



Ongoing Evaluation of Implementation of the Operational Programme Research, Development and Education

Ministry of Education, Youth and
Sport

Progress Report 10

March 2021
Final version



EUROPEAN UNION
European Structural and Investing Funds
Operational Programme Research,
Development and Education



Executive Summary

This report represents the tenth Progress Report which monitors the factual progress and financial performance of the OP RDE as of 31st December 2020. In accordance with the Methodological Guidelines for Monitoring and Implementation of ESIF in the Czech Republic in the 2014-2020 programming period, data including commitments and achieved values valid as of 31st December 2020 were generated on 28th February 2021.



Based on the state of implementation, factual progress partially corresponds with the anticipated state of implementation of OP RDE to a given date.

In the period from 30th June 2020 to 31st December 2020, 139 of the 156 result and output indicators across the priority axes to which the projects are directly committed showed a non-zero achieved value.




Target values of the indicators with risk of non-fulfilment or over-fulfilment has been identified.

Non-fulfilment risk has been identified for 16 pairs of indicators (LDR and MDR together) and it is necessary to revise the target values (reduce them). For 51 pairs of indicators (LDR and MDR together) the risk of over-fulfilment was identified, and it is necessary to revise the target values (increase them). For 2 pairs of indicators (LDR and MDR together) the need for redistribution of target values between regions was identified. For 1 pair of indicators (LDR and MDR together) no risk of non-fulfilment, over-fulfilment or the need to redistribute target values between regions was identified. The material progress of the implementation of the OP RDE can already be demonstrated by the results of individual projects. To this end, a field survey was carried out as part of this report.

PA1: Evaluation of the call and projects of the call No. 02_15_003 – Support of excellent research teams

In research organizations implementing OP RDE projects in this call, partly due to the implementation of OP RDE projects, there is an increase in research performance (e.g., more publications, higher quality of publications, etc.) despite the fact that according to FG participants these projects are not a tool for systemic changes at the level of whole organizations, but their goal and main benefit is to create narrowly focused research teams and ensure their functioning. According to FG participants, these projects may have an impact on increasing quality in a given area (e.g., more publications, higher quality of publications, etc.), but they are not a tool for systemic changes at the level of entire organizations. According to some participants in the FG, it would be appropriate if the original requirement to create organizational independence of the created research center was observed. In all projects a new research team was created, which is led by a key foreign worker and there was a material and technical support of these teams, according to their focus and needs, as the projects implemented in this call focus on a wide range of completely different areas, topics and disciplines. The projects made it possible to build new and specifically focused research teams, which enabled the involvement of new key workers from abroad and the Czech Republic and, in some cases, the





involvement of young researchers and their retention in the institution. As a result of building stable teams, it is possible to build on these projects and further not only maintain their functioning, but also develop them, for example, by integrating them into other activities of the institutions, obtaining additional grants and establishing foreign co-operation. Implementers would welcome the possibility to involve more than 15 employees in projects and use shorter hours than 0,5 or the possibility to involve employees in the project, e.g., in the form of agreements and the possibility of involving students / doctoral students in projects.


As a result of the implementation of projects, the applicable research results have not yet been produced and the results should only be applied. The projects contributed to the fact that the research teams were materially and technically adequately secured when scientific equipment was modernized, new laboratories were built, the number and quality of information needed for top material research was expanded, expensive equipment that the institution could not otherwise afford, etc. The projects also had a positive impact on the development of international co-operation, especially by deepening and intensifying co-operation existing before the start of projects where foreign workers (involvement of at least 1 foreign worker was a condition of the call) have contacts with institutions (e.g., previous work, etc.) and workers in abroad and bring these contacts to projects and institutions. Barriers to the involvement of foreign workers include administrative complexity in obtaining and maintaining permits and visas for foreign workers from countries outside the EU, other complicated tasks after the arrival of workers in the Czech Republic (e.g. reporting to the Foreign Police, etc.) and also the environment and civic amenities in the Czech Republic, municipalities that do not provide sufficient conditions for foreign workers to stay (e.g. lack of English-speaking kindergartens and primary schools, etc.). The projects thus contributed to the signing of new Memoranda of Co-operation, to the conclusion of more than 60 strategic co-operation / partnership deals, to the establishment of other forms of co-operation with more than 45 foreign partners and further to the implementation of international projects (e.g., Horizon 2020, EEA Funds and Norway, projects based on bilateral agreements, etc.). At the same time, activities and negotiations are ongoing in the projects, which may lead to the development of further co-operation and the conclusion of new strategic co-operation / partnerships.

