



MINISTRY
OF REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT CZ

SUMMARY OF EVALUATIONS

of the NCA Evaluation Unit

Main conclusions from evaluations
of EU funds in the Czech Republic
in the 2014–2020 programming period



EVALUATION
UNIT NCA

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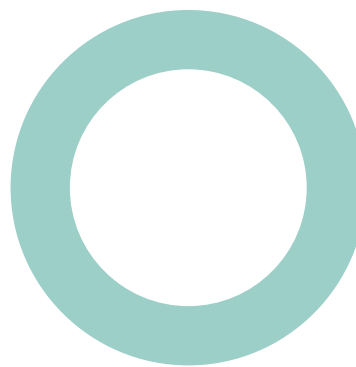
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Process evaluation of the 2014-2020 programming period



Representatives of managing authorities understand the idea of the Single Methodological Environment, but they considered it ambitious already in 2016.

TITLE:

Verification of meeting the objectives of the Single Methodological Environment

The representatives of the managing authorities (MAs) understand the idea of the Single Methodological Environment (SME) in principle, they are aware of the advantages of unifying the rules, but they are not satisfied with the developments to date and the current state of the SME. They consider the SME too ambitious, they would welcome its narrowing and simplification which would respect the differences among individual operational programmes (OPs).

GOAL:

The evaluation evaluated the beginning of the implementation of the 2014-2020 programming period and focused on evaluating the first calls (i.e. feedback on their comprehensibility). The feedback was collected both from the applicants and from the employees of the implementation structure.

KEY FINDINGS:

Although the MAs understand that it is necessary to set uniform rules, the current regulation of the rules (SME) at the national level is perceived rather negatively by the representatives of the MAs:

- 59% of respondents are dissatisfied with the modifications of the rules at the national level.
- The main mentioned disadvantages of the SME include the fact that it does not take into account the specifics of individual programmes, the extensiveness of the system and the limited flexibility of such environment.
- The representatives of the MAs would welcome support of the NCA in areas where they need help and which are key and where joint management makes

sense, e.g. State aid, public procurement, integrated instruments or monitoring, but not interfering with the competences of the MAs, e.g. in the appraisal of project applications.

The applicants mentioned:

- Electronic submission of aid applications is seen as positive, it contributes to simplifying the preparation.
- In general, applicants would like to have all the rules and information available at the beginning of the call, with no further changes later on.
- In terms of the process of submitting an aid application, the respondents perceived the time allotted for drawing up the application (between the announcement of the call and the deadline for submitting the application) as sufficient.
- The addressed applicants consider the calls to be comprehensible.

Title: Verification of meeting the objectives of the Single Methodological Environment - focused on administrative burden, simplification, monitoring system, computerization

Supplier: HOPE GROUP s.r.o., EUservis.cz division

Implementation period: September 2015 - February 2016

Evaluation methods: questionnaire survey

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/overeni-plneni-cilu-jmp-zamereno-na-administrati>

Partnering has improved, also thanks to platforms for call preparation. The most important is the opportunity of discussion and openness to discussion.

TITLE:

Evaluation of platforms for the preparation of calls

The managing authorities approach the platforms for the preparation of calls differently, but they always communicate with the partners in some way, be it platforms defined within the single methodological environment, working teams or bilateral meetings. The partners see the main benefit of the platforms in the possibility to project practical experience into the call and to set the call purposefully.

GOAL:

The goal of the evaluation was to map the forms and activities of the platforms for the preparation of calls and their real functioning, and to find the weaknesses and strengths in fulfilling the partnership principle.

KEY FINDINGS:

In the next period, building on what already works, not creating complicated platform systems, new mechanisms or partnership tools. Platforms contribute to a better setting of calls and enable open discussion.

- At the platforms, partners can influence the final form of the calls. To prepare a call, MAs also use other platforms or bilateral meetings in addition to the platforms established by obligation of the SME. It is advisable to keep the platforms and to continue to gather information from experts and from the field.

Small groups are more effective for the preparation of the call content.

- Larger platforms, in turn, ensure greater transparency and reduce the risk of covert influence by the MAs.

Greater application of the partnership principle is hindered by general systemic obstacles:

- These are, for example, high turnover at the MAs, the complexity of the rules, the complicated distribution of responsibilities and competences.
- The purpose of the methodologies is not sufficiently explained to the MAs, so they often perceive the imposed obligations as an administrative burden.
- Partners dislike the fact that over a half of the members of the platforms are representatives of State administration. At the same time, the partners respect that the MA should have a decisive say as it is responsible for the call. However, they would welcome the platforms to reflect their views.

The methodological approach to synergies and complementarities was not accepted by the managing authorities. Nevertheless, they lack a coordinator for challenging or controversial topics.

TITLE:

Evaluation of the functioning of the synergies/complementarities coordination

Concepts related to synergies and complementarities were defined in the methodologies and seemed to be clear and understandable at the theoretical level. However, in practice, when applied in a specific situation, they become unclear. Different actors thus use the terms differently and often use them interchangeably (e.g. confuse complementarities with duplications, etc.).

GOAL:

Verification of the processes set for the implementation of synergies/complementarities (S/C), identification of barriers and areas not covered by methodologies and MS2014+, recommendations for streamlining the implementation of S/C.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Defining the duplicities (overlaps) at the beginning of the period was very useful for both the MAs and MoRD-NCA.
- Nevertheless, the agenda of synergies and complementarities has not been fully adopted by the MAs and the implementation of any measures is very difficult. The reason was mainly the definition of differences between synergy and complementarity and the introduction of purely synergistic calls. This step meant that MAs began to label synergistic calls as complementary and wanted to avoid risks that would be associated with synergistic projects (e.g. that the linked synergistic projects would not get implemented, etc.).
- A key mechanism for S/C coordination appears to be informal communication and platforms for the preparation of calls.
- There is a need for a mechanism that would coordinate large/controversial themes which cut across several ministries and multiple opinions exist on how to address them. The role of a mediator of such topics should be taken by the MoRD-NCA.

Evaluations focused on corruption



The measures outlined in the Strategy cover all the main risks identified for EU funded projects.

TITLE:

Evaluation of the Strategy for Combating Fraud and Corruption

The key principle should continue to be the support for all entities of the implementation structure in the area of prevention and detection of fraud risks in various forms (e.g. conflicts of interest, manipulation of public contracts), and more effective application of mechanisms that increase their integrity. The result should be not only easier enforcement of specific measures in practice, but also the possibility of higher public control.

GOAL:

The aim of the analysis was to evaluate the relevance of the Strategy in the fight against fraud in terms of general anti-corruption mechanisms, international recommendations, national methodologies and by comparison with the risks identified in the area of corruption and fraud in programmes and projects co-financed by the EU. The evaluation focused on verifying whether the measures of the Strategy reflect international and national requirements and, at the same time, whether these are incorporated into documents that specifically regulate the implementation of ESI funds.

KEY FINDINGS:

The emphasis put in the Strategy on strengthening a culture that rejects fraudulent conduct and has zero tolerance for fraud should be seen as very positive.

- This concerns risks related to project selection where the Strategy specifies measures associated with the prevention and verification of undesirable ties or conflicts of interests, and risks associated with the implementation of projects.
- It is important to increase transparency through timely, open, clear and easily accessible publication of information on all processes carried out by each of the implementation structure bodies, including information on the selection and implementation of individual projects.

- There is also a need to share experience with identifying fraud risks and addressing them within the implementation structure and externally.

The measures are subsequently reflected in binding methodological guidelines.

- Sometimes the methodological guidelines go beyond the scope of the Strategy, in some cases it is the other way around, but both tools can be said to cover the essential risk areas.
- Continue to enforce the rules of ethical codes and update them according to the needs of the implementation structure bodies, and encourage the reporting of suspected fraud and support the protection of whistleblowers.

Title: Evaluation of the Strategy for Combating Fraud and Corruption in the Use of the CSF Funds in the 2014-2020 Period

Supplier: ASTRA - Association for Transparency

Implementation period: September 2017 - February 2018

Evaluation methods: content analysis, comparative analysis

The outputs are available at: [https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/hodnoceni-strategie-pro-boj-s-podvody-a-korupc-\(1\)](https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/hodnoceni-strategie-pro-boj-s-podvody-a-korupc-(1))

Although the practice of using most anti-corruption tools is somewhat problematic, most of them have an impact on transparency in the processes of implementing aid from EU funds.

TITLE:

Evaluation of the functioning and effectiveness of anti-corruption instruments in terms of increasing transparency in EU funds

The effective use of the instruments without increasing the administrative burden is thus greatly influenced by the degree to which the instrument was developed and put into meaningful practice at the level of the managing authority/ intermediate body. This fact is influenced by the interpretation of the relevant parts of the methodological guidelines.

GOAL:

The analysis is one of the evaluations of the Strategy for Combating Fraud and Corruption in the Use of ESI Funds in the 2014–2020 Programming Period. The purpose of the evaluation was to obtain feedback from the users of the Single Methodological Environment (SME) on key methodological measures (SME tools), the aim of which is to contribute to greater transparency in the use of ESI funds or to reduce the risk of fraud and corruption.

Eleven methodological tools that are believed to be key in this regard, appear to be problematic, or are likely to generate the most errors were selected for evaluation.

KEY FINDINGS:

Although the practice of using most of the tools is somewhat problematic, most of the analysed tools have an impact on transparency in the processes of implementing aid from EU funds.

- Tools seen as positive:
 - Disclosure of the evaluation criteria and justification
 - The institution of codes of ethics
 - The setting of checklists (especially in the field of public procurement)
- Tools seen as neutral:
 - Evaluator database (conflict of interest)
 - Request for review
 - Fraud indicators
 - Procedures in the event of suspected unfair practices by the MA/IB
- Tools seen as negative and/or considered ineffective
 - Self-assessment and risk analysis of the MA
 - Unravelling the ownership structures

Title: Evaluation of the perceived functioning and effectiveness of selected Single Methodological Environment instruments in terms of increasing transparency in EU funds

Supplier: Deloitte Advisory s.r.o.

Implementation period: October 2017 - April 2018

Evaluation methods: content analysis, comparative analysis, interviews

The outputs are available at: [https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-vnimaneho-fungovani-a-efektivnosti-vy-\(1\)](https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-vnimaneho-fungovani-a-efektivnosti-vy-(1))

The emphasis on strengthening a culture that rejects fraudulent conduct and has zero tolerance for fraud is assessed as positive. Nevertheless, local authorities should work better with new technologies and thus increase the transparency of their procedures.

TITLE:

Mapping the risks of corruption in the regions

The measures outlined in the Strategy essentially cover all the main risks identified in EU funded projects. This concerns risks related to project selection where the Strategy specifies measures associated with the prevention and verification of undesirable ties or conflicts of interests, and risks associated with the implementation of projects.

GOAL:

The goal of the project was to increase the transparency of public administration by reducing opportunities for corruption. The project also included partial training of local government representatives.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Only two of the seven regions analysed are actively working with an anti-corruption strategy that reflects changes in anti-corruption legislation.
- The information published by local authorities is not user-friendly (e.g. not updated, hard to find, etc.).
- Elected representatives and officials perceive the level of general anti-corruption education and specialised training courses as insufficient.
- Regional grant programmes meet the basic rules of good governance and transparency, but often omit local needs.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- It is necessary to work on a culture of mutual communication between officials and elected representatives so that risk situations of borderline corruption phenomena are formulated and defined in the code of ethics jointly.
- There should be a reduction in the total volume of subsidies and a strengthening of local government budgets.
- It is advisable to establish a suitable platform providing information on civic activities.
- Training to deepen anti-corruption, specific and public procurement knowledge should be supported for elected representatives and officials.

Title: Mapping the risks of corruption in the regions

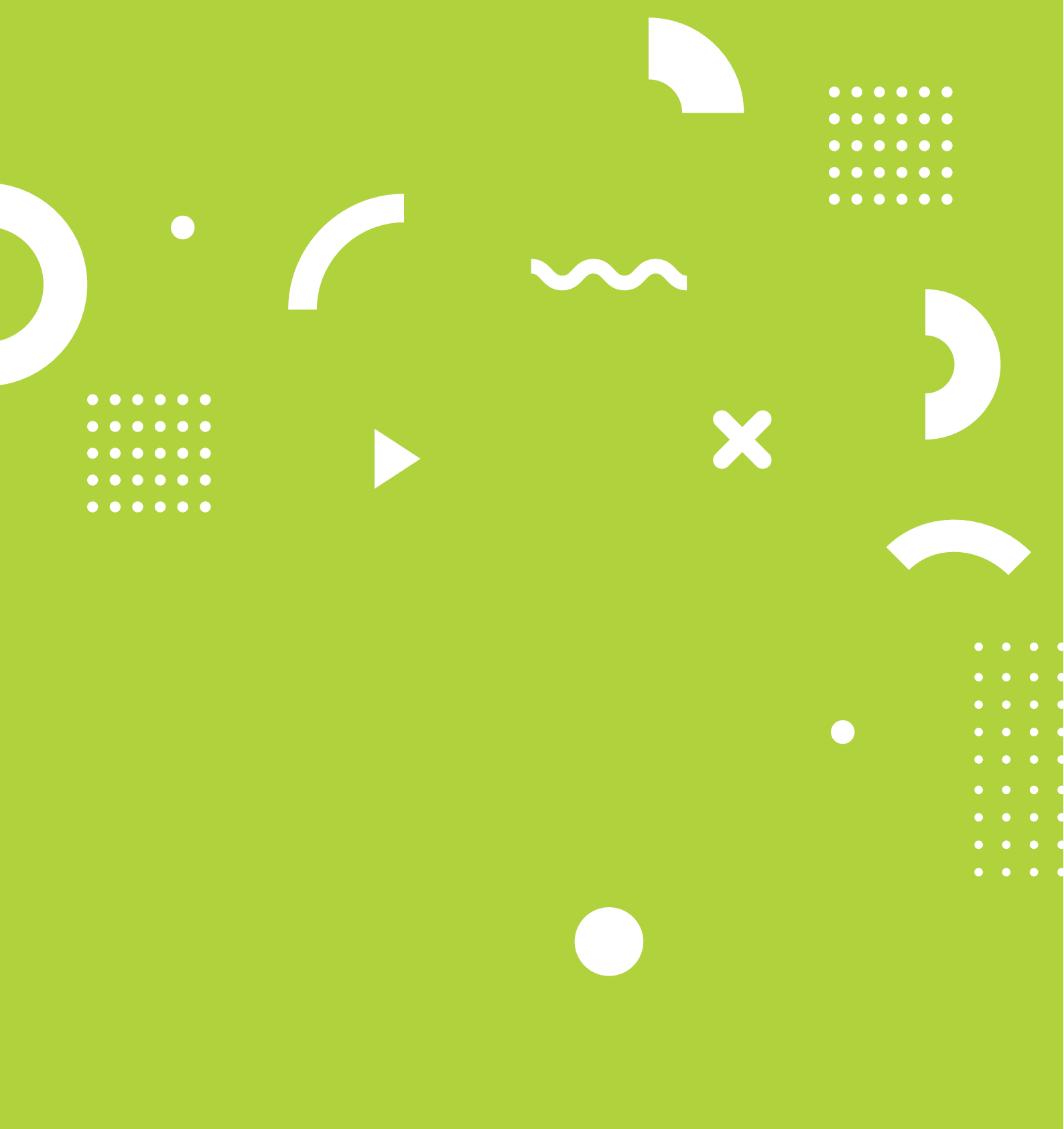
Supplier: ASTRA - Association for Transparency

Implementation period: June 2017 - December 2019

Evaluation methods: desk research, content monitoring, focus groups, questionnaire surveys

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/mapovani-rizika-korupce-v-regionech>

Advice for the period 2021+



Evolution, not revolution: in the period after 2021, it is necessary to focus more on beneficiaries as the main users of the system, to simplify and clarify methodologies and to focus on the transfer of good practice.

