



MINISTRY
OF REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT CZ



EVALUATION
UNIT NCA



SUMMARY OF EVALUATIONS 2024

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATIONS

RESULTS OF SELECTED EVALUATIONS
FROM THE EU FUNDS ENVIRONMENT
PUBLISHED IN 2024

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EVALUATION
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Introduction



The publication you are holding aims to familiarize readers with the main outcomes of evaluation activities in the area of EU funds in the Czech Republic, carried out from December 2023 to December 2024.

It can serve readers as a practical guide for finding evaluation outputs.

Complete versions of evaluation reports and other outputs can be found in the Evaluation Library:

www.dotaceEU.cz/knihovna-evaluaci.

The publication is divided into two parts:

- The first part focuses on evaluations carried out by the Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Regional Development – National Coordination Authority (NCA).
- The second part of the publication focuses on evaluations conducted by the evaluation units of Managing Authorities (MAs).

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Key Findings from Evaluations by the **NCA Evaluation Unit**



The NCA Evaluation Unit serves as the national coordinator for evaluations in the area of European funds. It carries out evaluations that are cross-programme or focus on key topics related to the national-level implementation of European funds.

Chapter contents:

- **Socio-Economic Analysis with Regard to The Territorial Needs of the Czech Republic**
- **Evaluation of the Impact of the “Before and After” Communication Campaign – October 2024**
- **Assessment of Awareness Among Selected Entities Regarding Financial Instruments – Post-Test of the Financial Instruments Campaign**

Socio-Economic Analysis with Regard to the Territorial Needs of the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic's convergence with the EU27 has slowed down. When the Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004, its GDP per capita was 78 % of the EU average. However, this convergence halted at 93 % in 2019. In 2022, GDP per capita had declined to 90 % of the EU27 average.

Key Findings:

- In 2023, the Czech Republic was on the verge of an economic recession.
- There are few companies in Bohemia capable of implementing higher-order innovations.
- Digital infrastructure remains insufficient.
- Energy consumption per unit of GDP in the Czech Republic is nearly twice the EU27 average; the share of coal in electricity and heat production remains very high.
- Increasing attention is being paid to the storage of electricity surpluses via hydrogen production through water electrolysis. This hydrogen can then be used as an emission-free fuel or for reconvert into electricity.
- The effects of climate change in the Czech Republic have become increasingly evident in recent years.
- What citizens consider a basic component of quality of life – access to drinking water and wastewater treatment – is still a challenge in small settlements.
- The circular economy has yet to gain traction in the Czech Republic.
- The years 2019–2022 were favorable in terms of air quality; however, concentrations of certain pollutants with serious health impacts still exceeded legal limits in many locations.
- In 2022, all arable land in the Czech Republic was affected by some degree of erosion.
- In the Czech Republic, 22 % of mammal species, 58 % of bird species, 61 % of reptile species, 59 % of amphibian species, 61 % of fish species, 58 % of vascular plant species, and 28 % of bryophyte species are at risk of significant decline or extinction.
- Although only 2.6 % of passenger vehicles use alternative fuels, recent years have seen a sharp increase – electric vehicles grew 2.24 times, and other alternative energies 1.98 times; alternative fuels are also being adopted in public transport.
- A key project for developing public transport infrastructure in the Czech Republic is the construction of high-speed rail lines.
- For most of the main indicators tracking progress toward the goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), the Czech Republic performs better than the EU average.
- Advanced digital skills in the Czech Republic exceed the EU average. According to a Czech Statistical Office analysis, 35 % of the Czech population has advanced digital skills, which is above the EU average (27 %).
- The extent of social exclusion across the Czech Republic worsened year-on-year in 2022.
- The annual report of the Czech School Inspectorate highlights that the Czech Republic ranks among the countries with above-average disparities in student performance.
- Ukrainian children are participating in education in the Czech Republic.

The objective of this analysis is to assess the socio-economic state of the Czech Republic and its regions based on statistical indicators that best characterize areas defined by specific policy objectives. The socio-economic analysis identifies key factors related to the current social and economic situation in the Czech Republic, taking into account the individual policy objectives selected in the Partnership Agreement for the 2021–2027 programme period.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Regional Development

Implementation Period: March 2024 – June 2024

Evaluation Methods: Desk research, statistical and comparative data analysis, expert assessment

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/socio-ekonomicka-analyza-s-prihlednutim-k-uzemnim>

Evaluation of the Impact of the “Before and After” Communication Campaign – October 2024

Awareness of EU funds slightly increased year-on-year. However, other indicator parameters showed a year-on-year decline. For all indicators (except for the availability of information about EU funds), better values were recorded in districts targeted by the campaign. Awareness of specific projects funded by the EU significantly contributes to a more positive perception of the funds. Nearly one-third of respondents stated that the tested campaign improved their perception of the benefits of EU funds.

Key Findings:

- Average awareness of projects in the targeted districts was 38 %. Projects related to infrastructure and leisure activities were better known and perceived more positively.
- 11 % of respondents in targeted districts noticed the “Before and After” campaign. The campaign was more frequently recognized in districts where projects were actually implemented. Respondents also more often remembered campaigns linked to infrastructure and leisure projects.
- The campaign significantly increased awareness that projects are funded by the EU. This is confirmed by the strong correlation between awareness of the campaign and awareness of the project and its funding.
- Respondents in the targeted districts most often encountered the “Before and After” campaign on the Internet and social media.

The subject of the evaluation was to assess the implemented “Before and After” campaign with the aim of gathering suggestions for optimization and for a potential repetition of the campaign in 2025. The aim of the evaluation was to obtain current values for selected publicity indicators using a representative sample, and to compare the results with previous evaluations to determine trends in public awareness of EU funds.

Recommendations:

- For similar projects/campaigns, prioritize online communication.
- Adjust the media coverage strategy based on the extent of impact: infrastructure and leisure – online channels; social services and education – outdoor advertising, online channels, and regional print media; cultural heritage restoration – online channels.
- Clearly highlight EU funding in all communications.
- Continue using the “before and after” concept as a central campaign message.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Regional Development

Supplier: IBRS – International Business and Research Services s.r.o.

Implementation Period: July 2024 – August 2024

Evaluation Method: Online public questionnaire (CAWI)

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/vyhodnoceni-dopadu-komunikacni-kampane-pred-a-po-r>

Assessment of Awareness of Selected Entities Regarding Financial Instruments – Post-Test of the Financial Instruments Campaign

The greatest experience with financial instruments is found among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where 26 % of businesses have applied for this type of support. The most well-known type of financial instrument is the preferential loan, recognized by two out of three respondents who are aware of government support. The share of respondents considering the use of financial instruments increases with the size of the business. In large enterprises, these considerations apply to 30 % of respondents, while among the sole proprietors, the figure is 8 %.

