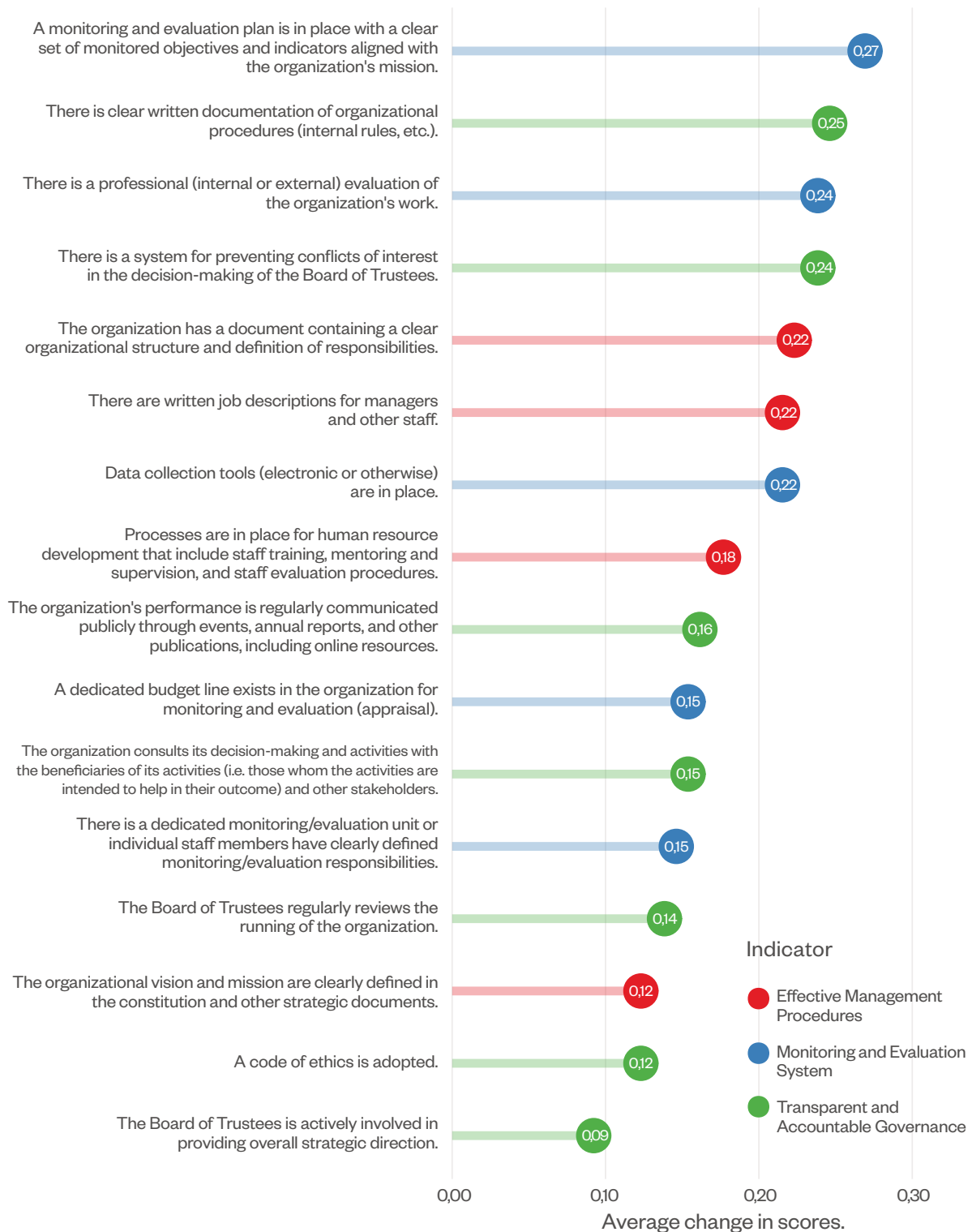
Median shares of the maximum possible score in each domain



We also tested the change in indicators formally, using the Wilcoxon test. We use statistical inference to see what the situation would look like in the entire population of similarly selected organizations undergoing an identical program. For all three indicators, we can observe a statistically significant increase⁶. If we were to interpret the effect sizes, we could say that the probability of improvement in the observed indicators for organizations that would have gone through the same program is between 72 and 75%.

The graph below shows the average change by item for the instrument used. We show all items for all indicators. All changes were positive, with the largest average change for the item “A monitoring and evaluation plan is in place with a clear set of monitored objectives and indicators aligned with the organization’s mission.” However, none of the areas stand out in terms of the magnitude of the differences.

6 At the significance level $\alpha = 0,01$. The specific results are as follows: for „Transparent and Accountable Governance“ $V = 4,487,0$; $p < 0,001$; for „Monitoring and Evaluation System“ $V = 4,105,0$; $p < 0,001$; and for “Effective Management Procedures“ $V = 3,287,5$; $p < 0,001$.