TITLE:

Evaluation of the methodological environment from the point of view of the implementation structure

The idea of a single methodological environment (SME) has been adopted. However, the SME is extensive, difficult to navigate and, in many cases, unnecessarily detailed.

GOAL:

The evaluation served as one of the sources of information for the decision on the overall concept of the methodological environment in the 2021+ programming period. The goal of the evaluation was to identify problem areas in individual processes and the sources of the identified problems; to give examples of good practice; propose solutions while complying with all relevant regulations and laws.

KEY FINDINGS:

THE SETTING OF THE METHODOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT: The methodological environment should be based more on recommendations and guidance and examples of good and bad practice.

- The clarity of the methodological environment is impaired in particular by:
 - its size - hundreds to thousands of pages of methodological guidelines and recommendations,
 - frequent changes and updates of the methodologies,
 - the methodologies are often unclear and users have to enquire about their interpretation.
- The scope of the methodological environment swells particularly with findings of the Audit Authority. The findings are often taken over without explaining their application in practice.
- Methodological support should be focused on a narrower range of topics. It is important to pass on good practice, e.g. by organizing educational seminars/workshops on problematic topics.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE BODIES: It is important to support informal communication among the bodies, strengthen interactive discussion, focus on sharing good practice.

- Poor transfer of information between or within organizations can lead to misinterpretation of communication towards applicants/beneficiaries.
- The key to proper information transfer is the setting up of at least a basic mechanism, for example a regular newsletter or regular meetings.
- Information sharing can be made more effective through informal communication.

MONITORING SYSTEM: There is a need to ensure greater system stability, improve user orientation in the application and speed up responses.

- The intention of unifying the monitoring system is correct, but there is dissatisfaction with its implementation.
- MAs/IBs started to distrust the system due to initial technical problems.
- In the future, it is advisable to improve communication on changes in the system and modification requirements.

Title: Evaluation of the methodological environment from the point of view of the implementation structure

Supplier: Ernst & Young, s.r.o.

Implementation period: August 2018 - April 2019

Evaluation methods: desk research, questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-metodickeho-prostredi-z-pohledu-implement>

The beneficiaries are satisfied with communication with the managing authorities during the preparation of the grant application as well as during the project implementation; the appraisal of the applications is objective but long and complicated.

TITLE:

Public consultation with applicants/beneficiaries

The survey shows that applicants/beneficiaries are satisfied with the individual phases of project administration.

GOAL:

In connection with the preparation of the new period 2021–2027, the MoRD-NCA conducted a “Public consultation on the issue of administrative burden at the level of applicants and beneficiaries”, the aim of which was to obtain feedback on the existing system of project preparation and implementation. More than 24,000 applicants and beneficiaries from the MS2014+ database were approached and responses were received from more than 3,200 entities.

KEY FINDINGS:

WHAT WORKS: The beneficiaries are satisfied with the information from and communication with the MA/IB.

- 76% of applicants/ beneficiaries are satisfied with the MA/IB communication as regards the preparation of the grant application.
- 78% of applicants/ beneficiaries believe that the calls contained sufficient information.
- 67% of beneficiaries are satisfied with the MA/IB communication related to implementation reports.
- 79% of beneficiaries believe that the check was carried out professionally.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: Beneficiaries consider the project appraisal to be long and point out the complexity and ambiguity of the tendering rules. The information presented in the cost-benefit analysis is duplicate and the analysis is rather complex.

- 71% of beneficiaries consider the appraisal of the application to be longer than expected or excessively long.
- 64% of beneficiaries see the rules of public procurement as complicated.
- 74% of applicants consider the cost-benefit analysis to be challenging and duplicate; for 14% of applicants, the CBA was useful in setting the project parameters.

Successful implementation of the EU funds needs stability, predictability and continuity.

TITLE:

Proposals for the system of EU fund implementation starting in 2021

It is important to avoid headlong changes, to prepare everything from a long-term perspective. Any changes should be based on objective analyses and take into account a longer horizon than one period. It is essential to maintain the know-how carried by key employees. It is necessary to retain existing workers and to choose an appropriate motivation system for that purpose.

GOAL:

The background study for the preparation of the 2021+ implementation system was focused on good practice from other EU Member States. It dealt in detail with the forms of implementation structures and evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the individual implementation models on specific case studies. It also focused in detail on partial elements of the system, such as financial and integrated instruments or the legislative background of EU funds.

KEY FINDINGS:

General recommendations for the setting of the implementation structure:

it already, so that the changes in the future do not have to be of a more fundamental nature.

Stability and continuity

- Interventions in the implementation structure should be well thought out and evolutionary rather than revolutionary. An important aspect of continuity is the preservation of the know-how carried by key employees. Its preservation should be the primary goal in the event of changes or transfer of competences to other institutions.

Sufficient time to implement changes

- When preparing the programming period 2021–2027, it is advisable to take into account the possible development of EU funds in the post-2027 period and to adapt some steps to

Communication between institutions

- Other countries have good experience, for example, with locating the implementing institutions in one building, organising informal meetings and seeking to maximize dialogue.

Relationship between the audit authority and the other implementation structure entities

- Based on the inspiration from the examined countries (for example Slovenia, Estonia, Germany), in order to strengthen the certainty of the beneficiaries, it could be appropriate to leave more space to the managing authorities in the investigation of the findings identified by the audit authority.

Title: Architecture of European funds in the Czech Republic after 2021

Supplier: Ernst & Young, s.r.o.

Implementation period: February 2018 - February 2019

Evaluation methods: desk research, case studies

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/podkladova-studie-pro-pripravu-systemu-implementac>

After 2021, it is important to create an enabling and supportive environment for a greater role of financial instruments, to simplify and consolidate them, and focus on better promotion.

TITLE:

Areas suitable for the use of financial instruments

In the Czech Republic, the beneficiaries are strongly dependent on grants and reluctant to use alternative forms of financing, even in a situation where the administrative burden of using the financial instruments is almost identical to the grant financing. In the next period, it is necessary to simplify the usability of the financial instruments (FIs) in terms of processes, improve promotion and increase the pressure on consolidation of the instruments and on using the functioning FIs.

GOAL:

The study provides an overview of the areas (sectors), beneficiaries and activities where it is appropriate to implement financial instruments (FIs). The study outputs also show under what conditions the potential final beneficiaries are willing to apply for aid in the form of financial instruments.

KEY FINDINGS:

FIs should be designed as more user-friendly compared to grant calls and almost indistinguishable from commercial products for the beneficiaries.

- Potential beneficiaries must be aware of the fact that the Government wants to use this form to support selected activities and areas.
- The conditions for the use of repayable assistance must not change.

The structure of FI providers/managers must be more unified. It is not necessary to have a separate instrument with a manager for each area.

- An option is to introduce an implementation architecture with a fund of funds - or to unify the provision of FIs so that they are not primarily single-type, but enable a combination or selection according to the needs of the beneficiary.
- Capital FIs are a key type for achieving progress in the use of FIs.
- Support for capacity building and knowledge transfer among the ministries is also important.

The use of FIs would also be enhanced by their more targeted promotion and explanation of their advantages and benefits.

- The offer of communication channels informing about the possibilities of FIs must be more broadened: e.g. a dedicated website, social networks, contextual advertising, direct mailing, and collaboration with associations, consulting companies, and interest associations.
- We recommend targeting the communication at the individual groups of beneficiaries and guide them towards the main information source.

Title: Assessment of areas suitable for a repayable form of aid in the period 2021+ (financial instruments)

Supplier: Deloitte Advisory s.r.o.

Implementation period: September 2018 - February 2019

Evaluation methods: desk research, focus group, questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews

The outputs are available at: [https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/posouzeni-oblasti-vhodnych-pro-navratnou-formu-\(1\)](https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/posouzeni-oblasti-vhodnych-pro-navratnou-formu-(1))

The unification of financial corrections is complicated.

TITLE:

Analysis of financial correction rate settings

The areas where the elimination of the biggest differences could be considered are: the purpose of the grant, double financing, information obligations, accounting and archiving.

GOAL:

The aim of the analysis was to create an overview of financial correction settings across operational programmes and to suggest areas in which their harmonization could be considered.

KEY FINDINGS:

- At the beginning of the programming period, there was no established procedure across operational programmes to set financial corrections.
- The various operational programmes have different obligations for beneficiaries and different rates, and also use different terminology.
- For better orientation, it would be advisable to unify and clarify the form of the Grant Award Decision and other documents.
- Any unification and the rate of financial corrections must be discussed with the managing authorities.
- The areas where the elimination of the biggest differences could be considered are: the purpose of the grant, double financing, information obligations, accounting and archiving.
- Areas where unification is not very realistic are: indicators, ineligible expenditure and specific obligations.

Title: Analysis of financial correction rate settings

Internal analysis by the NCA Evaluation Unit

Implementation period: September 2020 - June 2021

Evaluation methods: desk research

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/analyza-nastaveni-sazeb-financnich-oprav>

Ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period



Thanks to the EU funds, research organizations can get better involved in international projects.

TITLE:

The benefits of EU funds in research and development

The findings show that the supported centres gradually manage to establish themselves on the international and regional scene, that there is cooperation with the application sector and a significant share of foreign scientists. Differences among the centres in their functioning are related to their connection with the parent organization. Factors limiting the benefit of the interventions include the complexity of the setting of the entire R&D support system, differences in the system of evaluation and funding between different providers of institutional aid, or the emphasis on formalism and bureaucracy on the part of control authorities.

GOAL:

Ex-post evaluation of the benefits of interventions aimed at research and development in the 2007-2013 programming period. Specifically, these are interventions of the Operational Programme Research and Development for Innovation. The evaluation focused on the benefits that the interventions brought for the research and development potential of the Czech Republic.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 8 centres of excellence and 40 regional centres were supported
- The capacities of research institutions have been modernized and expanded
- Support was provided to centres with higher potential
- The infrastructure enables involvement in international projects
- Centres supported in OP RDI show a more progressive approach in pursuing their visions
- The achievement of the centre's vision is influenced by the degree of its autonomy
- R&D support from EU funds cannot be separated from the overall system of R&D financing.

Recommendations:

- Closer coherence of interventions with regard to the setting of the R&D system
- Concentration of capacities and consolidation of research teams
- Continued support for collaboration with industry and international cooperation
- Continuation of the multi-objective financing set up in the period 2014-2020
- Support of new and modernization of existing research capacities
- Approach of the MA/aid provider oriented on the purpose of interventions.

Title: Ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period - Benefits of the EU funds in research and development

Supplier: Evaluation Advisory CE s.r.o.

Implementation period: March - October 2018

Evaluation methods: case studies, desk research, expert panel

The outputs are available at: [https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/ex-post-evaluace-v-oblasti-vyzkumu-a-vyvoje-\(1\)](https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/ex-post-evaluace-v-oblasti-vyzkumu-a-vyvoje-(1))

The EU funds have helped to increase technological development in the Czech Republic and cooperation between companies and higher education institutions.

TITLE:

Benefits of EU funds in the field of business research and innovation

EU funds have helped businesses to step up the growth of added value or labour productivity. New research and innovation capacities were built or expanded in companies, bringing along a significant technological upgrade, and thus accelerating the research and development work. The companies developed new products and services with higher added value. In business incubators and the science and technology parks, the implementation of the projects contributed to developing the innovation infrastructure for R&D and to improving the cooperation of universities and research institutions with the business sector.

GOAL:

The goal of the evaluation was to identify and verify the probable effects of the Potential and the Prosperity programmes (Operational Programme Enterprise and Innovation) in the field of business research, development and innovation on the growth of a number of variables in the supported companies, and to assess the impact of the programmes.

KEY FINDINGS:

Programme “Potential”

- Thanks to the implemented interventions, the added value grew (by approx. 33%) and labour productivity grew (by approx. 18%) in the supported enterprises
- Moreover, the interventions significantly upgraded the technological equipment of the companies and expanded or created new research and innovation capacities of the companies
- The portfolio of offered products was expanded and new products or services were developed, the degree of cooperation with external scientists increased

Programme “Prosperity”

- In the Prosperity programme, no effect of the support, or incubation of the firms, on their financial indicators was proven.
- It was found that business incubators / science and technology parks are most often financed by a combination of own resources and grants. Some entities would not be able to provide services at all without the grant, while others are fully financed from their own resources
- In business incubators and science and technology parks, the cooperation of universities and research institutions with the business sector has improved
- It has been found that there are insufficient data available to effectively evaluate this type of intervention. Therefore, it will be necessary to establish a way of measuring progress and reporting the underlying data for their evaluation.

Title: Ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period - Benefits of the EU funds in business research and innovation

Supplier: Haskoning DHV Czech Republic, spol. s.r.o.

Implementation period: December 2017 – August 2018

Evaluation methods: counterfactual impact analysis, case studies, desk research, in-depth interviews, data mining

The outputs are available at: [https://www.dotaceu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/ex-post-evaluace-v-oblasti-podnikoveho-vyzkumu-\(1\)](https://www.dotaceu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/ex-post-evaluace-v-oblasti-podnikoveho-vyzkumu-(1))

In the area of waste management, the EU funds contributed mainly to an increase in the separate collection of waste, to increased material recovery from waste and to reduced landfilling.

TITLE:

The benefits of EU funds in the field of waste management

The importance of support from EU funds was mainly in reducing the production of mixed municipal waste, increasing the production of separated components of municipal waste and increasing the production of biodegradable municipal waste. The participation in the grant programme is statistically significant for all monitored types of waste and a part of the change in the production of the types of waste can be attributed to the impact of the grant programme.

GOAL:

To evaluate the benefits brought by the cohesion policy in the area of waste management in the programming period 2007-2013. This was implemented through the Operational Programme Environment.

