



Environmental Impact Assessments – Czech and US Approaches

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Background

I work as a personal assistant to the Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic. In this position I am very close to main environmental issues which are solved and discussed in the Czech Republic or during the European or international sessions. I work with the top management of the Ministry, prepare expertise for the Minister. I am responsible for the Minister's personal agenda.

Since my studies at University of Pardubice at the Department of Chemical Technology and consequently at Charles University in Prague at the Law faculty, I have been interested in environmental protection. My studies enabled me to have a look at this field from different point of view. I started working in the legal office, where I was responsible for the cases connected with the environmental law, after two years I decided I would rather be in the position where I could create and make the environmental law and I started working at the Ministry of Environment as a legal desk officer – assistant to Deputy Minister. I was responsible for the infringement proceedings in the area of environment, for Czech and EU environmental legislation, I was monitoring of the harmonization of EU law and the judgments of European Court of Justice.

At the ministerial meeting of the Visegrad Group States (so called V4) in Cracow on 9-10 July 2009 environment Ministers discussed and agreed the Czech proposal of joint project between V4 countries and U.S. Environmental Protection agenda in the area of execution of inspection and supervision activities in environmental protection. I would like to continue in this cooperation and to link it up also in a different environmental area. I don't want to terminate the exchange of information and experiences but respectively to find a closer contact with the American partner and extend a tight partnership between the organizations.

American Partner

My internship partner, and I am really proud of this opportunity, is US EPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency, who leads the nation's environmental science, research, education and assessment efforts. The mission of EPA is to protect human health and the environment and to safeguard the natural environment – land, air, water – upon which life depends. To accomplish this mission, EPA develops and enforces regulations, gives grants, studies environmental issues, teach people about the environment, that protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility. EPA informs the public about activities, works with businesses, non-profit organizations, and state and local governments through dozens of partnerships. EPA employs about 17,000 people across the country, including its headquarters offices in Washington D.C., 10 regional offices, and more than a dozen labs.

EPA is one of the few U.S. bodies with environmental regulatory powers at the federal level. EPA's five major national programs are: Air and Radiation, Water, Solid Waste and Emergency Response, Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, and Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. EPA's purpose is to ensure that national efforts to reduce environmental risk are based on the best available scientific information, federal laws protecting human health and the environment are enforced fairly and effectively, environmental protection is an integral consideration in U.S. policies concerning natural resources, human health, economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade, and these factors are similarly considered in establishing environmental policy and environmental protection contributes to making communities and ecosystems diverse, sustainable and economically productive.

EPA works with the states to implement federal environmental programs, with officials in state environmental, health and agricultural agencies on strategic planning, priority-setting and measurement of results. EPA has a comprehensive Partnership Programs address a wide variety of environmental issues by working collaboratively with companies, organizations, communities, and individuals which offer participating enterprises a wide variety of valuable services and resources to reduce their overall environmental impact

Objectives

My program objective is firstly to know the style of working in one of the biggest environmental organization worldwide which plays a leadership role in working with other nations to protect the global environment, furthermore to exchange experiences with competent authorities – representatives and to develop my leadership skills for my future positions in the Ministry of Environment. I want to learn about programs, opportunities, and tools to help me get involved and make a difference in my community.

My project should promote the availability of practical information on the situation and the effectiveness of the policymaking and enforcement process. I would like to provide analysis of different approaches and identify good (best) practices of law enforcement. The aim of my project is to learn from the US partner approach in environmental protection which is realized in diverse ways in comparison with the Czech Republic which arise from the differences in natural conditions, historical development of the countries and various current administrative systems.

Last but not least I would like to consult and point out to specific cases the differences of the approach to the Environmental Impact Assessments of large facilities in the Czech Republic and USA during my internship.

Detailed Description

EPA works closely with other federal and state agencies, foreign governments and international organizations to promote effective enforcement and compliance with United States environmental laws, especially along the United States Border. EPA also helps fulfill the United States' commitments by providing technical assistance and capacity building for environmental compliance, enforcement and impact assessment in other countries.

My internship program will start at the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance which delivers compliance with U.S. environmental laws while inspiring the regulated community to adopt methods that focus on pollution prevention. The Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance is working in partnership with EPA Regional Offices, State Governments, Tribal

Governments and other Federal agencies, ensures compliance with the nation's environmental laws. International Compliance and Enforcement activities are part of the office as mentioned above and include providing assistance in the development of Environmental Impact Assessments and the operation of import and export programs in accordance with environmental laws and international agreements. EPA's International Affairs Program brings together other nations with similar environmental concerns to solve problems.

My planned internship program consists of two parts – I would like to participate, to join and to gain experience in the field of Environmental Impact Assessments, I am interested in the area of air pollution, in context of large industrial facilities (when they build new facilities or make significant modifications to existing ones). I would like to consult with EPA our experience in the Czech Republic, especially current cases such as - power plant Prunerov, power plant Turow in Poland, nuclear power stations, etc. The experiences will be illustrated by own examples of authentic cases, to be used as a basis for broad discussions of certain topical issues. Key issues to be solved from the point of view of enforcement will be put on the table to initiate discussion how to handle them.

First part of my program will take place in Washington, DC, and I will stay at the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance which is responsible for compliance and enforcement, but they also oversee EPA's Environmental Impact Assessment program, so this would be a suitable place for me to see how the EIA review system works. My interest in regulating air pollution from large facilities could be met at the best by working with authorities responsible for issuing permits under the Clean Air Act. The experts in issuing the permits themselves are in offices including the Office of Air and Radiation with whom I will cooperate too. Because I recognize that to really see how EPA works I have to and I will spend the second part of my internship in one of EPA's Regional offices.

Organization and Time Schedule

The proposed overall length of my project is less than six months, starting at the beginning of September 2010 and ending in February 2011. I will spend the first three months at EPA headquarters in Washington D.C. I will spend the second part of my internship at one of the EPA regional offices.

Program Cost

Monthly maintenance will create without fail the highest part of total costs because of the sum for the accommodation. The expected costs of my internship are shown in the table below.

Item	Cost in US\$
Executive training seminars	
Internship	
Administrative fees (visa, registration fees, etc.)	200
International travel	1,500
Local transportation	1,000
Medical insurance	1,000
Monthly maintenance	12,000
Contingency	2,000
Total	17,700

To demonstrate my strong interest, I have agreed to contribute \$2,700 to my program cost.

Program Benefits

First and foremost I hope I will contribute to deepen cooperation between our institutions and I start with more intensive exchange of experience and information. I am sure one of the benefits will be obtaining of new contacts, meeting new people, professionals in the area of environmental protection. Without fail I will learn a lot of new, I will gain new practical working experience and professional knowledge. I would like to improve my management, organizational and decision making skills during working in a different cultural and language environment.

I would like to share obtained experiences and recommendations from my internship with my colleagues in my own organization to streamline the work in the Czech public administration. I have to say the Czech Republic is only just coming to improve protecting of human health and the environment and to safeguard the natural environment and very truly we have to learn a lot of by proof of our American partners in the area of environmental protection.

I want to be able after my American internship to better incorporate all parts of society in the Czech Republic – communities, non-profit organizations, individuals, businesses, and state and local governments to effectively participate in protection of human living environment and in managing human health and environmental risks and to have access to accurate information.

Risks

The risk of my project I am aware of is a continuing resistance to a change of thinking in relation to environmental protection in the Czech Republic. The main expected risk is official bureaucracy in public service and existing reluctance against working collaboratively with companies, non-profit organizations, communities, and individuals in my country.