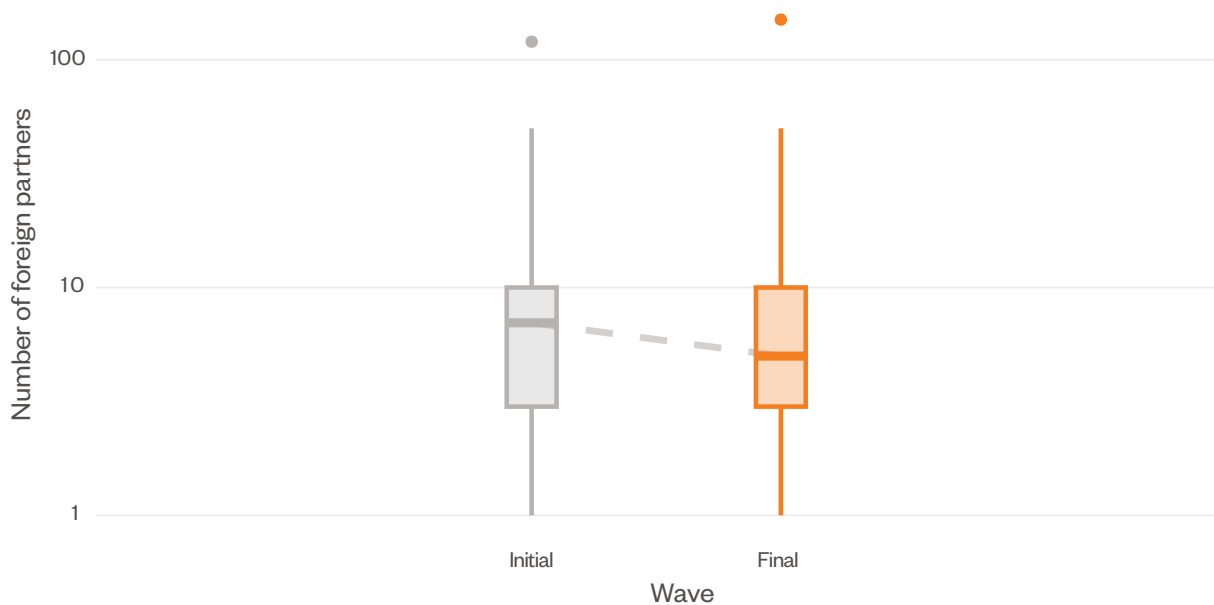
Individual items were scored 0-2 points. N = 130.

2.5 Relationships across sectors

Regarding cooperation with foreign NGOs in the last 12 months, 87 organizations (i.e. 67%) reported cooperation in the first wave and 90 (i.e. 69%) in the second wave.

The median number of foreign partners itself has dropped from 7 to 5, as can be seen in the chart below. However, the formal test does not indicate a statistically significant shift⁷; the probability of a positive change for a randomly selected organization is 44%, close to 50% “chance”.

The number of foreign partners has not changed significantly



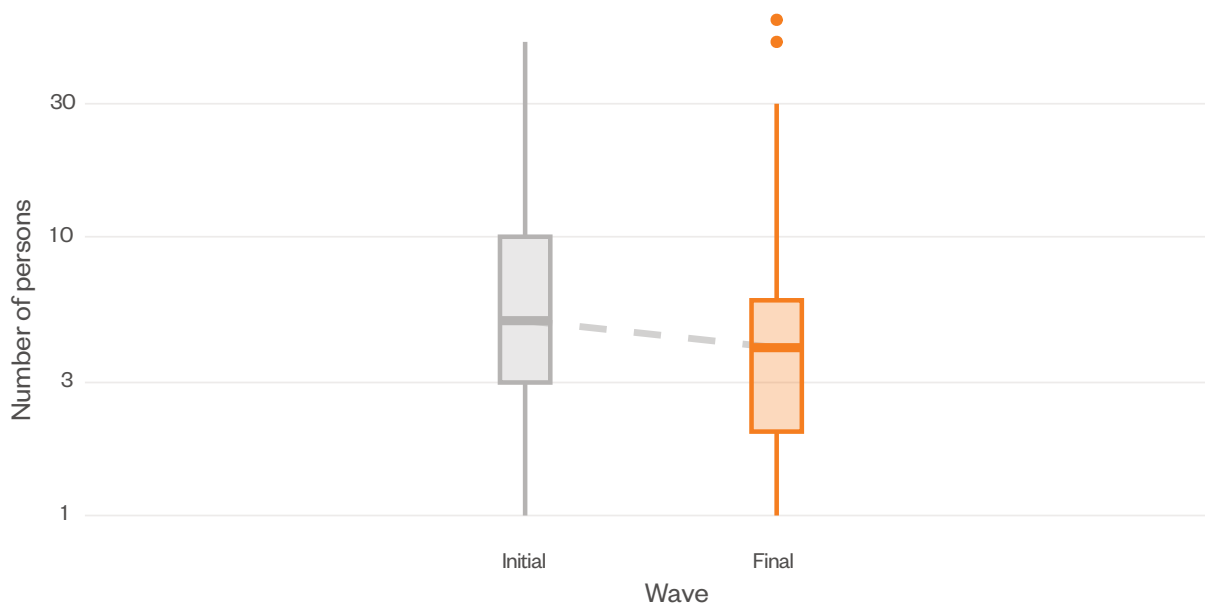
Results are on a logarithmic scale due to outliers and skewness of the distribution of the number of partners. Organizations that indicated that they do not have the information or are unable to track it down are not included. N = 75.

In terms of contacts with the media, 84 organizations (65%) had at least one contact person with whom they regularly work when they want to report on something in the first wave and 93 (72%) in the second wave.

The median number of contacts dropped from 5 to 4, which is not a statistically significant shift⁸; the probability of positive change for a randomly selected organization is 42%. As can be seen from the graph below, there were exceptions with very high numbers of contacts in the second wave.

7 V = 587.5; p = 0.481.
8 V = 663.5; p = 0.273.

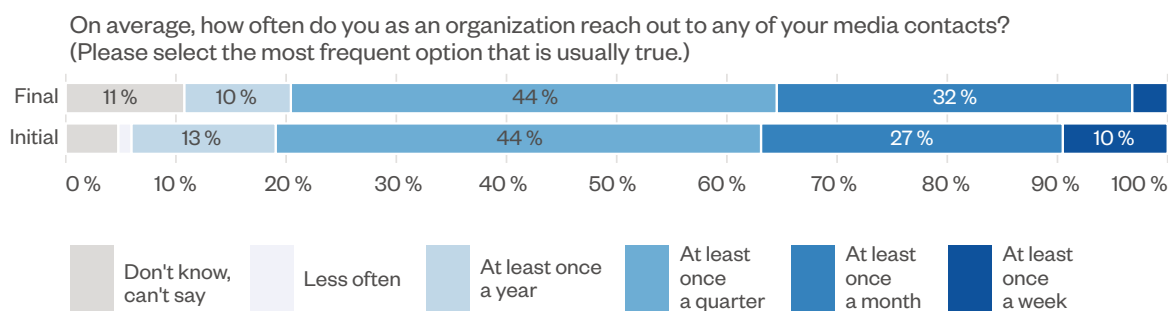
The number of media contacts remains unchanged



Results are on a logarithmic scale due to outliers and skewness of the distribution of the number of contacts. Organizations that indicated that they do not have the information or are unable to track it down are not included. N = 69.