Key Findings:

- Half of the respondents from small enterprises are familiar with financial instruments. In other business categories, awareness is lower, the lowest is among sole proprietors, where only 28 % are familiar with the instruments.
- Respondents from medium and large enterprises are more likely to know the institutions offering financial instruments and the specific currently open programs.
- The highest perceived usefulness of financial instruments for their business is among medium and large enterprises (48 %).
- More than 55 % of respondents who see financial instruments as useful for their business are considering using them.
- Respondents whose companies have experience with applying for financial instruments are significantly more likely to consider using them again than those without such experience.

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the awareness of economically active business entities in the Czech Republic regarding financial instruments following the implementation of an information campaign (post-test of the financial instruments campaign). The evaluation focused on four key aspects of the campaign: point of interest, clarity, credibility, and motivation to seek more information.

Recommendations:

- The campaign should more clearly target sole proprietors as well as micro and small businesses.
- Emphasize the advantages of financial instruments, such as speed and low administrative burden. Highlight how they differ from other types of support.
- Clarify the origin and scope of support through financial instruments. Businesses that are familiar with the application process perceive the instruments as significantly more usable, as they understand the nature and extent of the support.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Regional Development

Supplier: STEM/MARK, a.s.

Implementation Period: January 2024 – March 2024

Evaluation Method: CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) survey

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/hodnoceni-povedomi-vybranych-subjektu-o-problemati>

Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP)



Chapter contents:

- Regional Distribution of Investments in Educational Infrastructure
- Evaluation of PA1 and PA3 of IROP: Case Studies
- Evaluation of Communication Activities 2018–2023 IROP

Regional Distribution of Investments in Educational Infrastructure

This evaluation focuses on how investments in educational infrastructure were distributed across regions within the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) during the 2014–2020 period. The aim is to provide recommendations for more effective territorial targeting of support and to present the results in a clear visual format using interactive online maps and data tools.

Key Findings:

- The results showed a fairly diverse pattern in the allocation of IROP funds and investment distribution from 2014 to 2020 across municipalities with extended powers (SO ORP), municipalities, and regions, depending on the type of educational activities and specific IROP objectives. The Plzeň, Karlovy Vary, and Ústí nad Labem regions showed a lower level of IROP support compared to other Czech regions.
- Except for the category of regional centers, the intensity of IROP support in areas prioritized by the Regional Development Strategy was below the national average.
- Support for educational infrastructure allocated through calls specifically targeting socially excluded localities (SVL) during 2014–2020 was directed to areas with higher than average levels of social exclusion only to a limited extent.
- The regional distribution of IROP investments in educational infrastructure primarily reflected the activity of local stakeholders who responded to the IROP calls. However, it did not align with regional policy goals such as reducing regional disparities or preventing social exclusion and segregation.

The evaluation not only assessed the regional distribution of IROP investments in educational infrastructure but also aimed to develop and test a methodology for such assessments. The study compiled clear data by type of educational activity and IROP-specific objectives at the level of regions, districts, municipalities, and territories under the National Regional Policy. It also provided recommendations for data collection and structuring to ensure that future evaluations and visualizations can be consistently replicated.

Recommendations:

- Target IROP support to educational infrastructure in localities with segregated schools that have a high share of socially disadvantaged pupils. These areas are often highly localized though unevenly spread across regions. Calls should be targeted at not only SO ORP-level territories but also specific municipalities and basic settlement units.
- More precisely target support based on school facility capacity, using a combination of assessments of the need for intervention at the level of the SO ORP and at the level of the basic territorial unit (ZUJ), i.e., municipalities or city districts/wards in large and properly structured cities.
- Analyze the low uptake of support in the Karlovy Vary, Plzeň, Ústí nad Labem, and Moravian-Silesian regions, three of which are structurally affected and have extraordinarily high levels of social exclusion. Focus on supporting applicants in regions with low uptake but high need for local and regional development support.
- Localize IROP-supported projects at the ZUJ level to enable more detailed territorial evaluations within larger cities.
- To capture the territorial impact of IROP-funded projects, consider applying the Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) methodology.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Regional Development

Supplier: Charles University, Faculty of Science, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Centre for Urban and Regional Research (CVMR)

Implementation Period: September 2023 – June 2024

Evaluation Methods: Geographic analysis and synthesis, statistical data analysis, application of specific methodology with TIA elements, interactive online mapping and data tools, applied research

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/zprava-z-hodnoceni>

Evaluation of PA1 and PA3 of IROP: Case Studies

The evaluation focused on assessing the impacts of supported projects in various areas of transport, the Integrated Rescue System (IRS), and access to cultural and natural heritage. The results indicate that there was a reduction in travel time to regional capitals, lower energy and fuel consumption on modernized road sections, and positive changes in areas where completely new roads were built. In some regions, there was an increase in public transport usage, a decrease in pedestrian involvement in accidents, and other desirable trends.

Key Findings:

- The benefits of IROP are measurable, but uneven. Project impacts vary by region and type – some have a strong effect, others weak or none.
- SO 1.1 (roads): faster transport, lower consumption, more accidents but fewer severe ones. Projects improved traffic flow and fuel efficiency, but the number of accidents increased slightly. Social benefits were not confirmed.
- SO 1.2 (public transport, cycling, safety): impact mainly where part of a more complex, systemic solution (e.g., in Plzeň, Benešov, and Hradec Králové), while in other areas the impact was limited.
- SO 1.3 (risks): faster emergency responses, better preparedness
- The response of IRS units and training improved, but funding did not always target the most critical areas.
- SO 3.1 (cultural heritage): strong local impact
- Restoration of monuments supported employment and visitor numbers. Tourism in some years was affected by the pandemic.

The aim of the evaluation was to verify whether and how projects funded under the specific objectives (SOs) contributed to improving transport accessibility, traffic safety, environmental sustainability, and regional economic development. The projects enabled faster responses to emergencies, thanks to better accessibility of response stations or more efficient dispatch management. About two-thirds of the projects had a positive impact on employment and the local economy, especially in newly accessible locations and cultural sites.

Recommendations:

- Prioritize the construction of new sections and solutions for accident-prone locations over mere modernization of existing roads.
- Support comprehensive and environmentally friendly projects as part of developing multimodal transport (e.g., terminals, public transport).
- Increase focus on rapid response to emergencies—build new stations, invest in special equipment, reduce response times.
- Ensure conditions that allow less developed regions fair access to funding compared to more developed areas.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Regional Development

Supplier: Naviga Advisory and Evaluation s.r.o.

