

ISSUE 6
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extra league papers



LIGA LIDSKÝCH PRÁV

topic

Liga's 10th anniversary – closer to justice for 10 years



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interview with Liga's founder





David Zahumenský, Chair

ten years of fighting bad mood

Once upon a time, a few active citizens left the Environmental Law Service (ELS) and started their own business. As the founders of the League of Human Rights, bearing its name in the manner of all those "Leagues" associated in the International Federation for Human Rights, these young lawyers pointed at the fact that certain forms of violence, especially violence against women, police brutality, racially motivated violence, or violation of children's rights, provoked no appropriate response from Czech authorities.

Today, ten years later, many things have changed. This year the Czech authorities introduced a system of independent investigations into police brutality, domestic violence is an undisputed issue, which the authorities are trying to solve, and also children's rights are better enforced. As fairytales usually end with a happily ever after, we could just stop here. But we are not saying good bye yet. As the Czech society developed, Liga has developed as well. Other issues have come into our focus, such as patients' rights, support of people with disabilities or access to education. Our staff members and our way of working have changed as well. Apart from pointing at current issues, analysing solutions to them and representing victims, we want to focus more on fighting the "bad mood" and mi-

strust in the change, which is perceptible throughout the entire society. We want to show people that it does not do any good to grumble about things in a pub, but that it is possible to bring about change if we stand up and do something. After all, Liga's efforts in the past ten years have proved that it is possible to change things for the better. We will build on this and use our experience as well as examples of other people to show that it is worth the while to sacrifice some of your comfort and do something in order to enforce the essential values of human life – freedom or justice.

Liga has always been mainly about people. Those who worked in the organization, who worked as volunteers in their free time, who donated money or services, but also those who were not afraid to make themselves heard when they witnessed any injustice. Without you all Liga would not be such as it is now, and I believe that we can still count on you in the years to come. Let's celebrate our achievements together, but let us not wait for the happy endings. There is still a lot of work to be done...

achievements

2002

We prevented a dangerous change of the Assembly Act. The original draft amendments to the Act endowed the authorities with the right to arbitrarily bully those who summon spontaneous assemblies or to practically prevent the exercise of the right to assembly.

We watched the mass protests against the NATO summit in Prague. Above all, citizen law watches wanted to prevent repeated police brutality occurring at police stations and to prevent the subsequent non-investigation into the police brutality.

We published a shadow report on observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the UN Committee meeting in Geneva we presented the gravest objections to the deficiencies in the work of the courts and child protection authorities.

2003

In cooperation with the ELS we founded an organization we called Public Interest Lawyers Association (PILA), today called Pro bono alliance.

We achieved a precedential sentence for

a brutal police assault. Despite the light sentence imposed on the assaulters, the verdict delivered by a court of first instance represented a first step on the road to restricting the impunity of Czech police officers vis-à-vis their possible interventions in someone's physical integrity.

We helped a victim of long-lasting domestic violence. We helped her get an asylum, legal and psychological consultations and we represented her before the court in the course of divorce proceedings.

2004

In March Liga became a member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). FIDH is the world's oldest international organization fighting for human rights.

The Embassy of the United States in Prague presented Jiří Kopal with the Alice Garrigue Masaryk Award for courage showed when solving the issue of police brutality, the enforcement of principles of open civil society, and the key role he played in founding Liga.

We promoted the extension of the Public Defender of Rights' powers. We tried to provoke a discussion about the importance of an independent inspection in facilities restricting personal liberty – children's homes, institutions for people with disabilities, jails or prison cells.

2005

We started systematically addressing the issue of therapy for domestic violence offenders. We organized a two-day international conference in Brno, aimed at initiating discussion among professionals and drawing attention of the institutions that exert influence on the drafting of new acts, projects and policies.

We published a report on the state of children's rights protection in the Czech Republic. We analyzed the problems of coordination between the State and non-governmental organizations, child abuse, foster care, institutional care, right to education, children of refugees and immigrants, minors and courts and international parental child abductions between 2003 and 2005.

The Municipal Court in Prague upheld our claim for financial compensation to a victim of racially motivated violence due to the violation of their fundamental rights. This verdict meant a shift towards a more efficient protection of victims of racially motivated violence.