The frequency of contact with the media has not changed significantly over time⁹. Most often, organizations contact them at least once a quarter, about a third once a month, while more intensive or less frequent contacts are much rarer in the responses.

Frequency of addressing contacts in the media remains unchanged



N = 130.

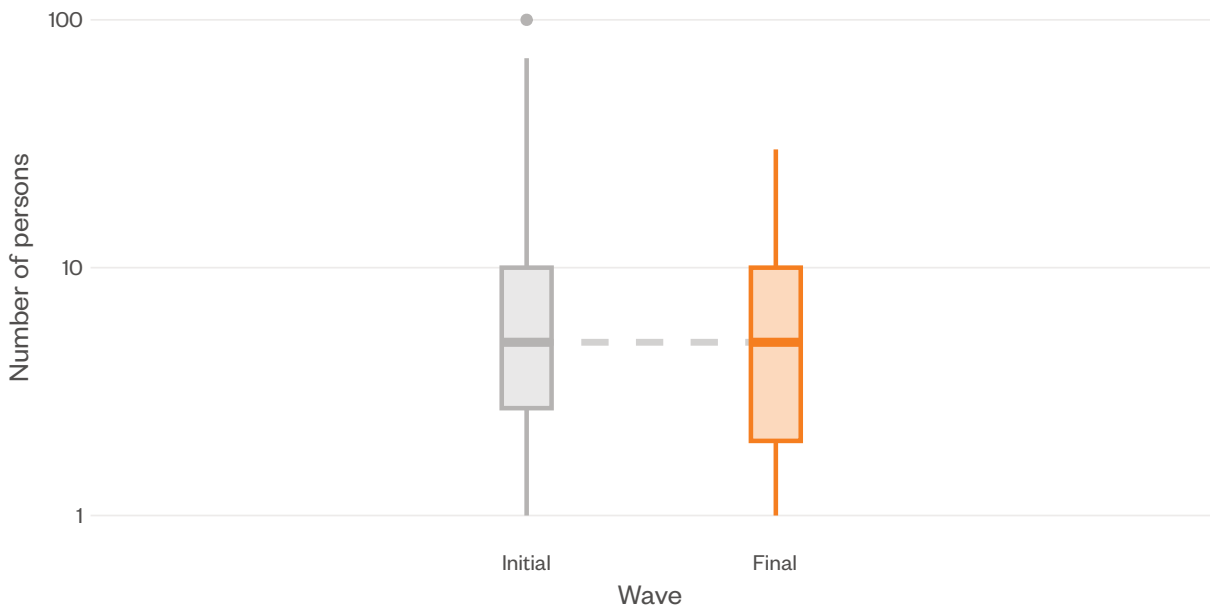
In terms of political representatives contacts, 84 organizations (i.e. 65%) had at least one contact person to whom they could turn and expect their suggestions to be genuinely considered in the first wave, and an almost identical 87 (i.e. 67%) in the second wave.

The median number of contacts remained unchanged at 5. The formal test also does not detect change¹⁰; the probability of positive change for a randomly selected organization is 47%. We provide a graphical representation of the distributions of the number of contacts below.

⁹ According to χ^2 test of independence: $\chi^2(5, N = 130) = 6.733; p = 0.241$.

¹⁰ $V = 625.0; p = 0.724$.

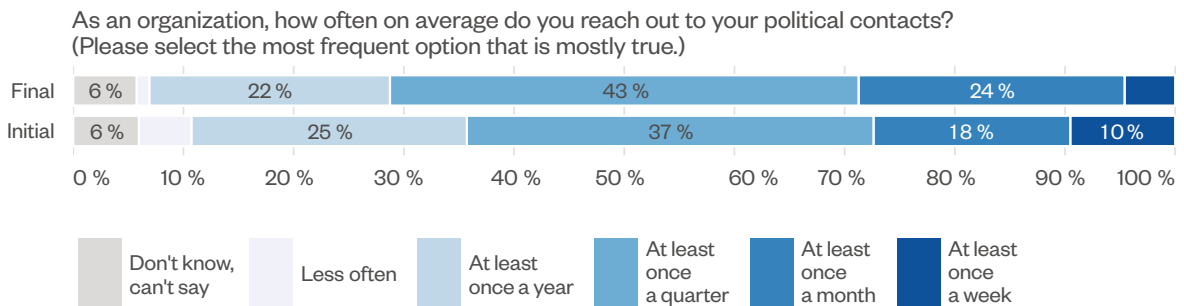
The number of political representatives contacts remains unchanged



Results are on a logarithmic scale due to outliers and skewness of the distribution of the number of contacts. Organizations that indicated that they do not have the information or are unable to track it down are not included. N = 66.

Nor has the frequency of contacting the aforementioned political contacts changed significantly over time¹¹. Most often, organizations contact them at least once a quarter.

Frequency of reaching out to contacts in politics remains unchanged



N = 130.

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¹¹ According to the X² test of independence: X²(5, N = 130) = 4.712; p = 0.452.

