

Evaluation of the Systemic Project "National Centre for Electronic Information Resources - CzechELib" supported by PO 1 OP RDE

Final Report

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Abbreviations (Czech version)

ALCU (AK VŠ)	ASSOCIATION OF LIBRARIES OF CZECH UNIVERSITIES
CA	CONTRACTING AUTHORITY
CAS (AV ČR)	ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC
CAWI	COMPUTER ASSISTED WEB INTERVIEWING
CEL	CZECHELIB
CELUS	ELECTRONIC RESOURCES MONITORING SYSTEM
CRC	CZECH RECTORS CONFERENCE
CTU (ČVUT)	CZECH TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
EIR (EIZ)	ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES
EQ	EVALUATION QUESTION
ERMS	ELECTRONIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FTE	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT
GACR	THE CZECH SCIENCE FOUNDATION
HEC (RVŠ)	HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL
HW	HARDWARE
IER	INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT
IER (PEZ)	INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT
IOCB (ÚOCHB)	INSTITUTE OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY AND BIOCHEMISTRY OF THE CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
IT	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
KA	KEY ACTIVITY
MEYS (MŠMT)	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS
MMR – NOK	MINISTRY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – NATIONAL COORDINATION AUTHORITY
MPM (HPM)	MAIN PROJECT MANAGER
NA	NOT AVAILABLE
NCIP	NATIONAL CENTRE FOR INFORMATION SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION
NLC	NATIONAL LICENSING CENTRE
NPPP (JŘBU)	NEGOTIATED PROCEDURES WITHOUT PRIOR PUBLICATION
NTK	NATIONAL LIBRARY OF TECHNOLOGY
OA	OPEN ACCESS
OP RDE (OP VVV)	OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION
PA (PO)	PRIORITY AXES
PLIS (VISK)	PUBLIC LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES
PP (VZ)	PUBLIC PROCUREMENT



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PPA (ZZVZ)	PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ACT
PRI (VVI)	PUBLIC RESEARCH INSTITUTION
R&D (VaV)	RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
RDI (VaVal)	RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION
RDI COUNCIL (RVVI)	COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND INNOVATION
SaaS	SOFTWARE AS A SERVICE
SB (SR)	STATE BUDGET
SO (SC)	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
TC CAS (TC AV ČR)	TECHNOLOGY CENTRE OF THE CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
UCT (VŠCHT)	UNIVERSITY OF CHEMISTRY AND TECHNOLOGY, PRAGUE
UNI	UNIVERSITY
VAT (DPH)	VALUE ADDED TAX



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Definitions

Member Institution (MI)	Unless stated otherwise MIs in this text are defined as MIs, which are institutions with a signed agreement for centralized procurement, and participating institutions, who are interested in signing an agreement for centralized procurement with CzechElib but have not yet done so.
EIR Provider	Unless stated otherwise, the EIR Provider is defined as an entity that is a publisher or exclusive supplier of electronic information resources.



Executive Summary

Introduction

The final report has been prepared in compliance with the contract for work between the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (hereinafter also referred to as "MEYS" or "Contracting Authority") and Ernst & Young, s.r.o. (hereinafter also referred to as "EY") signed on October 18, 2017. The contract was signed based on outcome of the following Public Procurement (PP) contract: Evaluation of the Systemic Project "National Centre for Electronic Information Resources (EIR) – CzechELib" (hereinafter also "Project") funded by Priority Axis 1 of the Operational Program for Research, Development, and Education (PA1 OP RDE).

Objectives of the Evaluation are in accordance with procurement documentation in terms of:

- ▶ **Continuous qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the Project's realization and the extent to which the evaluated Project fulfils its objectives.**
- ▶ **Provision of feedback and recommendations concerning CzechELib's project implementation to OP RDE's Managing Authority and the ISP implementor.**

The Inception Report defines a total of 14 evaluation questions (EQs), all of which are answered within this final report.

- ▶ EQ1 – How is the project being implemented?
- ▶ EQ2 – To what extent are defined target groups familiar with the existence and overall concept of the Project? Is the current publicity and promotion of the EIR effective?
- ▶ EQ3 – To what extent are the selected representatives of the target group satisfied with the informational and methodological support from the NLC?
- ▶ EQ4 – What is the Project's ongoing perceived benefit among the representatives of participating institutions?
- ▶ EQ5 – What is the Project's ongoing perceived benefit by other key actors?
- ▶ EQ6 – Is the preparation and implementation of internal evaluations, i.e., evaluations within the Project, effective?
- ▶ EQ7 – To what extent is the created NLC fulfilling its role and functional?
- ▶ EQ8 – To what extent is the electronic access (web interface) created by CzechELib user-friendly?
- ▶ EQ9 – Are there any other identifiable shortcomings/weaknesses or gaps in the centralized purchasing system not mentioned in the Project that need to be addressed? If so, what are they and what are the proposed solutions?
- ▶ EQ10 – Has the project's implementation led to a greater efficiency in the acquisition and management of EIR?
- ▶ EQ11 – To what extent has centralised procurement management enabled better strategic management and evaluation of the RDI sector at both national and institutional level? In what ways and to what extent do the various institutions indicated below (or their representatives) handle and evaluate research results using CzechELib's data and methodological support?



- ▶ EQ12 – Has the project's implementation improved the quality of the information infrastructure and, as a result, the conditions for increasing RDI productivity in the Czech Republic?
- ▶ EQ13 – As a result of the implementation of the project, have the links (National Technical Library (hereinafter referred to as "NTK") x EIR providers, NTK x similar institutions acting as service intermediaries) strengthened at the international level?
- ▶ EQ14 – Is it possible to identify some unintended consequences (both positive and negative) of the Project? If so, what are they?

Main Findings and Conclusions

The overall evaluation of the project by the respondents (member institutions, RDI sector representatives, one foreign organisation and a publisher) shows that **the project met the expectations of the stakeholders and the set goals**. The key benefits listed by member institutions in the acquisition of EIR were **financial and time savings**. Administrative savings were confirmed in the questionnaire survey by **91 % of respondents**, and 54 % of respondents said that the **CzechELib project had also reduced their EIR costs**. At the same time, 95 % of institutions stated that the project was successful in **reducing fragmentation of EIR provisioning**. 80% of respondents mentioned that **the project facilitated procurement in their organizations**. Other benefits for member institutions include education (in the fields of EIR, Open Access, statistics and others), institution interconnection, and development of EIR portfolios, with 55 % of institutions acquiring more EIR than before joining the project.

Financial savings in EIR can be considered the project's main, unexpected effect. EIR prices were successfully negotiated lower than expected, and the implementation team managed to keep the prices unchanged year-on-year, or only with a slight increase. The savings made it possible to reduce the project budget and use the funds in other projects implemented in the OP RDE. The project's second unexpected outcome was the **formation of a community centred on EIR** (among librarians, with the MEYS, and with the international community). This effect was rated highly favourably due to the interconnection of key actors and the sharing of best practises among member institutions. The international involvement was highly valued by the implementation team and provided numerous benefits (e.g., sharing information on publishers and OA).

In comparison to the initial project implementation delay, **the subsequent phases occurred according to the project schedule** with no or minimal postponement of deadlines. In the initial phase of the project, problems in cooperation were identified in the first IER from 2018 (fragmentation of communication channels, change of persons responsible for communication). These problems were solved and during the course of the project it was possible to monitor the **satisfaction with communication and overall project progress**. Following the increased demands of the project's first phase (identification, selection, and contracting of EIR), these processes were standardised, ensuring their fluency and continuity.

The project also had a noticeable impact on the RDI sector as a whole. When the CzechELib project replaced several parallel projects and consortia from the previous period, it **made a major contribution to the centralization of EIR provisioning**. Other significant benefits for the RDI sector include **long-term, system sophistication, secured funds, and data for institution functioning**. An important project outcome was an increase in the **transparency and cost-effectiveness of EIR provisioning**.

The primary **communication channels** for member institutions were project websites, newsletters, and in-person meetings. An online forum has also been established for member institutions to communicate about the purchases of EIR. **The stakeholders deemed the project's publicity to be adequate**. An article for *Hospodářské noviny* and several educational videos are currently in the preparation for the upcoming



months. During the project, an interim internal evaluation report was created, and a final report is being currently being composed. It will be critical to maintain the continuity of internal evaluations in the subsequent project.

In terms of international ties, the project was a success, with the implementation team becoming a member of three foreign platforms. During the project, one of the team members was elected to **the ICOLC Coordinating Committee**, and an Open Access conference was held in Prague. The foreign organisation rated the collaboration with the CzechELib team highly. The Czech Republic's OA transformation process, as well as the success of involving key stakeholders in the discussion, were also highlighted.