2006

We launched a website aimed at advising patients, answering questions concerning access to medical documentation, abuse of the patient's unease to get consent with a surgery, disrespecting the child's wish, and others.

In March we achieved a precedential decision when the court granted our client the right to get a copy of her medical documentation. The decision of the court of appeal definitively condemned the paternalistic attitude of Czech physicians who consider a patient as an "incompetent" person who has no right to participate in their treatment.

We succeeded in persuading the court to revoke a preliminary injunction against a mother whose eight minor children were taken away due to livelihood insecurity. The court decided that all children must be returned to their mother.

2007

We published a paper entitled Institutionalized children!, which analyzes the state of observance and protection of children's rights in the Czech Republic and contains suggestions on changes to legislation.

The Regional Court in Ostrava awarded our client Ms Č. compensation in the form of an apology and a sum of 500,000 CZK for unlawful sterilization. In another case the High Court in Olomouc confirmed that the surgery had been performed unlawfully and ordered the hospital to send a written apology to our client.

The Constitutional Court satisfied the complaint brought by our client Ms M. who had been unlawfully deprived of legal capacity. The Court observed that the right to private and family life and the right to vote had been violated there.

2008

In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and other organizations we succeeded in implementing changes in the new draft Civil Code, which abolishes complete deprivation of legal capacity and provides for several alternative measures to be preferred to restriction of legal capacity.

We helped Mr S. obtain compensation of 102,000 CZK for procedural flaws in court proceedings concerning legal capacity. In his case the court proceedings went on for twelve years and several procedural flaws were committed by the court.

We created the Fair School Certificate, later adopted by the Minister of Education, which is granted to elementary schools

which support the integration of children with special educational needs.

We helped obtain compensation to two victims of a brutal police intervention at a dance festival in 2005 and to a family who were beaten up in their home by police officers, who had broken into their residence at night for no apparent reason in 2004.

2009

The court confirmed that, in the case of a woman whose healthy ovaries had been removed without her consent, the doctor performed the surgery unlawfully. The High Court in Prague awarded our client a financial compensation of 150,000 CZK. We awarded the Fair School Certificate to first four elementary schools.

The Czech Republic ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On the grounds of the Convention the State will have to reform the law in order to support the development of potential of people with disabilities.

After years of our efforts the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was eventually ratified in July. President Václav Klaus finally signed the Statute and the Czech Republic thus became the last country to conclude the ratification process.

2010

We made a film entitled Fair Schools, which shows examples of good working practice in three Fair schools. It is intended for teachers, head teachers and the general public as well.

In the case of our client the Constitutional Court gave a precedential verdict, which makes it obligatory for courts to consider the consequences when deciding on legal capacity. So from then on, in the course of proceedings concerning deprivation of legal capacity the courts have to consider the ability of the person to understand the meaning, purpose and consequence of elections.

Our lawyers published a book called People with mental disabilities and their legal actions. It deals with changes in approach to the issue of decision-making on the part of people with disabilities towards the model of support.

2011

Our Fair School project received the ERSTE Foundation Award for social integration. It succeeded in competition with more than 1,700 projects from twelve countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Regional Court in Plzeň agreed with our client, a participant in the Šumava forest blockade in July, who brought an administrative action against unlawful dissolution of assembly. The court observed that the police intervention was unlawful. The police committed an error mainly in neglecting the issue of legality of cutting down the trees, at which the blockade was aimed. The police also wrongly assessed against whom the intervention should be made.

We succeeded in implementing more than half of our comments in new health care acts, which came into force in April 2012.

2012

We helped our clients obtain compensation of 20,000 EUR. The European Court of Human Rights decided that the circumstances that led to the death of a 23-year-old man at a police station in 2002 were not thoroughly investigated and that the right to life was violated in this case.

We succeeded in implementing further comments in the new Civil Code, which will not allow courts to deprive people of legal capacity anymore. It will come into force in 2014.

On basis of our long-advanced arguments concerning the right to freedom of choice the Constitutional Court invited the State to initiate a serious discussion among professionals on the matter of home births to help bring about the change of the current legislation so that the birthing mother's right to private life is respected.