2.6 Organizational, personnel and economic indicators

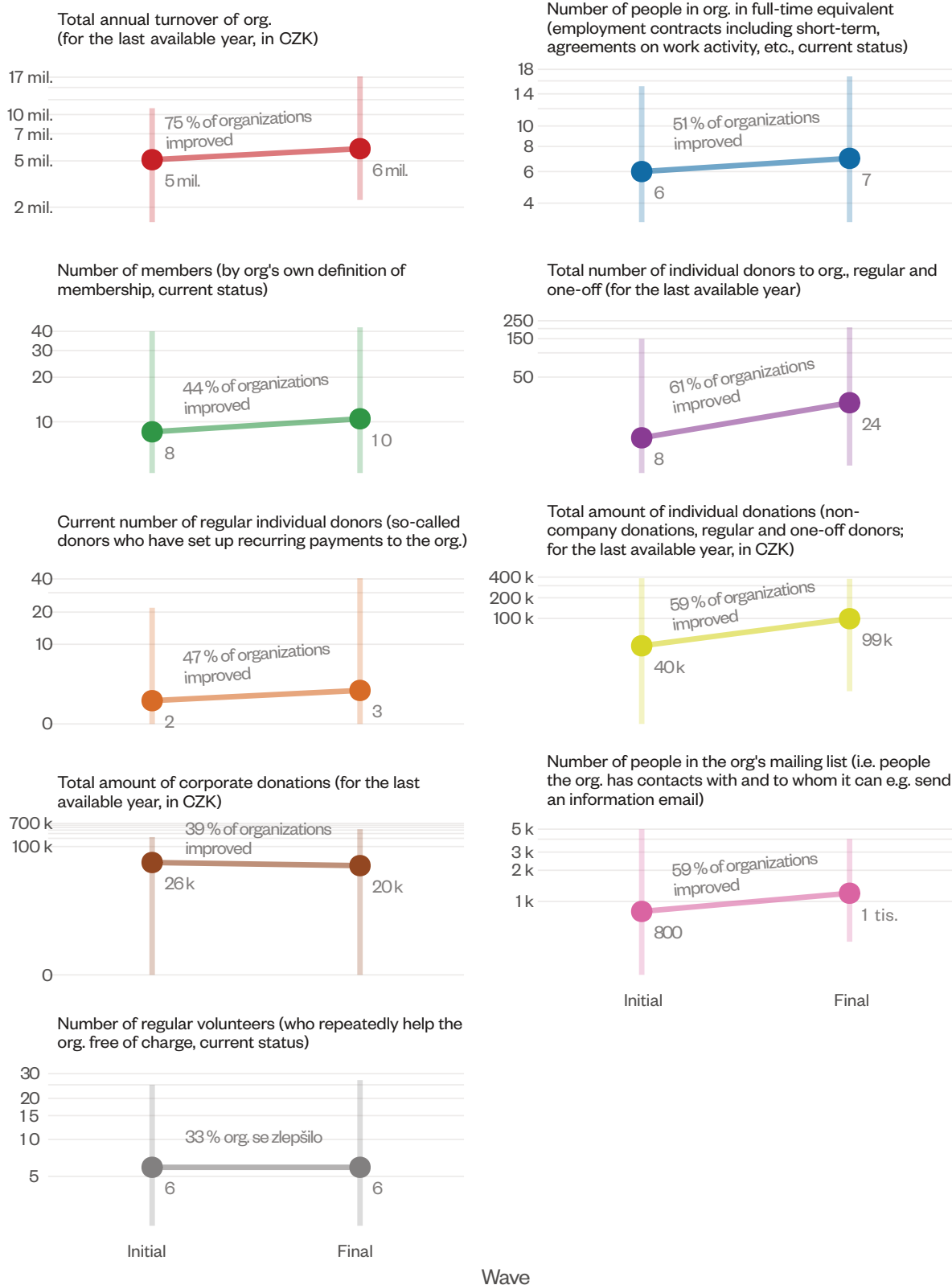
The following section summarizes mostly quantitative data of an organizational, personnel and economic nature. The data were provided directly by the organizations. The evolution of the median values over time is shown in the following graph. It can be seen that most of the indicators are increasing, with the exception of the number of regular volunteers, which remains unchanged in aggregate, and the total amount of corporate donations over the past year, which is slightly decreasing over time. In contrast, the biggest shift can be seen in the total number of individual donors to organizations (both regular and one-off).

However, the aggregate values represented by the medians are influenced by some numbers or amounts of a few organizations that differ significantly – often by orders of magnitude – from the typical levels of others. Thus, some variation on the graph may be caused by units of organizations. For this reason, we additionally add textual information

to the graph that tells us what fraction of the observed organizations experienced any improvement over the input wave. In this respect, the most significant change is in total annual turnover, where 75% of organizations have seen an increase. Conversely, the smallest positive shift was in the aforementioned number of regular volunteers, which increased for only 33% of organizations (here, 45% of organizations also deteriorated, the largest deterioration among the indicators, and 22% remained unchanged in the number of volunteers).

Most personnel and economic indicators of organizations are growing

Medians of indicators in each wave. Labels indicate the percentage of organizations that improved by any value between waves.



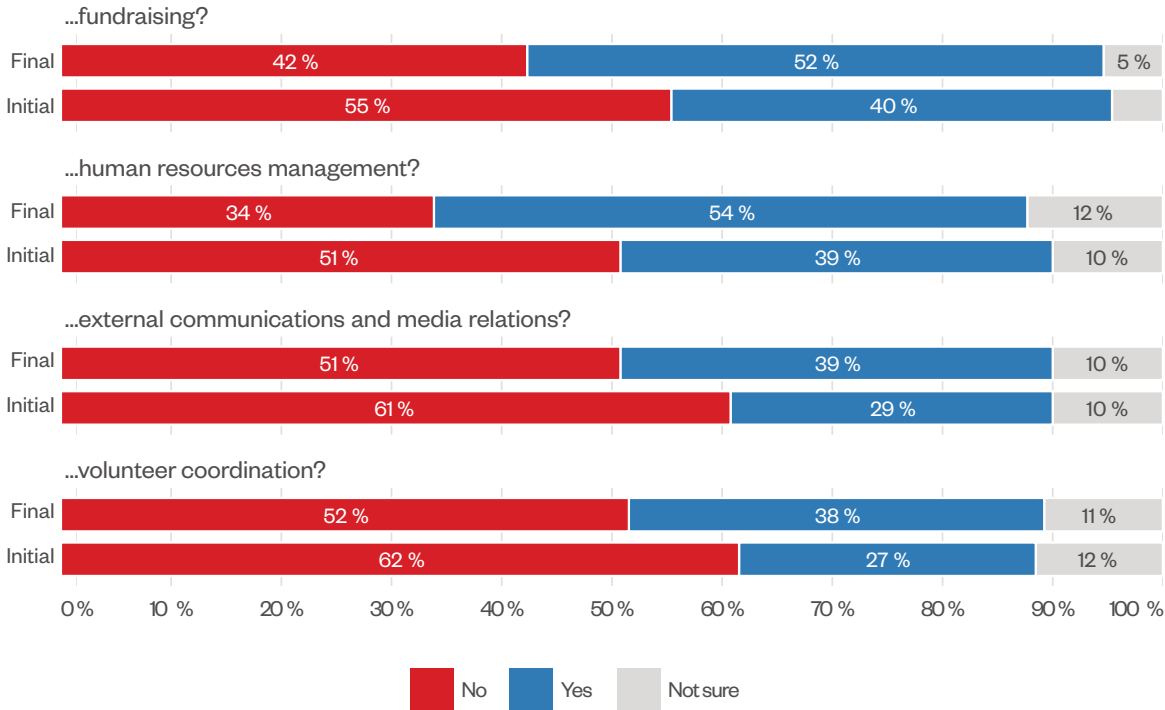
The "y" axis is on a pseudo-logarithmic scale that is successively linear near zero. The classical logarithm cannot be used because some values are zero. Vertical segments represent the 25th to 75th percentiles of each organization's values. N = 130.