KEY FINDINGS:

Support was provided to:

- 456 civic amenity sites
- 77 landfill reclamations
- 2,325 separate collection systems
- 603 composting and biogas plants

Thanks to EU funds, the following results were achieved:

- The total capacity of waste management facilities increased to 10,471,043 t/year.
- The capacity of the waste separation and collection system increased to 1,617,518 t/year.

Other relevant benefits of EU funds:

- The beneficiaries themselves mainly appreciated projects that were focused on biodegradable municipal waste. According to the respondents, the appreciated projects would not have been implemented at all or would have achieved significantly smaller capacities without the grant.
- Among other things, the evaluation pointed to a greater effect and effectiveness of the implemented projects in the category of the largest municipalities over 50,000 inhabitants.
- The evaluation showed a link between the achieved results and the objective of reducing the specific production of waste, although the provided intervention had only a limited possibility to influence this objective.
- The civic amenity sites have helped to reduce the amount of mixed municipal waste and to maximize the use of waste as a substitute for primary sources.
- By building sorting lines and waste recycling facilities, there was an increase in the amount of separated waste components and an increase in the proportion of used waste.

Title: Ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period - Benefits of the EU funds in waste management

Supplier: SPF Group, s.r.o. and Evaluation Advisory CE s.r.o.

Implementation period: January 2018 - November 2018

Evaluation methods: counterfactual impact analysis, case studies, desk research, in-depth interviews

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/ex-post-evaluace-v-oblasti-nakladani-s-odpady-a-en>

Thanks to the EU funds, the Czech economy has reduced its energy intensity and negative environmental impacts.

TITLE:

Benefits of EU funds in the field of energy savings

The achieved reduction of energy loss leads to more economical management of energy resources in the public sector and allows the deployment of more environment-friendly methods of heating buildings. Without the grant intervention, the projects aimed at energy savings would not have been implemented in most cases, or would be implemented at a significantly lesser extent.

GOAL:

The main goals of the ex-post evaluation focused on the area of improving energy performance are: (1) Evaluation of the results of interventions in the improvement of energy performance. (2) Evaluation of the functioning of interventions in the improvement of energy performance using examples of supported projects, and identification of key aspects that influenced the success/failure of the selected projects. (3) Generalization of the knowledge gained for a better setting of interventions in the next period (post-2020).

KEY FINDINGS:

- The most significant benefit of the implementation of the mentioned interventions at the project level should be seen above all in the acceleration of the implementation of activities.
- Through a questionnaire survey, the evaluation confirmed that the vast majority (approx. 85%) of public entities/unsuccessful applicants who did not receive the grant did not implement energy savings on buildings.
- A significant environmental benefit can be seen in the reduced amount of emissions released into the air, especially in connection with the modernization of energy generation plants.
- The economic benefits are the increased competitiveness of enterprises, which was captured in case studies, and investment savings thanks to obtaining the grant itself and thanks to the lower annual energy bills.
- The evaluation results confirmed that the logic of the intervention was constructed correctly and the provided intervention led to the expected results and positive impacts.
- Except for situations where, after the implementation of the project, the energy bills increased due to more expensive fuel, no negative aspect was mentioned by business entities (with the exception of administrative complexity)

Title: Ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period - Benefits of the EU funds in energy savings

Supplier: SPF Group, s.r.o. and Evaluation Advisory CE s.r.o.

Implementation period: January 2018 - November 2018

Evaluation methods: counterfactual impact analysis, case studies, desk research, questionnaire survey

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/ex-post-evaluace-v-oblasti-nakladani-s-odpady-a-en>

Result evaluations of the 2014-2020 programming period



The analysis identified problem areas that hinder the faster convergence of Czechia. The Czech Republic should focus on investments in infrastructure, education, science and research.

TITLE:

Macroeconomic and Sectoral Analysis 2019

The economy of the Czech Republic is characterized by a high level of openness, and trade and ownership ties with the Eurozone countries. The GDP per capita indicator when converted using the current purchasing power parity increased slightly in 2014–2017 and exceeds 80% of the Eurozone average, but the room for long-term economic convergence to the developed countries of the Eurozone remains considerable.

GOAL:

The analysis describes the macroeconomic development of the Czech Republic with a special focus on convergence to older EU member states, based on the main macroeconomic indicators. The main goal was to define the problem areas that most hinder faster convergence and then to provide a context for the starting points of the eleven areas of development needs defined in the Partnership Agreement.

KEY FINDINGS:

The unfavourable developments of the Czech economy after the financial crisis pointed at structural problems preventing a faster convergence to the states of Western Europe. However, the economic growth recorded in recent years brings an opportunity for change. The Czech economy has been growing continuously since 2014.

However, there have been no fundamental changes in the Czech business environment in recent years, and there is no significant improvement in the most pressing areas. The problematic sectors also include transport and ICT infrastructure, public administration, the labour market and, despite many improvements, also energy and the environment. Last but not least, the Czech Republic should heed the disparities in the economic performance of the regions, seek their convergence and pay attention to regions that lag behind the national average.

- Labour market: The Czech labour market developed favourably, but there are significant threats. The share of employed people grew and the unemployment rate, which was the lowest in the entire EU in 2018, decreased significantly.
- Education: Education brings undeniable benefits, but it needs more attention. Czech education shows very good values in a number of areas. It is mainly the rate of successful students and the share of university graduates.
- Research and development: Expenditure on research and development (R&D) in the Czech Republic continues to lag behind the European average. Efforts must be made to build innovation capacities and R&D cooperation in the regions as well, so that this is not concentrated in Prague.
- Environment: Environmental protection should continue to be a priority. The state of the environment is affected by deepening climate change, which affects the stability and function of ecosystems.

Title: Macroeconomic and Sectoral Analysis 2019

Made internally by the NCA Evaluation Unit.

Implementation period: January 2019 - June 2019

Evaluation methods: macroeconomic analysis

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/overeni-zmeny-rozvojovych-potreb-dohody-o-partners>

The EU funds play an important role in investment in the Czech Republic, the most in the field of industry.

TITLE:

Analysis of public expenditure and EU funds in 2007-2015

Between 2007 and 2015, the share of EU funds in investments (capital expenditure) increased from 15% to 63% (from CZK 28 billion to CZK 150 billion). The investments depend on resources from EU funds mainly in the areas of industry, construction, trade, and services that are financed in 93% from EU funds.

GOAL:

To map how funds provided to the Czech Republic from the EU budget enter public expenditure and, therefore, the area of public policies.

KEY FINDINGS:

Current and capital expenditure

- Between 2007 and 2015, the share of EU funds in investments (capital expenditure) increased from 15% to 63% (from CZK 28 billion to CZK 150 billion). In terms of current expenditure, EU funds make up only a small part which, however, grew continuously between 2007 and 2015 from 2% to 6%.
- At the same time, capital expenditure from own resources fell between 2009 and 2014, while the share of EU funds in capital expenditure steadily increased to about half in 2014.

Share of EU funds in total expenditure

- The risk sectors are motorway and road transport as well as rail transport, which are large budget chapters (85 and 74 billion) with the share of EU funds around a quarter.

- In addition, there was a jump in the EU's share in rail transport in 2015, but it was rather ad hoc (spending the remaining allocation) and the expenditure cannot be expected to stay at the 2015 level.
- Other risk areas are associated with State aid for companies - research and development in industry, construction, trade and services (5 billion) and other sectoral and specialised matters in industry and construction (22 billion), where EU funds make up the vast majority of resources.
- All five areas related to environmental protection can be considered risky. Each of these areas has spending from 5 to 22 billion, the shares of EU funds vary from 30% to 80% and have increased over time.
- Active employment policy (8 billion) is a very risky area, as EU funds finance almost its entire operation.

Title: Analysis of public expenditure and EU funds in 2007-2015

Supplier: Petr Janský, Tomáš Křehlík, CERGE-EI

Authors of the final document: NCA Evaluation Unit: Petr Bouchal, Jan Hněvkovský

Implementation period: September 2016 - June 2017

Evaluation methods: budget data analysis

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/en/europe-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/verejne-vydaje-a-fondy-eu-2007%e2%80%932015>

Appropriate types of support were chosen as part of the pandemic-control measures. However, the risk was a too long rescue phase of general, untargeted support at the expense of investments in the restructuring of the economy.

TITLE:

Analysis of EU fund measures responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

A number of different pandemic-control programmes were implemented in Czechia with varying amounts of support. In terms of volume, three types of support were key: programmes providing loan guarantees, compensation for paid wages and other compensation or direct support. Two-thirds of the funds provided were available to entrepreneurs in the form of loans or guarantees, and one third in the form of non-repayable aid. The counterfactual analysis has not (so far) confirmed a statistically significant effect of the support on the economic indicators of the support recipients.

GOAL:

The goal of the study was to evaluate the support co-financed from the ESI funds, provided to eliminate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The positive effect of the analysed anti-crisis programmes cannot be unequivocally confirmed statistically (so far). A statistically significant effect of the support on survival of the supported enterprises and preservation of employment was not identified.
- The general trend that can be observed is the increasing share of small and micro-enterprises in the total number of supported entities.
- The support was provided across the board, it was not directed to the most affected sectors at a significantly higher extent.
- The accommodation and catering sector was most significantly affected by the anti-crisis measures and the pandemic, and the service sectors were also significantly affected. Retail was somewhat less affected on average, as some of its parts benefited from the pandemic (online trade, communication equipment). The

information and communications sector was affected rather positively, especially in the field of telecommunications and information services.

- Overall, the types of support selected for the rescue phase of the crisis were appropriate. In general, anti-crisis programmes contributed to softening the shock of the pandemic crisis - there was not a wave of bankruptcies and layoffs in the economy as a whole.

Recommendations:

- In the rescue phase, it is necessary to provide unconditional support across the board with sufficient capacity, as quickly as possible.
- In the recovery phase, i.e. after the decline in the performance of the affected companies has stopped and/or the restrictions have been lifted, it is important to target the instruments at the affected sectors. In this phase, the support should be conditional (for example, on maintaining employment) and reflect the pre-crisis financial health of the recipient.

Supplier: Evaluation Advisory CE, s.r.o.

Implementation period: December 2020 – February 2022

Evaluation methods: counterfactual impact analysis, questionnaire survey, desk research, expert panel

The outputs are available at: <https://dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/analyza-opatreni-reagujicich-na-pandemii-covid-19>

There are disparities among regions in the absorption of EU funds.

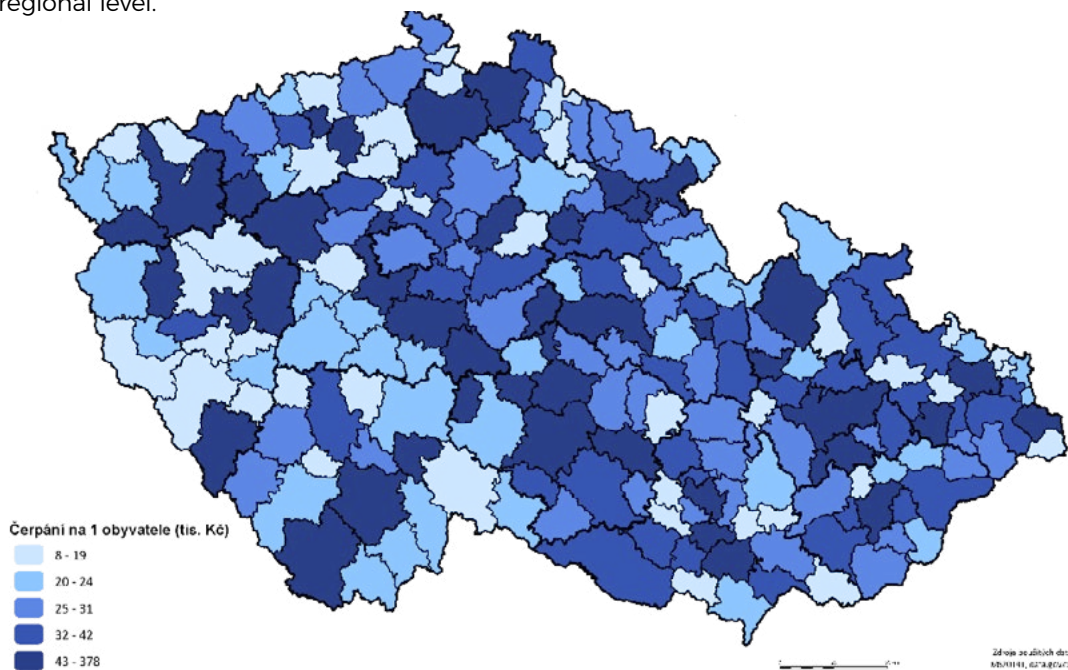
TITLE:

Regional result evaluation

The funds are directed primarily to: (i) core areas with significant concentrations of population and economy (Prague agglomeration, regional capitals and their hinterland and other regional centres), (ii) structurally affected areas (Ostrava, Karlovy Vary, Liberec districts), (iii) environmentally attractive regions (Krkonoše, Jeseníky, Beskydy mountain ranges).

GOAL:

To evaluate selected objectives of territorial development in Czechia and the benefits of EU funds at the regional level.



KEY FINDINGS:

- The municipality with the most funds per capita (CZK 378,000) receives 47 times more funds than the municipality with the least funds (CZK 8,000).
- 73% of funds go to developed regions, 23% to stabilized areas and 4% to peripheral areas.
- The highest number of projects are implemented in the Central Bohemian, South Moravian and Moravian-Silesian Regions, while the lowest number is in the Pilsen and Karlovy Vary Regions.
- Integrated instruments were used unevenly across territorial units and 5% of the funds were absorbed through them.

Title: Result evaluation of the benefits of EU funds at regional level

Supplier: Ernst & Young, s.r.o.

Implementation period: January 2021 - October 2023

Evaluation methods: desk research, focus groups, in-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, advanced statistical methods (CIE, DiD, regression)

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/vysledkova-evaluace-prinosu-evropskych-fondu-na-re>

The results of EU funds in the Vysočina Region showed that the largest support went to transport.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Vysočina Region

Vysočina is currently the best absorbing region in Czechia. The EU funds here were mostly directed to the development of transport in the region, specifically to the reconstruction of the D1 motorway. Furthermore, EU funds significantly contributed to the transformation of municipalities, their infrastructure was improved, and their civic amenities enhanced. On the contrary, support for research and innovation is not very successful in the region, and the outflow of young people continues. One of the reasons may be the fact that the region lacks higher education.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The Vysočina Region is the most supported region in the Czech Republic per capita, with significant investments in transport and infrastructure.
- **Transport:** Improvements in transport service were achieved mainly thanks to the reconstruction of the D1 motorway, but infrastructure problems still persist.
- **Education:** Support in the field of education has led to an increase in the capacity of educational establishments, but the outflow of the university-educated population remains a problem.
- In the social infrastructure, social enterprises and social housing units have been created, but social exclusion still persists.
- **Research and innovation:** In the area of innovation and research, the Vysočina Region has insufficiently developed potential, which limits its ability to support innovative projects.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship support has led to the emergence of social enterprises, but there is still a lack of infrastructure for SMEs.