Implementation Period: February 2023 – December 2023

Evaluation Methods: Combined quantitative-qualitative approach, regional comparative analysis, case studies, quantitative analysis of socioeconomic impacts

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-po1-a-po3-irop>

Evaluation of Communication Activities 2018–2023 IROP

The communication activities of IROP during the period 2018–2023 contributed to fulfilling communication goals and priorities, although there is room for improvement. The analysis of the data concluded that the Ministry of Regional Development (MMR) and the Centre for Regional Development (hereinafter referred to as the Center) carried out a large number of communication and publicity activities over the years. These significantly contributed to increasing absorption capacity and informing applicants about available support opportunities, thus ensuring the utilization of the IROP allocations.

Key Findings:

- Consultation services and seminars are highly successful in meeting all of the "5U" criteria. The IROP website also performs very well in accordance with the 5U principles. However, other communication activities meet these principles to varying degrees depending on the target audience.
- All the specifically evaluated communication activities—including the IROP website, consultation services, seminars for potential applicants, current applicants and beneficiaries, campaigns, social media, competitions, and events—contributed to achieving communication goals and priorities.
- The evaluation confirmed that, apart from external factors (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), communication activities were particularly limited by internal constraints within public administration, insufficient staffing with marketing expertise, and externalities like the complexity of EU funding or its frequent association with corruption and fraud.

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the communication activities during 2018–2023, with a particular focus on evaluating selected communication efforts in more detail and providing feedback and recommendations for implementing communication activities. This included transferring positively evaluated results and proposing changes to communication strategies, especially in light of the requirements for the 2021–2027 programme period.

Recommendations:

- For optimal future evaluation of communication efforts, track expenditures separately for each communication tool (media campaigns, social media, seminars, competitions, etc.), especially to enable comparison between different communication channels.
- On the IROP website improve the organization of tabs; move the event calendar/schedule to a more prominent position; enable newsletter subscriptions for calendar updates; improve the relevance of full-text search results (e.g., enable keyword searches across calls for proposals and more generally); allow filtering of calls based on eligible applicant types.
- In the call descriptions and accompanying documents, include more illustrative examples (e.g. of eligible expenses or project types).
- In consultation services, allow for "chaining" of questions—ideally 1–2 follow-up inquiries.
- During seminars, present more practical examples, i.e., more model or real-life cases, including frequently asked questions (e.g., from consultation services).
- To improve user-friendliness and engagement, offer online seminars with camera use (e.g. laptop camera) showing the speaker. User experience is negatively impacted when participants cannot see the presenter during a presentation.
- Continue using the IROP YouTube channel and MMR and the Centre as a secondary support communication channels.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Regional Development

Supplier: Deloitte Advisory s.r.o.

Implementation Period: June 2023 – December 2023

Evaluation Methods: Desk research, semi-structured interviews, surveys and expert panels, focus groups, data analysis, eye tracking/user tracking

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/zaverecna-zprava-vyhodnoceni-komunikacnich-aktivit>

Johannes Amos Comenius Programme



Chapter Contents:

- User Evaluation of the OPJAK.cz Website
- Initial Evaluation of Higher Education within P JAC
- Survey Among Primary School-Aged Children on Leisure Time, Use of Digital Technologies, and Wellbeing
- Evaluation of Projects in Kindergartens, Primary Schools, After-School Clubs, Leisure Centres, and Art Schools Using Simplified Cost Options

User Evaluation of the OPJAK.cz Website

The OPJAK.cz website is primarily used by individuals connected to the Johannes Amos Comenius Programme (P JAC), especially beneficiaries or (potential) applicants, which aligns with its intended purpose. The website design is generally considered successful in terms of ease of navigation and clarity, with the majority of respondents giving positive ratings for both indicators.

Key Findings:

- The primary users of the OPJAK.cz website are those with a connection to P JAC, especially beneficiaries or potential applicants.
- Positive ratings for clarity and comprehensibility – Fewer than 10 % of respondents found the website navigation somewhat or very difficult; only 5.5 % considered the content to be (somewhat) unclear.
- About 50 % of respondents rated the visual appearance of the site positively; another 30 % rated it as average.
- The website is the most frequently used source of information about P JAC; social media accounts are used minimally.
- The most positively received suggestion was to create a separate section for P JAC Templates and a summary of frequently searched information/documents.

The aim was to assess how users of the OPJAK.cz website—specifically the general public and employees of Section IV of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT)—evaluate its clarity, comprehensibility, visual appearance, and informational value.

Recommendations:

- Maintain the website's clear structure and comprehensible content, as they are highly valued by users.
- Respondents suggested updating the FAQ section related to published calls and making improvements to the P JAC newsletter.
- Improve communication channels beyond the website, especially by enhancing social media presence and engagement.
- Implement a dedicated section for P JAC Templates and frequently searched documents, as recommended by users.
- Regularly update the FAQ section to reflect current calls and users' evolving needs.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Implementation Period: September 2023 – October 2023

Evaluation Methods: Survey, pop-up window, link

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/hodnoceni-webovych-stranek-opjak-cz-uzivateli>

Initial Evaluation of Higher Education within P JAC

In recent years, universities have undergone significant development, largely supported by operational programs (OP R&DfI and OP RDE). Nevertheless, due to natural societal changes, they continue to face new challenges, necessary solutions, and shortcomings.

Key Findings:

- OP RDE and P JAC have had a significant impact on improving university infrastructure and equipment.
- The range of study programs is satisfactory and reflects labor market needs.
- There are few incoming academics from abroad, while student arrivals exceed departures.
- Universities support equal access to education.
- There is relatively broad public interest in lifelong learning.
- A major problem for universities is funding, for effective strategic management requires at least a medium-term financial outlook.

The purpose of this evaluation was to map the current status of the higher education environment, specifically faculties educating teachers in areas supported by P JAC. The results will be used for P JAC's evaluation activities, particularly to establish a baseline for follow-up surveys, enabling assessment of changes in this support area.

Recommendations:

- Support the modernization of university facilities and equipment, including student housing.
- Ensure efficient sharing of teaching and research spaces and equipment.
- Continue to strengthen the quality of study programs, both academic and professionally oriented, and further develop project-based and collaborative teaching.
- Promote collaboration between universities and inter-faculty cooperation.
- Provide a stable environment for incoming students and professors.
- Support student mobility abroad.
- Support funding for universities' membership in international alliances.
- Share experiences and good practice on equal access among universities and faculties.
- At the national level, systematically anchor outputs of lifelong learning.
- Strengthen and stabilize university funding, at least in the medium-term outlook.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Implementation Period: January 2024 – October 2024

Evaluation Methods: Surveys, focus groups, analyses

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/vstupni-evaluace-vs-op-jak>

Survey Among Primary School-Aged Children on Leisure Time, Use of Digital Technologies, and Wellbeing

Children's mental wellbeing depends on many factors. Interviews show that children face problems caused by the environments they are part of, primarily family, school, after-school clubs, etc. Media activities and general time spent on electronic devices also significantly influence children's lives and experiences. It is only with increasing age that children begin to recognize and become aware of the negative effects of media activities that can affect them. Younger children do not perceive this as a problem requiring their attention.