We published an analysis of the influence of pharmaceutical companies on children vaccination in the Czech Republic. It reveals non-transparent practice of decision-making and the cases of clash of interest when making decisions on matters of public health as well as problems related to advertising of drugs, especially vaccines. We subsequently organized a discussion seminar on the same topic attended by many professionals.

In January a new Act on general inspection of security forces came into effect. It introduces the investigation into criminal offences committed by police officers by an independent body. For a long time we have tried to bring about this change, since the currently functioning inspection did not prove to have adopted an objective approach.

Michaela Kopalová, a former Liga lawyer

liga helped me in meeting my partner and self-confidence

I chose to study law for purely pragmatic reasons. For a long time I had no specific ambitions as far as my career was concerned. Compared to this my ambitions of finding a partner were considerably greater. And my idea of a perfect partner was in no way modest.

I was picturing an accomplished intellectual, but at the same time someone who would not be dull and out of touch with reality. Someone worldly, but not conceited. But above all, someone who would respect all human beings, and not only those people he wants to impress. I somehow felt that more than anything I needed support and a source of love to help me fully develop the potential, which I felt I had but which, nevertheless, I knew not how to release.

Although, looking back to my high school years, I have to admit that I already had a slight interest in public affairs, including human rights, I mostly just ignored it. However, it is true that movie characters of various fighters for freedom and human rights made a strong impression on me. This was most probably due to the ostracism I experienced as a culturally different child growing up in the atmosphere of normalization school education. This inspired me with sympathy for all kinds of outsiders.

I was told not to go to Liga too often

For a long time I could not meet my ideal man. However, I have to admit that I had not devised any strategy concerning how and where I could actually meet him. Student parties, to which I often went, did not prove to be a suitable place for meeting such gentleman. After breaking up with



the only guy who was at least close to my ideal man I tried to focus on finishing my studies. Then, a friend of mine told me that Jiří Kopal, of the League of Human Rights, is looking for a volunteer and I wasted no time in thinking twice about it.

Jiří greeted me right at the door. He explained to me how things worked in Liga and that there was not enough space and enough computers, and that therefore I should not come to Liga's office too often and that I should rather send my assignments via email. And for a couple of weeks this really was what our collaboration looked like. But eventually, we went to undertake fieldwork together: training Roma social services workers in Žďár nad Sázavou.

Jiří's trust in me helped me find my career orientation

We spent the whole day together not only in training but also in rambling and talking surrounded by Santini's buildings. On the way back, on the train somewhere between Žďár and Brno I realized that the vision of my ideal partner was just beginning to take form. And soon after the first weeks of romance had passed, I found the way, in which my career was to be orienta-

ted, when Jiří engaged me, an inexperienced lawyer, in a case of unlawful sterilizations. Thanks to this case I started focusing on health law. The trust Jiří had in me from the beginning unalterably directed my creative energy towards human rights. Soon enough I could observe the results, my increased self-confidence made me a whole new being – a confident, dynamic woman capable of creating real values.

After a few years of our work in the field of human rights we have decided that we want to influence the society using other means than the law. In our family business that Jiří started I can develop my potential as a coach. Together we are now trying to help people and firms reveal what is inside them and how they can use it to enhance their development.

In a couple of days we will celebrate our sixth wedding anniversary. We have two children. In our bookcase we have many publications, from which our children can learn about our activities in the field of human rights. I hope that when they read them one day, they will understand their meaning just as we did: that it is right to be interested in public affairs and that to contribute to changes in society is not just their duty, it can also be an opportunity to find the meaning of their lives.



LIGA LIDSKÝCH PRÁV

Facts about Liga and our people

We are a non-profit organization that defends rights and freedoms of all people. We help people get to know their rights and actively enforce them. We are trying to enforce changes in the system, which would improve the quality of life in the Czech Republic. Our vision is a free, fair and engaged society for all.



LIGA IN 2002

5 lawyers, 2 coordinators, 1 economist, 1 office worker, 3 psychologists, 1 social services worker

LIGA IN 2012

11 lawyers, 2 teachers, 2 economists, 3 PR specialists, 1 fundraising specialist, 1 office manager

HEALTH CARE

We strive to increase awareness on the part of patients and physicians of their rights. We are in favour of the right to freedom of choice and individual decision-making.