Furthermore, the CzechELib project enabled **greater centralization and simplification of communication in the Czech Republic with foreign publishers. The benefit of the project was the anchoring of a previously fragmented system**, in which each publisher had one partner. By forming a single partner to represent the entire Czech Republic, the Czech Republic **increased its bargaining power**. The communication was rated as good by the foreign publisher, with minor criticisms of low awareness and a lack of clarity at the start of the project.

The project had two electronic tools primarily for member institutions to manage their EIRs. The ERMS web interface will not be developed further for the subsequent NCIP project but will be replaced by a more user-friendly solution. Despite some technical difficulties, CELUS, which allowed users to work with statistics, has been updated and will be used in the NCIP (feedback was collected with suggestions from member institutions on problems with the system).

The transition to the source of funding for the follow-up NCIP project was evaluated as smooth. The follow-up project resolved the issue of the CzechELib project's sustainability, and despite the approved reduction in support, the member institutions intend to continue with the ongoing activities. It will be essential in the coming months to actively communicate the project schedule and possible changes to member institutions. The implementation team's goal is to further develop OA in the Czech Republic. In this context, it will be necessary to resolve system settings so that the cost increases associated with the transition to OA do not jeopardise the existing consortia.

Recommendations

- ▶ **Anchor the internal evaluation settings in the subsequent NCIP project** to ensure the continuity of the acquired knowledge (in the first evaluation, 15 evaluation questions were defined, which focused on services of centralization of EIR purchasing, access to EIR target groups and internal processes of project operation and provision of project activities). Evaluations should include qualitative data collection methods as well.
 - Justification – for the purposes of continuous evaluation by the internal evaluator and to cover topics critical to the project's proper functioning
- ▶ **Take into account current issues in the communication strategy**, especially information on the follow-up NCIP project (schedule, conditions, possibilities, etc.). At the same time, it will be important to set up a clear communication channel, as was the case with the CzechELib project (e.g., the website of the follow-up project, which already links to the NC CzechELib website, which continues on). Other proposed topics for promotion are data and methodological support, or the use of statistics.



- Justification – these are the topics mentioned by members in the questionnaire survey and guided interviews as the least covered by the implementation team.
- ▶ **Maintain relevant online activities.** Member institutions have expressed willingness to continue education and other activities online or in a hybrid format. Due to the already relaxed epidemiological government measures, we recommend finding out whether member institutions are interested in commuting to Prague (which can be time-consuming), and that conducting at least some of the activities online is considered, with possible sharing of recordings on the project website. Following the interviews, we recommend that an online community for negotiating resources between institutions is promoted and further developed.
 - Justification – the questionnaire survey revealed that some institutions are interested in continuing education in an online or hybrid format. Some institutions mentioned the amount of time needed to commute to Prague in the supplementary interviews as a possible obstacle.
- ▶ **To keep the existing team on the follow-up NCIP project.** Regarding the end of the CzechELib project, it will be critical to retain the core team in the follow-up project in order to preserve the know-how and contacts established throughout the duration of the project. We recommend focusing on recruitment of specialised employees in order to maintain and improve existing quality. Since the search for professional personnel capacities is deemed problematic, we recommend beginning to build the team's capacity well in advance.
 - Justification – this is an issue that the implementation team identified as critical to the success of the subsequent project.
- ▶ **Continue the trend of community building**, which has been identified as an unexpected positive effect of the project. As a result, we recommend that existing activities in the follow-up NCIP project continue, as well as the further development of the community through meetings, conferences, and other relevant platforms. It will be critical to establish links with states that can share their experiences in the context of OA. Simultaneously, in the Czech Republic, it will be critical to continue involving relevant actors in the discussion about the transition to OA. The NCIP Scientific Council is already in operation, providing a stable platform for meeting representatives from RDI, universities, the Czech Academy of Sciences, other research organisations, and industry.
 - Justification – this trend was evaluated very positively by the respondents and the development of the community was evaluated as a benefit for the RDI sector.



Introduction and Context

The individual systemic project "National Centre for Electronic Information Resources – CzechELib" is implemented from the funds of the Operational Programme Research, Development, Education, from the specific objective 4 of priority axis 1 (SO 4 PA 1 OP RDE). This specific objective is aimed at streamlining research management at national level and creating a motivating environment for the realization of better research results in line with the Council Recommendation on NRP for 2014. The project implementer is the National Technical Library.

Prior to the project's implementation, the Czech Republic had 18 "consortia" that brought together approximately 130 RDI institutions (public universities, CAS institutes, large, especially university hospitals, large libraries, and other research organisations - hereinafter referred to as "users") and provided them access to nearly 100 collections of electronic information resources. Consortia were supported by two different non-synergy programmes, hence similar requirements and purchases of these consortia were dealt with separately. This resulted in at least duplicate agendas, increased financial costs for individual entities, and increased demands for highly specialised human resources. As there was no national research or demand survey for EIR, institutions purchased some resources in duplicate.

The subject of the CzechELib project was therefore a systemic change in ensuring access to RDI information sources in accordance with the National RIS3 Strategy with the aim of increasing RDI performance by building the CzechELib NLC. By combining know-how and concentrating funds, greater efficiency in the acquisition and management of EIR was to be achieved.

The project's overarching goal is to improve the performance and efficiency of the Czech Republic's RDI sector through a systemic change in the way EIR is delivered, resulting in significant savings in public funds spent by users on related administration. This will be taken over from the project by the National Licensing Centre (hereinafter referred to as CzechELib or the NLC), which will pool existing know-how into a professional team in charge of all procurement (tenders, contractual arrangements, payments, operating support, etc.).

More specifically, the achievement of the objectives and expected changes defined in the application is summarised in the following tables. CzechELib's global goal, as defined in the project application, consisted of several important parts, which are shown in the table below, including their fulfilment, for greater clarity. Following that, a table that evaluates the project's fulfilment of the expected changes is attached.

Table 1 Achievement of project objectives

Project objectives	Meeting the project objectives
Increasing the performance and efficiency of RDI.	This goal was described by the Supplier as the project's long-term impact (in the Theory of Change, defined within the Inception Report). According to the findings, the project met all of its objectives, including improved RDI performance and efficiency in the Czech Republic through a systemic change in the way EIR is secured and made available to users,



Project objectives	Meeting the project objectives
	resulting in significant savings in public funds spent by users on related administration.
Ensuring more favourable contractual conditions for EIR.	<p>The project met expectations in the unification of contractual terms. At the same time, it was managed to secure EIR from selected providers with reduction or full cancellation of the year-on-year increase in prices. As the questionnaire survey showed, the cost of EIR was reduced by 54% for institutions, thanks to which they could utilise the funds elsewhere, for example, to purchase additional resources.</p> <p>The results also revealed that it was possible to secure more favourable EIR prices than planned in 2015, resulting in funds saved and the project budget being reduced.</p>
Improving the information infrastructure of publicly funded research and, as a result, the conditions for increasing the productivity of RDI results in the Czech Republic.	<p>The improvement of the research information infrastructure was acknowledged by representatives of the public administration, who stated that the project enabled them to target financial assistance where it was most needed. As a result, EIR has been purchased more responsibly (see the last segment of the table), and information on EIR use and institutional functioning has improved. Concurrently, the project delivered high-quality data on strategic management in the RDI sector.</p>
Building the capacity of member institutions to provide information support to their own target group.	<p>It is clear from the results of the evaluation that administrative (and time) capacities of member institutions have been saved. According to the findings, students' awareness of the CzechELib project was low (13% of students had awareness). On the other hand, almost 70% of students said that the institution in which they study, shared information with them about the available electronic information resources. Of the respondents surveyed, 32% used EIR at least 1 time per week.</p>
Making EIR co-financing as transparent as possible. Ensuring cost-efficiency and proportionality in defining member institutions' needs.	<p>The CzechELib project has resulted in increased transparency of funds spent and data on EIR use by member institutions. As a result, the project has increased transparency concerning</p>



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Project objectives	Meeting the project objectives
	individual institutions' actual costs and ensured a more responsible approach to the purchase of EIR.