PA2: Evaluation of the call and projects of the call No. 02_16_028 – Development of capacities for research and development

The main goal of the projects in this call was to set up the processes and environment for obtaining the HR Award, and all 15 institutions that sought it within the projects in this call managed to obtain this award. The projects in this call contributed to the acquisition of 77% of all HR Awards awarded in the Czech Republic. The main motivations of institutions for obtaining the HR Award include strengthening the prestige of the institution as an employer in order to make the name of the institution visible abroad. Other motivations include gaining an advantage in future applications for projects funded by international grants and improving, expanding or implementing HR processes in the institution in order to formalize them and improve the management of RD employees. The projects in this call were used primarily to obtain funding for the establishment of strategic management and to cover costs related to obtaining the HR Award.

According to the recipients, setting up a functional environment according to the HR Award rules is a long-term process, the impacts and consequences of which will only be reflected with a certain distance, and the benefits of the HR Award can be assessed rather limited at this time. The HR Award contributes to the formalization of rules and setting of processes in the field of management and human resources, which was often not anchored in institutions. In institutions, for example, career rules, work rules, codes of ethics or rules for the recruitment of new staff and their subsequent integration into the institution, etc. are created or updated. It is now perceived as beneficial that OP RDE projects have made it possible to deal with the area and provided funding for the implementation





of activities that contribute to the development of institutions in the field of work with human resources. The process of obtaining the HR Award took place at the institutions mostly without complications which was strengthened by the possibility of co-operation with evaluators with whom possible ambiguities could be continuously consulted. Furthermore, seminars on the process of obtaining the HR Award and the opportunity to use and be inspired by documents from other institutions who published their outputs and had already received HR Awards also contributed. Minor complications arose, for example, due to changes in application forms and due to the involvement of a wide range of target groups in the preparation which was very demanding as far as organization is concerned. At the same time, in some cases it was necessary to convince other involved target groups of the HR Award.

In the area of setting up and developing internal evaluation, the aim of the institutions was to set up evaluations (e.g., staff, research groups / teams) in such a way that some staff were not favoured or discriminated against. When setting up the evaluation, the effort is based on the methodology at the national level (M2017 +), which, according to some representatives of the beneficiaries, is difficult to transfer to individual institutions as it is difficult to compare individual groups in the institution due to their different orientation. Institutions try to set the evaluation on the basis of hard data and at the same time set the conditions of the evaluation so that it is possible to take into account the focus of employees, some for example focusing on publishing, while others focus more on research transferable and some on popularization, etc. These evaluation systems are still being prepared at the institutions or have been in place for a relatively short time. The complications that some beneficiaries have encountered in setting evaluation rules are mainly the need to convince employees of the benefits of evaluation and to change their habits. So far, clearly defined methods of employee evaluation, which make employees more efficient and have an impact on the quality of the entire institution, are considered to be beneficial. On the contrary, among the complications that some beneficiaries faced when setting the evaluation rules is the need to convince employees of its benefits and change their habits. In some projects, advisory / consultative bodies for internal evaluation in the field of research and development have been set up, which provide consultation and feedback on the established evaluation systems. These bodies are evaluated very positively and are considered beneficial as they give recommendations to institutions on where to go, how to further move in the area and as to what concrete steps should be taken.