The Olomouc Region significantly developed its R&D potential and improved the condition of its cultural heritage sites.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Olomouc Region

In the Olomouc Region, EU funds significantly contributed to the support of research and development (R&D) and had a significant effect on increasing the number of researchers. Workers supported by EU funds make up almost a half of the total increase in the number of workers in the region. R&D was significantly supported in the Palacký University Olomouc where several scientific centres were established. Changes are also seen in cultural heritage and tourism, namely in the Štemberk Castle, the Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary on the pilgrimage site of Svatý Kopeček (Holy Hill) near Olomouc, or the Helfštýn Castle. The last mentioned received two nominations for the Building of the Year in the reconstruction category. On the contrary, the EU funds did not reach, for example, the Konice area that is the inner periphery of the region. One of the reasons may be the fact that the area is omitted in the region's strategic documents.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Education:** Significantly more children now have access to better quality education and the education infrastructure has been improved thanks to EU funds. More than 48 thousand children have access to higher quality education. This is almost two-thirds of the 76 thousand children attending kindergartens and primary schools in the region.
- **Culture and tourism:** EU funds contributed to the restoration of cultural heritage sites, including the important Basilica of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary on Svatý Kopeček (Holly Hill) near Olomouc.
- **Social services:** Several social enterprises and housing units have been created, but the social exclusion index remains a challenge.
- **Transport:** Investments in transport have improved the connectivity of the region with neighbouring Germany, but infrastructural deficiencies remain.
- **Employment:** More than 28,000 new jobs have been created, but some parts of the region still face unemployment problems (Jeseník and Přešov districts).
- **Digitisation:** High-speed internet connections have improved (the share of connected households has increased by almost 14% since 2014), but digitization and ICT equipment need further support.
- **Environment:** Energy consumption has been reduced, flood control plans created and water quality improved, but the challenges associated with climate change will be important in the future. Since 2014, for example, the energy consumption of more than 3,000 households has been reduced, flood control plans have been created for 33 municipalities, and water quality has improved for more than 8,000 residents.
- **Migration and population decline:** Depopulation and migration continue to be a challenge for the region, the exact influence of EU funds on this issue is difficult to measure.

Thanks to EU funds, Brno is becoming an important technological and research centre in Czechia.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the South Moravian Region

Brno and the surrounding areas have managed to build an innovation ecosystem using the European grants. A significant effect of this funding can be seen both in the increasing number of researchers in the region and in the expanding cooperation between companies and research institutions. The number of research and technology centres, parks and incubators is also growing. The projects also contributed to improving the interconnection of public transport between Brno and its suburban areas. New tram lines, new parking spaces were added and the vehicle fleet was modernized.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Employment:** 2,521 residents got a job in supported companies, which makes up more than a quarter of new jobs in the Czech Republic thanks to EU funds.
- **Higher education infrastructure:** 9,050 students can use new or modernized higher education facilities, which means an increase in the quality of education for every fifth student.
- **Recycling:** 5 191 tonnes of waste can newly be recycled. The average resident of the South Moravian Region sorts 34.8 kg of waste per year.
- **Research and development:** EU funds have helped to increase the number of researchers and strengthen cooperation between companies and research institutions, especially in research and development.
- **Transport:** Public transport links with suburban areas have been improved, including the development of cycle paths.
- **Culture and tourism:** The funds also contributed to the restoration of important heritage sites, such as the Lednice-Valtice complex.
- **Flood protection:** 47,844 inhabitants are now better protected, which contributes to reducing the risk of flooding for 177,000 inhabitants in the region.

The Hradec Králové Region is better accessible thanks to the new section of the D11 motorway financed by EU funds.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Hradec Králové Region

An important project for the territory was the completion of the D11 motorway, which improved the accessibility of Hradec Králové, facilitated the commuting of local residents to work, and made the location more attractive for young families.

Several transport terminals were also built in the region. The one in Jaroměř is particularly significant, as it improved the interconnection of public transport in the region. The terminal has been or is used by 77% of the town's residents.

Thanks to EU funds, the region is managing to reduce the volume of municipal waste, the projects increased the recycling capacity by 20%, thereby reducing the municipal waste by 12,000 tonnes annually.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 5,162 households reduced their heating emissions.
- 40,886 children, pupils and students have access to higher quality education. The Hradec Králové Region had 104,716 children, pupils and students entering the 2021/2022 school year.
- 6,469 tonnes of waste can now be recycled, so each citizen can increase the volume of sorted waste by 11.7 kg per year, i.e. by 20%.
- 65 territorial documents drawn up in 16 towns, the documents cover more than a third of the area of the region and will, among other things, accelerate the building permit procedure.
- Without EU funds, some strategic objectives of the region would not be achieved. The funds played a key role in improving education, roads and public transport and the environment by reducing emissions, connecting households to sewers and treatment plants and increasing waste recycling.
- Thanks to the new terminal in Jaroměř, public transport connections in the region have improved and the terminal's surroundings have been revitalized. A central place was created where passengers can transfer between different types of public transport. The terminal has been or is used by 77% of the town's residents.
- On the contrary, social inequalities within the region have not been reduced or tourism was not supported sufficiently.
- The support in the excluded locality of the Josefov fortress was only symbolic.
- The most important programme for the region was the Integrated Regional OP, the largest project modernised the emergency admission department of the Hradec Králové University Hospital.

Grants from the EU funds fostering research and development and support for researchers prevented their further outflow from the Liberec Region.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Liberec Region

An important project in the region was the establishment of a business incubator that stimulated cooperation between the university and the business sector and plays a significant role in supporting start-ups. Textile industry is also returning to the Liberec area thanks to EU funds. The result of the support of the technical textile cluster is the introduction of new technologies. The projects help to complete the results of research work and to convert them into real products.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Research and development:** An important project was the establishment of a business incubator. The project was positively evaluated by all interviewed stakeholders and stimulated cooperation between the university and the business sector. It also created a shared innovation infrastructure for further development of local entrepreneurship in the region with services explicitly aimed at supporting start-ups and established small and medium-sized companies with the potential for rapid development and innovation.
- **Education:** EU funds have contributed to the development of research and education, including new educational programmes, but local disparities within the region still remain.
- **Research and development:** Thanks to EU funds, more than 13 thousand pupils needing support measures were supported. More than 21 thousand children have access to higher quality primary education. The ultimate consequence of higher quality education is a better job.
- **Social services:** More than 13 thousand pupils needing support measures were supported and 110 social housing units were created, which helped social integration.
- **Transport:** Inadequate connectivity to transport corridors remains a problem, and the modernization of railway lines has been postponed.

Thanks to EU funds, the public transport connection of the Central Bohemian Region to Prague was completed. The safety of the transport was also upgraded.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Central Bohemian Region

The biggest benefit for the citizens of this region was the successful completion of the integration of public transport and its connection to Prague. The EU funds contributed to building a number of P+R parking lots and transport terminals that helped to make travel faster, safer and smoother. The projects also helped to increase the number of researchers and modernize research facilities in the region, thus promoting research and development.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Infrastructure investment:** The projects supported the upgrade of roads and improved the accessibility of the region. However, the overall quality of the roads remains a problem, especially due to the traffic density.
- **Education:** Significant support was provided to schools, which enabled the modernization of teaching and the introduction of new fields of study. More than 59 thousand children now have access to better quality primary education programmes.
- **Research and development:** EU funds contributed to the increase in the number of researchers in the region, especially in connection with research institutes. The research, development and innovation potential of the region has increased, but it is still directed towards Prague.
- **Social infrastructure:** Many social services were supported and social housing units were created. The projects also facilitated the integration of pupils into education.
- **Environment:** The projects contributed to the development of flood control plans and improved access to drinking water. However, problems with air quality and ecological stability still remain.
- **Civic amenities and leisure activities:** Insufficient civic amenities and lack of leisure activities in smaller municipalities remain a challenge. The needs in the field of culture and tourism were not fully met.
- **Differentiation of the region:** The region is internally differentiated with challenges in the field of transport and amenities of smaller municipalities. The projects were directed more towards regional centres and larger towns.
- **Inadequate use of funds:** Despite the positive effects of the projects, some areas of the region were perceived as insufficiently covered, especially in municipalities on the edge of the region.
- **Population growth:** The growth of the population in the region caused by suburbanization posed an increased burden on the transport network and municipal amenities.
- **Culture and tourism needs:** The projects directed to this area were minimal, even though the regional authority and the municipalities consider this area to be essential for the attractiveness of the region.

Despite some achievements in the area of employment and infrastructure, the Ústí nad Labem Region still fails to fully exploit the potential of EU funds. This reflects the complex socio-economic problems of the region, which require comprehensive and long-term solutions.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Ústí nad Labem Region

The Ústí nad Labem Region is still looking for a way to successfully use EU funds. The projects helped in the region with the support of employment or the development of social integration (including the inclusion and integration of pupils in local schools). Research and development was supported, but the effects are not so great, mainly due to the underdeveloped research and business infrastructure.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The Ústí nad Labem Region achieves rather below-average results in spending EU funds, although some areas, such as sustainable employment or the development of transport infrastructure, are doing better.
- The region's problems are related to its economic performance, environmental pollution, unemployment and social exclusion.
- **Transport:** Investments in transport have helped to improve the connectivity of the region with neighbouring Germany (Panenský Týnec, Louny on the D7 motorway, Lubenec on the D6 motorway), but infrastructural deficiencies still persist. Thanks to EU fund projects, there was an increase in the number of people transported by public transport in a number of municipalities, e.g. in Lovosice by 55% or in Litoměřice by 28%.
- **Education:** Support for education (modernizing vocational learning spaces) and for the inclusive education system has brought some achievements, but the outflow of qualified graduates remains a problem.
- **Social infrastructure:** There has been progress in the area of social infrastructure, especially in services for socially disadvantaged groups. For example, 289 social housing units were supported.
- **Research and development:** The innovation and research potential of the region remains underdeveloped, especially compared to technologically oriented regions. The effects of the projects Smart Accelerator for the Ústí nad Labem Region and Support and Development of the Innovation Environment in the Ústí nad Labem Region II can be seen as positive, as they supported 499 people involved in the management and implementation of the R&D policy. The reason for the lower exploitation of the innovation potential is the small number of small and medium-sized enterprises that are the traditional driver of innovation development.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Business support has helped to create several social enterprises, but the region still needs more investment in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Companies in the region still lack mainly basic infrastructure, which limits the possibilities of implementing superstructure (add-on) projects.

The Karlovy Vary Region and EU funds: between challenges and potential. The region faces many socio-economic challenges that were only partially solved through EU funds. Despite efforts to support education, transport and tourism, the region's potential remains untapped.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Karlovy Vary Region

EU funds have helped in the Karlovy Vary Region to reduce unemployment, develop social integration or reduce air pollution. The quality of education was raised through both infrastructural and soft projects. In general, mainly smaller projects were implemented, which, however, did not address comprehensively the strategic needs of the region. The support for research and development was not successful, mainly due to an underdeveloped research and business infrastructure. The results show that the funds were not successfully used in peripheral areas that continue to lack sufficient services and infrastructure.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The Karlovy Vary Region used EU funds at a below-average level in all areas, compared to the other regions of the Czech Republic. The main reasons are the ongoing inexperience (mainly of smaller municipalities and applicants) with EU funds and the spending of grants, low confidence of potential applicants and fear of project implementation (risk of pre-financing, administrative burden). There is also the absence of qualified people who would prepare and administer the projects and a low number of business entities. Moreover, the region lacks innovation environment and basic infrastructure, which makes it impossible to support the superstructure.
- **Education:** The implemented projects had rather a local impact. Schools have improved their facilities and equipment. But the region lacks a higher education institution and enough researchers. Thanks to EU funds, the capacity of educational establishments and childcare facilities was increased by 18,026 places, which partly helped to improve access to education.
- **Social services:** Debt counselling, social housing and crime prevention were supported. However, the long-term effect of those measures has not yet been shown.
- **Transport:** In total, 26 km of roads were newly built or upgraded in the region, which improved the transport accessibility of some parts of the region as well as the connection to neighbouring Germany. However, transport connections to peripheral areas remain insufficient.
- **Tourism:** The potential of the spa industry and tourism in the region remains underutilized.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Companies in the region still lack mainly basic infrastructure, which limits the possibilities of implementing superstructure (add-on) projects.
- **Research and development:** The region lacks a higher education institution, has the lowest number of researchers in the country, and there is no innovation centre. These are the reasons for insufficient development of the innovation ecosystem (similar centres in the other regions play a key role in cultivating the ecosystems and contribute to higher investments in R&D&I).

The Pardubice Region has used financial aid from EU funds to strengthen its economy, infrastructure and social services, which makes it a successful region with significant potential for further development.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Pardubice Region

The Pardubice Region stands out compared to the other regions of the Czech Republic in its above-average use of financial aid from EU funds, which helped to develop the economy, social infrastructure and transport. The Pardubice Region achieved the third highest intensity (e.g. per capita) of financial support in the Czech Republic, taking into account its specific needs. Cooperation between the academic and the application sector was kick-started and, thanks to ITI, integrated solutions were implemented, e.g. in the restoration of heritage sites.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Transport:** EU funds enabled the construction and upgrade of key transport routes for the region, including another section of the D35 motorway, which improved the connection between Bohemia and Moravia. The public transport systems and cycling infrastructure have also been improved.
- **Social services and housing:** The region focused on increasing the availability of social and health services. The projects succeeded in promoting social integration and creating new social housing units.
- **Research and development:** Even though only one university operates in the region, EU funds have helped to increase the number of researchers and to support research and innovation projects. The ecosystem for research and innovation is developing, especially thanks to the cooperation between the academic and business sectors.
- **Education:** The projects succeeded in modernizing learning spaces and increasing the quality of education in schools throughout the region. An emphasis was placed on interconnecting theory with practice and on better equipment of schools.

The South Bohemian Region used EU funds to develop innovation and the innovation ecosystem, business incubators were built not only in České Budějovice, but also in Tábor and Český Krumlov. However, it still lags behind in internet coverage.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the South Bohemian Region

EU funds have contributed to the development of the territory, especially in the area of business, competitiveness and social services. Smaller municipalities used EU funds to build the capacities of pre-school facilities and schools, as well as to construct pavements. The potential of tourism remains untapped. Poor road quality remains an unresolved issue that most local residents face on a daily basis when commuting to work.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Innovation and entrepreneurship:** EU funds contributed to the development of the innovation ecosystem and business incubators. Support was provided to innovations in companies, which led to the development of new business fields, but the effect on the establishment of new businesses was not significant.
- **Research and development:** EU fund projects helped to improve the research and development infrastructure in the region and supported cooperation with higher education institutions. The number of workers in research and innovation has increased, but the region still lags behind technology-oriented regions.
- **Education:** EU funds have helped to improve the quality of education and an inclusion approach in more than 301 schools. However, the region continues to face the challenge of retaining qualified graduates in its territory.
- **Culture and tourism:** Projects aimed at supporting cultural and natural heritage have increased the attractiveness of the region, although some projects are still being implemented.
- **Internet coverage:** The South Bohemian Region still has the lowest share of households with high-speed internet, although the share has increased. Projects to expand connectivity have not been implemented, which remains a challenge.
- **Transport:** Despite projects in the field of transport, the region continues to face a high accident rate and insufficient transport links.
- **Leisure activities:** The area of leisure activities and sports was not supported from EU funds.

