Global Civil Society
Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector

Lester M. Salamon
Helmut K. Anheier
Regina List
Stefan Toepler
S. Wojciech Sokolowski
and Associates

The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project
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Table of Contents

Contributors ........................................................................................................ ix
Preface .................................................................................................................... xvi

Part 1: Comparative Overview .............................................................................. 1
    Chapter 1: Civil Society in Comparative Perspective ..................... 3
        Lester M. Salamon, Helmut K. Anheier, and Associates

Part 2: Western Europe ....................................................................................... 41
    Chapter 2: Belgium ......................................................................................... 43
        Sybille Mertens, Sophie Adam, Jacques Defourny,
        Michel Marée, Jozef Pacolet, and Ilse Van de Putte
    Chapter 3: Finland ......................................................................................... 63
        Voitto Helander, Harri Laaksonen, Susan Sundback,
        Helmut K. Anheier, and Lester M. Salamon
    Chapter 4: France ........................................................................................... 81
        Edith Archambault, Marie Garlaitto, Helmut K.
        Anheier, and Lester M. Salamon
    Chapter 5: Germany ....................................................................................... 99
        Eckhard Priller, Annette Zimmer, Helmut K. Anheier,
        Stefan Toepler, and Lester M. Salamon
    Chapter 6: Ireland ......................................................................................... 119
        Freda Donoghue, Helmut K. Anheier, and Lester M.
        Salamon
    Chapter 7: Netherlands ............................................................................... 145
        Ary Burger, Paul Dekker, Stefan Toepler, Helmut K.
        Anheier, and Lester M. Salamon
    Chapter 8: Spain ............................................................................................ 163
        José Ignacio Ruiz Olabuénaga, Antonio Jiménez Lara,
        Helmut K. Anheier, and Lester M. Salamon
    Chapter 9: United Kingdom .......................................................................... 179
        Jeremy Kendall and Stephen Almond
### Part 3: Other Developed Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 10: Australia</th>
<th>203</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark Lyons, Susan Hocking, Les Hems, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 11: Israel</th>
<th>219</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Gidron, Hagai Katz, Helmut K. Anheer, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 12: Japan</th>
<th>243</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naoto Yamauchi, Hiroko Shimizu, S. Wojciech Sokolowski, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 13: United States</th>
<th>261</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. Wojciech Sokolowski and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part 4: Central and Eastern Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 14: Czech Republic</th>
<th>285</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pavol Fricˇ, Rochdi Goulli, Stefan Toepler, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 15: Hungary</th>
<th>305</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>István Sebestény, Éva Kuti, Stefan Toepler, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 16: Poland</th>
<th>325</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ewa Leš, Sławomir Nalecz, Jan Jakub Wygrnański, Stefan Toepler, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 17: Romania</th>
<th>337</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Saulean, Dan Stancu, Carmen Epure, Stefan Constantinescu, Simona Luca, Adrian Baboi Stroe, Oana Tiganescu, Bogdan Berianu, Stefan Toepler, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 18: Slovakia</th>
<th>355</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helena Woleková, Alexandra Petrášová, Stefan Toepler, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part 5: Latin America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 19: Argentina</th>
<th>373</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mario Roitter, Regina List, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 20: Brazil</th>
<th>393</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leilah Landim, Neide Beres, Regina List, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 21: Colombia</th>
<th>411</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodrigo Villar, Regina List, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 22: Mexico</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustavo Verduzco, Regina List, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 23: Peru</th>
<th>445</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Sanborn, Hanny Cueva, Felipe Portocarrero, Regina List, and Lester M. Salamon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendices</th>
<th>463</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Methodology and Approach</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Comparative Data Tables</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Data Sources</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Advisory Committees</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: Local Associates</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Project Funders                           | 511 |
Like Romania, the Slovak nonprofit sector appears to be somewhat less developed in economic terms than its Central European neighbors of Hungary and the Czech Republic. In large part, this is due to the attempts of post-Communist governments to preserve centralized state control, which essentially kept the Slovak nonprofit sector out of the provision of crucial welfare services even more so than in other countries in the region. This does not mean, however, that the Slovak nonprofit sector lacks vitality. To the contrary, Slovakia’s nonprofit organizations have developed into a flexible, unified, creditable, and highly effective mechanism of citizen education and participation that has made substantial contributions to democratic development in this country.