Table 2 Fulfillment of expected changes as a result of the project

	Expected changes	Current status
1.	<p>Elimination of fragmentation in EIR provisioning through the establishment of a CzechELib institutional background under the National Technical Library (NTK), which will centrally provide EIR for RDI in the Czech Republic.</p> <p>The purchase of licences for access to EIR will be co-financed in the amount of at least 50% for the pilot verification of CzechELib functions. Concentration of public resources on EIR provision, a unified national strategy, and professionalisation of services will create more favourable conditions while significantly reducing administrative burden on participants. Central monitoring and evaluation will enable the provider and individual participants from various sectors to optimise the allocation of spent funds.</p>	<p>The results presented in this report show that the project helped to reduce the fragmentation of EIR provision. According to the most recent questionnaire survey, 95% of respondents were successful in reducing the fragmentation of EIR provision. Through the project, more than half of the respondents obtain 3/4 of the total EIR. The primary reason for sourcing resources outside of the CzechELib project was the narrow focus, which did not allow for meeting the 3+ rule. Organizations, on the other hand, were aware of this rule and, if interested, could contact other institutions via the established forum and agree on a joint purchase.</p> <p>At the same time, it was confirmed by the institutions involved that the project brought more favourable conditions and reduction of administrative burden, which turned out to be one of the main benefits. The reduction in administrative burden was confirmed by 91% of respondents.</p> <p>Interviews with representatives of the public administration showed that the project made it possible to spend funds on EIR more efficiently and 54% of institutions reported that the cost of EIR was lower due to the project.</p>
2.	<p>Another major change will be the improvement of access to EIR and the establishment of a system of comprehensive information support. CzechELib will provide user-friendly access to EIR. Furthermore, it will provide a variety of services required to ensure, manage, and evaluate the effectiveness of EIR usage.</p> <p>In addition, long-term archiving of purchased EIR, information-reference service, education, seminars for users, conferences with international participation and more will be provided.</p>	<p>The project centralised negotiations with EIR issuers and ensured technical and information support for member institutions through the implementation team. Two statistical tools for monitoring and managing EIR have also been developed. Member institutions used the EIR Management System (ERMS) primarily to identify which resources the institution subscribes to and to search for the necessary documents. This system will not be used in the following NCIP project, and a replacement is being sought. Evaluation Software (CELUS) was primarily used to track journal and database usage. This system is being updated and will be used in the subsequent NCIP project.</p> <p>Support from the implementation team was rated very positively, and overall cooperation within the project was rated very positively from the beginning. Approximately 65% of respondents took advantage</p>



Expected changes		Current status
		of the available education, and 86% took advantage of the opportunity to attend one of the conferences. The member institutions' meetings and the information provided on the project website were deemed beneficial.
3.	<p>Improved support for tools for evaluating research, development, and innovation results will also be provided: in addition to the bibliometric databases Web of Science and Scopus, the acquisition of analytical tools InCites and SciVal will be supported. This will allow for more effective strategic management and evaluation of the RDI sector at the national and institutional levels.</p> <p>CzechELib will provide data and methodological support in the processing of analyses.</p>	<p>The project's extensive data information contributed to data improvement for strategic management and management universities, as well as other research institutions. This allowed for a more accurate comparison of the various institutions. Simultaneously, new software (analytical programmes, API extensions, or science evaluation programmes at universities) was purchased, allowing for a better evaluation of RDI results.</p> <p>The implementation team provided methodological and data support; however, interest from member institutions was low - 14 % of respondents used data support and 7 % used methodological support. According to these respondents, the assistance was sufficient.</p>
4.	<p>As a result of the changes, international ties will be strengthened. CzechELib will be able to officially represent the Czech Republic in negotiations with other countries on cooperation. It will make it easier to access best practises from other countries, which will be reflected in the way CzechELib operates.</p>	<p>The project helped to strengthen international ties and establish NTK as an active representative of the Czech Republic. This is demonstrated by participation in several international platforms, conference implementation, and the stabilisation of communication with publishers. Foreign actors rated communication with the CzechELib implementation team as excellent.</p> <p>By joining the ICOLC and OA2020 consortiums, good practises and important information were shared (including publishers). Open Access was a hot topic on the international stage. According to the foreign organisations polled, the Czech Republic has tremendous potential in this area as a result of the project, and several significant steps have already been taken. Among other things, the implementation team was able to engage stakeholders who are critical to the transformation.</p>



Summary of Evaluation Activities

Description of Implemented Activities

In the Final report, evaluation activities were mainly focused on **overall evaluation of the benefits of the project**, including the fulfilment of expectations that member institutions had before joining the project. The report focuses on **evaluation of project implementation, communication and cooperation** between member institutions and the implementation team, **publicity of the project** and the **usage of CELUS and ERMS tools** and the adaptation of member institutions to possible changes stemming from the pandemic. Marginally, the report addresses the follow-up project (National Centre for Information Support for Research, Development and Innovation – NCIP), its readiness and awareness of representatives of member institutions about this project. In addition to member institutions, information was also collected from actors of other relevant institutions (representatives of public administration in the field of RDI) and from university students. Compared to the interim reports, the Final Report is broader in focus, as it deals with all fourteen evaluation questions. Evaluation questions EQ10-EQ14 are evaluated for the first time in this report, the remaining questions have already been evaluated in at least one of the past interim reports. The structure of EQ is similar to that of interim evaluation reports. In the text, we compare the shift compared to the conclusions from previous reports, especially within the initial and final phases of the project.

Since this is the final evaluation report, we evaluate the development of the project for the entire period of its implementation. On the other hand, with regards to the preparation of annual evaluation interim reports, we do not dive deep into details and rather try to summarize the overall progress in the implementation of the project and the development of the perceived added value. Following the previous IER, the report also includes a comparison with 2021.

During March and the first half of April 2022, **questionnaire survey carried out** among representatives of member institutions. Its purpose was primarily to gather feedback on the implementation and progress of the project, communication from the implementation team, the benefits of the Project, etc. from the perspective of member institutions' representatives. The questionnaire was revised and approved by the Contracting Authority (CA) and the implementation team. **Second questionnaire survey** took place in March 2022 and was aimed at university students. The questionnaire was focused on knowledge of the CzechELib project and the follow-up NCIP project and contained eight questions.

Information from the questionnaire survey for member Institutions were supplemented by **semi-structured interviews with representatives of member institutions**, which focused in detail on the topics covered in the questionnaire. In addition, another **semi-structured interviews with representatives of public administration in the field of RDI**, such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS), The Czech Science Foundation (GACR) and others to find out how these actors perceive the benefits of the project. All guided interviews were conducted in the first half of May 2022 and were conducted online.

The final group of respondents was also newly added this year, including **representatives of the publisher and the foreign organisation**, with whom **semi-structured interviews were conducted** during May 2022 to assess the benefits of the project. The Contracting Authority was regularly informed about the evaluation activities carried out in monthly reports.

Two EY meetings were held in December 2021 and April 2022 with **representatives of the CzechELib implementation team**. The meetings focused mainly on the following topics:

- ▶ Project management and adherence to schedule



- ▶ Evaluation of the overall course of the CzechELib project and the follow-up NCIP project
- ▶ Communication with member institutions and other stakeholders
- ▶ Internal evaluation and publicity of the project
- ▶ Web interfaces
- ▶ Staffing of the implementation team

At the same time, a meeting was held in March 2022 with a representative of the CzechELib implementation team with responsibility for ties to foreign actors. The interview focused on types of cooperation, platforms for meetings, development of cooperation during the project and communication with publishers.

EY's Methodological Approach to Evaluation

The methodology used in this evaluation was based on the settings of previous evaluation activities. The primary methods include desk-research, questionnaire surveys with representatives of member institutions and students, semi-structured interviews with representatives of member institutions, the Project implementation team, representatives of the publisher and foreign organizations, and representatives of the academic sector and public administration.

Information was obtained from representatives of the following types of member institutions:

- ▶ Public Research Institutions (PRI)
- ▶ Universities
- ▶ Hospitals (including university hospitals)
- ▶ Other research organisations
- ▶ Libraries outside the above organizations (e.g., regional).

Questionnaire survey among member institutions

The aim of the questionnaire survey was to gather information on the attitudes of member institutions, their overall satisfaction with the project and to identify the perceived benefits of the involvement in the CzechELib project.

The questionnaire survey covered the following topics in particular:

- ▶ Evaluation of the benefits of the CzechELib project,
- ▶ Cooperation and communication of the CzechELib implementation team with the representatives of member institutions
- ▶ Assessment of the project progress and key processes (e.g., methods of EIR selection, data and methodological support)
- ▶ Interconnection with other participating organizations and publicity of the project
- ▶ Use of CELUS and ERMS
- ▶ Possibilities of further support and education of member institutions within CzechELib
- ▶ Follow-up project NCIP.

The questionnaire survey was carried out via web assisted interviewing (CAWI). An internal questionnaire tool Qualtrics XM was used for data collection. In order to collect data, a total of 155 contacts representing



128 institutions¹ were supplied by the CzechELib implementation team. The questionnaire was partially completed by at least 107 people, of whom a total of 91 respondents (59 %) completed the questionnaire in full. The return rate on the questionnaire was thus slightly lower compared to 2021, in which 62 % of respondents completed the questionnaire completely.

Representatives of PRI were the most represented among the respondents, the representation of all types of organisations is shown in the table below:

Table 3 Structure of CAWI respondents by type of organisation (N=107)

Type of organization	Representation in CAWI (%)
Public Research Institutions (PRI)	45 %
Universities	26 %
Other research organisations (RO)	10 %
Libraries outside the above organizations	16 %
Other ²	3 %

For three types of organizations, we determined their size (universities, PRI and libraries) in order to identify possible differences between organizations of different sizes. Information on the representation of individual subgroups is provided in Annex No. 1.