Key Findings:

- Encourage children in areas where they excel.
- Overcoming obstacles and coping with failure.
- Self-care strategies.
- Mental hygiene in connection with the use of digital devices.
- Healthy and balanced lifestyle.

The conducted study aimed to find out the impact of media and technologies on leisure time, education, and wellbeing of Czech children aged 6 to 15.

Recommendations:

- Support interactive and varied forms of teaching using technology / minimize frontal (lecture-style) teaching.
- Support alternative forms of assessment beyond grading (formative assessment).
- Support teacher education and their ability to engage students (communication skills, acting lessons, psychology, etc.).
- Ensure school is a safe environment for equal development of children (in terms of gender, social background, nationality, and cultural differences).

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Supplier: Nielsen Edu, s.r.o.

Implementation Period: September 2023 – October 2023

Evaluation Methods: Qualitative research, CAWI (computer-assisted web interviewing), online individual interviews, ethnographic interviews, quantitative research, online surveys

Evaluation outputs available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/setreni-u-deti-ve-veku-zs-k-traveni-volneho-casu>.

Evaluation of Projects in Kindergartens, Primary Schools, After-School Clubs, Leisure Centres, and Art Schools Using Simplified Cost Options

There has been an increase in the involvement of all types of schools and educational institutions compared to the previous OP RDE. Regionally, the highest participation of kindergartens and primary schools was in the Moravian-Silesian Region (92.1 % of kindergartens and 91.3 % of primary schools), and the lowest in the Plzeň Region (66.2 % of kindergartens and 74.4 % of primary schools).

Key Findings:

- There was an increase in school participation compared to the previous OP RDE, with the highest increase in art schools and the lowest in primary schools.
- The highest number of participating kindergartens and primary schools was in the Moravian-Silesian Region, the lowest in the Plzeň Region.
- The most requested activity was staff education.
- More than 90 % of respondents rated the application submission and project administration as easy.
- The project was considered beneficial by all respondents from kindergartens and primary schools.
- Templates improved conditions for children at risk of school failure and contributed to enhanced quality of teaching, teacher cooperation, and the school climate.
- Particularly beneficial were innovative teaching methods and personnel support.

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the involvement of schools and educational institutions in the new program compared to the previous OP RDE, to evaluate the benefits of implemented activities – especially in the areas of staff education and support for children at risk of school failure – and to identify benefits and challenges related to project administration and implementation. It was found that templates significantly contributed to improving quality of teaching, cooperation among teachers, and the overall school climate.

Recommendations:

- Consider adjusting the methodology for reporting productive hours for personnel positions to make it more comprehensible for schools.
- Update the report based on more advanced stages of project implementation or completion.
- Share the findings of this report with the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT).
- Reconsider the required 32-hour time commitment for innovative education, which was demanding for some institutions.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Implementation Period: March 2024 – October 2024

Evaluation Methods: Online interviews, field research, project data analysis, survey

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/vyhodnoceni-projektu-ms-zs-sd-sk-svc-a-zus-se-z>

Operational Programme **Enterprise and Innovation for Competitiveness (OP EIC)**



Contents of the Chapter:

- Evaluation of OP EIC Projects Completed Between the Registration of the Application for Support and the Issuance of the Legal Act
- Ex-post Evaluation of OP EIC and Replication of the Counterfactual Impact Analysis of OP EI

Evaluation of OP EIC Projects Completed Between Registration of the Application for Support and Issuance of Legal Act

According to the audit of the OP TAC system, conducted from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, the previous OP EIC had an excessively high share of projects that were terminated between the registration of the support application and the issuance of the legal act (referred to as “negative projects”). This situation burdens the Managing Authority and inefficiently utilizes its capacities. Therefore, the audit recommended that the Managing Authority conduct an analysis of these negative projects, including an analysis of causes by individual calls, and based on this, implement corrective measures.

Key Findings:

- The average dropout rate of projects in OP EIC was 43.5 %. The support programs with the highest proportion of negative projects were Training Centers, Consulting, and Real Estate.
- The best-performing programs were Marketing, Innovation Vouchers, and Energy Savings in District Heating Systems.
- Projects registered in the first year of OP EIC operation had the highest proportion of prematurely terminated projects – up to 68.3 %.
- Large enterprises had significantly fewer negative projects than small and medium enterprises – the difference was 12.3 percentage points.
- Regionally, the Karlovy Vary region had the highest share of negative projects (50.8 %), while the Plzeň region had the lowest (38.0 %).
- Differences between types of calls were minimal – the rate of negative projects was almost the same in both time-limited and continuous calls.
- There is no single dominant cause of negative projects but multiple partial reasons: company decision not to implement the project (13.2 %), failure to properly document registration in the Register of Beneficial Owners (6.3 %), failure to meet deadlines for correcting deficiencies (6.2 %), limited call allocation (6.0%), failure to file financial statements in the commercial register (4.7 %), insufficiently described project (4.0 %), failure to submit attachments (3.7 %), inefficiency (3.3 %), ineligible expenses (1.9 %), etc.

The aim of the evaluation was to examine a sample of 730 projects to identify the reasons for the termination of OP EIC projects between the registration of the support application and the issuance of the legal act.

Recommendations:

- Avoid using the following types of calls in respective support programs: time-limited call – Smart grids I., High-speed internet (time-limited call); continuous call – Potential.
- Train employees responsible for checking formal requirements to identify unsupported activities early, and include examples where these activities were only discovered during substantive evaluation in the training.
- Monitor the amount of requested subsidies in open continuous calls and terminate the allocation once it has been fulfilled; increase allocation if there is an excess of projects, otherwise exclude later applications before formal checks.
- Train evaluators based on the outputs of selection committees and consider integrating machine learning into substantive evaluation.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Industry and Trade

Implementation Period: April 2024 – July 2024

Evaluation Methods: Primary data analysis, content analysis, desk research, guided interviews, short case studies

Evaluation results available at: <https://optak.gov.cz/evaluace-projektu-op-pik-ukoncenych-mezí-zaregistrovaním-zadosti-o-podporu-a-vydaním-právního-aktu/a-377/>

Ex-post Evaluation of OP EIC and Replication of the Counterfactual Impact Analysis of OP EI

Support from the program partially contributes to strengthening the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The support clearly leads to increased employment in supported companies. However, the contribution of OP EIC to fostering SME growth based on innovation is very limited. The benefits of OP EIC are more evident than those of the previous program, OP EI.