MEMBERSHIP AND COOPERATION
Liga is a member of the International Federation for Human Rights. We cooperate with the Mental Disability Advocacy Center. Our employees engage in various committees of the Government of the Czech Republic's Council for Human Rights (Committee for the Rights of the Child, Committee against Torture, Committee for the Rights of the Biomedicine, Committee against Discrimination).

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
We prevent the courts from depriving people with disabilities of legal capacity or from restricting their legal capacity. We try to help people with disabilities lead a normal life without any restraints.



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
Concerning children's rights we try to make sure that all children can grow up in their families and not in state institutions and that all children can have an equal access to education. We are in favour of abolition of state care institutions for babies and children. We enforce inclusive education.

JUSTICE AND POLICE

We support a better and faster-working justice and a fairer work of the police. We help people fight against delays in court proceedings. We help people fight against an independent inspection body which would investigate of an independent body of police brutality and abuse of power. We operate a free-of-charge legal aid and representation in courts.





Dan Petrucha, PR:
"I wish to Liga that one day they could say: We're not needed anymore."

Monika Tannenbergerová, teacher:
"Neither as newborns, nor as infants or toddlers... Brief, up to our tenth birthday we never pooped our pants! May we keep on like for another ten years!"



Ivan Prouza, student:
"May Liga keep on contributing to a more strict observance of human rights in our country, may Liga enjoy a growing support and celebrate more and more achievements, and may these past ten years be just the beginning!"



Nikola Poláčková, graphic designer:
For the next ten years to come, and for more, I wish Liga a lot of positive energy, real friends and justice."



Jitka Bartošová, volunteer:
"In the new decade I wish the League of Human Rights a door phone equipped with a door opening system, a comfortable temperature in the conference room, and a lot of reasons for celebration!"



Iva Pikalová, lawyer:
"For their tenth birthday I wish Liga all the best and a lot of energy to help them get through their teenage years without any difficulties and grow up into a strong, self-supporting organization that would be sought for by clients, respected by politicians and an inspiration to a civil society."



Denisa Slašťanová, lawyer:
"May Liga always be supported by people who believe in what they do and who do their work with pleasure and enthusiasm."



Zuzana Durajová, lawyer:
"May Liga keep on opening closed doors."

all the best!



Pavel Molek, assistant at Law Faculty of Masaryk University in Brno and judge assistant at the Supreme Administrative Court:
"What shall I wish Liga? May Liga, under all circumstances and none less effectively, continue gathering and passing information about violation of rights on to all people without distinction, be they married or single. May Liga carry on researching into past as well as future punishments and cases. Long live Liga, free, unaffected and surrounded by humane treatment!"



Kateřina Červená, lawyer:
"May Liga be not afraid to deal with issues others try to avoid and may the achievements recorded by Liga so far be just a trifle when compared to Liga's future achievements."



Michal Kolínek, webmaster:
"May Liga still inspire people with hope for justice in the upcoming decade and may Liga bring fair play among our judges, police officers and teachers."



Michaela Hazdrová, lawyer:
"May there be more and more people who are willing to listen to and give a chance to ideas promoted by the League of Human Rights."



questions for...

...Jiří Kopal, the founder of the League of Human Rights

In 1999 Jiří Kopal started working as a volunteer in a non-governmental organization – Environmental Law Service. Two years later, he co-founded the League of Human Rights where he acted as Chair until 2009. Apart from legal issues he focused on building the organization's brand and developing its external relationships. After leaving Liga, he founded a family firm focusing on brand management, coaching and external communications.

liga's first years

What made you found a legal organization like the League of Human Rights?

The reasons were practical and, if I may say so, also aesthetic. As an observer of police activities I didn't like the names we used when explaining to public our socially sensitive activities concerning the monitoring and legal pressure on the police. The Environmental Law Service (ELS) as well as the Citizen Law Watches, a project of the ELS, were highly confusing names given to all those activities that were started within the framework of the ELS. Those two unnaturally descriptive adjectives used with both traditional designations were, I think, completely wrong, semantically speaking. I just wanted to simplify it, to apply the methods – innovative in the field – for resolving issues of legal protection of environment to the field of legal

protection of human rights. And I also wanted to create more space for young lawyers, where they could work in the course of or after their university studies and be useful and free at the same time.