People responsible or involved in the management and purchase of EIR were interviewed. The largest representation was represented by respondents with responsibility for purchasing of EIR (34%) and for the management of EIR in the organization (32%). A detailed structure of respondents according to the type of their involvement in purchasing and management of EIR is shown in Table 4³.

Table 4 Structure of CAWI respondents by their role in the organization

Role of the respondent in relation to EIR	Representation in CAWI (%)
Responsible for the purchase of EIR in the organization	34 %
Responsible for the management of EIR in the organization	32 %
Involved in the purchase of EIR in the organization	21 %

¹ One contacted respondent refrained from completing the questionnaire due to a conflict of interest.

² Respondents defined "Other" as, for example, NTK or hospital.

³ It was possible to mark more than one answer and thus the sum is not equal to 100%. Given the results, it can be stated that the respondents often have a concurrence of roles in the purchase and administration of EIZ in the organization.



Involved in the administration of EIR in the organization	9 %
EIR user (exclusively)⁴	2 %
Other roles (e.g., IT department)⁵	1 %

Similarly, to the type of organization, all the roles of respondents in relation to the administration /purchase of EIR in the organization were sufficiently included in the questionnaire survey.

The information obtained from the questionnaire survey is provided for individual relevant evaluation questions and further in Annex No. 1 (Technical Report) and Annex No. 2.3 (anonymised CAWI results). For the purpose of generalization, open-ended questions have been coded into all-encompassing categories.

Guided interviews with representatives of member institutions

Based on the questionnaire survey, we approached respondents for guided interviews.⁶ The topics of the semi-structured interviews were based on relevant evaluation questions. Some topics were the subject of both a questionnaire survey and subsequent guided interviews, during which the quantitative findings from the questionnaire survey were analyzed qualitatively into greater detail.

The structure and questions of the interviews were partly intertwined with the scenarios of the interviews from previous years. These questions were complemented by an overall evaluation of the CzechELib project, meeting expectations and unifying the provision of EIR. The scenario of the interviews was consulted with the Contracting Authority (CA) and the CzechELib project implementation team and the final form is available in Annex No. 2.5. The conversations took place in the first half of May 2022.

A total of 14 guided interviews took place. The selection took into account the types of institutions as well as their geographical location. Six respondents were from an institution based in Prague, followed by one of other cities, such as Ostrava, Pardubice, Kroměříž and Zlín.

Most of the interviews were conducted with representatives of PRI and libraries. The number of respondents by type of organization is shown in Table 3:

⁴ Three respondents who mentioned only the EIR user option were not included in the sample.

⁵ It was, for example, a respondent from IT department (according to the respondents, the decision on the purchase of EIR is made by the management of the organization, which can also be assumed for some of the organizations whose representatives stated that they are responsible for the purchase).

⁶ Approached was a sample of respondents from those who left their contact details in the questionnaire and agreed to be contacted in the future.



Table 5 Number of interview respondents by type of organization (N=14)

Type of organization	Count
Public Research Institutions (PRI)	4
Universities	3
Other research organisations (RO)	2
Hospitals (including university hospitals)	1
Libraries outside the above organizations	4

Guided interviews with representatives of other key stakeholders

Further structured interviews were conducted with representatives of other key stakeholders (representatives of the MEYS, TC CAS, GACR and UCT). The interview with these respondents was mainly focused on the following topics:

- ▶ Knowledge of the CzechELib project and availability of information
- ▶ Assessment of the existing benefits of the CzechELib project (inter alia for the R&D sector and scientists)
- ▶ Comparison with thematically related projects
- ▶ Sustainability of the achieved results of the CzechELib project, the follow-up project of the NCIP.

Due to the higher number of time constraints on the side of potential respondents, four online interviews were conducted at the beginning of May 2022.

Questionnaire survey among university students

At the same time, feedback from university students, as the target group of the project, was collected. However, students are rather a secondary target group, given that they do not communicate directly with the project implementation team, but rather with universities that ensure the availability of information resources for them. The aim of the evaluation was to find out whether information about the project had reached the students, but it is important to note that this was not the aim of the CzechELib project. Thus, the publicity of the Project was not targeted at this group.

To answer the relevant evaluation questions, a short online questionnaire (CAWI) was proposed, which, in agreement with the Client, was sent out to students of mainly Prague universities. The online questionnaire tool Qualtrics XM was used internally. By mid-May 2022, the questionnaire was partially completed by 40 students and fully completed by 36 students. Partial findings are presented in the relevant EQs, and the results of the questionnaire are presented in Annex 2.4. (xls format).

Guided interviews with representatives of a foreign organization and publisher



Last but not least, representatives of foreign publishers and institutions acting as facilitators of services (i.e., such as NTK in Czechia) were addressed. 6 contacts brokered by the CzechELib implementation team were contacted and 2 interviews were conducted.⁷

The first interview took place with three representatives of a foreign publishing house (EBSCO), which operates within the European market and provides both its own databases and in some cases acts as an exclusive representative of some publishers. The publishing house cooperated with NTK from the beginning of the project, and it was therefore possible to reflect on the entire period since 2017. Specifically, the interview focused on:

- ▶ Evaluation of communication and cooperation with the CzechELib implementation team
- ▶ Added value of the cooperation
- ▶ Comparison with other countries in Europe, good practices
- ▶ Possible issues and recommendations.

The second interview took place with a representative of the foreign institution, Max Planck Digital Library, which cooperates with the CzechELib implementation team and focuses mainly on the transition to Open Access not only in Europe. The interview focused on:

- ▶ Evaluation of communication and cooperation with the CzechELib implementation team
- ▶ Possible issues in communication/ cooperation with the CzechELib implementation team
- ▶ Evaluation of the Open Access in the Czech Republic in relation to the transformation to OA and preparation of future agreements
- ▶ Comparison of the Czech Republic with other European countries in the context of OA.

Assessment of Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were assessed within this Final Report:

- ▶ EQ1 – How is the project being implemented?
- ▶ EQ2 – To what extent are defined target groups familiar with the existence and overall concept of the Project? Is the current publicity and promotion of the EIR effective?
- ▶ EQ3 – To what extent are the selected representatives of the target group satisfied with the informational and methodological support from the National License Centre?
- ▶ EQ4 – What is the Project's ongoing perceived benefit among the representatives of participating institutions?
- ▶ EQ5 – What is the Project's ongoing perceived benefit by other key actors?
- ▶ EQ6 – Is the preparation and implementation of internal evaluations, i.e., evaluations within the Project, effective?
- ▶ EQ7 – To what extent is the created NLC fulfilling its role and functional?
- ▶ EQ8 – To what extent is the electronic access (web interface) created by CzechELib user-friendly?

⁷ Interviews were held with respondents who agreed to be interviewed despite the time constraints.



- ▶ EQ9 – Are there any other identifiable shortcomings/weaknesses or gaps in the centralized purchasing system not mentioned in the Project that need to be addressed? If so, what are they and what are the proposed solutions?
- ▶ EQ10 – Has the project's implementation led to a greater efficiency in the acquisition and management of EIR?
- ▶ EQ11 – To what extent has centralised procurement management enabled better strategic management and evaluation of the RDI sector at both national and institutional level? In what ways and to what extent do the various institutions indicated below (or their representatives) handle and evaluate research results using CzechELib's data and methodological support?
- ▶ EQ12 – Has the project's implementation improved the quality of the information infrastructure and, as a result, the conditions for increasing RDI productivity in the Czech Republic?
- ▶ EQ13 – As a result of the implementation of the project, have the links (National Technical Library (hereinafter referred to as "NTK") x EIR providers, NTK x similar institutions acting as service intermediaries) strengthened at the international level?
- ▶ EQ14 – Is it possible to identify some unintended consequences (both positive and negative) of the Project? If so, what are they?

EQ1 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ1 – How is the project implemented?

Project in the reference period **corresponded to the schedule** and all key scheduled **activities were implemented**. In the first half of 2021, **contracts regarding the access of member institutions to EIR** for 2021 were signed, and **tender procedures from 2020 were completed**. At the same time, the covid amendments were signed, which **fixed prices for the period 2021-2022** (see IER 2021), later on, invoicing and collection of deposits took place. Member institutions have nominated their resources. Subsequently, **tender documentation was prepared, and public contracts announced**. In the first half of the year, a meeting was held with member institutions and an audit was carried out, which had no findings except for one small thing.

In the second half of 2021, **EIR nominations for 2022 collected** and **14 license agreements were signed**. They also prepared **proposals for the development of information systems** and for the development of the Project's **publicity**. In addition, a second meeting was held with member institutions, which was focused on the transition of funding from the National Centre for Information Support for Research, Development and Innovation (NCIP) project and the renewal of licensing agreements from 2023. **approved a decrease in financial support in subsequent years**. At the same time, **nomination for EIR** that member institutions will want to contract from 2023.