Activities in the field of international co-operation and internationalization of research institutions were most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, as a result of which projects often suspended and postponed these activities mainly due to the impossibility of travelling abroad. Nevertheless, according to project representatives, international co-operation developed, for example, internships and trips abroad for employees contributed to establishing or deepening co-operation, and thanks to them, new Memoranda of Co-operation were concluded, or new international projects were implemented. Foreign trips also contribute to the development of professional and administrative staff in projects, for example by learning about the system of international co-operation at given foreign institutions and the subsequent transfer of acquired good practice to home institutions in the Czech Republic. About half of the projects in this call used the project to introduce English as the institution's second language. The projects mainly translated main documents (e.g., work rules, organizational rules, materials for recruitment, work and onboarding, etc.) and the main benefit of these activities and ensuring bilingualism is, according to the beneficiaries, adapting the internal environment to be international and work with foreign workers as well as with domestic ones.

In the field of cross-sectoral co-operation, projects mainly build on the practice already established in the institutions and partially set and formalize rules in this area when, for example, projects created new rules for the institution on co-operation with the private sector, rules for intellectual property, rules for researchers on how to protect their knowledge, as there had not been structured and fixed



rules before. In one project, the beneficiary encountered problems in implementing Open Access when, after publication, it will not be possible to sell the results to companies in the form of a patent and at the same time there is a concern of employees that in the case of publishing results in Open Access, it can easily lead to their monetization by a third party. Within some projects, staff training was carried out, which focused on the possibilities of cross-sectoral co-operation, on how to protect one's results, what goals can be set in this area, etc. According to the representatives of one of the beneficiaries, the barriers to the implementation of cross-sectoral co-operation are not on the part of the institutions but generally in the environment between the research and application spheres. The state does not purposefully support and develop this co-operation, suitable legislative conditions are not set, there is no motivation of companies and at the same time it is necessary for the state to provide funds for reinvestment in scientific infrastructure, which is used for cross-sectoral co-operation.

The projects also contributed to the centralization of popularization activities in the institutions, as previously popularization was mostly carried out by individual components or researchers / teams, but no central strategy was established. The projects focus on the creation of new popular science programmes for the promotion of R&D (e.g., children's and junior academies, Science slam competitions, etc.), especially aimed at pupils and students. The goal of these programmes is often to attract new potential students and subsequently staff. These activities were often affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the projects, as they were to be carried out in person and, if implemented online, would not have such an impact. To support popularization, educational activities are implemented in projects, in which institutions try to develop their employees' presentation skills and educational skills, where especially in activities for children it was necessary to teach employees to provide information in a simplified and understandable form for children. The creation of new websites and social networks or the upgrade of expositions for popularization (e.g., visitor center, mobile laboratory, etc.) also contribute to the popularization of research in some projects).



The financial progress at the decisive date slightly exceeds the expectations stated in the OP RDE programming document.

The financial progress at the decisive date slightly exceeds the expectations stated in the OP RDE Programming Document. As of 31st December 2020, a total of CZK 93 384 million was committed, which represents 103,48% of the total programme allocation (currently the end of the sixth year of programme implementation, when according to the plan support of 100% of the total allocation is expected). The share of reimbursed funds in the total allocation of the OP RDE is then 78,24% of this allocation. In PA1, PA2 and PA4 the share of reimbursed funds in relation to committed funds is relatively low (around 70%), while in PA3 this share is at the level of 86%.

The funds allocated by the calls exceed the allocation set out in the OP RDE Programming Document. This is due to the fact that in some already closed calls not all allocated funds were used up and subsequently they were reallocated in other announced calls, so these funds are counted twice. The N + 3 rule for 2020 has been met.



Table 1 Financial performance according to the funds

Priority axis	Funds	Share of allocation calls to the allocation of OP RDE	Share of committed financial resources to the allocation of OP RDE	Share of financial resources paid to the allocation of OP RDE
PA1	ERDF	122,67 %	107,57 %	77,86 %
PA2	ERDF	133,58 %	123,05 %	90,32 %
	ESF	133,75 %	100,80 %	68,01 %
PA3	ESF	125,87 %	91,80 %	78,54 %
PA4	ERDF	114,91 %	100,63 %	65,54 %
Total	ERDF	128,94 %	111,03 %	80,22 %
	ESF	127,92 %	94,15 %	75,80 %
	ERDF+ESF	128,48 %	103,48 %	78,24 %



Based on the current status of the financial progress on 31 December 2020, no risk of non-utilization of allocated resources of the OP RDE has been identified.