The work presented here was carried out by a Slovak research team hosted by the Social Policy Analysis Center (S.P.A.C.E.) Foundation as part of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. It thus offered ample opportunities both to capture local Slovak circumstances and peculiarities and to compare and contrast them to those in other countries both in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere in a systematic way.
The present chapter reports on just one set of findings from this project, those relating to the size of the nonprofit sector in Slovakia and elsewhere. Subsequent publications will fill in the historical, legal, and policy context of this sector and also examine the impact that this set of institutions is having in Slovak society. The data reported here draw heavily on an official survey of nonprofit organizations conducted by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic in 1996. The survey was designed in close cooperation between the Statistical Office and the project team. Unless otherwise noted, financial data for Slovakia are reported in U.S. dollars at the 1996 average exchange rate. (For a more complete statement of the sources of data, see Appendix C. For a more complete statement of the types of organizations included, see Chapter 1 and Appendix A.)

**PRINCIPAL FINDINGS**

Four major findings emerge from this work on the scope, structure, financing, and role of the nonprofit sector in Slovakia:

1. **A modest economic force**

   In the first place, aside from its social and political importance, the nonprofit sector turns out to be a significant economic force in Slovakia, though still accounting for relatively modest shares of national expenditures and employment. More specifically:

   - **A $247 million industry.** Even excluding its religion component, the nonprofit sector in Slovakia had operating expenditures of $247 million (7.6 billion Slovak crowns) in 1996, or 1.3 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, a modest, but still significant amount.3
   - **An important employer.** Behind these expenditures lies a sizable workforce that includes more than 16,000 full-time equivalent paid workers. This represents 0.9 percent of all nonagricultural workers in the country, 1.4 percent of service employment, and the equivalent of 2 percent of the government workforce at all levels—federal, provincial, and municipal (see Table 18.1).
   - **Matches employment in largest private firm.** Put somewhat differently, nonprofit employment in Slovakia is essentially on a par with employment in the largest private business in the country, the East Slovak Iron Foundry VSZ in Košice.
   - **Outdistances some industries.** Indeed, as many people work in the nonprofit sector in Slovakia as in some entire industries in the country. Thus, as shown in Figure 18.1, nonprofit employment in Slovakia
outdistances employment in industries such as printing and hotels and restaurants. Moreover, nonprofit employment is not far behind the employment level in the Slovak mining, textiles, and chemical manufacturing industries.

- **Volunteer inputs.** Even this does not capture the full scope of the nonprofit sector in Slovakia, for this sector also attracts a considerable amount of volunteer effort. Indeed, this translates into at least another 7,000 full-time equivalent employees, which boosts the total number

### Table 18.1  The nonprofit sector in Slovakia, 1996

- $247.1$ million in expenditures
  - 1.3 percent of GDP
- 16,200 paid employees
  - 0.9 percent of total nonagricultural employment
  - 1.4 percent of total service employment
  - 2.0 percent of public employment

![Figure 18.1](image-url)  Nonprofit employment (head count) in Slovakia in context, 1996
of full-time equivalent employees of nonprofit organizations in Slovakia to 23,000 or 1.2 percent of total employment in the country (see Figure 18.2).

- **Religion.** The inclusion of religion, moreover, would add to these totals another 2,700 paid employees. With religion included, nonprofit paid employment therefore rises slightly to 1 percent of the total and paid plus volunteer employment to 1.4 percent. Religion also increases operating expenditures by approximately $19 million (590 million crowns), thus bringing total expenditures to close to $266 million (8.2 billion crowns), the equivalent of 1.4 percent of GDP without the imputed value of volunteer time, and 1.5 percent with volunteer time.