The projects partly contributed to the diversion of traffic from Plzeň city centre and thus partly reducing congestion

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Plzeň Region

The Plzeň (Pilsen) Region used financial support from EU funds to modernize the transport network and strengthen innovation potential. The main projects were the expansion of the road network and the support of alternative transport solutions, including cycling routes and a tram line. In the area of research and development, the region moved to the third place in Czechia in support of researchers in companies and in the academic sector. However, it still faces challenges in the areas of business competitiveness and the development of social services.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Transport:** EU fund projects improved the road network in the region and supported alternative forms of transport, which reduced Plzeň's traffic load. Important projects were Plzeň's west ring road and the tram line to the Borská Pole borough.
- **Research and development:** The region saw a significant increase in the number of researchers, which strengthened its innovation potential. Thanks to support from EU funds, the number of researchers in the region increased by 534, making the region third in the national comparison.
- **Healthcare:** EU funds enabled the modernization of medical facilities and increased patient safety. The psychiatric clinic in Lochotín, Plzeň, is one of the important projects (a new pavilion created in connection with the reform of psychiatric care). The Plzeň University Hospital received support for the modernization and improvement of equipment.
- **Tourism:** The implemented projects had an effect on increasing the number of visitors to the region, promoting the territory and developing cultural infrastructure (including the creation of new platforms, e.g. DEPO2015 – the premises of the former city public transport depot reconstructed for the organization of cultural events).
- **Competitiveness of enterprises:** Support for small enterprises was limited, which affected the competitiveness of the region. The projects were aimed more at the development of production and acquisition of new technologies for already existing enterprises.
- **Social services:** The Plzeň Region faces challenges in the development of social services, especially in rural areas. One of the problems is a lack of support for community planning and implementation of plans.

In the Zlín Region, EU funds were used to strengthen cooperation between the academic and application sectors, which contributed to innovation and competitiveness of businesses. Investments have also promoted the development of tourism and culture, including the renovation of museums and historical heritage.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Zlín Region

Thanks to EU funds, positive results were recorded in the development of the business and research environments in the 2014–2020 period. A significant step forward was the decentralization of social services. No progress was made in promoting tourism and improving the quality of transport infrastructure, primarily in the context of connections to the national motorway and railway network. Little was achieved also in addressing the needs of remote areas of the region, especially the inner peripheries were insufficiently developed.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Innovation:** The Zlín Region successfully supported the development of the innovation ecosystem Zlinnovation, which helped to increase the competitiveness of local businesses and provide new opportunities for graduates in the field of creative industries. Resources from EU funds were used to support start-up entrepreneurs and research projects.
- **Culture and tourism:** EU funds contributed to the renovation of cultural heritage, which increased the attractiveness of the region for tourism. The projects were aimed at regenerating castles, chateaux and museums, including the open-air Wallachian Museum and the unique museum of Slovak traditions.
- **Social services:** Thanks to the projects, the availability of social services in remote rural areas was improved, including the construction of social housing and support for people with mental illness. The projects also enabled the use of assistance and assistive technologies in the field of health care.
- **Rural development:** The Zlín Region faces challenges in the development of rural areas, although EU funds were used for that purpose. The outflow of young people still persists, and the quality of life in peripheral areas remains a problem.
- **Transport:** Despite the importance of transport in the region, less EU funds were used for that purpose. The projects were focused on public transport and the upgrade of roads and motorways, but infrastructural deficiencies still remain a challenge for the region.

The Moravian-Silesian Region used EU funds for its transformation. EU funds were used to address the main socio-economic problems and to transform the economic structure of the region and its social environment in the long term.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the Moravian-Silesian Region

The Moravian-Silesian Region can be considered a model of successful use of EU funds for addressing social and economic challenges. Projects supported by EU funds have led to significant improvements in the areas of employment, environment, education and social infrastructure. An extraordinary reduction of long-term unemployment, improvement of air quality, integration of Roma pupils into education and increased availability of public transport are only some of the positive results.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The Moravian-Silesian Region excelled in the use of EU funds and was the third most intensively supported region in the Czech Republic.
- The Moravian-Silesian Region has successfully used EU funds to address socio-economic problems, especially reducing unemployment, improving social integration and promoting entrepreneurship.
- **Unemployment:** Projects aimed at unemployment reduced the unemployment rate by 4.1% and supported more than 5,000 unemployed people.
- Environment: EU funds have helped reduce CO₂ emissions by 4% and improve air quality in the region.
- **Transport:** In the field of transport, there has been significant development of roads and public transport, including the purchase of 200 new vehicles for public transport.
- **Social services:** Projects in the field of social infrastructure included the construction of 401 social housing apartments and improvements in the quality of social services.
- The integration of Roma pupils into education was successfully supported, and 3,409 pupils were integrated into the education system.
- **Culture and tourism:** The revitalization of the Dolní Vítkovice industrial heritage site enlarged the region's cultural offer and attracted tourists.
- The Moravian-Silesian Region is trying to attract new residents and improve the quality of life, especially in urbanized areas.

In Prague, EU funds were spent to support excellence, many projects had a superstructure element and included smart solutions. Grants supported the infrastructure of research centres and SMART retrofitting of buildings, i.e. one of the ways to improve the environment in the city.

TITLE:

Regional result evaluation:

Results of EU fund support in the City of Prague

Prague supported excellence - many projects had a superstructure element (smart solutions) as opposed to the rest of the country. Grants supported the infrastructure of research centres and the SMART upgrade of buildings. Prague was successful in using the funds to support R&D&I, also thanks to the high number of higher education institutions. The projects helped to enhance transport service, improve the energy performance of buildings and strengthen research facilities. Inadequate support was provided towards the environment, though it is important for Prague as it needs, for example, to lower the temperatures in the city.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Research and innovation:** The projects implemented with the aid of EU funds established several research centres (e.g. the Research Center for Informatics at CTU), or university and private incubators.
- **Transport:** 4 tram track projects were implemented under ITI. The biggest project was the revitalization of the railway line Prague - Vrané nad Vltavou - Čerčany, reconstruction of the roof over the Prague Main Station hall, or modernization of the hump yard on the line section Prague-Hostivař - Prague Main Station.
- **Environment:** Prague faces challenges related to the quality of the environment, especially pollution and the capacity of waste facilities. Projects focused on the energy efficiency of buildings and green roofs have brought some progress, but underdevelopment remains.
- **Education:** Although a significant portion of funds was allocated for the development of education, especially pre-school and primary, there are still deficiencies in the capacities and equipment of schools.

The EU funds used to finance the projects represented only 3.5% compared to the total expenditure from the state budget. Therefore, no significant effect on the macroeconomic development of the state can be expected. Certain benefits could be perceived in specific areas. These areas include reducing energy intensity across all sectors, modernization of the road and rail network or support for the active employment policy.

TITLE:

Thematic result evaluation

Expenditure from EU funds, compared to the volume of current and capital expenditure from the state budget, ranged around 2.5 - 3.5% between 2018 and 2022. For this reason, EU funds cannot have a major share in the general growth of the Czech economy. Nevertheless, in sub-areas in which they made a significant financial contribution to the overall investments from public budgets, their measurable impact on relevant socio-economic indicators can be expected. In the 2014–2020 programming period, these areas include investments in supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy, transport, active employment policy or climate change adaptation. The effect of these investments can be expected to strengthen if they are appropriately thematically prioritized and targeted in the needing regions in accordance with their strategic goals.

KEY FINDINGS:

- In **the road network quality index**, the Czech Republic remains at the tail of the European Union (WEF Executive Opinion Survey, 2021), despite significant investments in the motorway, road and railway infrastructure, including from EU funds. These accounted for around 40.8% of all transport capital expenditure over the past 8 years. Their effect on selected socio-economic indicators could not be demonstrated.
- **In terms of support for research, development and education, aid from EU funds can be seen rather as one of the many components of the overall ecosystem of research**, development and education, but not as a decisive factor. Therefore, EU funds could not have the ambition to change the research, development and education support system as a whole, which would then reflect in the key socio-economic indicators. That was also confirmed by the investigation.
- Between 2015 and 2022, the Czech Republic climbed up by 19.8% in the renowned **Regional Innovation Index**. However, it was not possible to prove statistically that EU funds had an impact on this change, mainly due to the small number of observations and the influence of many other factors in the field of research, development and education, such as the R&D&I funding reform.
- The positive effect of EU funds on the general employment rate has not been proven.
- **For example, EU funds make an important contribution to specific areas of employment and social inclusion**, such as the activation of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion to complete education or to enter the labour market and integrate into society.
- EU funds played a significant role from the point of view of total investments in **reducing energy intensity in the public and business sectors, and in the housing sector** (around 50% of all capital expenditures from public budgets in this area).

- In the field of nature protection, support from EU funds does not have sufficient power to reverse the negative trends in biodiversity. Nevertheless, a slight positive impact on the growth **of the Ecological Stability Coefficient** was observed in this area, which was generally low between 2015 and 2022 (an increase of 0.035 points from 1.068 to 1.103 on a scale from 0 to 10).
- Although the establishment of new small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) between 2015 and 2022 had a rather downward trend, the total number of SMEs increased slightly (by 8% on average), mainly due to the low number of businesses winding up. The investigation showed that this positive growth in the absolute number of SMEs was also due to the financing from EU funds that had **a stabilizing effect on existing manufacturing enterprises**, to which most of the support was directed.
- Investments from EU funds, on the contrary, had **no impact on the establishment of new businesses, and only a minimal volume of finance went to companies in knowledge-intensive fields**. The competitiveness of SMEs and thus the entire economy of the Czech Republic remains at risk due to the slow levelling of the ratio between innovative and traditional companies (European Commission, 2021).
- In order to maintain the positive development of the economy, it will be important **to increase business support from public sources, focusing on digital transformation of SMEs and support of new innovative business plans**.

Title: Thematic result evaluation of the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020

Supplier: Ernst & Young, s.r.o.

Implementation period: June 2021 - August 2023

Evaluation methods: desk research, in-depth interviews, case studies, expert assessment, descriptive statistics

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/vysledkova-tematicka-evaluace-dohody-o-partnerstvi>

Support from EU funds is key to establishing, institutionalizing and developing the quality of services supporting technology transfer. However, it does not significantly affect the number nor quality of specialised publication outputs

TITLE:

Results in strengthening research, technological development and innovation (TO 1)

Support from EU funds had a measurable positive impact on the development of applied research, but it does not have a measurable impact on the production and quality of R&D publication outputs. In the area of innovation, it was not possible to confirm a direct impact on the share of innovating enterprises, mainly because of the support for rather lower-order innovations.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The analysis confirmed **the contribution of EU funds to a higher orientation of R&D towards benefits for practice and society**. The trend of non-publication R&D results in the Czech Republic as a whole is negative. However, EU funds measurably contributed to a lower decrease - without the support, the total number of application results would have been even lower by about a third.
- The analysis **did not confirm the influence of the support on the quantity or quality of R&D results** (publication results, patents), although in some cases a positive impact of the support on the quality and quantity of publication results is clearly observed, the systemic factor behind this finding is the change in the R&D evaluation methodology.
- **The influence of EU funds on trends in the training of a new generation of researchers**, especially on interest in studying doctoral programmes, has not been confirmed.
- The analysis confirmed **a positive impact of the support on higher education's income from contract research and technology transfer in general**. Without support from EU funds, the higher education's income relative to the total income in both of these categories would probably decrease.
- Mainly qualitative research showed that the support played an important role especially in **the development of "soft infrastructure" for technology transfer** and in innovation infrastructure.
- In this context, we recommended promoting the introduction of technology transfer activities into the R&D results evaluation methodology and strengthening awareness of the importance of technology transfer on both sides (enterprises and research organizations).
- Sustainability would be threatened by a too sudden termination of grant support for infrastructure activities facilitating technology transfer, or for innovation infrastructures, or a significant limitation or redefinition of such support. It is crucial that the support in the future remains broad enough to capture and take into account the specifics of technology transfer in various fields, or the specific approaches of the different institutions, which have proven to be effective.
- Despite the significant support directed towards the uptake of innovations, **a direct influence of EU funds on the development of innovation capacities in the private sector**, which would strengthen the international competitiveness of these enterprises, **was not statistically captured**. So the support does not explain the increase in the share of innovating enterprises.
- The aid has no impact on increasing the demand for industrial and intellectual property protection.
- The evaluation recommends increasing the explicit emphasis on supporting higher-order innovations (including those using KET), strengthening support for SMEs in the field of IPR, continuing to support the long-term development of excellent research with an emphasis on internationalization and R&D development aimed at meeting socio-economic needs.

EU funds contributed to better access of citizens to digital governmental services and increased resilience of hospitals to cyber threats. The expansion of high-speed internet, on the other hand, will not meet the expected goals.

TITLE:

Results in enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communications technologies (TO2)

EU funds contributed to the creation of applications and services. In public administration, for example, the Citizen's Portal enables citizens to access hundreds of public administration services online, or in selected municipalities, thanks to digitisation, the administrative burden has been reduced and communication with citizens has been strengthened and simplified. However, the achieved results often fall short of expectations. A positive relationship can be observed between the aid paid and the expanded use of cloud computing technology by businesses.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Hundreds of enterprises providing digital services have been supported, but their contribution to economic development or the level of digitisation is not clear, as the spread of the software to other enterprises cannot be mapped. The projects mostly covered the personnel costs of the supported enterprises. However, the support of personnel expenses is key especially when creating new ICT solutions and operating shared service centres. In other projects, the support of personnel expenses is not desirable.
- **The total funds allocated for the development of eGovernment will not be fully spent. A number of ministries did not use EU funds for further development of digitization and cyber security at all, many projects ended prematurely or faced significant delays due to problems with the implementation of public contracts** (e.g. the still unfinished eLegislation/eCollection project).
- Key projects on computerisation of public administration are facing delays or are not being implemented due to complications in public contracts or subsequent delivery. The most frequently mentioned reason is **the lack of quality IT experts on the part of the public administration.**
- A solution can be an amendment to the legislation ensuring greater flexibility and attractiveness and so enabling the recruitment of sufficiently experienced IT experts to state administration. We also recommend centralising some functions and sharing the professional capacities across the state administration so that experts are efficiently used where they are currently most needed.
- Key government systems do not share data across (and often even within) a ministry, even though a technological solution is available.
- The capacities of the Department of the Chief Architect of eGovernment are limited, we recommend strengthening its capacity, expertise and competences so that it can coordinate eGovernment projects and intervene in already ongoing projects to a greater extent.
- A number of key systems do not have long-term financing of their operation secured, and resources are sought almost every year. This **threatens the sustainability of projects and the functioning of basic government services.**
- The evaluation therefore recommends determining the systems that are key for the operation of eGovernment and ensuring their long-term financing from the state budget. An example can be, for example, data boxes.