In the second half of 2021, **nominations for the EIR for 2022 were collected** and **14 license agreements were signed**. Furthermore, **proposals for the development of the information systems**, and for the development of the publicity of the project were prepared. In addition, a second meeting was held with member institutions to discuss the transition of funding from the National Centre for Information Support for Research, Development and Innovation (NCIP) project and the renewal of licence agreements from 2023. The governing bodies of the CzechELib and NCIP **projects approved a decrease in financial support in subsequent years**. At the same time, **nominations were made for the EIR** that member institutions will want to contract from 2023.



At the beginning of 2022, **tender documentation was prepared for the currently contracted resources**, and institutions were asked to provide **statement on their willingness to proceed with membership of the follow-up NCIP project**. In addition, a new EIR methodology has been agreed under which NCIP support will be 100% in some exceptional cases. The collection of **advance payments for the EIR for 2022 took place**. In April, the implementation team missed collecting funding from 6 institutions, so this was a smaller remaining amount. During May 2022, **commitments were to be paid and any overpayments refunded**. At the same time, the methodology and contract template were adjusted in relation to the transition to the new funding. A meeting with member institutions was held in April 2022. All contracts expire this year (2022) and **indicative bids from publishers** were collected in the first half of the year. At the time of the meeting with the implementation team, most of the bids had been collected. The plan is to start **signing centralized procurement contracts in June 2022**.

Transfer to a source of funding from a follow-up NCIP project was evaluated by the implementation team as successful. Member institutions have been informed of the transition at the regular meeting in April 2022 (institutions were previously informed at the 2020 and 2021 meetings), including the planned reduction of financial support. According to the implementation team, this reduction is set up in such a way that member institutions are able to gradually adapt, and the change does not mean a fundamental change in support for them. Member institutions also stated in interviews that they were aware of the planned reduction in support and were taking this fact into account for the coming years. The implementation team of the CzechELib project did not notice a decrease of interest in involvement on the part of member institutions (all institutions remained registered).

In the forthcoming years, **emphasis will be put on Open Access and transformation contracts** (14 transformation agreements are expected to be signed). Transformation agreements are already signed with approximately 5-6 smaller publishers. Due to the complexity of the process from the contractual point of view, mainly given by the fact that this is a new service in the Czech Republic, it will be necessary to set new measurement parameters and thoroughly explain the new settings to member institutions. The readiness of institutions and the setting of a fair model will be crucial, in order to avoid the break-up of the consortium.

The following table shows the progress of the project with respect to the set plan specified in the Project Charter (version valid as of May 2021).

Table 6 Completion of project phases⁸

Activity	Plan	Current status
Start of the project.	1. Q 2017	Fulfilled
Development of systems for the purchase, provision, administration and evaluation of EIR.	4. Q 2018	Fulfilled – in the previous evaluation period, the Management System (ERMS) and Evaluation System (CELUS) were established. The purchasing system (the so-called voice recorder) is not used due to the complicated

⁸ The evaluation of the completion of the project phases took place in May 2022, but the project will run until the end of 2022. Therefore, some goals are indicated as "partially fulfilled". Due to the progress of the Project implementation, we assume, that the remaining phases will be fulfilled without significant complications.



Activity	Plan	Current status
		acquisition of EIR (but is not a mandatory output of CEL).
Elaboration of methodologies for management, workflow, financial flows, negotiation strategies for the purchase of EIR and others.	2017 a 2018	Fulfilled – the procedure for the selection and acquisition of EIR has been established.
Web development and implementation of functionalities.	2.–3. Q 2017	Fulfilled – a website containing information about the project and the EIR offered has been created.
Signing contracts with domestic and foreign EIR providers.	2018, 2019, 2020	Fulfilled – all planned EIR access licence agreements for the period 2020-2022 ⁹ between NTK and EIR providers were signed by the end of 2019 (except for one agreement signed at the beginning of 2020). License agreements for the period 2021-2022 were signed by the end of January 2021.
Purchase / provision of EIR for users from the project.	2017, 2018, 2019	Fulfilled – in spring 2019, all contracts between NTK and member institutions for the provision and access to the EIZ for the period 2019-2022 were signed. Contracts and methodologies are updated annually/continuously as needed.
Negotiation of the conditions for the purchase of EIR for the next period, possible gradual transition to OA.	2020	Fulfilled – before the end of 2020, all contracts with EIR providers were signed, including the first transformation agreement. After 2020, the financing of EIR is arranged from the state budget. In 2022, 14 transformation agreements are planned to be signed. At the same time, the intention is to target Open Access also within the framework of a follow-up project.

⁹ Some EIRs were not acquired for the entire period of 2019-2022, but only a part of it. In exceptional cases, a shorter period was negotiated (metric instruments with the consent of the RV or EIR, when it was not possible to negotiate the entire period with the supplier).



Activity	Plan	Current status
Operation of the centre, possible further transitions to OA, evaluations, proposals for recommendations for the future functioning of the centre.	2021–2022	<p>Will be likely fulfilled – The centre is stably operated, transformation contracts are in the pipeline (14 transformation contracts are expected), the transition to the follow-up NCIP project took place without serious problems and the future functioning is solved in the preparation of the follow-up project. A second, final internal evaluation is currently being prepared.</p> <p>Due to the smooth transition to the follow-up NCIP project, we assume that the activity will continue to be fulfilled. Potential risks are related to the staffing of the follow-up project, but the risk is minimal. Similarly, further developments in the transition to OA are expected (due to the already conducted activities and the potential of the Czech Republic), the rather serious risks are securing a signature on exclusivity and a possible significant increase in financial costs in regard to OA (see Table 7 below).</p>
Negotiation of the conditions for the purchase of EIR for the next period.	2022	<p>Will be likely fulfilled – The reduction of financial support in the follow-up NCIP project was approved. In June 2022, the planning is to start signing centralised procurement contracts. In the follow-up project, the intention is to focus on OA, currently negotiating the signing of transformation contracts (14 contracts are a prerequisite). Negotiations are underway with publishers to sign a declaration of exclusivity.</p> <p>Similar to the previous risk, a rather serious risk is primarily the securing of the letter of exclusivity and ensuring a tolerable level of financial burden associated with OA. Due to the ongoing activities, the negotiation of the EIR conditions is already underway.</p>
Termination of the project.	4. Q 2022	<p>Due to the transition to the follow-up NCIP project and the ongoing preparation of the final internal evaluation, serious risks for the completion of the project are not identified.</p>



Activity	Plan	Current status
Evaluation of the benefits of the CzechELib.	1. Q 2022 – until the end of the OP RDE programme	Will be likely fulfilled – The external final evaluation of the project (this document) will be submitted in May 2022. The final internal evaluation will take place in Q2 2022. The preparation of the final internal evaluation is already underway and no more serious risks of implementation have been identified.

The main activities of the project were largely fulfilled. In the following period until the completion of the CzechELib project, the main risks are associated with the staffing of the follow-up project (the risk is rather minimal) and with the negotiation of the conditions for the purchase of EIR and the transition to OA (rather serious risks). An important condition for the functioning of the follow-up project is the setting of the model so that the financial costs associated with the transition to OA are bearable for the member institutions. With regard to the activities carried out at the time of preparation of this evaluation, we do not expect risks threatening the successful completion of the project and the evaluation of its benefits.

In the period under review, **activities were carried out according to the announced dates.** The process steps of the project are functional and stable, mainly due to the fact that during the duration of the project, there was enough time to debug inefficient process steps and other problems. The implementation team had time reserves in the schedule so as not to delay the implementation of the project. The timetable was respected without significant delays in the first half of 2022. As for the overall adherence to deadlines during the project, except for the initial delay compared to the plan, e.g., for KA3 (see IER 2018), the implementation of the project corresponded to a large extent to the originally set schedule.

Information obtained from the questionnaire survey and from structured interviews prove the satisfaction of representatives of member institutions and other relevant entities with the process setting of the project. Despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic, the process¹⁰ managed to remain the same, which respondents evaluated positively. In this context, it was also possible to ensure the reduction or full cancellation of the year-on-year increase of prices for selected EIR providers of individual EIR, or different benefits.

A detailed description of each sub-question is given below.

Evaluation of partial EQs – How are the key activities of the project implemented?

During the evaluation period, all key activities of the Project took place. The activities of KA6 and KA7 will be crucial especially in the final phase of the project, i.e., in the coming months.