In addition to quantitative indicators, we also asked about the formalization of the internal processes of the organizations, i.e. whether they have a strategic document or at least written internal guidelines on various areas. The results are summarized in the following graph, which shows that in the initial wave

27-40% of organizations had formalised the areas under study, while in the final wave 38-54% of organizations had formalized them. The largest increase was in the area of human resource management (15 p.p.). On the other hand, formalization shifted the least in the area of external communication and media relations, where there was an increase of “only” 10 pp.

Formalization or conceptualization of internal processes is increasing

Does your organization have any strategic document or written internal guidelines regarding...



N = 130.

2.7 Feedback from organizations and overall evaluation of the program

The organizations first assessed three aspects of their experience with the Active Citizens Fund program, using grades as in school. On average, organizations rated all areas very positively, so the ‘report card’ is as follows:

- 1.18 for “Support in project implementation (grant administration) by the program team”
- 1.19 for “Communication from the program team (accessibility, speed, etc.)”
- 1.46 for “Accompanying support activities offered by the Active Citizens Fund program during the project (PR support, webinars, etc.)”

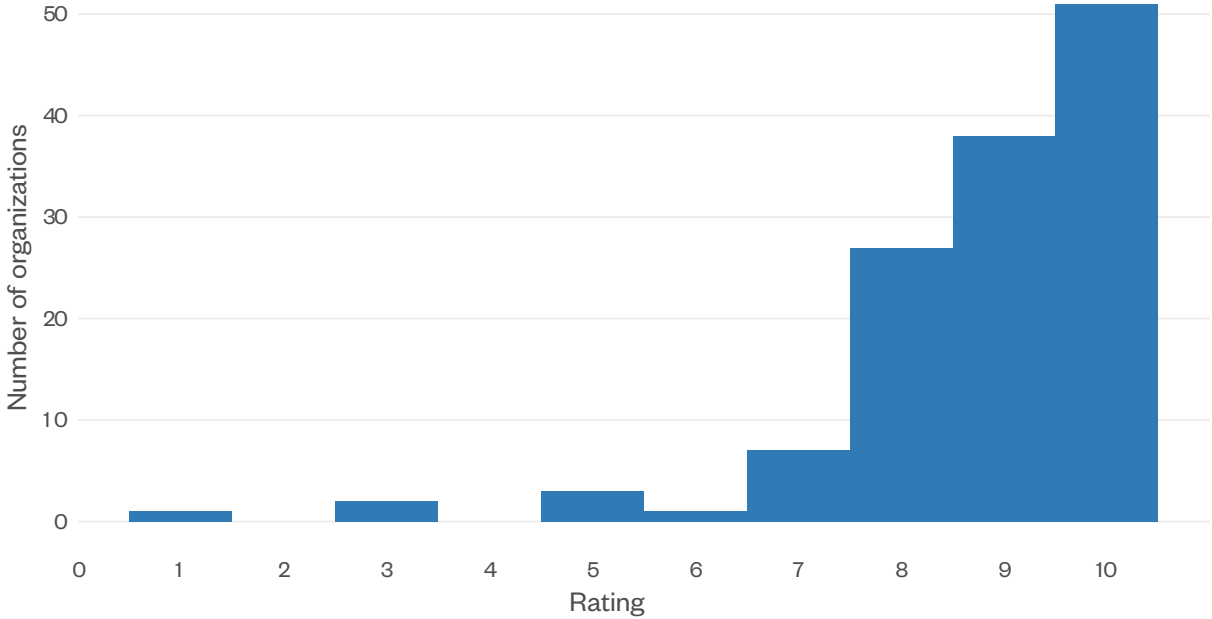
In the survey we also looked at satisfaction in terms of whether they had recommended the Active Citizens Fund program to any other organization during the course of the project, which 65% of organizations did (53% more than once, 12% just once). A further 27% would be happy to do so on an appropriate occasion. A positive sentiment was therefore expressed by 92% of organizations. Only 1% of organizations would not recommend the Active Citizens Fund program¹² and the remaining 6% could not judge (it was possible that the respondent was just unaware of the recommendation).

¹² The reason given was the termination of the program, under which 1 organization had applied for support and therefore had no one to offer it to, and another 1 organization mentioned “bureaucratic burden.”

When asked about future collaboration with the Open Society Fund Prague, 81% of organizations would “definitely want” to continue working with the Open Society Fund Prague and 13% would “rather want” to. Only one organization would “definitely not want to continue working with the Open Society Fund Prague” (the rest could not judge the matter). 52% of organizations would definitely appreciate cooperation with the Committee of Good Will – Olga Havel Foundation, 15% would rather appreciate it and the remaining 33% could not answer (however, significantly fewer organizations cooperated with this foundation). If we were to assess satisfaction without “Don’t know / Can’t say” answers, 99% of organizations expressed a wish for further cooperation with the Open Society Fund Prague and 100% of organizations with the Committee of Good Will – Olga Havel Foundation.”

Organizations rated their overall satisfaction with the Active Citizens Fund program on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is “least satisfied” and 10 is “most satisfied.” The distribution of “scores” received is presented in the following graph. The median satisfaction score was 9, with only 3 organizations scoring below 5.