2. **One of the smaller nonprofit sectors in Central and Eastern Europe**

While it is beginning to take its place as a serious component of the Slovak economy, the Slovak nonprofit sector is small relative to its counterparts elsewhere in the world, and even lags a little behind the level in other Central European countries.

**Figure 18.2** Nonprofits in Slovakia, with and without volunteers, 1996, as a % of . . .
• **Significantly below the international average.** As Figure 18.3 shows, the relative size of the nonprofit sector varies greatly among countries, from a high of 12.6 percent of total nonagricultural employment in the Netherlands to a low of 0.4 percent of total employment in Mexico. The overall 22-country average, however, is close to 5 percent.

---

**Figure 18.3** Nonprofit share of total employment, by country, 1995
This means that Slovakia, at 0.9 percent, falls significantly below the
global average.

• **Just under the Central and Eastern European average.** In addition to falling significantly below the 22-country average, nonprofit employment as a share of total employment also falls below the level elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, as shown in Figure 18.4, full-time equivalent employment in nonprofit organizations in Slovakia, at 0.9 percent of total employment, is just below the Central and Eastern European average of 1.1 percent.

• **Margin widens slightly with volunteers.** This margin widens slightly, moreover, when volunteers are added. Thus, with volunteer time included, nonprofit organizations account for 1.2 percent of total employment in Slovakia, which is 30 percent below the regional average of 1.7 percent (see Figure 18.4).

3. Culture and recreation dominance

Similar to other Central and Eastern European countries, but unlike the all-country average, culture and recreation clearly dominate the nonprofit scene in Slovakia.

---

**Figure 18.4** Nonprofit share of employment, with and without volunteers, Slovakia and four regions, 1995
Close to 37 percent of nonprofit employment in culture and recreation. Of all the types of nonprofit activity, the one that accounts for the largest share of nonprofit employment in Slovakia is culture and recreation. As shown in Figure 18.5, 37 percent of all nonprofit employment was in the culture and recreation sector.

**Figure 18.5** Composition of the nonprofit sector, Slovakia, Central Europe, and 22-country average, 1995

*1996 data*
in Slovakia is in the culture and recreation field. This is comparable to the Central and Eastern European average of 35 percent, but it greatly exceeds the 22-country average of 14 percent. This situation very likely reflects the heritage of the previous regime, as culture and recreation were among the few fields of social activity that were tolerated and even encouraged by the Communist state. The same holds true for professional associations and unions, which also account for a comparatively larger share of nonprofit employment in Slovakia than the international average (10 percent in Slovakia vs. 7 percent internationally).

- **Sizable nonprofit presence in education.** Another sizable portion of total nonprofit employment in Slovakia is in the education field. This field accounts for almost 29 percent of all nonprofit employment, most of which is in primary and secondary education. The education share of nonprofit employment in Slovakia thus almost reaches the international average and is significantly higher than in other Central and Eastern European countries. This suggests that nonprofits were relatively successful in establishing footholds in some parts of the education field—most notably grammar schools and trade academies—after the private provision of core welfare services (including education) became legally possible in 1990. Both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches began to assume the operation of some former state schools; but private nonprofit schools also resulted significantly from teacher initiatives driven by the desire to use and explore new and alternative teaching methods. For the most part, these private schools are housed in state-owned school buildings and are financed by the state. However, it should be kept in mind that the education share is high primarily in relative terms and would be smaller if other nonprofit service areas, especially health and social services, were more developed in Slovakia.