Key Findings:

- Support from the program partially contributes to strengthening the competitiveness of SMEs: a partially statistically significant impact was found for the indicator of added value; supported firms also showed higher revenue generation, greater return on total capital, and an increase in total assets. However, for other key competitiveness indicators, no significant benefits from the support were observed.
- Support clearly leads to increased employment in supported enterprises.
- The benefits of OP EIC are somewhat stronger than those of the previous program OP EI.
- Support in the form of financial instruments (FIs) contributes to strengthening competitiveness more effectively than subsidy support. The key difference is that the effect of FIs is both immediate and long-lasting.
- OP EIC demonstrably contributed to strengthening cooperation in research and development, the ability to identify opportunities in foreign markets, revitalization of brownfields, reducing energy consumption, expanding electromobility, and developing new ICT solutions.
- The contribution of OP EIC to innovation-based SME growth is very limited, primarily because the supported projects mostly focus on lower-level innovations.
- The program does not contribute to supporting the creation of new businesses or fostering entrepreneurship.
- The impact on expanding access to high-speed internet is also very low.

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of support provided from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) on the competitiveness of supported enterprises – both in the short term (OP EIC) and the medium term (OP EI). It also evaluated the extent to which the objectives outlined in the operational program were achieved, including the degree to which support contributed to meeting result indicators.

Recommendations:

- Future programs should reduce their emphasis on employment, limiting it to the creation of highly skilled jobs.
- Support through financial instruments should be further expanded.
- Efforts should continue to concentrate business support thematically into sectors with strong growth potential and/or into lagging regions where support is most needed.
- Enterprises are often cautious about seeking grants for truly significant innovations. Concerns include protecting their know-how and fear of innovation failure, which could negatively affect the project due to strict budgetary rules. Therefore, alternative forms of support for developing SME innovation potential should be considered.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic

Supplier: Naviga Advisory and Evaluation s.r.o., Prague University of Economics and Business

Implementation Period: August 2023 – December 2023

Evaluation Methods: Counterfactual impact analysis, multiple regression analysis, desk research, theory of change, surveys, case studies, expert panel

Evaluation report is available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/zaverecna-zprava-op-pik>

Operational Programme **Fisheries**



Contents of the Chapter:

- Baseline Study of the Operational Programme Fisheries 2021-2027
- Assessment of the Usability of Financial Instruments in the OP Fisheries 2021-2027 and 2028+

Baseline Study of the Operational Programme Fisheries 2021-2027

The research team proposed a set of indicators to complement the existing programme indicators based on an analysis of the aquaculture environment and the needs arising from the draft of the OP Fisheries. After finalizing the indicator framework and establishing the method for data collection and analysis, the research team collected data to determine the baseline values of the indicators.

Key Findings:

- A set of new indicators was proposed to complement the existing OP Fisheries indicators, including three contextual indicators.
- Data collection was carried out through desk research, questionnaire surveys, and stakeholder interviews to determine baseline values.
- The result is a final Evaluation Methodology for OP Fisheries, which will be used to evaluate the programme in 2029.

The objective of the evaluation was to propose and complement the indicator framework for the OP Fisheries, determine baseline values, and create a methodology for its future evaluation.

Recommendations:

- Interpret results with caution – no control group was used, so direct impacts of OP Fisheries cannot be conclusively confirmed.
- It is recommended to supplement the analysis with time series data and links to investment levels.
- Differences between "before" and "after" may not be due to the programme but rather, for example, to sampling error.
- Prefer data from institutions that ensure data quality.
- Always consider the context of data collection and methodology – any changes in methodology should be clearly mentioned in the evaluation.
- Monitor and report survey response rates – low return rates increase the risk of bias.
- Take into account the timing of data collection, as it can influence respondents' attitudes.
- To reduce sampling error, a minimum of 1,000 respondents is recommended.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Agriculture

Supplier: INESAN, s.r.o.

Implementation Period: May 2023 – December 2023

Evaluation Methods: The most suitable method selected was TBIE, carried out using data from desk research, aquaculture environment analysis, literature review, surveys, and informal interviews.

Evaluation results are available here: <https://dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/baseline-studie-operacniho-programu-rybarstvi-2021>

Assessment of the Usability of Financial Instruments in the OP Fisheries 2021-2027 and 2028+

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the usability of financial instruments (FIs) within the OP Fisheries for the second half of the 2021-2027 period, and to propose options for their use in the 2028+ programming period. The study updated previous assessments of FIs in relation to the specific objectives and activities of the programme.

Main Findings:

- Fish production in the Czech Republic is stagnating and has been slightly declining since 2016. Carp remains the dominant species, with other species playing a supplementary role.
- Around 47 % of fish are exported. While fish consumption in the Czech Republic is slightly increasing, the share of domestically produced freshwater fish is declining.
- Efforts to launch and sustain a larger number of modern Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) have not been successful.
- Enterprises mainly rely on their own resources and grants; financial instruments are not currently used.
- Grants play a critical role in modernization, efficiency, and improving working conditions in the sector.
- Estonia serves as the only EU country to fully implement FIs in the fisheries sector, demonstrating that such implementation is also feasible for freshwater aquaculture.

The evaluation focused on sector analysis, an assessment of standard project types, experiences of programme administrators, international best practices, and interviews with relevant stakeholders (e.g., SAIF, NRB). The outcome was a final synthesis of recommendations for future use of FIs in the fisheries sector.

Recommendations:

- Focus FIs on activities 2.1.2 (transport equipment) and 2.1.3 (modernization and construction of RAS) – these show the greatest potential for FI implementation.
- Implement a pilot FI scheme: Start with a limited scope – a proposed allocation of approximately CZK 200 million for the programme period (including a reserve for RAS modernization).
- It is economically advantageous to introduce FIs in cooperation with CAP instruments aimed at rural development investments.
- Companies showed interest in FIs only after a detailed explanation of their benefits—it is essential to systematically inform stakeholders about FI options.
- FIs can be an attractive alternative to grants if designed with favorable conditions and flexible monitoring mechanisms.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Agriculture

Supplier: IREAS – Institute for Structural Policy, o.p.s.

Implementation Period: July 2024 – December 2024

Evaluation Methods: An analysis of secondary data and information sources, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and prescreening were conducted; methodologically, this followed on from the already completed (ex-ante) evaluation of the potential use of FIs in OP Fisheries 2021-2027; this was a follow-up assessment conducted several years later.