- The organizational units of the state, as administrators of critical information infrastructure (CII) and important information systems (IIS), implemented projects focused on the security of information systems to a very limited extent. Also thanks to a change in the conditions of the call, which reflected the low interest on the part of the state organizational units, it was possible for a wider range of applicants to apply. As a result, it was mainly hospitals that applied to secure their

systems which, however, have a lower strategic significance compared to CII and IIS. Given the increasing number of cyber attacks (and incidents) in hospital facilities, this departure from the original intention proved to be expedient. Thanks to EU funds, the level of protection of hospital facilities is sufficient, as the measures implemented are in accordance with the Act on Cybersecurity (No 181/2014 Coll.).

EU funds contributed to a faster pace of revitalization of brownfields and reconstruction of non-compliant buildings. A less significant impact was observed in the strengthening of knowledge-intensive business and in the field of providing consulting services and improving the image of entrepreneurs in society.

TITLE:

Results in enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (TO3)

Support from EU funds contributed to increasing the competitiveness of Czech companies through higher availability of business infrastructure thanks to the revitalization of brownfields and reconstruction of non-compliant real estate and more intensive use of financial instruments. In the area of the use of risk capital, there are still considerable reserves in the Czech environment. SMEs were also interested in support for the preparation of presentation activities at trade fairs and the launch of their products on new markets. The effect of the support on the development and uptake of innovations (especially of higher order) and knowledge-intensive business was very limited.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **EU funds contributed to a faster pace of revitalization and reconstruction of non-compliant real estate.** The support also corresponded to regional needs for the modernization/revitalization of non-compliant buildings (with the exception of the Plzeň Region).
- **The programmes were not explicitly aimed at supporting the establishment of new entities in knowledge-intensive fields.** No new company in a progressive field was started from the support of EU funds, and only 7% went to already existing knowledge-intensive companies.
- The programme focused on consulting with the aim of stimulating the transition of companies to a more knowledge-intensive business encountered very little interest from SMEs. In addition, qualitative investigations show that the quality of consulting services is improving, but not as a result of support from EU funds.
- A significant part of the support in this thematic objective was provided through financial instruments (56%). The positive trend primarily concerns guarantees and loans. In the area of the use of risk capital, there are still considerable reserves in the Czech environment. In order to further ensure the sustainability of support from EU funds, it is important to further deepen this positive trend and **encourage businesses to start using EU funding through financial instruments rather than grants.**
- In addition to expanding the purposes for which financial instruments are used, **awareness of their availability to SMEs should be generally improved.** From a medium-term point of view, the activities traditionally financed through grants should be increasingly financed exclusively through financial instruments (as, according to the information so far, is the plan for the area of revitalization and reconstruction of non-compliant real estate).
- **The destabilizing effect of support from EU funds on the business environment in rural areas** should be taken into account as an important part of the planning of future activities. Support from EU funds should primarily be directed to areas where significant structural problems can be observed (insufficient business infrastructure, lack of qualified workforce, etc.). Support should generally target places with a lower concentration of business infrastructure.

The largest volume of funds to support the transition to a low-carbon economy was spent on improving the energy performance of buildings in the housing sector and in the public sector. The support improved the environmental outcomes and increased people’s motivation to invest in measures with a positive impact on the environment.

TITLE:

Results in the transition to a low-carbon economy (TO4)

EU funds significantly helped to implement projects focused on the energy efficiency of residential buildings. Thanks to EU funds, energy consumption in the Czech Republic was reduced by 2.9 million GJ/year, which corresponds to 3.5% of the Czech Republic’s heat for 2021. However, new capacities of renewable energy sources were built at a minimal extent. EU funds represented an important stimulus in the area of electromobility in the business sector. In the 2014–2020 period, despite the use of the support, there was no significant decrease in greenhouse gases (CO₂). The reason is the bark beetle calamity, but also the position of the Czech Republic as an important energy exporter.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Activities to support the improvement of energy efficiency may be effective, but have a very low multiplier effect. On the contrary, activities aimed at **supporting research, development and innovation** in the field of low-carbon technologies and their subsequent production have the **potential for a significant multiplier effect**.
- EU funds to **support renewable energy sources** (RES) had practically no impact. Better mapping of absorption capacity and consideration of potential barriers would be helpful. However, the achievement of climate goals requires many times higher investments in renewable energy than could be obtained from EU funds. Strengthening the position of RES in the Czech energy mix also requires a systemic approach that will create adequate conditions for the energy transition.
- The programmes should also focus on **providing consulting services for businesses on how to achieve a more sustainable and energy efficient operation**.
- EU funds contributed to improving the energy efficiency of the housing sector. However, the performed analyses pointed to regional heterogeneity and ineffective targeting of the support. Support should generally target places with a higher concentration of older housing infrastructure. **The socio-economic development of the regions of the Czech Republic should also be taken into account** when allocating funds.
- EU funds should continue to provide long-term support for improving the energy performance of buildings in the public sector.
- **The business sector should be supported rather through financial instruments to reduce the energy intensity of operation and of production processes.**
- EU funds stimulated the development of electromobility in the business sector. However, the risk of such interventions is **an increase in dependence on the import of batteries for electric cars** from markets dominated by non-European suppliers. In addition, electromobility itself is only as sustainable as its energy source.
- Along with other decarbonization measures, attention should be paid to the simultaneous strengthening of the entire energy system.

EU funds contribute to strengthening climate change resilience, they support adaptation to the change and risk prevention.

TITLE:

Results in climate change adaptation, risk prevention and risk management (TO5)

The current support for strengthening the adaptability of cities is quite fragmented and so does not reach the potential set out in the Adaptation Strategy of the Czech Republic - it is not comprehensive enough. The support contributes to speeding up the process of remediation of old environmental burdens and strengthening flood preparedness. The support was very beneficial for strengthening the readiness of the Integrated Rescue System (IRS), but in the future it is necessary to focus it more on new risks and threats and to strengthen a more conceptual approach in this sense.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Support for strengthening the adaptability of cities contributed to **the reduction of urban runoff**, the contribution of EU funds to **the establishment and revitalization of residential greenery** is significant. Other adaptive capacities, such as reducing temperature-related risks (shading of buildings, energy-efficient cooling using renewable energy sources) or smart solutions were not supported significantly. **Emphasis should be placed on supporting more comprehensive adaptation solutions** that reflect the impacts of climate change as a whole. Support should be aimed at reducing the occurrence of heat islands and improving CO₂ sequestration. The basis for future support of adaptive capacities should be their conceptual framework designed at the level of municipalities and cities.
- Support from EU funds is proven **to increase the pace of eliminating environmental risks**. The contribution of EU funds to the removal of old (critical) environmental burdens in contaminated locations can be roughly estimated at **10-15%**. EU funds also contributed to the inventory of environmental burdens and the production of relevant risk analyses.
- The evaluation and management of support from EU funds intended for the removal of old environmental burdens (but also from other sources) would be significantly more effective if **the data extraction from the Contaminated Sites Registration System (SEKM) was improved** by introducing certain components for ongoing, systematic monitoring of sites and their condition.
- EU funds as one of the key sources contributed to **the strengthening of flood prevention** and protection in threatened areas. However, the pace of implementation of (near-natural) flood measures is not sufficient.
- With the increase in support for flood control measures, the change in the number of protected residents is relatively negative - the number of people at risk decreases overall, but it decreases more slowly with the intensity of the support. The reason is that the pace of construction in threatened areas is faster than the pace of implementation of planned flood defence measures. Simultaneously with accelerating the implementation of flood defence measures, there is a need to strengthen legislative measures preventing residential construction in active flood zones.

Investments from EU funds contribute to the conservation and protection of the environment and the promotion of resource efficiency, primarily by reducing emissions of harmful substances and strengthening waste collection and sorting systems.

TITLE:

Results in preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (TO6)

The support has a significant share in the reduction of pollutant emissions from stationary sources and local combustion heaters. In the field of waste management, the support contributes significantly primarily to waste prevention, but also strengthens the collection, sorting, treatment, material and (selected forms of) energy recovery from waste. Investments have a direct share in increasing the volume of treated wastewater. In the area of supporting biodiversity and ecological stability of the landscape, the influence of EU funds is rather limited.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Support from EU funds is **appropriately targeted in the area of biodiversity and ecological stability** and is concentrated in areas with the occurrence of the most threatened biotopes and habitats and in specially protected areas. It is very effective in fulfilling the objectives of smaller projects – i.e. in solving partial problems and needs of individual locations and strengthening the reproduction of (threatened) species that live there. The expected positive changes will only become apparent over a longer term, the supported areas must be **monitored and, if necessary, partial interventions must be carried out.**
- However, support from EU funds **does not have the capacity to solve the problems of the landscape as a whole**, such as water retention in the open landscape on a wider scale. Apart from the limited capacity of the programme, a negative role is also played by the insufficient conceptual approach to the development of the territory, which would interconnect the interests of partial actors in favour of ecological stabilization. The conceptual approach to **ensuring the ecological stability of the open landscape** should be strengthened, promoting an integrated approach to the needs of the landscape and biodiversity even outside specially protected areas.
- **A direct contribution of the support to the reduction of suspended particle concentrations** is observed. This influence is more clearly observed in the analysis of the impact on the reduction of emissions from industry and agriculture. It must be added that a significant part of the decrease in emissions from large stationary sources, especially in coal regions, is caused by the tightening of limits for emissions of harmful substances. The effect on reducing emissions from local heat sources can also be observed, though to a lesser extent.
- There has been a very significant reduction in the number of inhabitants who are affected by above-limit emissions, mainly of suspended particles, and this change is dramatic especially in coal regions and other affected areas.
- A significant **risk to the sustainability of the results achieved in reducing air pollution** is posed by the reduction of natural gas supplies and the increase in its price. This resource played a significant role in reducing the share of solid fuel space heaters, especially in local combustion heaters.

- With support from EU funds, **a total of 21,139 people will be newly connected to the water supply system**, and approx. 2,000 km of sewers have been built. Support from EU funds can explain up to **30% of the increase in the volume of treated wastewater**.
- **Support from EU funds can explain up to 70% of the observed increase in composting**, and thus the reduction in the landfilling of biodegradable (municipal) waste. A direct effect of the support on increasing the share of material recovery from municipal waste and the total volume of sorted waste is also confirmed.
- **It is not observed that the support would lead to a reduction in total waste production.**
- EU funds should further strengthen the emphasis not only on the separate collection and sorting of waste, but also on the **subsequent material recovery in the sense of the objectives of a circular economy** (i.e. support conditional on the sale of recycled materials and products; promotion of the demand for products of recycling).

The most significant impact of EU funds in the field of transport is the expansion of the key transport network of the Czech Republic by 222 km of new and 128 km of upgraded motorways and class I roads (of which 93 km only on the D1 motorway), the modernization of 378 km of the railway network, 26 km of newly built and 877 km of upgraded roads of regional importance.

TITLE:

Results in promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures (TO7)

Even though most of the goals set in the programming documents are being achieved, the construction of the motorway network cannot currently be considered sufficiently effective, mainly because of its time demands and the risk of not meeting the plan of constructing the entire motorway network by 2050. In the case of the railway, the expected deadlines are also not being met, and the construction falls behind the indicative schedule, which is also reflected in the financial demands of the entire undertaking.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The construction of new road sections **improves the accessibility of regional capitals from** various parts of their regions. The accessibility is changed to the greatest extent by the construction of the **TEN-T network sections**, and less so by the construction of the road network of regional importance. The regional roads are mostly reconstructed and modernised, which has a positive effect on other transport characteristics such as smoothness and safety of traffic, but only a minor effect on reducing travel time.
- In terms of the regional network, the evaluation recommends focusing more on a change in the quality of the ride, a change in the flow of traffic, travel speed at peak times or safety rather than on a change in accessibility.
- With the development of the capacity and quality of the road network, the share of serious accidents in the total number of car accidents is decreasing. However, the connection to EU funds has not been proven. Ultimately, safety is not so much improved by the building of new roads but rather by increasing the safety of specific risky sections or improving the quality of the vehicle fleet.
- The reconstruction of railway lines brings positive effects, mainly because it **stabilises timetables**, as the increased speed on the line enables the creation of operational reserves. Although there is no overall reduction in the number of incidents on the railway in connection with the investments, the reduced occurrence of incidents related to the poor condition of the infrastructure is confirmed.
- **The key to the completion of the entire motorway and railway network is acceleration of the preparation process**, which can take up to 13 years for large construction projects. The length of preparation also affects the price of transport structures.
- A key output in the field of intelligent transport systems (ITS) is the development of systems for measuring the so-called **Floating Car Data** (FCD). The appropriate use of this data can, in the future, have a positive effect on the evaluation of the impacts of new transport measures and thus bring new and relevant knowledge regarding the

development of the transport situation in the Czech Republic. The data have been available since 2019 and their production is expected to continue.

- In the field of ITS, the diverse activities that statutory cities have decided to support with the help of EU funds are seen as positive. However, the results that the newly introduced ITS brings have not yet been effectively shared.
- The impact of activities focused on sustainable transport: i.e. on **the development of refilling capacities for alternative fuels such as**

electricity, hydrogen or gas is not yet as

significant as expected. Such activities

supported by EU funds are still largely

underway, so their long-term effects cannot yet be evaluated.

- The Czech Republic maintains a relatively high and stable (international) position in the characteristics of public transport performance.

Thanks to EU funds, there has been a massive development of affordable, high-quality childcare facilities for pre-school children in the past period. In part, they helped to increase the employment of hard-to-place people.