Overall satisfaction with the ACF program



Ratings were on a scale of 0-10, where 0 indicates the least satisfaction and 10 the most satisfaction. N = 130.

In commenting on the positive satisfaction scores for the Active Citizens Fund program, organizations often mentioned 1) support and helpful and professional communication from the donor, 2) flexibility in terms of budget, 3) meaningful focus of the program and support for topics perceived as important by organizations, 4) opportunities for training, networking, and accompanying activities, 5) simplicity of administration, especially compared to EU projects. Worse ratings were associated with the following comments: 1) administrative complexity, especially in terms of reporting, monitoring reports or length of forms, 2) currency of grants – exchange rate losses, 3) perceived unfairly high valuation of foreign cooperation in proposals, 4) user-unfriendly evaluation system with external storage and Word tables.

In terms of satisfaction with the way in which organizations were able to use the capacity strengthening grant (whether it was a mandatory investment of 5-15% of the total budget or a stand-alone project in Focus 5), 96% of all organizations reported that they were satisfied with the use of the grant (66% were very satisfied and 30% were ‘somewhat satisfied’). Only 5 organizations were ‘somewhat dissatisfied’ and no organization was ‘very dissatisfied’.

Organizations most often used the amount for training and human resource development (35% of organizations), followed by investment in PR and communication together with strategic planning (both 21%), 10% of organizations used the amount for leadership strengthening and the same proportion for fundraising. The remaining 4% purchased technical and IT equipment.

In relation to the administrative burden of the program, 58% of the organizations felt that it was appropriate for the type of similar project. 31% of the organizations perceived the burden of the program as

somewhat higher than would be considered justified by the organizations. Only 6% of organizations considered the program to be significantly more administratively demanding than they could justify.

We also asked about perceptions of the sustainability of any positive changes that the Active Citizens Fund program might bring. Here, 61% of organizations said that there was a 75-100% likelihood that most of the changes could be sustained more than a year after the end of the project. A further 28% of organizations gave this a 50-75% chance. A total of 5% rated the likelihood as lower and the rest either could not assess sustainability or said that it did not make sense to consider sustainability for their activities.

3 Summary of case studies

The Active Citizens Fund supported 305 projects between 2019 and 2024. The projects supported varied from mid-sized grants (139 supported) to strategic grants seeking larger strategic change (13 supported), smaller action grants (121 supported) or matching grants (7 supported), of which fundraising was an integral part¹³. The supported projects could pursue different objectives and during their lifetime the project teams dealt with different challenges and changes, partly caused by, among others, the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced changes in some project activities. The supported projects then produced case studies as part of the evaluation. Their purpose was not to describe each project in full detail, but to pick out an interesting moment that may have lessons for other organizations that also seek to develop civil society in one of the target areas. The case studies are therefore short, usually two pages, and seek to convey some of the insight gained from the implementation of the project.

What the supported projects and case studies have in common is the range of objectives they pursued. The Active Citizens Fund program supported projects that pursued any of the following objectives: (1) strengthening civic participation, (2) conducting or developing advocacy and watchdog activities, (3) empowering disadvantaged groups, (4) civic education and media literacy, and (5) strengthening the NGOs themselves and their capacities. Most projects pursued primarily one of these objectives, but some, by the nature of their focus, similarly pursued multiple objectives, even if they had to formally subscribe to one objective as their main objective.

There are a variety of notable moments in the case studies themselves. For example, efforts to develop the use of digital technologies, both internally and with the target group with which the organization works, were evident in a number of projects. Other projects have provided lessons in community development, including the development of a community of contributors and fundraising, as well as the development of active citizenship among supporters and the people they follow. Still other project teams then chose moments related to the implementation of educational programs for their case study. And there is no shortage of case studies on how project organizations have sought to strengthen their organizational capacity and kick-start long-term sustainable change in their operations.

Before the reader begins to leaf through the case studies themselves, a few examples can be given. The organization Organizace Středisko náhradní rodinné péče (Foster Family Care Centre) decided to start developing the use of digital tools by creating a new website. This was supported by a questionnaire among the target groups, which ascertained both satisfaction with the existing website and the needs of the target groups in general. This strategy led, among other things, to the introduction of a form for enquiries directly from the website, which the organization itself said worked well: “Almost immediately after the launch of the website, we saw an increase in the number of enquiries about adoption or foster care, but also offers of cooperation.”

Similarly, in the field of digitization, for example, organization Domov sv. Josefa (St. Joseph’s Home) has created a new client database system as part of its participation in the Active Citizens Fund program. Although it was possible to create a system that automatically generates useful reports and dashboards that can be used in real time by the organization’s staff, for example, during a phone call with a patient/client, some things were left unfinished in retrospect: “We asked all the therapists where they enter the data about the counseling intervention they had done. However, we should have asked where they enter all client data and what other processes they follow.” So the new system works well for many purposes, but it is not linked to all the information it could be linked to. As a result, some of the information is hidden in unconnected repositories, making it difficult for a staff member to access it in real time when talking to a client. The case studies also include lessons learned from mistakes that inevitably occurred in the projects.

It is still rather rare in the Czech Republic that we become drivers of international cooperation and inspiration for other countries. However, this is exactly what the organization Svoboda zvířat Plzeň (Animal Freedom Pilsen) has done, which has improved the international signature campaign and secured tens of thousands of signatures for a joint international petition. The organization decided to go down the route of creating its own digital tool: “[We] created our own signature collection website despite the existence of a pan-European signature collection site created by the organizers []. Not only was ours significantly nicer,

13 The amount raised was mirrored to some extent by an equally large grant to the organization so supported.

but it included a number of clever features, and also converted patentees into donors. We then used these donations to collect additional signatures to pay for social media advertising to increase the reach of posts encouraging people to sign EOIs on our website. So the ads generated signatures for us, and the signatures on the site generated additional donations for us, another investment in social media advertising.” The organization then introduced the innovation to organizations in other countries, some of which also used the strategy.