Evaluation results are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/posouzeni-vyuzitelnosti-financnich-nastroju-v-op-r>

Operational Programme

Technical Assistance



Chapter Contents:

- Ongoing Evaluation of the Achievement of the OPTA Objectives for the Period 2021-2027

Ongoing Evaluation of the Achievement of OPTA Objectives for the 2021–2027 Period

The programme pursues several objectives, including increasing the expertise of staff involved in the implementation of funds, ensuring administrative capacity (horizontal institutions – e.g., the Audit Authority, the NCA, PO; regional actors – Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI), Local Action Groups (MAS), Regional Standing Conferences (RSK), and also supports the MS2021+ monitoring system.

Key Findings:

- Training for staff within the EU funds implementation structure has sufficient capacity and generally covers relevant topics; however, about one-third of staff do not participate in training for various reasons.
- Methodological support and communication with OPTA Managing Authority staff are at a good level, although more attention could be paid to clarifying and communicating changes in the methodological environment.
- Administrative capacity meets the demands of implementation, mainly due to the introduction of flat rates, which are a significant benefit. However, the low value of the flat rates causes complications for many beneficiaries.
- There is a significant difference in the average level of personnel costs between horizontal institutions and other beneficiaries.
- Respondents are generally dissatisfied with their financial compensation.
- Most internal users are generally satisfied with the MS2021+ monitoring system. Even among (external) users of the ISKP21+ system, feedback is mostly slightly positive or neutral.
- Regional partners highly value the trust-based relationship with the Managing Authorities and other territorial partners.

The aim of the evaluation is to monitor the programme's progress, identify obstacles, and propose measures to remove them in order to ensure the effective implementation of programme objectives. The first interim report also establishes baseline values for trends that will be monitored over the long term in the coming period. A key goal is to ensure data collection is replicated annually to allow the evaluation of changes and trends in the implementation of the OPTA.

Recommendations:

- Support the availability of hybrid and online courses to increase motivation for education among employees and managers alike.
- Improve the format and communication of updates to key documents and make working with methodologies easier, especially for less experienced project managers.
- Adjust problematic call conditions (e.g., maximum project duration, reporting period length, flat rate amounts, salary limits).

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Regional Development

Supplier: Naviga Advisory and Evaluation s.r.o. (Grant Thornton Czech Republic s.r.o.)

Implementation Period: January 2024 – October 2024

Evaluation Methods: Statistical analysis of secondary data, in-depth interviews, focus groups, content analysis

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/prubezna-evaluace-naplnovani-cilu-optp-pro-obdobi>

Operational Programme

Employment



Chapter Contents:

- Evaluation of National and Regional AEP Projects
- Evaluation of International Mobility of Disadvantaged Youth – Call No. 59
- Evaluation of Youth Employment Support 1.1 and 1.5
- Evaluation of the Questionnaire on the Impact of the Housing First Programme for Addressing Housing Exclusion
- Projects Supporting Gender Equality – Evaluation of Calls No. 61 And 62
- Projects Supporting Gender Equality – Evaluation of Call No. 81

Evaluation of National and Regional AEP Projects

Education is a key factor in labor market integration. Among the tools monitored within Active Employment Policy (AEP), retraining programmes stood out as particularly effective across all groups. Compared to subsidized job placements, retraining was significantly less costly and showed high benefits. However, for disadvantaged groups, the most effective forms of support were not always utilized. In some cases, costly and intensive tools were provided to individuals who did not experience significant improvements in employment, posing a risk of so-called “deadweight loss.”

Key Findings:

Effectiveness of AEP Tools Two Years After Project Entry, by Selected Groups:

- Men aged 25–29: Two years after entering a project, men with secondary or tertiary education showed 80–90 % active labor market participation, regardless of the specific AEP tool they received. Even those who received only minimal support showed high participation.
- In contrast, young men with only primary education had much lower participation—on average 55 %. Their labor market involvement varied by the type of support received. Those who underwent retraining (69 %) or obtained a subsidized job (62 %) were the most active.
- Men aged 50–59: For older men, economic activity also correlated with education. On average, 52 % of men with primary education were active, compared to 70 % of men with higher education. It became clear that for older men, minimal support in the form of counselling (so-called “soft skills”) was insufficient, as these men showed lower labor market activity compared to others.

The aim of the ongoing evaluation was a quantitative assessment of AEP projects, based on administrative data from the IS ESF, which includes information on economic activity before and after participation in a project and the type of support received. From 2015 to 2022, European funds from the OP Employment were the main source of financing for AEP. AEP aims to increase employment, remove barriers to labor market entry, and activate groups excluded from the workforce. Within projects implemented by the Czech Labour Office, over CZK 20 billion was spent on AEP tools, supporting employment for more than 200,000 unique individuals.

Recommendations:

- Develop counselling services at the Labour Office (ÚP ČR): Increase the expertise of staff at Labour Office Information and Counselling Centres for career selection and change – supporting students, schools, parents, and adults through career guidance and diagnostics.
- Encourage returns to education: The Labour Office should actively support young people returning to education, using counselling and motivational tools, particularly for registered job seekers with low qualifications or incomplete education.
- Provide retraining and further education opportunities: Promote education for all target groups, including more demanding or follow-up training, with a special focus on low-skilled individuals, older persons, and people with disabilities.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Implementation Period: January 2017 – December 2023
Evaluation Method: Data analysis

Evaluation results are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-narodnich-a-regionalnich-projektu-apz>

Evaluation of International Mobility of Disadvantaged Youth – Call No. 59

The most visible benefit of the internship was the improvement in foreign language skills in the language in which the internship took place. The most significant progress was observed among participants who entered the project with no prior knowledge of a foreign language. Participation in the projects provided valuable experiences and skills, but also highlighted the need to address specific barriers that hinder successful integration into the labor market.

Key Findings:

- According to the data, the intervention helped three-quarters of participants become more engaged in society.
- More than half of the participants reported a change in their overall approach to life after taking part in the project.
- An overwhelming majority stated that the project improved their knowledge and skills, including qualifications.
- Most participants also reported positive effects in other areas, particularly in gaining work experience and improving work habits.
- Over 80 % of participants saw an improvement in teamwork skills.
- After participating in the project, 62 % of participants said they had successfully found employment.

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the projects implemented under Call No. 059 – “International Mobility and Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Youth.”

The evaluation includes: a description of the socio-demographic structure of supported individuals, a summary of outputs from various project stages including an overview of participants’ situations and expectations upon entry, an assessment of the foreign internship experience, and an evaluation of the overall benefits of the project, including the impact on personal and professional development and participants’ reintegration into work or education.

Recommendations:

- Do not underestimate the importance of recruiting the right participants, as this is a key factor in the project’s success.
- Focus on maintaining participant motivation, especially after returning from the international internship.