- **Very small shares of nonprofit employment in health and social services.** Compared to the overall 22-country average, health and social services absorb a very small share of nonprofit employment in Slovakia. Thus, while these two fields absorb 38 percent of global nonprofit employment on average, they account for only 7 percent of nonprofit employment in Slovakia. This very likely reflects the determination of the post-1989 governments to keep firm control over these two crucial welfare fields. Accordingly, all hospitals in Slovakia are state-owned with the exception of three church-affiliated hospitals. What is more, in the peculiar health care privatization environment in this country, all private health care providers are legally defined as commercial organizations, meaning that even the three church hospitals are technically for-profit rather than nonprofit institutions. The nonprofit sector
thus essentially has been left outside the health care privatization process that has taken place in ambulatory services, pharmacies, and health spas. In the social service field, no privatization has taken place whatsoever, as the state continues to provide the same services as before 1990. New kinds of social services provided by nonprofit organizations remain at best on the fringe of the Slovak welfare system.

• **Relatively strong nonprofit civic and advocacy employment.** The related fields of advocacy and environmental protection emerge as the fourth largest arena of nonprofit activity in Slovakia, after culture and recreation, education, and professional associations and unions. These fields absorb close to 10 percent of all nonprofit employment in the country, which is about three times as much as the 22-country average of 3 percent, testifying to the pronounced advocacy orientation of the Slovak nonprofit sector. By contrast, development and housing, with 1 percent of employment, represents a mere fraction of both the international average of 6 percent and the Central and Eastern European average of 6.3 percent. An additional 7 percent of nonprofit employees fall into other categories, including international activities and philanthropy.

In sum, the structure of the Slovak nonprofit sector can best be understood as being influenced by three crucial factors:

• The heritage of the previous regime, which tolerated social activity in the field of culture and recreation and actively promoted membership in the professional organizations and unions that were formerly controlled by the Communist party. After 1990, however, these organizations shed Communist control and adopted new, democratic structures. In addition, a number of new professional organizations and unions have emerged.

• Over its 40-year rule, the Communist regime in Slovakia essentially eliminated basic human rights and democratic institutions, and exerted tremendous control over the educational system. After 1990, a large number of independent civil initiatives came into being to advocate individual rights and to promote leisure activities or environmental protection. At the same time, these organizations became one of the main mechanisms for citizens to gain information and learn about democratic behavior. The activities of these new initiatives proved very important as new, post-1990 governments showed the tendencies to continue some practices of the previous regime. This was especially the case with the Mečiar government, which after 1995 increasingly began to show disregard for the law. The relatively high share of environmental and civic and advocacy employment in Slovakia (close to
10 percent of total nonprofit employment) is therefore a direct result of this crucial role that civic organizations have played in the post-Communist development of this country.

• The process of transforming the national economy into a market system that began in the former Czechoslovakia after 1990 and continued after the separation into the independent Czech and Slovak Republics in 1993 led to the creation of a private business sector in addition to the state sector. This privatization process, however, did not include a consistent government posture that would have accepted a role for the nonprofit sector in the transformation of the formerly state-run welfare system (i.e., education, health, and social services). Because the government has not changed its position and the reform process in this area is very slow, the role of the Slovakian nonprofit sector remains even more limited than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the provision of health and social services.

4. Most revenue from fees and charges, not philanthropy or the government

Consistent with its culture and recreation orientation, the Slovak nonprofit sector receives the bulk of its revenue not from private philanthropy or the government, but from fees and charges. In particular:

• **Fee income dominant.** The overwhelmingly dominant source of income of nonprofit organizations in Slovakia is fees and charges for services that these organizations provide. As reflected in Figure 18.6, this source alone accounts for more than half, or 55 percent, of all nonprofit revenue in Slovakia.

• **Limited support from philanthropy and public sector payments.** In contrast, private philanthropy and public sector payments provide much smaller shares of total revenues. Thus, as Figure 18.6 shows, private philanthropy—from individuals, corporations, and foundations combined—accounts for 23 percent of nonprofit income in Slovakia, while public sector support accounts for 22 percent.