In the organization Středisko ekologické výchovy SEVER Horní Maršov (the Centre for Environmental Education SEVER Horní Maršov) in the School for Sustainable Living program, the project implementers focused on activating young people in local community projects to improve the environment and quality of life in their neighborhood. The projects are carried out by students with their teacher and receive support from mentors from the SEVER Centre. The project implementers identified a risk where “the level of pupil participation in the program is often perceived differently by pupils and teachers. The teacher believes that the pupils were the movers and shakers, that the project was their work, while the pupils perceive their activity in a completely different way, that adults made decisions for them at important moments in the project.” The project implementers therefore sought to work with teachers’ fear of failure, which they identified as a major factor in why teachers often have too much input into the direction of the project, leading to pupil alienation. However, even this did not help to completely eradicate the problem. The project thus showed that teachers’ low willingness to give control to pupils and let them make real decisions (including those that are not optimal from the teacher’s perspective) is likely to be strongly entrenched. Thus, change would probably require even more intensive work with teachers, for example “sharing good practice during induction workshops for the program.”

As part of its involvement in the Active Citizens Fund program, Život 90 (Life 90) decided to highlight and differentiate its emergency helpline service from its competitors. The challenge was to highlight the service’s strengths and build on these to communicate the service, but not lose the link between the service and the organization’s overall brand. To this end, the organization partnered with Pábení (“Sham”) and the Court of Moravia. As a result, the service was renamed from “Emergency Service” to “Outreach” and a new website was created based on UX testing, which explains to clients more clearly than before what problems the service solves and how. This has, among other things, relieved some of the pressure on the team, who had been overwhelmed with queries in the past.

KVAS association has focused on increasing student participation through creative learning methods as part of its “Jihlava is not fu@k to me!” campaign. The main activity was seven long-term educational programs that took place at school classroom level, but in collaboration with artists and cultural organizations. Pupils also tried out new approaches to learning and making. One of the key moments was getting feedback from the pupils, with the organizers noting that in an environment of trust, the pupils themselves are the experts on their needs and can name what is important to them and what works for them.

The organization MY LITVÍNOV focused on community support and building a community centre in a socially excluded locality. While the activities for children were successful and popular from the beginning, the activities for adults in the form of civic education and thematic workshops did not work very well at first. However, the organizers were open to change and instead of the classic workshops in the meeting room, they switched to a form of informal gatherings in the community garden by the fire, often with guests of Roma ethnicity (the predominant ethnicity in the target community). Combined with explaining the importance of community, these efforts contributed to greater participation of the target group.

Foundation Neziskovky.cz (Nonprofits.cz) has prepared e-learning materials for other nonprofit organizations that want to advance in topics such as communication, storytelling, brand tonality and temperament, copywriting, mailing, social media, advocacy, media, community relations, analytics, fundraising, and more, in short, almost everything modern nonprofits need as tools to effectively move toward their primary goal. The implementers have distilled a few ingredients from their experience in developing e-learning courses that have helped them, and which can certainly be applied more generally: go out and ask questions, identify needs, involve a wide range of experts and experienced people, let things mature, don’t be afraid to tear things down a few times to build a better piece of work, and a host of others that you will find in the relevant case study.

Of special note are the larger strategic grants that were intended to contribute to some more lasting systemic change. These strategic grants most often implemented their activities in the category of “Advocacy and Watchdog Activities”.

An illustrative example is the project of Naděje pro děti úplňku organization (Hope for Full Moon Children), which used the grant to develop a new umbrella organization (Alliance for Individualized Support) advocating for the rights of people with disabilities. This umbrella organization was created to connect relevant organizations and propose reform of the welfare system towards greater individualization of support for people with disabilities. However, the proposal for a comprehensive reform proved to be too ambitious against the background of the need to continuously respond to various upcoming legislative changes on the subject. As a result, the project was more reactionary (and watchdog) than initially planned. However, three areas crystallised which were agreed by member organizations and which then guided the Alliance's response to the forthcoming legislation: 1) the area of support coordination (which is perceived as fragmented, poorly linked etc.), 2) accessibility of services and 3) fair assessment of needs.

Another systemic grant was implemented by the organization Platforma pro sociální bydlení (Platform for Social Housing). The aim of the project was to enforce the lack of legislation to prevent and address housing needs in the Czech Republic. To this end, the Platform created the "For Housing" ("Za bydlení") initiative based on the participation of a wide range of experts and stakeholders, including representatives of regions and municipalities. It succeeded in defining the main principles and recommendations on what legislation the Czech Republic needs to support housing. Communication with the government resulted in the draft law on housing support in line with the recommendations of the "For Housing" initiative being approved by the Legislative Council of the Government of the Czech Republic in early summer 2024.

Other strategic grants have been successful, for example, in standardizing forest kindergartens (Asociace lesních mateřských škol, Association of Forest Kindergartens), in expanding the range of migrants who have access to public health insurance (Sdružení pro integraci a migraci, Association for Integration and Migration), in amending the Criminal Code to broaden the scope of predicate offenses (In IUSTITIA), in restoring the right of associations in building permit processes that have a significant impact on the environment (Zelený kruh, Green Circle), and in other advocacy campaigns.

Of course, it is difficult to select just a few examples from the hundreds of often highly successful and otherwise enlightening projects. The projects described above are just a taster. Those who would like to look a little deeper into the prepared menu (on [the Active Citizens Fund page](#)) before reading the case studies themselves can also enjoy

- the project of the association Nasedím, sousedím (I am Not Sitting, I am Neighbouring), which organized community lunches for the elderly and managed to raise the necessary money to cover the costs from sponsors thanks to a clear plan with a strong story;
- the Khamoro project, which organized 'Journeys of Discovery'. These were intended to open horizons for Romani people from excluded localities in the Karlovy Vary Region about Romani history and culture;
- the Slovo 21 (Word 21) project, which helped its women's group Manushe to broaden its scope from specifically women's issues towards community organizing and increasing voter turnout and interest in political participation;
- the project of Spolek pro integraci menšin (the Society for the Integration of Minorities), which included, among other things, organizing a discussion and distributing leaflets to fight vote buying in socially excluded localities; or another project of the same organization, in which advocacy and media training for young Roma was implemented;
- a case study from the Charity Svitavy project describes how the organization prepared for social work in the area of sexuality and relationships of clients with intellectual disabilities;
- the NESEHNUTÍ Brno project was based on lobbying for a new decree on school meals;
- Iuridicum Remedium describes in a case study the creation of a film about the right to be offline in the era of ongoing digitalization;
- the case study of the proFem organization project focuses on the cooperation between a non-profit organization and a researcher from the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic;
- the case study of TADY A TEĎ (HERE AND NOW), describes the campaign against child executions in the Pilsen region and also tells about negative experiences with obtaining data from courts through 106/1999 code;