All specific objectives of the OP RDE are covered by at least one completed call. The absorption capacity of calls was correctly estimated in most cases of completed calls in the period from 31st June 2020 to 31st December 2020.



Interviews with representatives of the management of the OP JAK preparation showed that, from a factual point of view, the preparation of the OP JAK is proceeding without serious complications that would jeopardize the MEYS ability to launch a new Operational Program according to the current plan at the turn of 2021/2022.

According to the original assumptions, the preparations for the OP JAK were aimed at starting on 1st January 2021 together with the beginning of the programming period, but the preparation of the OP was slowed down by the European Commission, insufficiently prepared European legislation and its demanding negotiations, individual OPs and of course, also the COVID-19 pandemic.



Anti-epidemic measures of the MEYS did not have a negative effect on the performance of Section IV.

According to information provided by management of the fourth section, the MEYS crisis measures during the emergency did not have a negative effect on the performance of the fourth Section and the ability to draw funds from the OP RDE was not negatively affected. Home office is perceived significantly positively by the MA staff and it is recommended to consider the possibility of introducing the home office as a comprehensive tool for motivation and support of employees.



Performance IV. the section measured by compliance with the N + 3 rule was not affected in any way by restrictive measures, the most significant of which is the introduction of a home office. From January 2020 to April 2020, the N + 3 rule was exceeded, by a monthly average of 17%.

At the same time, the internal audit of MEYS and the previous Deloitte report within this evaluation showed that the possibility of using work in the form of a home office is a fundamental motivating factor for MA employees.



The strategic documents defined in the text of the OP RDE are covered by the calls of the OP RDE, which implement activities that meet the fulfillment of the objectives of these documents.

In the text of the OP RDE, the strategic documents are divided into two basic areas: **“Education”** and **“Research and Development”**.

Area of Education

The OP RDE interventions in the area of **“Education”** are the strongest in terms of financial allocation of the **Priorities of the National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic 2014 (NRP)**, (48 links to calls with a total allocation of more than CZK 63 billion). **The second most strongly fulfilled strategy is represented by the Specific Recommendations of the Council of 2014** (41 links to calls with a total allocation of calls of CZK 56,5 billion). **The third most strongly implemented strategy is the Digital Education Strategy until 2020**, (33 links to calls with a total allocation of CZK 51,2 billion). **The fourth strategy is the Europe 2020 Strategy** (33 links to calls with a total allocation of almost CZK 50 billion). **The fifth strategy is the Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training (ET 2020)**, (41 links to calls with a total allocation of CZK 47,3 billion).

Research and Development

The National Research and Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialisation of the Czech Republic (National RIS3 Strategy) and its regional annexes (32 links to calls with a total call allocation of 66.8 billion CZK) are fulfilled most strongly by OP RDE interventions in the area of **“Research and Development”**. CZK). The second most strongly fulfilled strategy is the **National Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2012-2020** (31 links to calls with a total allocation of calls of CZK 63.3 billion). The third most strongly fulfilled strategy is the **Update of the National Policy of Research, Development and Innovation of the Czech Republic for the years 2009 - 2015 with a view to 2020 (Update of the NP RDI¹)**, (27 links to calls with a total allocation of CZK 50.7 billion). The fourth strategy in the order is the **Strategy of International Competitiveness of the Czech Republic for the years 2012 to 2020 (ICS)**, (23 links to calls with a total allocation of CZK 46.7 billion). The fifth strategy is the **Europe 2020 Strategy** (19 links to calls with a total allocation of CZK 44.7 billion).

¹ This strategy is followed by the strategy of the National Policy for Research, Development and Innovation for the years 2016-2020 and its update. Update of the National Policy for Research, Development and Innovation of the Czech Republic for the years 2016-2020 (update 2018).





Factors were identified that may hinder the effective implementation of the OP RDE.

The identified factors that currently negatively affect the progress of the implementation of the programme are listed in the following table. The factors are divided into the most severe (red), moderate (orange) and least severe (green).