TITLE:

Results in promoting sustainable employment, quality jobs and labour mobility (TO8)

While EU funds helped to increase the adaptability and employability of workers and improve the conditions for reconciling private and working life, their impact on increasing the employability of difficult-to-employ people and the development of cooperation between key actors on the labour market was limited.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The influence of EU funds on the increasing rate of employment of disadvantaged persons was only partial. The increasing rate of employment is mainly contributed to economic growth which was typical for the 2014–2020 programming period.
- Activities to increase the employment of disadvantaged people should continue to be supported despite the findings stated above, primarily due to the upcoming transformation of the Czech economy, which will bring new challenges to the labour market, especially in connection with trends such as Industry 4.0 and the Green Deal. According to experts, these new trends can have a fundamental impact on the employment of disadvantaged people, and their support will therefore be highly desirable.
- It was found that people who can be considered qualified are more likely to participate in further education. In contrast, persons most at risk of unemployment participate in further education only to a small extent.
- Thanks to EU funds, it was possible to implement a system **project for analysing and predicting the labour market**. The system offers a comprehensive source of information and data on the labour market and represents a high-quality support system for strategic decision-making, not only by ministries, but also by other entities. However, awareness of this system is low.
- **The share of flexible forms of work in the Czech Republic is still very small**, and the Czech Republic lags behind most EU countries in this regard. Currently, there are many conceptual documents on the development of flexible forms of work, but their translation into the real economy is very slow and lengthy.
- EU funds have led to **an increase in the offer of affordable, high-quality pre-school childcare facilities**, but their number is still insufficient. This area should continue to be supported, as there is still a large surplus of demand over supply. In the future, the existing facilities will also become obsolete, while maintaining their capacity is one of the essential conditions for the provision of quality and affordable care for preschool children.
- **The proportion of men involved in caring for children and other dependents is increasing slightly**, but the numbers are still very low.

Thanks to the intervention of EU funds, there was partial success in combating unemployment, especially among the most vulnerable groups on the labour market. In the social area, new solutions for working with target groups were piloted.

TITLE:

Results in promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination (TO9)

EU funds have contributed to reducing the unemployment of socially excluded persons, improved interventions in socially excluded locations, the conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship and the availability of some fields of health care. On the contrary, the impact of EU fund interventions on increasing the availability of social housing and social work and social services was only partial.

KEY FINDINGS:

- In the reporting period, the unemployment rate decreased, including of persons most at risk on the labour market. This situation was largely influenced by the higher growth of the Czech economy during this period. Nevertheless, the resources allocated from EU funds to this area also had a positive impact. Sequential analyses showed that **there is a statistically significant relationship between the lower unemployment rate of vulnerable groups and the allocated EU funds**, which indicates a positive synergistic effect of the combination of economic growth and targeted support for vulnerable groups on the labour market.
- The evaluation recommends a more thorough **review and definition of groups at risk on the labour market** and ongoing evaluation of the need for support for each target group. For example, school-leavers and minors (without the accumulation of other handicaps) do not face such pressure on the labour market as in the past, and their position compared to other groups has improved significantly today and is approaching that of the majority population.
- The index of social exclusion in the Czech Republic decreased, according to the analysis, the decrease can be partly attributed to investment from EU funds (specifically from the Integrated Regional OP).
- The evaluators recommend continuing the targeted work in socially excluded localities, overall change is a complex and long-term task. The Co-ordinated Approach to Socially Excluded Localities (CASE+ in the new period) also contributes to this, as it makes it possible to deliver resources for addressing problems to a specific locality. The success of these interventions depends, among other things, on the professional capacities of the Agency for Social Inclusion, which implements CASEL/CASE+. It would also be appropriate to monitor the number and status of excluded localities regularly, not only once at the beginning of the programming periods.
- There was no significant expansion of social housing capacities as the responsible ministries could not agree on the definition of the concept and on the target groups to be supported.
- Although **the availability of social services improved in the evaluated period**, partly also thanks to EU funds, it was often more about increasing the capacities of in-home services through the purchase of cars than about building new services (including innovative ones) that could be more beneficial and are missing in the regional networks of social services.
- EU funds have contributed to **the piloting of newly created health care segments**, some of which have been introduced into regular financing from health insurance. These were often services on the so-called social-health borderline, which utilise both client care systems.
- In the future, it is advisable **to use EU funds for further piloting of newly introduced types of care.**

Support from EU funds is an important factor for developing the quality of educational facilities at all levels. As a result of the support, there is also an increase in the share of children aged 3–4 who are enrolled in kindergartens. The support also contributed to a higher degree of integration of pupils with disabilities into mainstream classes in kindergartens and secondary schools.

TITLE:

Results in investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning (TO10)

Support from EU funds contributes to increasing the capacities of kindergartens and child care services and with statistical significance increases the share of 3–4 year old children enrolled in kindergartens. With regard to the demographic development, however, this increase in capacity is not sufficient, and the support thus has no effect on the share of children under the age of 3 who are enrolled in kindergartens. Systemic projects are used to create new tools and impulses for changing the educational system. In addition, support is provided for introducing changes in the “bottom-up” approach - at the level of schools in the form of templates. The support has an effect on increasing the quality of education in higher education institutions (HEIs), especially through introducing quality assessment processes and uniform standards, the support also strengthens the specialization of HEIs.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Support from EU funds contributes to **increasing the capacities of kindergartens** and child care services and with statistical significance increases the share of 3–4 year old children enrolled in kindergartens (the support explains up to a quarter of the change observed). It has no effect on the share of children under the age of 3 who are enrolled in kindergartens. Even in this age group, however, it demonstrably slightly reduces the rate of increase in the share of rejected applications for enrolment - without support from EU funds, the share of rejected applications would very likely grow even faster.
- Support from EU funds, which participated in investments in the modifications and equipment of educational establishments, was demonstrably one of **the factors that contributed to the increase in the proportion of pupils with disabilities in kindergartens and secondary schools** (in the case of secondary schools, the analysis estimates that the support explains up to a half of the overall observed increase in the proportion of pupils with disabilities who are integrated in mainstream classes). The positive trends at primary schools and HEIs are not explained by the (investment) support.
- EU funds generate positive impulses for the system of primary education through the development, testing and pilot verification of new tools, methodologies, etc. However, the key to utilizing this potential is **the transfer of these tools, methodologies and impulses into the standard education system**.
- EU funds are not observed to contribute to changes in pupils' test scores (PISA), to increasing the proportion of adults in education or to increasing the proportion of teachers taking part in further education. Any effects of the support on such "high-

level" formulated goals can only be expected in the long term. It is also observed that due to the project nature of the support, the positive effects are manifested mainly in schools that were already among the more active before the support was provided.

- The immediate effects of the support on improving the capabilities of children, pupils and students in key competences cannot be observed (so far).
- In contrast to investment support, **no statistically significant impact of non-investment support** (mainly in the form of

"templates") **on the observed increase in the proportion of children, pupils and students with disabilities** who are being educated in mainstream classes has been demonstrated.

- However, the support has proven to increase students' interest in studying Ph.D. programmes and has a positive effect on increasing the proportion of students with specific needs. EU funds directly supported the development of services and support, which were used by more than 4 thousand students with specific needs.

EU funds contributed the most to improving the quality of territorial preparation of investments - the preparation of territorial documents at the level of municipalities with extended powers was supported.

TITLE:

Results in enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and contributing to efficient public administration (TO11)

EU funds contributed the most to improving the quality of territorial preparation of investments, and helped to improve quality management in public administration through the introduction of quality management systems at the level of civil service offices and territorial self-governing units. Thanks to EU funds, communication between municipalities and citizens was strengthened through websites and portals. However, the projects did not deal with (and therefore EU funds could not contribute to) the introduction of agenda standards and the regulatory impact assessment. There were no projects aimed at reducing corruption opportunities or increasing the efficiency of justice. Potential applicants did not implement projects due to their preference for another funding source or previous experience with EU funds.

KEY FINDINGS:

- EU funds contribute to the better preparation of territorial documentation of municipalities, which can ultimately be reflected in territorial development and its acceleration. However, a direct impact on increased investment in the territory has not been proven. The acquisition of territorial documents was restricted to municipalities with extended powers, which limited the potential interest of smaller municipalities.
- Mandatory sustainability was not set for the projects of the Operational Programme Employment and, due to the absence of follow-up support in the 2021–2027 programming period, there are **concerns about continuing the use of quality management systems in public administration**, which EU funds helped to establish. Abandoning the established systems could ultimately lead to a reduction in the quality of services provided to citizens.
- In the 2014–2020 programming period, **no projects focused on setting up systemic tools for assessing the impact of regulation (ex-ante or ex-post) were supported.**
- Training activities to enhance public administration expertise, financed from EU funds, focused primarily on communication with citizens, legislation and cyber security. Over 20,000 participants went through the training. Despite the time demands of the training, the staff perceived it as beneficial. However, it is not possible to track whether the training activities led to an increase in performance or a decrease in employee turnover.

Synergistic calls are relevant and help to interlink projects with synergistic potential. However, their use is rather exceptional and faces low interest from beneficiaries.

TITLE:

The effect of synergies and complementarities in the Partnership Agreement

The Partnership Agreement (PA) and other guideline documents also define complementarities between programmes and objectives, as well as their monitoring and evaluation processes. Complementarities and the system of their monitoring are, however, in the vast majority of cases only formalistic and do not bring added value to the implementation of the PA and the achievement of its expected results.

KEY FINDINGS:

- In the Partnership Agreement and the related guideline documentation, 36 links between programmes and/or thematic objectives were identified (of which 10 links are within one programme and cover two or more thematic objectives).
- Synergistic calls encountered very low absorption capacity, especially in ongoing calls. **Nevertheless, synergistic calls are a relevant tool and should continue to be supported and developed.** The case studies clearly show that **the structure of synergistic calls brings added value to both parties** – for example, it verifies the applicability in practice of knowledge reached in development and, at the same time, allows a low-risk enterprise to test market interest in a technology/product based on that knowledge.
- Grant beneficiaries use existing synergies between programmes, objectives and calls rather "instrumentally": they are able to **effectively adapt their plans, which often form one integrated investment or development plan, to the conditions of the relevant calls.** However, grant beneficiaries do not see any significant added value in dividing their plans into several separate projects – although they are able to use this system, it represents an unnecessary administrative and bureaucratic burden for them (from their perspective).
- It is important to set and define the calls correctly. Thanks to the setting and conditions of the calls, cooperation is further strengthened indirectly, the circle of partners involved in the cooperation is expanded, and "formalization" processes, which can facilitate the systematic development of cooperation between the involved research organizations and enterprises, have also been initiated, at least partially.
- **In synergistic calls, there is a strong complementarity of the activities of partners from different sectors** (research and development, business).
- Above all, small enterprises do not have the capacity to carry out their own research, so it is very rational for them to take the opportunity to use the know-how of research organizations that deal with the given topic. **In addition to access to know-how, there is also an important element of mitigating the risk associated with the introduction of research and development results into practice,** which cannot be guaranteed in advance. In this sense, the support is set up correctly – it does not focus on the actual introduction of the innovation into sales in the given company,

but it **rather supports the verification of the market potential of the products** that are based on the know-how achieved in research and development. It is only on the basis of this verification that companies decide whether it is economically advantageous to actually market the new product in full.

- In follow-up calls, companies have to "choose" from already achieved research and development results (which were supported in the synergy call), they can only participate

to a limited extent in targeting the research in the initial project so that it corresponds to their innovation needs and plans. When designing the mechanisms for future synergistic calls at the borderline of applied research and corporate innovation, it would be appropriate **to design the processes so that they enable joint identification of research topics and goals based on the focus of the research organisation and the needs of the cooperating company.**

Through REACT-EU, EU funds contribute to strengthening resilience against various types of crises (epidemics, climate change, etc.), they support adaptation to changes and risk prevention.

TITLE:

REACT-EU

With regard to the setting of the call conditions and supported activities, the projects that will be completed by the end of 2023 at the latest are objectively expected to have a positive effect on the resilience of facilities and infrastructure. The expectation is based on the planned activities, the setting of indicators and the investigations carried out (questionnaire survey, case studies, expert panel).

KEY FINDINGS:

- **The completed projects already show an increase in/ strengthening of the resilience of service providers.** At the time of the evaluation, through the supported projects, for example, 550 sets of new equipment for the IRS components were purchased, which represents 38% of the indicator's target value, 22 buildings serving the IRS components were modernized (35% of the target status), 153 ambulances and other emergency vehicles were purchased, which represents 20% of the target value of the indicator, a total of 216 facilities for social services were supported, i.e. 30% of the target value of the indicator, and 581 clients of social services were supported, which represents 20% of the target value of the indicator.
- The resources of the EU/REACT-EU funds contribute significantly to the modernization of **the material and instrumentation equipment of hospitals** throughout the Czech Republic (typically, for example, mass spectrometers for testing, an irradiator for an oncology centre or intensive care beds).
- The projects have a direct impact on the reduction of operating costs (energy savings in buildings and more economical operation of electric cars). In some cases, however, the projects were threatened by additional financial requirements needed for the proper completion of the project's activities, which were not the subject of the grant (adequate solution for recharging the purchased electric vehicles).
- In some cases, REACT-EU contributed to the process of transformation and deinstitutionalization of social services. These effects could be amplified by a suitable approach.
- REACT-EU funds will also make a significant contribution to **increasing the capacity and quality of care that was postponed during the pandemic** and that currently burdens health care providers not only in terms of inpatient capacity, but also, for example, the required availability of high-quality medical technology (e.g. devices for testing various types of diseases, oncology centre equipment). An example can be the care for oncology patients, which was also supported by a REACT-EU project that enabled the purchase of instruments and other equipment, now increasingly required after the pandemic has subsided and the postponed care is being provided.
- Especially projects that have not been completed, or have not carried out the necessary tendering procedures for suppliers, are at risk of a significant increase in the budget compared to the original application due to a sharp increase in prices and interest rates in the period between the grant application and the implementation of the activities.

Integrated instruments and territorial dimension



It is advisable to significantly simplify the methodological guideline for integrated urban instruments, to ensure the platforms are attended by relevant persons, and to promote an open discussion of problems and opinions.

TITLE:

Process evaluation of the implementation of integrated urban instruments

The Methodological Guideline for Integrated Instruments is considered too extensive, especially in its non-binding sections. In communication, actors care about the existence of direct human contact, which is an expression of partnership. They do not like the large number of established organizational elements (conferences, chambers, platforms of various types, working groups, committees), which causes confusion.

GOAL:

The process evaluation focused on the current setting of key processes (design and updating of the Methodological Guideline for Integrated Instruments, communication and coordination, calls, appraisal of applications, changes in strategies, etc.) defined by the CZ Ministry of Regional Development (MoRD), and proposes recommendations that would maximize useful and purposeful work and eliminate unnecessary, unproductive work.

KEY FINDINGS:

The Methodological Guideline for Integrated Instruments (MGII) is too extensive.

- ITI holders should have a professional platform ("ITI association") where they would coordinate their positions, and which would represent them in negotiations with the MoRD and the OP MAs. The MGII should be shortened and simplified, non-binding sections should be inserted in a good practice manual. It is appropriate to strengthen the MoRD's role as a methodological supervisor of the territorial dimension and to shorten and simplify the process of designing and updating the MGII.

Direct human contact is important for communication and coordination.

- A large number of organizational elements (conferences, chambers, platforms of various types, working groups, committees) causes confusion, the National Standing Conference (NSC) should primarily be a working, not a representative, body.