What was the most difficult aspect when founding Liga?

I guess the people. By the end of the 1990s social organizations were happy that there were at least some pro bono lawyers. Thus, the founders of the ELS, led by sympathy, agreed to deal with issues, which were not their exact specialization, and they launched projects, which were not always compatible, when it came to themes and people, too. Things were slightly artificial-looking in the non-environment-orientated part, which later became the League of Human Rights. Three different organizational cultures in three different places (the Centre for Women in Distress in Brno, the Centre for Legal Protection of Children in Tábor and the Civil Law Watches based in Brno and in Prague) were put together, though they all dealt with victims of violence in different spheres of the society. At the beginning, Liga was formed from two thirds by purely client-orientated organizations, which didn't really cooperate, and from one third by an advocacy program, aimed at enforcing changes in the system. If I were 22 again and more sensible, I wouldn't think of coming up with such institutional innovations ☺.

What did Liga's beginnings look like? How did people feel about such organization and how did Liga do in the first years?

People around us saw us mostly as activists "who looked inappropriately young". Therefore we were always careful to present objective, verified information, which, anyway, was the only way we wanted to do our job. We found our freedom in the middle of the Brno "Bronx"; for nine years Liga's headquarters was to be found there, surrounded everywhere by friendly Roma. Our reports were taken very seriously by foreign authorities, for example by those working within the UN. When the representatives of the Czech government were confronted with our reports, they were unable to raise a plausible objection to the documented facts of violations of human rights. And so they gave vague, ambiguous answers or answers – absolutely stupid in the international context – which put the Czech Republic in a bad light. Compared to the

client-orientated projects our activities aimed at bringing more dignity into the work of the police were more in the focus of public attention. President Václav Havel organized various international meetings in Prague and the police got a little nervous on seeing the slightly rowdy demonstrators, so it was necessary to calm the police down in a more sophisticated manner. Quite surprisingly, we weren't much popular with Stanislav Gross, his subordinates and police officers ☺. On the contrary, some partly influential people or some journalists supported such activities. Yeah, and I cannot forget those who didn't understand why we wanted to do such things, how come that we managed to obtain monetary contributions to our activities and what our geopolitical agenda was ☺.

Looking back at the first years of Liga's work, is there anything you would change or do differently?

I wouldn't put together those incompatible projects, maybe I wouldn't try to establish a new organization and I would gain work and life experience in some other way, but looking at things from today's perspective, this would have been a shame. The way things happened was good, as I learned how to reasonably do my job and pass on my experience, and I also learned how some things are not done ☺.

What are your memories of Liga?

The best thing about Liga was that I met my wife here. Other good things were the little snacks I used to take from some of my colleagues. I liked the quite smart policy papers we issued; they contained many practical suggestions on how to solve issues that hadn't been discussed up to then. And last but not least, I was relieved to see that the current Chair is a person with strong character, who took over the organization with much responsibility and takes it more seriously than I did! The last couple of years I felt really past my prime, I merely wished to hand Liga over to my successors without compromising the created brand. As I wanted to maintain continuity, I also like to remember that when I was leaving Liga, it was an organization with secured financial support for the upcoming years and with a team, which was by far the friendliest in the last fifteen months. And after I left the organization, the new management even more encouraged teamwork, which is pretty great ☺.

liga 10 years later

Do you keep watching Liga's activities after you left it? In your opinion, did Liga's work go through any changes in the past ten years? If so, in which way did it develop?

I'm happy to see that still more people support Liga. It went through all kinds of changes, in the organization, in topics, etc. But it's still only a ten-year-old kid. With regard to the possible impact on the entire society, the most significant change would be the shift to health and education law. These two fields are rather difficult to deal with, from the point of view of budget allocation as well as from the point of view of human rights observance. As far as Liga's development is concerned, I think that the most important thing was the Liga's decision to establish an external advisory board independent of the internal management. We have discussed this matter with experienced American volunteers – retired lawyers – as well as with Czech consultants for years. While I was working in Liga, we tried several model systems, yet we haven't succeeded in establishing such a clearly separated body. I viewed this as the single debt I owed to Liga's future. If there's no interconnection of the elements of good governance connected with separated spheres of responsibility, and no restraints and balance, a non-governmental organization can be easily seized by an apparently charismatic leader of no integrity or by a closed group of buddies who will forever run the organization like a limited company, a machine for running projects, which are sometimes granted merely out of inertia. This is always a bad example for the society of responsibly run institutions as I imagine it.