Project Management (KA1) took place according to the set schedule. There was a change by the arrival of a new Chairwoman of the Steering Committee of the CzechELib and NCIP projects, when the position was taken over by Deputy Minister Radka Wildová from MEYS. The new Deputy Minister praised the

¹⁰ The following steps are understood by the process: nomination of EIZ, signatures of contracts on centralized submission/contracts on securing and making available EIZ, conclusion of License Agreements, Invoicing of advance payments/invoicing and payments to providers.



progress of the project as there were no significant changes in the management process. The first Report of Independent Evaluators was implemented for the NCIP project – this report would be produced on annual basis. Preparations for the termination of the CzechELib project are currently underway, which is connected to the end of the team's funding and its transfer to the new NCIP funding source. The implementation team will propose the conditions for the transition to the employees in June. A large part of the workforce is expected to be transferred and given the conditions of the NCIP, the risk of not ensuring sufficient human resources was not perceived.

Creation, operation and evaluation of CzechELib (KA2), is proceeding as planned. The NLC largely caters to the needs and meets the expectations of the participating member institutions. Communication and cooperation with the implementation team is evaluated very positively by the member institutions. In addition, according to the results of the questionnaire survey, member institutions have largely managed to adapt to the changes associated with the coronavirus crisis and to solve the problems that have arisen in relation to EIR (e.g., functioning of remote access, availability of EIR from home). At the same time, the preparation of the final evaluation has begun, which will be carried out mainly in July 2022.

Within **KA3 (Setting-up the rules of the system, tenders for securing licenses for EIR and evaluation)** in the second half of 2021, EIR nominations were collected, and license agreements were signed. At the beginning of 2022, the nominations for EIR for 2023 took place and the tender documentation for the currently contracted resources was prepared. In addition, both advance payments for EIR and indicative quotations from publishers were collected. Managing authorities of CzechELib and NCIP approved a gradual reduction of financial support. Signing of centralized procurement contracts is scheduled for June 2022. The setting of rules and the selection of EIR in the project is evaluated positively by member institutions.

Administration and management of operation of EIR access and its evaluation (KA4) took place without any significant problems. Communication and cooperation with the implementation team were positively evaluated by member institutions. The questionnaire survey showed that member institutions that used methodological and data support for the project, evaluated it as sufficient. Member institutions were also able to use statistical tools to monitor and manage their EIR, which was used by less than 68 % for ERMS and 75 % for CELUS (see KA5).

KA5 (Technological support for the management of the centre) was provided primarily by electronic tools ERMS (software for EIR management) and CELUS (software for monitoring the use of EIR). According to information from the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews, not all institutions used the systems. The use of the systems was affected by the size of the institution, with smaller member institutions with fewer EIRs usually rarely needing to manage their resources in the ERMS. In the interviews, the institutions stated that the system is beneficial especially for large institutions with multiple resources, for which clear administration using the ERMS system can simplify the work. ERMS was most often used by institutions to determine which EIR their or other institutions subscribe to. In the case of the CELUS system, the most frequently used option was to monitor the use of EIR (journals, other databases). Among the training proposals, statistics and the CELUS system both appeared often.

As far as the subsequent development of the systems is concerned, the CELUS system upgrade supplier was selected, which is the same as for the first version. Currently, meetings with the supplier and agile programming are being conducted. Data should be migrated to the server soon. The system was evaluated very positively by the implementation team, which highlighted its uniqueness in the world (only one of the two existing tools) and positive acceptance by the community. For ERMS, it was decided that the upgrade would not be implemented due to inefficiencies in the price/performance ratio. The use of other, already existing systems used by consortia around the world is currently being discussed, in the form of SaaS. The



main disadvantage will be a reduction in flexibility towards the requirements in the Czech environment. The advantage will be primarily a much friendlier user interface, sophistication given by worldwide community of users, and a reduction in costs. The money for the development of ERMS was returned and the system will be newly financed from the follow-up NCIP project.

Ensuring the publicity of the project within **KA6 (Publicity of the project, promotion of EIR and support of EIR users)** was supported via regular meetings with member institutions, and other support activities (e.g., gift items with logo). Several activities are also planned in the upcoming months – the NTK will participate in the Science Fair in June. An annex with an interview with the NTK director about the CzechELib project will be produced in collaboration with Hospodářské noviny, and educational videos for various target groups are being prepared. Furthermore, in October 2022, a Final Conference will be held to evaluate the overall benefits of the project, with representatives from ministries (ministers, deputies) and the European Commission in attendance.

KA7 (Final evaluation and recommendations) will be a key activity especially in the coming months, i.e., 2Q and 3Q 2022. The report is currently being prepared and documents are being collected, and it is expected to be completed in July and August. The goal is to have an external expert with evaluation experience participate in the evaluation. The project application specifies the deadline for submitting the evaluation.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Does the implementation of key activities and outputs correspond to the schedule and current needs?

Implementation of key activities and outputs to a large extent **corresponds to the schedule** and the **current needs of member institutions**. Compared to the beginning of the project implementation, there is no delay in project activities. The change from the original plan was mainly caused by the ERMS system (see KA5), where the system upgrade was not financed, and an alternative solution is currently being prepared. Significant issues have yet to be discovered as a result of the funding transition to the follow-up NCIP project, which was rated as trouble-free by the actors interviewed. License agreements and agreements on making EIR available to member institutions were signed according to schedule. Representatives of the member institutions evaluate the involvement in the project very positively and plan to continue in it.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Are there risks that threaten the implementation of the project and the achievement of the set goals?

The risks listed in the following table are taken from the Project Charter (current version as of May 2021). These are the risks identified by the Charter at the start of the project, as well as the evaluator's ongoing assessment of their relevance, likelihood level, and potential impact on the project. In addition to the risks listed in the table, we highlight potential additional risks in this subsection.



Table 7 Risk assessment for project implementation

#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
1.	Title	Time-consuming administration of procurement according to the regulations of MYES in its departments	<p>The risk is significantly lower than in the initial phase of the project but is still relevant.</p> <p>Even though there are fewer PPs than at the start of the project, their implementation is time-consuming and administratively demanding.</p> <p>Furthermore, the complexity of the PP stems from the necessity of the inspections and the approval process by the Managing Authority or other entities (the Government of the Czech Republic, the meeting of the management of the MYES).</p>
	Description	In 2017, several public procurement contracts of a smaller or larger nature will be implemented, which, in the event of their failure or delay, may disrupt the project schedule and the performance of individual stages.	
	Measure	Adoption of such extraordinary measures at MYES in order to begin contracts within the required deadlines, perfect readiness of the tender documentation.	
2.	Title	Complexity of Public Procurement (PPs)	<p>The risk is still current. Legal supervision is provided by an external contractor. To date, one inspection had a financial impact - the costs were determined to be ineligible and thus covered outside the CEL; the other inspections had no financial impact.</p>
	Description	Based on the experience of the previous programme period, the area of public procurement appears to be very complicated and problematic, and the risk of incorrect procurement procedure on the part of the contracting authority is relatively high. In the case of contracts with such a specific subject of fulfilment (for most EIR, there is only one provider, namely their issuer), as is the case with this project, the risk is even higher. Risk can be significantly reduced by providing external legal oversight of the entire process and corresponding documentation.	
	Measure	Provision of an external service (legal supervision) ensuring supervision of the entire process, planning sufficient funds for this service, perfect readiness of the tender documentation	
3.	Title	Delay in the start of project implementation	



#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
	Description	A significant majority of EIR access licences agreed under the current decentralised model are only valid until the end of 2017. New licences must therefore be secured already in the course of 2017. In the course of 2017, it is therefore necessary not only to create a functional NLC, but also to secure new licenses from providers through it.	The risk is no longer current. During the course of the project, delays from the beginning of the project implementation were eliminated.
	Measure	Maximum possible shortening of deadlines for communication with the community, intensive involvement of the expert group. Direct expedited appointment of the Expert Council by its Chairman for the first phase of the project. Eventually, the launch of some activities that do not explicitly require project costs even before the project starts.	
4.	Title	Non-fulfilment of project objectives at the end of its implementation date	The risk is minimal, primarily due to the approval of the follow-up NCIP project, which will be more focused on the Open Access model. The results of the interviews and the questionnaire survey show that the main objectives of the project have been met.
	Description	It is possible that during the project, changes to the project that are incompatible with the approved version will be required. The transition of e-journal business models to Gold Open Access may be a significant factor.	
	Measure	The risk is partially eliminated by shortening the subsidized period from the OP RDE to 3 years (a shorter time horizon will allow us to respond more flexibly to the situation).	
5.	Title	Sustainability of the project after the end of the support from the OP RDE	Given the approval of the subsequent NCIP project, this risk should be low. This project should ensure the member institutions' support for the purchase of EIRs. In particular, the interviews praised the quality and constructive cooperation of all stakeholders
	Description	There is a risk that the MYES will not ensure enough workers with an adequate wage fund for and especially for the part of the workers ensuring the operation of CzechELib.	
	Measure	After the end of the support from the OP RDE, the support will continue to be provided at least for the operation of the national centre, or even for the purchase of EIR from national sources.	