Initiate the participation of members in the preparation of the programme. Emphasize the expediency of negotiations, their effectiveness also in terms of the enforceability of obligations, reduce the formality of negotiations and duplication of information; ensure the participation of people with decision-making powers (e.g. relevant representatives of the OP MAs - deputy ministers, mayors and regional presidents in the NSC plenary), combine formal and informal communication channels.

Availability of guidelines, transparency and speed of appraisal are important for approving the strategies.

- It is important to set the methodology (MGII) in a timely and specific manner in order to eliminate uncertainty in preparing the integrated strategies. When approving the strategies, it is advisable to maintain consultations with the MoRD Dept. of Regional Policy and OP MAs before the actual approval of the strategies and to strengthen their binding nature. At the same time, greater responsibility for the correctness and usefulness of the strategy should be transferred to the strategy holder.

Title: Process evaluation of the implementation of integrated urban instruments

Supplier: University of Pardubice, Faculty of Economics and Administration

Implementation period: July 2019 - November 2019

Evaluation methods: in-depth interviews, the Vanguard method

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/procesni-evaluace-implementace-integrovanych-urban>

The aim of the territorial dimension should be to ensure the implementation of relevant projects in a specific territory in relation to a given topic/problem or target group.

TITLE:

Process evaluation of the territorial dimension implementation

The National Document on the Territorial Dimension (NDTD), as the main document covering the territorial dimension in the Czech Republic, does not define the goals of the territorial dimension in such a way that would make it perceived uniformly by all actors. The importance of the territorial dimension platforms is mainly in the communication aspect. Regional action plans (RAPs) helped to identify the so-called white areas in the territory.

GOAL:

The evaluation focused on: (a) the use of NDTD, (b) existing forms of favouring selected territories in the OPs, (c) the functioning of existing territorial dimension platforms (RSC and NSC) and (d) the used forms of monitoring the implementation of the territorial dimension at regional and national levels (RAPs and Reports on the application of the territorial dimension).

KEY FINDINGS:

- In order to become a national reference document, the National Document on the Territorial Dimension (NDTD) should contain a clear and widely accepted definition of the territorial dimension and clearly define its objectives. The aim of the territorial dimension could be defined e.g. as "ensuring the implementation of relevant projects in a specific territory in relation to a given topic/problem or target group".
- The main role of NSC should be mainly informative, and its members should use it to obtain information not only on EU funds, but also on other instruments of regional development.
- RSCs should define so-called strategic projects of the region's development and increase the absorption capacity of the territory, not only in connection with EU funds but also with national and regional subsidy schemes.
- The RAPs should be modified in terms of form and content so that they are focused only on the so-called strategic projects implemented in the given territory, regardless of the source of their financing. Their monitoring could subsequently be one of the RSC's activities.

Title: Process evaluation of the territorial dimension implementation

Supplier: HaskoningDHV Czech Republic, spol. s r.o.

Implementation period: May 2019 - November 2019

Evaluation methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews, the Vanguard method

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/procesni-hodnoceni- implementace-uzemni-dimenze>

Approach the Methodological Guideline for Integrated Instruments according to the current needs of its users. Preserve the existing communication settings and emphasize their informal character.

TITLE:

Process evaluation of the implementation of the integrated instrument Community-Led Local Development

The Methodological Guideline for Integrated Instruments should be divided into parts corresponding to the individual instruments. The MoRD's approach as a supervisor is seen as positive, but the problem is that MoRD does not directly manage the relevant funding.

GOAL:

To evaluate the setting of key processes (design and updating of the Methodological Guideline for Integrated Instruments, communication and coordination, calls, appraisal of applications, changes in strategies, etc.) of community-led local development (CLLD), which are carried out by MoRD.

KEY FINDINGS:

Issue the MGII at the time when users need it, make it clear, well arranged and enforceable.

- If it is not possible to issue it as a whole sufficiently in advance, then publish the methodology by parts relevant for each phase. Primarily, make the MGII procedures uniform for all MAs.

Flexibility and a partnership approach are important in communication.

- Generally good feedback on the platforms, specifically the CLLD platform is positively evaluated for its flexible functioning and partnership approach. It is advisable to keep the current settings.

Coordinate only what is common to all.

- In cases where it is not possible to achieve unification of the requirements of individual MAs towards LAGs, it is better to step back from coordination and keep these processes separate for each MA.

Simplify the structure of the strategy and divide its appraisal into two separate phases.

- Simplify the socio-economic analysis, exclude some chapters, unify the implementation parts - issue a uniform template that will differ only in the specifics of the LAGs and will contain the internal procedures of the LAGs. First, evaluate those parts of the strategy which do not require waiting for the MA's final instructions - e.g. the analytical part, the strategic part without programme frameworks, the implementation part - then evaluate the individual programme frameworks.

Title: Process evaluation of the implementation of the integrated instrument Community-Led Local Development

Supplier: SPF Group, s.r.o.

Implementation period: May 2019 - January 2020

Evaluation methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews, the Vanguard method

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/hodnoceni-implementace-integrovaných-nastrojů>

Other



Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that requires a comprehensive approach.

TITLE:

Reflection on the impact of EU funds on the equality of women and men in the labour market

Equality between women and men should be more supported, for example in the form of voluntary commitments.

GOAL:

To evaluate the results and objectives of the Partnership Agreement in the field of equality of men and women and to identify a set of examples of good and bad practice. Another goal was to present recommendations for setting the calls in the next programming period.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that requires a comprehensive approach. However, the application of the horizontal principle of equality between women and men is rather formalistic in the context of EU funds.
 - Thematic merging of this principle with the principle of promoting equal opportunities restricts it only to non-discrimination of women.
 - For a correct application of the principle of equality between women and men, there is a need for sufficient methodological support for applicants and beneficiaries.
 - The vision and objectives of the Partnership Agreement in the next period should continue to aim for the desired impact on gender equality.
- Main recommendations
- Non-governmental organizations that have a high degree of expertise in gender issues should be more involved as partners in the setting of calls.
 - Set up education, training and mentoring programmes for employees and employers on the topics of reconciling family and working life and non-discrimination in the workplace.
 - The number of employers supporting equal opportunities, equal pay and flexible working arrangements should be increased.
 - There is a need to enhance access to quality and affordable preschool education and care, including improving the quality of care in state facilities and establishing children's groups and micro-nurseries.

Title: Reflection on the impact of EU funds on the equality of women and men in the labour market

Supplier: Czech Women's Lobby

Implementation period: March 2018 - November 2020

Evaluation methods: desk research, focus groups, questionnaire survey

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/reflexe-dopadu-esif-na-postaveni-zen-na-trhu-prace>

Integration projects help foreigners to better navigate the society.

TITLE:

Evaluation of EU-funded projects on Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic in the 2014–2020 programming period

EU funds could be used more to promote the foreigner integration policy.

GOAL:

The evaluation finds out how projects financed by EU funds fulfil the Partnership Agreement and the state Concept of Integration of Foreigners. The evaluation outputs are focused on recommendations for the next period and on how to improve the use of European funding in the integration of foreigners.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Continue to support proven interventions (Czech language courses, professional counselling, individual mentoring and support in navigating the society, support for pupils with a different mother tongue and their teachers, training of professionals working with migrants, community centres).
2. Use EU funds to pilot system measures (interpretation and work of specialists at the authorities, support of integration at the local level and cooperation of actors).
3. Put proven interventions or system solutions into practice and ensure long-term conceptual funding for the integration of foreigners.
4. Introduce the "Migrants/persons with migration experience" indicator that would allow the monitoring of support for people with migration experience regardless of nationality and age.
5. Unify the monitoring of supported persons with migration experience under ESF and AMIF.
6. Monitor integration projects across programmes in connection with the priorities of the state Concept of Integration of Foreigners (CIF) and evaluate integration projects at least selectively.
7. If the foreigner integration policy is to be funded through projects, it is necessary to identify high-quality interventions and support their continuous and long-term financing.
8. During the programming period, it is necessary to look for sources of systemic financing of proven interventions, or to plan stable project financing.
9. Strengthen the institutional support of the integration policy, especially in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports so that they have experts dedicated to the topic and monitoring the EU financing opportunities.
10. Use projects to pilot measures and ensure stable financing for best practices.
11. Coordinate the planning of interventions among OP Emp+, OP JAC and AMIF NP programmes in accordance with CIF priorities.
12. Ensure the evenness of financing, prevent late onset of financing and rapid spending in the final years of the programmes.
13. Establish better cooperation between the integration policy supervisors at ministries and the managing authorities of the ESF, allow the ministerial supervisors access to the design of programming documents and to platforms for the preparation of calls.
14. Involve regional and local government representatives, the non-profit sector and experts in the planning, implementation and evaluation of integration measures.

Title: Evaluation of EU-funded projects on Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic in the 2014-2020 programming period

Supplier: Consortium of non-governmental organizations working with migrants in the Czech Republic

Implementation period: March 2019 - May 2021

Evaluation methods: desk research, semi-structured interviews, focus groups

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-projektu-zamerenych-na-integraci-a-social>

The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is the core of the investment plan for Europe, the effect of EFSI support is positive primarily on the mobilization of private investment activities. The Czech Republic uses EFSI mainly for the development of business and it is one of the most successful EU states in using the support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

TITLE:

Evaluation of EFSI for the needs of transferring good practice and experience to the upcoming InvestEU fund

EFSI most often supports research, development, innovation and energy. Projects for small and medium-sized enterprises prevalingly take the form of guarantees and loans. Among the most successful countries in terms of using EFSI are Portugal, Greece or Bulgaria. The Czech Republic ranks average. The main motivation for using EFSI is more favourable financing conditions, the resources for co-financing are mostly provided by national support banks. Investment mobilization takes place primarily in the area of small and medium-sized enterprises.

GOAL:

To carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the level of use of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) by individual Member States. The evaluation also assessed what is transferable from EFSI to the Czech Republic as good practice for InvestEU.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The Czech Republic uses EFSI mainly for the development of business and it is one of the most successful EU states in using EFSI to support small and medium-sized enterprises.
- On the other hand, the Czech Republic makes very little use of EFSI support for infrastructure and innovation.
- A significant weakness is the absence of the public sector in strategic EFSI projects for the development of infrastructure, especially transport.
- In the Czech Republic, beneficiaries of EFSI support from the private sector significantly predominate (88.5% of funds used for EFSI projects in the Czech Republic).
- The dominant topics in the Czech Republic are the support of small and medium-sized enterprises and research and development.
- Significant differences are observed among Member States in the use of EFSI for the individual topics.
- Most of the representatives of the Member States declare a positive effect of EFSI support on the mobilization of private investment activity in their country.
- Investments relevant for the use of the InvestEU instrument are those in transport infrastructure, clean energy, waste management, digital transformation, innovation support and technology transfer.
- The use of the InvestEU national compartment should be compatible with shared management programmes, including the Just Transition Fund and other instruments.

Title: Evaluation of EFSI for the needs of transferring good practice and experience to the upcoming InvestEU fund

Supplier: Evaluation Advisory CE, s.r.o.

Implementation period: December 2020 - September 2021

Evaluation methods: data mapping and analysis, questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews

The outputs are available at: <https://dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/vyhodnoceni-programu-efsi-pro-potreby-prenosu-dobr>

Satisfaction of implementation structure staff and beneficiaries and applicants with the monitoring system reached 66%. The working conditions indicator exceeded its target and reached a value of 72%. Satisfaction with personnel policy and the remuneration system has been stable for a long time and remains around 64%.

TITLE:

Identifying the achievement against satisfaction indicators 2021

EU funds could be used more to promote the foreigner integration policy.

GOAL:

The satisfaction indicators are the subject of regular surveys aimed at identifying the values of three selected satisfaction indicators for the Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OP TA). The satisfaction indicators measure the level of satisfaction in three main areas: (1) Satisfaction with the monitoring system, (2) Satisfaction with personnel policy and training system and (3) Satisfaction with working conditions. The survey covered the period of 2019 and 2020.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The latest survey, which covered the years 2019 and 2020, shows that there was an increase in satisfaction in two of the three monitored indicators. There was an improvement in the indicator of Satisfaction with the information system, namely by six percentage points to 66 percent. Thus, the indicator exceeded its maximum from 2014, and therefore also the baseline value that was measured for the old monitoring system. Still, four percentage points are missing into the target value. If the current growth rate continues, the target could be achieved by 2023.
- There was also an increase in the indicator Satisfaction with working conditions, which improved by four percentage points to 72 percent. In doing so, it exceeded its target value, which was set at 70 percent.
- The indicator Satisfaction with personnel policy and education system remained at a value of 64 percent. However, the results of the survey could have been negatively affected, especially for this indicator by the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why we evaluate a stable value as a positive result.

Title: Identifying the achievement against satisfaction indicators 2021

Internal analysis by the NCA Evaluation Unit

Implementation period: February 2021 - April 2021

Evaluation methods: questionnaire survey

The outputs are available at: [https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/zjistovani-miry-naplneni-indikatoru-spokojenos-\(3\)](https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/zjistovani-miry-naplneni-indikatoru-spokojenos-(3))

Half of the respondents have a positive attitude towards EU funds, a third are neutral and the rest (17%) have a negative attitude.

TITLE:

Assessment of public awareness of the topics of EU funds 2021

To identify public awareness of the topics of EU funds in 2021 and to obtain data for determining the current values of relevant publicity indicators.

GOAL:

To identify public awareness of the topics of EU funds in 2021 and to obtain data for determining the current values of relevant publicity indicators.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The benefits of EU funds (for the Czech population, for the region or for personal life) are rated better than in the previous period.
- Information about EU funds is perceived as available by 29% of the respondents, which is a decrease by 10 p.p. compared to the previous survey from August 2020.
- There was a significant decrease in the awareness of a specific project that is financed by EU funds. At least some project comes to mind for 45%, which is 23 p.p. less than in the previous survey.
- The confidence in the use of aid from EU funds is not very high. Almost 60% of people believe that the money is not used transparently. Only a fifth of respondents are convinced of the opposite.

Recommendations:

- In general, we recommend focusing on regional and local activities to support specific projects implemented in a given region or place, in the form of, for example, city celebrations, festivals, exhibitions in squares or town halls, open days, etc.
- It is the most sensible to focus on the Working Optimists segment with a targeted online communication campaign, covering topics of education, environment or infrastructure.
- The appropriate timing of the campaign would be summer and some MoRD activities could be connected with events of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council.
- Although the press did not do very well in the competition of more significant media in the quantitative survey, the demonstrations during the discussion groups revealed that advertising in this type of media is not disturbing, the respondents notice it and EU funds fit in it.

Title: Assessment of public awareness of the topics of EU funds 2021

Supplier: STEM/MARK, a.s.

Implementation period: August 2021 – December 2021

Evaluation methods: CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing), Focus groups

The outputs are available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/hodnoceni-povedomi-verejnosti-o-problematice-fondu>



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