What do you think of Liga's work ten years after its foundation?

Liga has evolved and successfully focuses on many unpopular topics that haven't been dealt with so far, at least not in an independent, consistent and professional manner. We may say that all issues that were first dealt with by Liga changed significantly later for the better. For example, establishing an independent system of investigations into acts committed by police officers, or independent inspections at freedom-restricting facilities, enforcing procedural and material rights of victims of crime, putting an end to inconspicuously performed unlawful sterilizations, undertaking adult guardianship reform,

increasing compensations awarded by courts for interference with individual rights, also due to many successfully resolved cases of the League of Human Rights, enabling patients to access their medical documentation or gradually diminishing the possible space for disrespecting the freedom of choice in various areas of health care. The hardest task is now to secure support for a fairer attitude of elementary schools towards minorities. Liga introduced a certain manner of work of NGOs focusing on human rights as, instead of merely criticizing and signing petitions or ad hoc declarations, it started systematically proposing remedial measures based on previously carried out detailed studies, examples from abroad or won precedential cases.

Do you still participate in any way in Liga's activities?

I look after the kids, when my wife goes to Liga and granny is busy ☺. Sometimes I'm asked to give a communication advice. I resigned my membership on purpose right after I left Liga as the Chair, since I have always watched with disgust people who were unable to resign from their functions in various institutions in due time. It's very educational and healthy. You get the chance to develop your potential in other areas.

In your opinion, what is the principal meaning of Liga's activities and existence?

Today, it definitely is maintenance of a sensible social balance by removing extremes. Many fields have got into a state of imbalance due to ill-conceived both left-wing and right-wing ideologies, hasty or indifferent decision-making and also, and most often, due to little resistance to the influence of big money. People and institutions led by people always start to act in an extremely imprudent manner and cause harm to other people. At such places it is necessary to make an ad hoc intervention either by means of law or by proposing different systemic measures. Other problematic issues are the persistent paternalism of public administrative bodies, social services authorities and education workers towards various minorities, socially disadvantaged people or children, and restrictions of freedom of speech using stupid forms of criminal repression, etc. The way I see it, the principal meaning of Liga's activities is not to fight these phenomena but to try to humanize the entire environment. And if possible, try to do so in a very creative manner, by means of hu-

mour and gradual, consistent awareness raising. There still are many examples of good practice in the world. However, it is still necessary to bring legal actions in the worst cases and in defence against intimidation and hasty criminal prosecution.

CAREER

When you started working in Liga, you dealt with legal issues. What did you focus on?

I was always happy to leave most of the legal stuff to my colleagues ☺. What I enjoyed most was devising strategies without having to consult paragraphs. What can and ought to be (sollen) has always been more interesting for me than what is (sein). Nevertheless, it's true that I was concerned a little with international mechanisms for protecting human rights and with criminal justice; from the police, on to criminalization of freedom of speech and enforcement of subsidiary prosecution to enable the injured person to stand in for an indifferent or inactive public prosecutor. Every area of activity reeking of penalizing is basically sombre. No one else was willing to deal with these issues on a long-term basis, so I did it more or less out of responsibility until there would appear younger people who'd be more enthusiastic about it. That's why I respect so much the people who replaced me, surpassed me or who work in these fields of law, either in state institutions, NGOs or as attorneys, and who are able to see their mission in life in bringing people closer to justice.

After a couple of years you decided to change the direction of your career and focus on brand management and communication. What made you do this?

I couldn't find any enthusiasm or long-term motivation in the fields of law, although I had a good, though a little undeserved reputation with representatives of some companies and with people who would care for commercial representation. I was actually unpleasantly annoyed with myself, as neither the prospect of financial remunerations nor the growing family commitments were a sufficient motivation for overcoming the constrained attitude towards the law. Another thing is that law can be used for changing the work of people or institutions only after all other means fail to do so. The law represents great force and is basically used in extreme cases, when there's not enough faith,

and other means of communication, such as negotiations, fail. I'm full of ideas, I feel more useful and more myself in other spheres of society, especially personal development and the development of profit as well as non-profit organizations. My slogan is "brand management starts within", I think that speaks for itself ☺.