Evaluation of Youth Employment Support 1.1 and 1.5

Gender and age did not have a significant impact on long-term employability. Instead, education level and project type proved to be decisive factors. Around half of the participants stated that the project helped them, with participants in regional projects reporting even more positive experiences.

Key Findings:

- The type of project implementer influenced project outcomes, from target group selection, to participant engagement, to the success of supported individuals in entering the labor market after support ended.
- Projects by the Labour Office targeted a less vulnerable group compared to regional and competitive projects, which influenced overall project success in terms of participants' employability.
- Regional and competitive projects focused more on the youngest age group.
- Regional and competitive projects more frequently targeted individuals with the lowest levels of education.
- Labour Office projects were more focused on people with disabilities, while regional and competitive projects included more ethnic minority participants.
- Since regional and competitive projects worked with more complex target groups, even a lower employment rate among participants can be considered a notable success.
- In terms of employment contracts, quality jobs were offered to participants.
- However, the salary levels offered were low.

The aim of this evaluation was to assess projects funded by the ESF in the Czech Republic focusing on support for employment of individuals under 29 years of age. This includes projects implemented by the Czech Labour Office (including Youth Guarantee projects), as well as regional authority projects and competitive grant projects.

Evaluation of the Questionnaire on the Impacts of the Housing First Programme for Addressing Housing Exclusion

85 % of households lived in the apartment provided by the project for at least one year. 89 % of housed individuals reported increased satisfaction with their housing. 74 % of families with children experienced improved living space for their children. 65 % of housed individuals showed improvement in mental health (measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale). 57 % reported greater life satisfaction (one year after being housed, 87 % said they were satisfied with life).

Key Findings:

- Living space doubled – from 26 m² to 50 m² – and participants reported an improved sense of privacy.
- Households started newly using various support services, such as food banks, debt counseling, and assistance with social services and dealing with public authorities.
- After moving into housing 13 % of households began receiving housing supplement payments for the first time, 55 % started receiving the housing allowance.
- The state saved money on housing supplements, but the amount paid out in housing allowances increased. Overall, the total volume of housing-related benefits doubled.
- Housing had a strong positive impact on respondents' mental well-being.
- Before moving, there was a significant difference between the target group and the general population in the use of emergency services, and the frequency and length of hospitalizations. The use of prescribed psychiatric medication also increased.
- Household income sources changed only slightly after moving into social housing. However, the number of days per month when respondents had no money at all decreased.
- In the event of a serious problem, respondents said they could rely on their social worker or staff from a support organization.
- The move had a significant impact on children's development, with a marked increase in the number of children who had their own room thanks to improved housing.

The main objective of the evaluation was to assess the outcomes achieved by Housing First programmes.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Implementation Period: September 2019 – December 2023

Evaluation Methods: Questionnaire survey, data analysis

Evaluation outputs are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-vysledku-vyzvy-podpora-programu-housing-f>

Projects Supporting Gender Equality

- Evaluation of Calls 61 and 62

One-third of participating women increased their labor market activity after entering the project. During the monitored period, the employment rate of women rose by approximately 20 percentage points. After 30 months from joining the project, about 70 % of women were either employed or self-employed, while the unemployment rate dropped to 11 %.

Key Findings:

- Age and educational level significantly influenced employment outcomes during and at the end of the monitored period. The highest employment rate was found among women aged 30–54 with university education – 85 % of them were employed at the end of the period. In contrast, women aged 55 and older had considerably lower employment rates: only 54 % of older university-educated women were employed, among women with primary education, only 31% had a job. Among the oldest age group, the share of economically inactive women increased during the period.
- Women who were already working or self-employed at the start of the project had a significantly higher likelihood of remaining economically active by the end, compared to those who were inactive. Even women who were unemployed at the beginning had better chances of labor market participation than the inactive group.
- Participants who were inactive at the start and obtained a subsidized job achieved 15 percentage points higher employment at the end of the monitored period than women who received a different type of support. However, subsidized employment had little effect on those who were already active when entering the project.
- Requalification had a positive impact especially on inactive women at the time of project entry. By the end of the period, their employment rate was 13 percentage points higher than those who received another type of support.
- Requalification seemed to have no significant effect on women who were already economically active when they joined the project.

The aim of the evaluation was to determine how successful the participants were in entering or returning to the labor market during the monitored period, and what impact the provided support had on their employment outcomes. The analysis was based on data from the ESF 2014+ information system. The evaluation covered 3.5 years, specifically 12 months before and 30 months after women entered the projects. Calls No. 61 and 62 focused on reducing gender inequality in the labor market through a variety of measures and activities not included in any other narrowly targeted calls. Supported projects could combine individual practical support with awareness-raising, educational, or advocacy activities. The evaluated projects focused almost exclusively on women.

Internal analysis by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Implementation Period: August 2020 – December 2023

Evaluation Methods: Data analysis

Evaluation results are available here: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-vyzev-61-62>

Projects Supporting Gender Equality – Evaluation of Call 81

Participants most appreciated increased self-confidence, easier return to work, the opportunity to build professional contacts, and acquiring new skills or higher qualifications. The project activities primarily provided them with soft skills and the confidence necessary for obtaining higher job positions, even if these did not always directly affect their current earnings.

Key Findings:

- The most frequently supported group was women around the age of 30, with university-educated women aged 30–39 making up almost one-third of all participants. In total, 44 % of respondents had a child under the age of six when entering the project.
- The most significant benefit, according to participants, was increased confidence at work. More than two-thirds of women reported lacking confidence or courage before the project. Overall, 85 % of participants considered increased self-confidence and support in returning to work as the main benefit of the project.
- A smaller portion of participants improved their technical or managerial skills. About one-quarter of women gained management skills that may aid career growth. Only a minority of projects focused on reducing horizontal labor market segregation, i.e., increasing women's representation in technical (STEM) fields.
- The projects were more effective in improving future employment prospects rather than immediate income increases. 71 % of respondents believed their financial outlook had improved thanks to the project, while only 47 % reported a current income increase.

The goal of the evaluation was to assess how well the set objectives in reducing gender inequality in the labor market were being met. It also looked at which target groups were most often supported, what types of support were provided, and how the participants themselves perceived this support. The evaluation was primarily based on a questionnaire survey conducted with the target group. Call No. 81 focused primarily on eliminating gender discrimination in the labor market, specifically reducing the gender pay gap. In practice, most projects targeted women with young children returning to work and work-life balance support.