#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
			in the project's approval and implementation. ¹¹ Member institutions support the approved reduction in financial support for the follow-up project (see previous chapters).
6.	Title	The decision of the state not to follow-up with support from the Slovak Republic after the end of the support from the OP RDE	See risk No. 5
	Description	There is a risk that the concerted efforts of the MYES, CRC, HEC and the CAS will not succeed in persuading the RDI Council to renew its support for the provision of EIR from the RDI support budget from 2020 onwards. If, after the end of the support from OP RDE, support for the purchase of EIR is not provided, there is a risk of a massive departure of CzechELib users.	
	Measure	1. CzechELib will provide materials for intensive lobbying at the government level. 2. The quality of its services convinces CzechELib that it is advantageous to remain a user even under these conditions.	
7.	Title	Demise of the software vendor	The risk is not current, NTK is the owner of the source codes and the software.
	Description	It cannot be ruled out that the company that produces and maintains the ordered software will cease to exist.	
	Measure	The software will be created as open and documented code, the functionality will be divided into separate, independent applications.	
8.	Title	Location of CzechELib in NTK	

¹¹ Approved as a "project of shared activities", according to the new institute introduced by the amendment to Act No. 130/2002 Coll. with effect from 12 September 2020.



#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
	Description	At present, NTK does not have the space capacity to accommodate about 20 Employees of the CzechELib Centre.	The risk was mitigated by the dislocation of workers.
	Measure	The situation could be improved by the integration of the CTU Central Library along the lines of the UCT and IOCB libraries. Recruitment of a significant part of experts from the beneficiary's staff (they already have their own spatial capacity), or from persons allocated at the Dejvice campus (own capacity, walking distance to team meetings). Use of teleconferencing means for communication with more distant team members.	
9.	Title	Financing of EIR at the national level from the state budget will not be ensured or will be provided to a limited extent.	See risk No. 5
	Description	There is a risk that funds for the purchase of EIR will not be sufficiently allocated within the state budget.	
	Measure	CzechELib will ask the MYES to request the RDI Council to renew support for the acquisition of EIR starting in 2020 in the preparation of the medium-term outlook for the budget in 2017. At the same time, CzechELib will ask the representation of higher education institutions (CRC, HEC) and the Presidium of the CAS to support this application.	
10.	Title	Project staffing of the Licensing Centre	The risk is lower than in the previous evaluation periods. The position of HPM was successfully filled, however, the concurrence of the functions of HPM and the director of NC CzechELib is not optimal. This will be resolved within the follow-up NCIP project. The position of guarantor of publicity was filled. Two FTE positions are missing from the license unit
	Description	Due to the need for specific qualifications of the MPM and project team members, it is possible that these personnel will not be obtained in time.	
	Measure	Identification and establishing contact with potential employees started already in the Q3 2016. Adequate levels of planned salary resources will improve recruitment success.	



#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
			<p>(focused primarily on contract negotiation and bibliometric analysis).</p> <p>In general, it is challenging to find suitable candidates for jobs in the project, due to relatively specialized expertise and limited salary opportunities.</p> <p>After the end of the project (at the end of 2022), the financing of the CzechELib project team will be terminated and the employees will be transferred to the funding source of the follow-up NCIP project upon agreement. By June 2022, it is planned to present the employees with conditions of transition. The risk of a team breakup is not significant (among other things, due to adequate conditions within the NCIP), on the contrary, there is an effort to strengthen the team.</p>
11 .	Title	Staffing of the Licensing Centre – professional	<p>The risk was mitigated by the involvement of several experts in the Expert Council of the project. See also risk No. 10</p>
	Description	With regard to the necessity of high and specific qualifications of professional employees of the CzechELib NLC, it is possible that they will not be obtained in time and in sufficient numbers.	
	Measure	Identification and contacting of potential professional employees started already in the Q3 2016. Adequate levels of planned salary resources will improve recruitment success.	
12 .	Title	Failure to ensure the transfer of current experts with experience in negotiating licenses and prices of EIR to the central organization.	See risk No. 10



#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
	Description	There is a risk that experts in negotiating licenses and prices of EIR (especially consortium leaders within the implementation of support programs of the MYES) will not be interested in working within the central organization, or these experts will not be approached.	
	Measure	Identification and contacting of potential professional employees started already in the 3. Q 2016. Adequate levels of planned salary resources will improve recruitment success.	
13 .	Title	The Hardware fails during the project.	The risk exists, but it is minimal. The acquired hardware should provide sufficient capacity. In the event of an outage, it should be possible to use the NTK reserves.
	Description	Failures of common hardware cannot be ruled out	
	Measure	Sufficient resources are allocated for replacement for consumer hardware. For the so-called enterprise hardware, contractual provision of guarantees for the duration of the project is envisaged.	
14 .	Title	Sustainability and data security	The risk is minimal, there was no change in the severity of the risk during the evaluation period.
	Description	Since the data will also contain sensitive information such as prices and terms and conditions, it is essential to ensure that it is inalienable.	
	Measure	The risk is eliminated by running the software in a local installation, not as a SaaS.	
15 .	Title	Unwillingness of EIR users to participate in the CzechELib licensing centre.	The risk is partly still current, albeit to a lesser extent than in previous evaluation periods. Part of the EIR is acquired by member institutions outside the CEL, usually due to the
	Description	There is a risk that some potential participants will purchase separately from their own budgets or, considering the required amount of participation, will look for other sources of	



#	Title – Description – Measure		EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
		financing for the purchase of EIR, which will lead to fragmentation of the overall EIR portfolio.	very narrow specialization of their focus.
	Measure	The amount of support means is a magnet for institutions. The risk is significantly reduced by shortening the pilot period – a reasonably low participation rate. In the period of financing EIR from the Slovak Republic, it will depend on the amount of support. CzechELib's range of services convinces users of the advantages of participating in the project, during and after the sustainability period.	The increase in risk is likely to occur in 2024, when support will start to be reduced (by 2.5% /year) (the same risk will then apply to the follow-up NCIP project). Nevertheless, interviews with member institutions show that the planned reduction in support is being considered and is not a major problem for them. A major role in this context may be played by the increase in prices with the transition to Open Access, which, according to the European experience, is happening.
16	Title	Hardware will not sustain operations	The risk is minimal, there was no change in the severity of the risk during the evaluation period.
	Description	The hardware is designed for high utilization, yet with extremely successful fulfilment of the project goals, its capacity may be exceeded from time to time.	
	Measure	The hardware solution will consider the impact load, a sufficiently dimensioned hardware will be purchased.	
17	Title	Establishment of a parallel institution focused on the central purchase of EIR in the Czech Republic, decentralization of the system.	The risk is minimal, the current project is functional according to member institutions and other actors. The motivation to establish such an institution is low and no attempt to implement a similar project has occurred during the duration of CEL.
	Description	There is a risk that some organizations will establish a parallel association for the purchase of EIR.	
	Measure	The amount of funds is a magnet for institutions. A parallel association without support makes no sense and is not attractive. CzechELib's offer of	



#	Title – Description – Measure	EY's assessment of risk in the assessment period
	services convinces users of the advantages of participating in the project.	

In addition to the risks listed in the Charter, the evaluator identifies the following risks:

- ▶ **Setting of financial conditions in the follow-up NCIP project.** Most representatives of the member institutions confirmed their interest in participating in the follow-up project, with the condition that financial conditions would not deteriorate significantly. They would then have to re-evaluate which resources they could acquire and whether they would participate in the project at all. The course of the discussions with the member institutions showed that a reduction in support was presented to them and given the gradual reduction, this is not yet a big risk.
- ▶ **License agreements expire in 2022.** The acquisition process for licensing agreements, which would take effect from 2023, is currently underway. At the end of 2021, a meeting with member institutions was held, which was focused on the transition of funding from the National Centre for Information Support for Research, Development and Innovation (NCIP) project and the renewal of licensing agreements from 2023. At the same time, nominations for EIR were made, which member institutions will want to contract from 2023.
- ▶ **Transformation Treaties** will differ from the current settings. Should there be a significant increase in prices, it will depend very much on the individual member institutions whether they will still have not only an interest, but also the financial means to cover the costs. Due to experience, an increase in financial demands is expected, so it is necessary to prepare the model in a way that the transformation occurs gradually without a significant shock. High inflation can also have an impact, which can affect price offers to some extent.
- ▶ **Signing of the letter of exclusivity¹² by the publisher(s)** is currently a complication and may affect public procurement, for example by the cancellation or non-announcement of certain contracts. The condition of exclusivity is not accepted by some publishers (especially those abroad who do not know the context of the legal framework in the Czech Republic) and therefore try to circumvent it, which complicates the legal process. This is a risk that, in one case, already entailed the refusal of a publisher whose internal policy did not allow him to sign such a declaration.
- ▶ **Personnel changes in the management of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports** (at the highest level) could cause personnel changes at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. With the current personnel settings, the cooperation works very well, the communication is correct and reliable.
- ▶ **The situation with regards the coronavirus pandemic.** Although the current situation appears to be relatively stable, unexpected government measures are still imminent. Uncertainty in this respect and its effects may lead to a reduction in the budget of member institutions.
- ▶ **Perceived worse bargaining position among smaller institutions** may negatively affect their willingness to engage in the follow-up project.