Don't you sometimes miss your former career? ☺

Just the opposite, I was much relieved that I didn't have to bother daily with application of paragraphs. I discovered my strong points, thanks to which I can develop more naturally and I can also give free rein to my sense of humour, often politically incorrect, and not be bound by a certain persistent respectability of human rights, for which a couple of people, imprisoned for their opinions under the Communist regime, paved an arduous way. I felt it was somehow binding especially with regard to a silent respect for their courage. I realized I was out of my imaginary centre and I wanted to leave this space to others. It is true that once or twice a year I'm asked by foreign institutions to carry out an independent analysis of the situation in the Czech Republic, for example in comparison with the situation in the EU. And to be honest, I'm always dismayed when I realize to what I agreed, I'm sweating over it ☺ and looking forward to finishing it. So I start handing this over to other lawyers more devoted to a certain field or to other analysts. You should do your work with pleasure, because only if you do so, you can have positive influence on the people around you.

Thanks to your two careers you have experience with managing a non-profit organization as well as a commercial company. What's the difference between them?

In my experience, in a non-governmental organization, especially in one specializing in law, there often are people who are very intelligent but lack self-confidence. It is necessary to support them more mentally. At the beginning I didn't know how to do it, and honestly speaking, I didn't even think of it. I was rather afraid of all these petty fights over power, like who will coordinate who in a project run by three people, or who will go to which conference, in short, afraid of all typical manifestations of provincialism, which have existed outside as well as inside NGOs criticizing bad habits. In a commercial company people feel more self-confident even though their actual abilities and skills are poorer, they

don't analyze the failures so much and try to move on quickly, although various fights over positions take place in commercial companies as well. However, today the employees ask for more also in the immaterial sphere of the company's activities. I watch with interest as still more companies adopt more unrestricted forms of management and it may be sometimes difficult to perceive the difference between professionally managed profit, non-profit and state institutions. I, myself, make a point of leaving a lot of space to people, though for some people, it may be way too much space ☺.

NOW

While you were working in Liga, you often travelled abroad and gained experience. In your opinion, is there anything the Czech Republic could draw inspiration from?

Certainly, a more refined and less unpleasant public debate on problems in society. Not to treat as an enemy someone who comes up with innovations just because they don't work in the particular institution that should improve its activities, or because they don't belong to the group of buddies in power. The Czech Republic is still affected by the heritage of paternalism present in the health care or education system. As far as these issues are concerned, things are far more advanced in Western Europe. It's not good to adopt everything they have abroad without thinking about it, though. In our country there still are many influential places, which have dogs in the manger, who are trying to take advantage of the system and prevent any progress. I always wondered how come that even the right-wing politicians didn't do much to enforce the rights and freedom of choice on the part of patients as well as healthy people. The right-wing oriented doctors still behave the way doctors did under the Communist regime or they yielded to the influence of money. Yet, they could see that there are places in which the interaction between the doctor and the person, who has a different opinion on the necessity of vaccination or on the place of giving birth, etc., can be more dignified. The correct response shouldn't be to permit unrestricted freedom in everything but to allow gradual and if possible kind changes to these areas. Not to act as if Austria, Germany or other countries with more humane practice and forms of communication didn't exist but to overcome

the pain of change and to patiently change the environment and reform it in the manner of evolution. It seems to me that the current Minister Heger has recently started to understand this, at least partly.

Is there any current problem in the Czech Republic that Liga should focus on?

I'm not particularly aware of anything, but there still is the terribly annoying issue concerning the efforts to pass on the concept of hate crime, which some people want to use for fighting the Nazi extremism. And when it begins to slowly and sneakily restrict the freedom of expression or decrease the legal certainty concerning the possible offences that could get especially young people in jail, it would be proper to speak out against such situation and weaken the arbitrary approach of public prosecutors and experts. Disregarding the possible grumbling voices ☺, Liga could try to propose more reasonable solutions, help get things into a more balanced state and thus defend free space for future cases, for the time when it is necessary to initiate an open discussion about topics, which can be considered outrageous by the society. To all appearances the recent tendencies seemed to be a typical example of a road to hell paved with good intentions.