Recommendations:

- Improve the representativeness of the target group survey. Future calls should include targeted outreach and ongoing data collection monitoring to ensure more representative results and stronger conclusions.
- Clearly define the objectives of the call. Future calls should have specific, measurable goals, such as increasing the share of women in managerial positions, supporting women in STEM fields, helping mothers return to work, or supporting older women in staying in the labor market.
- Focus support on specific target groups, e.g., women returning from maternity/parental leave. It's also important to promote flexible forms of employment.
- Encourage experience-sharing and networking. Supported projects should be connected via workshops and conferences, allowing project implementers to share experiences and best practices.

Operational Programme **Employment+**



Contents of the Chapter:

- Analysis of OPE+ Projects Focused on Supporting Informal Caregivers
- Financial Models: Reintegration of Individuals into the Open Labour Market
- Financial Models: Quality of Social Work

Analysis of OPE+ Projects Focused on Supporting Informal Caregivers

The evaluation confirmed that nearly half of the project implementers have activities structured in such a way that, without additional targeted support through projects or changes in regional funding systems, these activities will not be sustainable. However, around 40 % of implementers are able to finance at least part of the activities through other means.

Key Findings:

- The way support is provided to informal caregivers remains highly diverse. Seven groups of implementers were identified, based on the type of support offered and target group focus.
- The current system for providing the Care Allowance is considered problematic, especially regarding processing times and the inconsistent evaluation methods.
- While the clarification of the definition of a caregiver is generally seen as a positive step, it also led some implementers to restrict support to certain target groups (e.g., caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease, many of whom do not receive social benefits).

The purpose of the evaluation was to map the broader context of implementing a total of 26 projects supported under Call No. 03_22_014 – Support for Caregivers and Shared Care. These projects focused on supporting informal caregivers. The call was positively received by most respondents, with approximately one-third offering no critical comments. Some criticism was directed at specific content issues (e.g., the inability to fund medical procedures or therapy), while others pointed out certain administrative shortcomings, which are addressed in the report.

Recommendations:

- It is important to advocate for further systemic changes in the support of informal caregivers, e.g., introducing clear standards for caregiver education or establishing a legal entitlement for caregivers to take a certain number of days off.
- The successful inclusion of the caregiver definition in the Social Services Act should be followed by further steps, especially defining staffing and financial capacities at the regional level, as part of updates to mid-term social services development plans.
- For caregivers, the availability of flexible and part-time jobs is crucial. These are currently insufficient and unattractive for employers in the Czech Republic, which has a negative economic impact.
- After the death of the care recipient, caregivers lose their entitlements. This could be addressed through programs for reintegration into the labor market.
- Homesharing is developing relatively quickly, but conditions need to be created for recruiting host families and a legal definition of homesharing should be established.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Supplier: Naviga Advisory and Evaluation s.r.o.

Implementation Period: May 2024 – December 2024

Evaluation Methods: Qualitative thematic analysis, in-depth interviews, desk research

Evaluation outputs available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/analiza-projektu-opz-zamerenych-na-podporu-neforma>

Financial Models: Reintegration of Individuals into the Open Labour Market

Based on three specified model examples in the area of reintegration into the open labour market, three financial models were developed. These allow for a precise estimation of the societal cost-benefit ratios for both a no-intervention scenario and an intervention scenario.

Key Findings:

- Long-term unemployment has broad and interconnected impacts.
- These impacts are influenced by multiple factors: education, gender, age, family and social background, region of origin, and the economic situation of the country or region.
- Individual responses to job loss typically occur in phases: shock phase; active job search (optimism); pessimism and demotivation; fatalism, resignation, and apathy.
- Individuals unemployed for over 6 months are considered especially vulnerable due to increasing demotivation to seek employment.
- Total monetized impacts analyzed in the research include: productivity – decline in economic performance; wellbeing – deterioration of mental wellbeing; health – negative effects on both physical and mental health; crime – increased risk of criminal behavior.
- The most significant monetized cost is the wellbeing of people around the unemployed, not just the individuals themselves.

The goal of the evaluation was to develop financial models for three case studies that would most accurately estimate the societal costs and benefits of reintegration measures. The core theme of the evaluation was long-term unemployment.

Recommendations:

- Improve access to and integration of data to enable more accurate estimation of the causes and consequences of long-term unemployment.
- Expand future research to include more realistic parameters that better reflect the unemployed population, rather than relying solely on narrowly defined model examples.
- Map and clarify existing data sources, especially with an emphasis on the Czech context, and further expand these data sets.
- Conduct dedicated research into topics that are not yet well-covered in the literature, such as: motivation of the unemployed to find work; economic advantages of remaining unemployed; impacts on vulnerable groups; influence of ethnicity; regional disparities.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Supplier: České priority, z.ú.

Implementation Period: February 2024 – September 2024

Evaluation Methods: Cost-benefit analysis (CBA), desk research, in-depth interviews

Evaluation outputs available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/financni-modely-reintegrace-osob-na-otevreny-trh-p>

Financial Models: Quality of Social Work

This evaluation focuses on the analysis and assessment of the impacts of various social work intervention scenarios. It evaluates the costs and benefits of providing timely and professional social work, aiming to verify its effectiveness and its influence on public finances and social well-being.

Key Findings:

- Social issues addressed through social work generate significant savings in other public systems, such as healthcare and justice.
- Timely social work interventions (the "intervention scenario") have positive impacts. They improve living conditions, stabilize families, and reduce overall public sector costs.
- Field-based services are multiple times cheaper (in terms of public finances) than residential (institutional) solutions.
- The cost of repressing social problems greatly exceeds the cost of preventive measures.
- Results confirm that high-quality and accessible social work has a positive socio-economic impact and represents an effective public investment.

The purpose of the evaluation was to create financial models that compare three scenarios: no intervention, delayed intervention, and immediate intervention. These were applied to three specific case studies: a single mother, a person with a disability, an elderly woman with serious health issues. The research analyzed the costs and benefits of each variant, considering the likelihood of each scenario occurring. Special attention was paid to identifying both direct and indirect costs associated with the interventions.

Recommendations:

- Support early and professional social work as a preventive tool for avoiding serious social problems and related costs.
- Invest in the availability of quality social services, as their absence lowers the effectiveness and benefits of social work.
- Improve data availability and quality regarding social work and social services to strengthen evaluations and planning.
- Analyze and monetize key socio-economic effects, such as value of life and quality of life (wellbeing). A sustainable methodology for measuring population wellbeing should be developed.

Contracting Authority: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Supplier: STEM Institute of Empirical Research (STEM Ústav empirických výzkumů, z.ú.)

Implementation Period: February 2024 – September 2024

Evaluation Methods: Cost-benefit analysis (CBA), desk research, focus groups (triads), in-depth interviews

Evaluation outputs available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/evaluace-21-27/financni-modely-kvalita-socialni-prace>

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