- Portus Prachatice mentions in the study the creation of an interactive map with contacts to supervision for teachers, which is available at www.superucitel.cz and which currently constitutes the only comprehensive place with contacts and recommendations for school practice used by the Ministry of Education and Science in the discussion of the usefulness of supervision in pedagogical practice;
- the development of an educational mobile application in the media and human rights field is described in a study by Amnesty International;
- Centrum demokratického vzdělávání (The Centre for Democratic Education) describes in a case study the search for partner organizations in Austria and Norway and the subsequent cooperation, study tours and sharing;
- Dozens and hundreds of other case studies give a glimpse of how the civic sector in the Czech Republic works today, where it is moving and what it can do.

Conclusion

Overall, the overwhelming majority of the monitored indicators have changed positively during the Active Citizens Fund program and the satisfaction of organizations is at a high level. In the following paragraphs we briefly comment on the main results by sub-theme.

Satisfaction with the activities developed or tools used has increased for all those we asked about in the evaluation. Subjectively, we observed a perceived shift in these activities as a result of the Active Citizens Fund program in 10 of the 11 organizations, most notably in the area of communicating their activities externally. The areas where there was the greatest subjective shift were also rated by the organizations as the most important (the exception being monitoring legislation and decision-making processes relevant to the organization's activities, which is rated as important but has a small subjective shift as a result of the Active Citizens Fund program).

In external communications, there has been an increase in the number of organizations using newsletters and a significant increase in the number of subscribers, but no increase in website traffic.

Internal processes, as assessed by the CSRM indicators, improved significantly both in all items of the questionnaire battery and in the derived indices of individual areas (i.e. Transparent and Accountable Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation System and Effective Management Procedures). The probability of improvement for a randomly selected organization, a metric that can be used to measure effect size, is around 73% across the indicators (the biggest shift was in "having a monitoring and evaluation plan in place with a clear set of monitored objectives and indicators aligned with the organization's mission").

There have been no statistically significant changes in external relations across sectors, but the number of organizations working with foreign partners, in the media or with political leaders has increased by units of p.p. over time. However, the frequency of contact with these groups remained unchanged.

However, positive changes have taken place in 7 out of 9 monitored indicators of organizational, personnel or economic nature. The biggest shift was recorded in the number of individual donors to organizations, with a slight negative change in the amount of corporate donations. There was a significant shift in the formalization of internal processes in all areas monitored, most notably in human resource management.

The overall assessment and feedback from organizations on the Active Citizens Fund program as a whole is strongly positive, with a median overall satisfaction score of 9 on a scale of 0-10. Fully 92% of organizations have already recommended or would recommend the program to others, and 94% of organizations would like to continue working with the Open Society Fund Prague in the future. Organizations rated the support in project implementation, communication from the program team, and the support activities offered by the Active Citizens Fund program as "excellent" overall, with an average score of 1.28. The sustainability of the changes associated with the Active Citizens Fund program was also viewed positively, with 89% of organizations believing that the changes are more than 50% likely to be sustained more than a year after the program ends. By far the least positive feedback thus relates to the administrative burden, with 37% of organizations rating this as greater than they could justify.

The goal of the Active Citizens Fund was to support civil society and vulnerable groups. The programme was carried out as part of the EEA and Norway grant programmes for 2014 – 2021 and it was supported with the amount of EUR 15 million. In the Czech Republic, it is managed by the Consortium consisting of the OSF Prague, the Committee of Goodwill – Olga Havel Foundation and the Scout Institute.

The Open Society Fund Prague

We have been distributing grants for more than 25 years. We have always supported organizations with original and innovative approaches and invested in their development. Via our financial support, we have made it easier for the People in Need NGO to launch pilot projects focused on social work in socially excluded communities and to initiate the “One World” international human rights film festival. We have made it possible for organizations such as Transparency International, Ecological Legal Service, currently Frank Bold and Fórum 50% to be established. We have brought new concepts to Czechia – approaches that were unknown due to the totalitarian communist regime, but worked in other countries and helped promote values of open society and democracy. This applies, for example, to the concept of palliative care (successfully developed by the Cesta domů NGO) and open data (in this area, we initiated establishing the Rekonstrukce státu NGO).

The Committee of Goodwill – Olga Havel Foundation

The Committee of Goodwill was founded by Olga Havlová, the first wife of the president Václav Havel, at the beginning of 1990 following the tradition of the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted and the Charter 77. Our mission is to help people who, because of their poor health or social status, find it difficult to integrate into society or cannot care for themselves without other people’s assistance. We support NGOs focusing on healthcare, social, humanitarian and educational activities that enhance dignity and integration of people with disabilities or diseases, uncared-for children and elderly people. With these goals, we defend human rights and social justice.

Scout Institute

The Scout Institute operates under Junák – Czech Scout organization which has had hundreds of thousands of members. Our mission is to record the history of this inspiring movement, to develop it and promote it. Besides that, we create space for encounters and personal growth of people of all generations, whether they are scouts or not. This forum filled with scout atmosphere and values attract young organizers and visitors of various events to active citizenship in the public sphere.

Schola Empirica

We are an educational and research organization. We educate teachers, social workers, and parents so that they can provide the best possible care for children and help them reach their full potential. We draw on scientifically proven approaches and methods from abroad, adapt them to the Czech Republic, test them in practice together with our partners, evaluate their impact in the Czech environment and then disseminate the best practices.

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| Nadace **OSF**


VÝBOR DOBRÉ VŮLE
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