In your opinion, should Liga become concerned with a particular international issue or field?

Sadly, there are tons of international issues, often very serious. The best practice would be to transfer the experience in those areas, in which there has been a significant shift on the domestic level. In these areas, there is the greatest guarantee of stability, results and honesty, since these issues have already been dealt with, often in an unpleasant discussion or stuffy social atmosphere. Then, it's not just vague worldly advice offered by perpetual human rights travellers from conference to conference ☺.

Where do you see Liga in another ten years?

If it is still led by the same effort to establish balance in the society, and if it doesn't get into some extreme or ideological positions due to a bad change of leadership, or any such thing, it will probably play a significant role in many fields. It will probably take a long time to seek, enforce and legally accomplish the balance between the freedom of individuals and the responsibility of the institutions. ■

Did you know that...

Liga has been working for 10 years
we have awarded the Fair School Certificate to 18 elementary schools in the Czech Republic
we focus on 6 topics
our shortest case took 3 days to settle
we published 7 issues of the EXTRA League Papers and 25 analyses, 12 handbooks and 9 policy papers
right now there are 7 children in Liga
we published 1 film ("Fair Schools")
in total Liga had 73 employees, of which 12 men and 61 women
and we have consulted personally HUNDREDS of clients
Liga had offices at 8 different places (Brno: Bratislavská, Cejl, Senovážné náměstí; Tábor: Kostnická)
the Liga's People Club has 196 members
the highest contribution we helped our client obtain was 500,000 CZK
at the moment there are 5 blondes
we have answered 26 cases of violations of children's rights
we have dealt with 77 cases of clients with mental disabilities
THOUSANDS of questions via telephone
325,508 cases of abuse of powers and 37 cases of violation of patients' rights



liga's people

LIGA'S PEOPLE Liga's People Club



LIGA'S PEOPLE is a group of our regular contributors who help us protect human rights and improve the quality of life of all people in the Czech Republic.

JOIN LIGA'S PEOPLE TODAY AND YOU CAN GET:

- regular information about our activities
- e-magazine Cheering for Justice every months
- EXTRA League Papers twice a year
- invitations to social and sporting events and public discussions
- annual report
- new publications for free
- and other little gifts

If you would like to support us, please contact Petr Jeřábek on 776 234 446 or send an email to lidiligy@llp.cz.

www.lidiligy.cz

**THANK YOU.
IT PAYS OFF NOT TO BE INDIFFERENT.**

The League of Human Rights

We are a non-profit organization that defends rights and freedoms of all people. We help people get to know their rights and actively enforce them. We are trying to enforce changes in the system, which would improve the quality of life in the Czech Republic. Our vision is a free, fair and engaged society for all.

EXTRA League Papers

It is a topic-oriented magazine issued by the League of Human Rights. It is issued twice a year. Previous issues focused on freedom of choice in Czech obstetrics practice, police work, Czech educational system, right-wing extremism or the issue of slander. More information on Liga's activities and news can be found on www.llp.cz or in the electronic magazine Cheering for Justice.

thank you

Dear donors,
sponsors, partners,
Liga's friends.

For ten years now you have helped us defend and protect human rights of the citizens of the Czech Republic. With your support we publish handbooks that help people orientate themselves in the jungle of paragraphs, we train professionals as well as the general public, we represent injured persons in courts, and we participate in drafting Czech legislation. Thanks to you our voice can be heard well. On behalf of all of us in the League of Human Rights I would like to thank you for your present interest and cooperation. Donations aren't just about



*Petr Jeřábek,
donations co-ordinator*

money but also about activity and a desire to tilt at windmills – as it may seem at first sight. You support the energy of every Liga employee and participate in all our achievements.

Thank you.

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The League of Human Rights,
Burešova 6, 602 00 Brno,
tel.: +420 545 210 446,
fax: +420 545 240 012,

email: brno@llp.cz,
www.llp.cz

Editor:

Lucie Hušková

Graphics and typography:

Nikola Spratek Poláčková,
www.nikolapolackova.com

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