• **Revenue structure with volunteers.** This pattern of nonprofit revenue hardly changes when volunteers are factored into the picture. In fact, as shown in Figure 18.7, private philanthropy increases only slightly from 23 percent to 25 percent with volunteers included, while fees and charges still account for more than half of total revenue. What is more, adding religion would not further change the picture.

• **Similar to other Central and Eastern European countries.** The pattern of nonprofit finance evident in Slovakia is generally comparable to that elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. In particular, as shown
Figure 18.8, the nonprofit organizations in the Central and Eastern European countries included in this project also derived on average the largest share of their revenues from fees and charges, though the share was slightly less than Slovakia’s (46 percent vs. 55 percent in Slovakia). The philanthropy share of nonprofit revenue in Slovakia basically matched the regional average (23 percent in Slovakia vs. 21 percent on average in Central Europe). Government support, however, was somewhat weaker in Slovakia (22 percent vs. 33 percent in Central and Eastern Europe generally).

Figure 18.7  Sources of nonprofit revenue in Slovakia, with volunteers, 1996
Deviation from the global average. While the revenue structure of the Slovak nonprofit sector generally mirrors that elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, it differs considerably from that evident elsewhere in the world. Thus, as Figure 18.8 also shows, while fees and charges are the dominant element in the financial base of the nonprofit sector globally, their dominance is still somewhat less pronounced than it is in Slovakia (55 percent of total revenue in Slovakia compared to 49 percent globally). Similarly, the philanthropic share of nonprofit income in Slovakia, as in the region in general, accounts for more than twice the global average (23 percent in Slovakia vs. 11 percent globally). In contrast, public sector payments comprise a considerably larger share of nonprofit income in these other countries on average (40 percent vs. 22 percent in Slovakia). Quite clearly, a different pattern of cooperation has taken shape between nonprofit organizations and the state in these other countries. Evidently, the Slovak nonprofit sector has not yet established a firm cooperative partnership with the state. While this is true to a degree for all Central and Eastern European countries, the reluctance of past governments to grant the nonprofit sector a role in the welfare services arena has stood in the way of further developing such partnerships in Slovakia.

Figure 18.8 Sources of nonprofit cash revenue, Slovakia, Central Europe, and 22-country average, 1995
• **Variations by subsector.** Even this does not do full justice to the complexities of nonprofit finance in Slovakia, however. This is so because important differences exist in the finances of nonprofit organizations by field. In fact, three quite distinct patterns of nonprofit finance are evident among Slovak nonprofits, as shown in Figure 18.9:

![Figure 18.9 Sources of nonprofit cash revenue in Slovakia, by field, 1996](image-url)

**Figure 18.9**  Sources of nonprofit cash revenue in Slovakia, by field, 1996
**Fee-dominant fields.** Fee income is the dominant source of income in six fields of nonprofit activity for which data were gathered, accounting for more than 90 percent of revenues in professional associations and unions, around three-quarters of total revenue in the development and housing and environmental fields, and more than half of all revenues in culture and recreation, international activities, and social services.

**One private philanthropy-dominant field.** Private giving turns out to be the dominant source of income in only one field of nonprofit activity, i.e., philanthropic intermediaries.

**Public sector-dominant fields.** In three Slovakian nonprofit fields (education, health, and civic and advocacy) government plays the dominant role in financing. In education, government subsidies account for almost three-quarters (73 percent) of private, nonprofit school income, as such schools are firmly integrated into the overall educational finance system of this country. In health care, public sector payments account for slightly less than half of nonprofit revenues, with fees and charges, at 45 percent, accounting for most of the remainder. As noted before, however, health is not a significant field of nonprofit activity. Essentially, the Red Cross, which is partially supported by the state, is the only significant health-related nonprofit organization in Slovakia. Finally, at close to 40 percent, government support is also the single largest source of revenue for civic, legal service, and political organizations, which, in part, reflects state subsidies for minority groups, such as Hungarian and Roma civic and cultural associations, associations for people with disabilities, youth and student unions, and women’s organizations.

**CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The end of Communism, the recognition of the Declaration of Human Rights, and the break-up of Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s provided significant impulses for the development of public activities in Slovakia, especially in advocacy, public education, the development of new democratic institutions and independent media, and a variety of community initiatives. Although post-Communist governments, like the Mečiar government, attempted to keep society under firm state control, they proved unable to hamper this development. To the contrary, civic activities became the most important force in support of democracy in Slovakia. However, the state kept its centralized dominance in crucial service fields and did not leave room for the nonprofit sector to develop a strong position in the delivery of human services. In fact, the state refused to accept emerging nonprofit organizations as partners, although the many volunteers and specialists—
some of whom had left their jobs in similar state organizations—were working hard to develop innovative projects and to offer new kinds of services.

Because of these two trends, the Slovak nonprofit sector emerged with little support and cooperation from the government, but proved to be very flexible, united, and able to mobilize very quickly. This flexibility, unity, and mobilization potential was most clearly demonstrated in the nationwide “Third Sector SOS” campaign in 1996 that mobilized against a discriminatory foundation law proposed by the government. The nonprofit sector potential was further demonstrated in 1998 with the “OK ’98” public campaign for an independent and fair election, which aimed to inform and mobilize especially young, first-time voters.

As a result of both of these highly effective campaigns and also the day-to-day civic activities undertaken by and on behalf of citizens, the nonprofit sector has become very popular and positively valued in Slovakia. Moreover, in contrast to the experience of the nonprofit sector in some other countries in the region, the development of the Slovak nonprofit sector was not marked by any scandals concerning the privatization of assets or other dubious financial transactions. The transformation of formerly socialist “public or social organizations” into democratically led associations and unions took place without any attempt at profiteering or any significant public controversies.

At present, the nonprofit sector in Slovakia is continuing to build, diversify, and decentralize its infrastructure. Supportive infrastructures are not only being formed for the whole sector, but also for the different professional and volunteer activities that the sector encompasses. One of the most important voluntary groups in this respect is the “Gremium of the 3rd Sector,” which represents sectoral interests with the government administration, the parliament, and other partners. Currently, the Gremium is coordinating activities on such crucial issues as decentralizing political power, promoting the integration of Slovakia into the European Union, and improving the transparency of public decision-making.

In sum, while the role of the Slovak nonprofit sector remains limited in the provision of welfare services, nonprofit organizations in this country are very alive in advocating the rights of citizens and in supporting democracy. With the credibility and legitimacy that the sector has gained in this country and with the continuing build-up of infrastructure, it seems most likely that Slovakia’s nonprofit organizations will be able to maintain their special role in the democratic transformation in the future.

ENDNOTES

1. The work in Slovakia was coordinated by Helena Woleková of the S.P.A.C.E. Foundation, who served as local associate to this project. Assisting her were Alexandra Petrášová of the
Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Martin Bútora of the Institute for Public Issues, Gabriela Dudekova of the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and the legal expert Ján Hrubala. The team was aided, in turn, by a local advisory committee made up of five prominent local leaders and researchers (see Appendix D for a list of committee members). The Johns Hopkins project was directed by Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, and the Central and Eastern European portion of the work was overseen by Stefan Toepler.

2. The definitions and approaches used in the project were developed collaboratively with the cooperation of the Slovak researchers and researchers in other countries and were designed to be applicable to Slovakia and the other project countries. For a full description of this definition and the types of organizations included, see Appendix A. For a full list of the other countries included, see Chapter 1 above and Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, The Emerging Sector Revisited: A Summary, Revised Estimates (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 1999).

3. Technically, the more precise comparison is between nonprofit contribution to “value added” and gross domestic product. For the nonprofit sector, “value added” in economic terms essentially equals the sum of wages and the imputed value of volunteer time. On this basis, the nonprofit sector in Slovakia accounted for 0.5 percent of total value added.