Table 2 Factors influencing the state of programme implementation

Factor	Specification of the factor	Impact of the factor	Probability of occurrence	Severity of the factor
PA1 – risk of non-fulfilment of the output indicators	<p>There is a risk of non-fulfilment of the following outcome indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP1: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions (MDR and LDR) 	2	2	4
PA2 – risk of non-fulfilment of the output indicators	<p>There is a risk of non-fulfilment of the following outcome indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP1: Number of students of research-oriented study programmes and Ph.D. students who took part in the fellowship (MDR and LDR) IP1: Number of newly created accredited study programmes in Czech (MDR) IP1: Number of newly created study programmes taught in co-operation with another university (MDR) Number of new practice-oriented study programmes (MDR) IP1: Number of study programmes with at least one subject taught in a foreign language (MDR) Number of supported products of LL (MDR and LDR) Number of new practice-oriented Bachelor study programmes (MDR and LDR) Number of newly built, expanded or modernized infrastructures for research-oriented study programmes (MDR and LDR) Number of students who use the newly built, expanded or modernized infrastructure for research-oriented study programmes (MDR and LDR) 	3	2	6
PA2 – risk of non-fulfilment of the result indicators	<p>There is a risk of non-fulfilment of the following result indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP1: Number of study programmes taught in a foreign language (MDR and LDR) IP1: Number of first-year graduates in new practice-oriented study programmes (MDR) IP1: Number of first-year graduates in new Bachelor practice-oriented study programmes (MDR) IP1: Number of students with SEN using products of counselling and assistance support (MDR) IP1: Number of newly created courses of LL (MDR and LDR) 	3	2	6



Factor	Specification of the factor	Impact of the factor	Probability of occurrence	Severity of the factor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP1: Number of universities with established transparent systems of quality assessment (MDR) IP1: Number of first-year graduates in new or modernized research-oriented study programmes accredited also for teaching in a foreign language (MDR and LDR) IP1: Number of research organizations with a modernized strategic management system (MDR) IP1: Number of organizations affected by a systemic intervention (MDR and LDR) IP1: Number of Roma children, pupils and students in supported organizations (MDR and LDR) 			
PA3 – risk of non-fulfilment of the result indicators	<p>There is a risk of non-fulfilment of the following result indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP1: Number of Roma children, pupils and students in supported organizations (MDR) IP2: Number of organizations in which the quality of upbringing, education and pro-inclusiveness have increased (MDR and LDR) 	2	2	4
PA4 – risk of non-fulfilment of the output indicators	<p>There is a risk of non-fulfilment of the following outcome indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training sessions, seminars, workshops, conferences Number of created communication tools 	2	2	4

Based on the performed analyses, the following recommendation was created.

Table 1 Recommendations resulting from findings

Name of recommendation	Description of recommendation	Prioritization of recommendation	Implementation steps
Revision of the Operational Programme of the settings of the indicator values in PA1 – PA4	For all priority axes, indicators were identified where there is a risk of non-fulfilment of indicator target values and their over-fulfilment, even in the order of hundreds of percent. For this reason, it is recommended to revise the OP with the aim of adjusting the values of the selected indicators.	4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To complete a document containing the arguments behind proposals for changes in indicator values. 2) To start a formal negotiation process with the European Commission.
Evaluate the possibilities of MEYS to introduce the possibility of widespread use of home office as a tool for motivation and support of employees	It is recommended to prepare a feasibility study that will evaluate the possibilities of using home office in a public institution from a legal point of view, from a procedural point of view (e.g., electronic approval workflow), from the point of view of technical readiness and equipment of all MEYS employees (i.e., including “core” employees), in terms of the possibility of reimbursement of home office costs (including possible tax implications), etc.	4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Create a feasibility study assignment. 2) Ensure the implementation of the feasibility study, either by MEYS itself or externally as a public contract. 3) According to the results of the feasibility study, ensure steps for the widespread introduction of home office at MEYS



Disclaimer:

This document is English translation of original document in Czech. In case of discrepancy between the Czech original text and the English translation, the Czech text shall prevail. The contractor is responsible for the correctness of the English translation.