¹² The letter of exclusivity means the designation of the Company or Publisher itself as the exclusive intermediary of the resource in the Czech Republic for the given period.



The lower perceived contribution among the large key institutions, as well as the potential negative impact on their cooperation and involvement after the project's completion, was identified as an additional risk in the second evaluation report. In this evaluation report, this risk has been significantly reduced. According to the questionnaire survey and structured interviews, the majority of institutions intend to participate in the follow-up NCIP project and consider the benefits of CzechELib to be significant.

EQ2 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ2 – To what extent are defined target groups familiar with the existence and overall concept of the Project? Is the current publicity and promotion of the EIR effective?

The questionnaire survey and the guided interviews prove that **publicity and promotion**, which is aimed at member institutions, is **deemed satisfactory**. Respondents evaluated that they had enough information and evaluated communication with the implementation team positively. Representatives of the institutions usually communicated with the implementation team on an ad hoc basis when they had a problem, and according to their statements, communication was always fast and helpful. Communication towards other target groups (representatives of public administration in the field of RDI or representatives of the RDI Council) takes place in a similar way as in the previous evaluated period, mainly through the Expert Council and the Steering Committee of the CzechELib project, in which representatives of the project implementer are participating, as well as MYES, ALCU, CRC, and the CAS.

Evaluation of partial EQs – To what extent do the defined target groups have an awareness of the existence and overall concept of the CzechELib project?

Representatives of other actors (MŠMT, GACR, TC CAS, UCT) overall had a **high awareness of the project**. The respondent from the MYES was aware of the project thanks to regular communication with the project implementation team. Furthermore, respondents obtained information about the project from the CzechELib Steering Committee, the Project Expert Council, by partial involvement in the project (e.g., through project meetings), or through professional publications. One respondent was involved in the project's conception and evaluation from a variety of perspectives.

Among university students, there was a very low awareness of the CzechELib project (13%). The level of awareness of the follow-up NCIP project was slightly higher, reaching less than 27%. Although university students are the target group of the project in the sense of users of the project outputs, they are not the target group of communication and promotion by the project team. Member institutions are responsible for the communication and promotion of EIR. The information collected from the questionnaire survey can thus only be understood as complementary.

Evaluation of partial EQs – How is the project publicity implemented and what are its effects, is the publicity effective?

Communication with member institutions and other stakeholders took place through several channels, the main of which are:

- ▶ regular meetings of member institutions
- ▶ project website
- ▶ newsletter
- ▶ personal or e-mail communication
- ▶ Meeting of the Project Steering Committee



- ▶ conferences organized within the framework of the project.

To share important information with member institutions, regular meetings with the implementation team were held 2 times a year (the last meeting took place in April 2022). Furthermore, communication takes place individually in case of ad hoc problems or through a regular newsletter. Cooperation and communication with member institutions is set up functionally and works without major difficulties. Communication to interested parties is anchored in the following documents:

- ▶ Communication management strategy,
- ▶ CzechELib' Communication Plan 2021–2022.

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, 84% of respondents from member institutions used the project website as a source of information. Furthermore, 80% used the possibility of sending a newsletter and 86% said that they took the advantage of an offer to attend one of the conferences organized within the CzechELib project.

As for the newsletter, in 2020 and 2021, we managed to send out five issues, which has so far proved to be ideal for reflecting news for the target group of member institutions. The graphics was modified to their current form and the distribution takes place to 228 active contacts. According to the statistics of the implementation team, an average of 49% of people actively view the newsletter, and on average 20% of people actively click on the links.

On the CzechELib website, the Matomo system is newly used for monitoring statistics. In 2021 and 2022, the most visited pages were homepage, E-sources, About Czechelib, News, List of Member Institutions and Training.

For the purposes of member institutions, in 2021 **a forum was launched**, where people can discuss EIR nominations. Therefore, if two institutions find that they require a specific EIR, they do not comply with the 3+ rule, they can involve other institutions with a possible interest in this resource in the discussion. The discussion is not managed by the CEL team, and the implementation team only modifies or supplements information.

One of the platform's respondents had a negative opinion of its creation on the Google platform, where a Google email address is also required. As a result, he had to use a private email and may have missed some information because he did not use email on a regular basis. As a result, the respondent believed it would be appropriate to shift communication between institutions to another platform, such as the project website. It would also be beneficial to categorise the various conversations thematically, such as artistic, economic, and so on.

The communication strategy has been developed and focuses on providing information about the project to both internal (NTK employees) and external (member institutions, library visitors, EIR providers, employees/external members of member institutions, representatives of other institutions such as the HEC, CAS, CRC, and others) audiences. E-mail, project website, newsletter, or meetings of member institutions were mentioned as communication tools used by the member institutions - i.e., most of the communication channels specified in the plan. The YouTube channel, for example, provides development potential for upcoming educational videos.



EQ3 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ3 – To what extent are the selected representatives of the target group satisfied with the informational and methodological support from the national license centre?

According to the questionnaire survey and guided interviews, representatives of the member institutions regarded the NLC's **information and methodological support as adequate and mostly positive**. Respondents were pleased with the speed of communication, the support provided by the implementation team, and the manner and quantity of information provided. **When compared to the beginning of the project, significant progress has been made**, with the evaluation of communication speed and fluency, among other things, significantly improved. According to the feedback, these processes are well-established, and as stated by the member institutions during the interviews, in the event of a problem or question, they know where or who to turn to, and any problems are resolved quickly and efficiently.

Some respondents appreciated online forms of meeting due to the possible need to commute to Prague and would leave at least the option **hybrid forms**. Also, for education, 37% of respondents said they would prefer hybrid forms of events in the future. In addition, member institutions would welcome support in the areas of Open Access, Open Data, Transformation Agreements, Data Analytics, ERMS, and Remote Access. Some respondents said they would appreciate training for beginners, as they took over the project from one of their colleagues. At the same time, interest was expressed in sharing good practices on working with EIR and more specific topics.

Finally, the institutions have shown interest in **more information about the NCIP project**. The project was presented by the implementation team during a meeting with member institutions in April 2022 (but also in previous years 2020 and 2021), the presentation is available on the CzechELib website. While some rated the level of awareness as sufficient (62.5%), others would have appreciated more specific information on the terms, possibilities and conditions of the follow-up project and whether the NCIP project website or another channel would be used to share up-to-date and relevant information. Some would also welcome the submission of an overview of basic information (including current project status), for example via newsletter or email. Even though the NCIP project and its website are running, it would be advisable to focus on informing member institutions about the planned timetable and where to obtain relevant information in order to make member institutions more aware.

Data support for analysis and evaluation of research results was used by 14% of respondents, all of whom considered the support adequate. This question was answered by 10 respondents. Respondents agreed that they mainly use statistics from accesses, or statistical data on the use of individual EIR. The responses also showed that CELUS is used for this purpose, but one respondent stressed that the available data need to be checked due to the occasional errors (which are caused by errors in the input data). **Support methodology**. 6.5 % of respondents used the support methodology to analyse and evaluate research findings, and all considered it was adequate.

EQ4 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ4 – What is the Project's ongoing perceived benefit among the representatives of participating institutions?

Since this is the Final Report, during the questionnaire survey and during the interviews, we monitored the overall evaluation of the benefits of the project for member institutions. The results of the questionnaire showed that the project was mainly beneficial **in financial and time savings**. In the questionnaire, 55 % of respondents mentioned that thanks to the project, they acquire **more EIR than before joining** – most



often because of price consolidation and thus, better financial offers have made it possible to include additional EIR to purchase. As the questionnaire survey showed, the cost of EIR was lower for less than 54 % of respondents thanks to the project.

„The CzechELib team has secured very favourable pricing conditions for resources that in the past were at the limit of affordability for us. However, the main incentive was not the government subsidy, which is certainly welcome for our institution, but the actual price of the resource, which was unacceptable from our original suppliers “.

[respondent, questionnaire survey]

Compared to the previous year, the percentage of respondents whose organization cut costs by purchasing through the CzechELib project increased significantly, from 37.7% to 53.6%. The rate of financial savings in the answers ranged from tens of thousands to 3 million CZK. According to five respondents, it was hundreds of thousands CZK. Large financial savings were reported mainly by small and medium-sized member institutions.

Some respondents also appreciated **the possibility of a wider scientific focus of the offer**, including the offer of collections of scientific journals. At the same time, respondents also acknowledged **organizational benefits**, such as central purchasing and related unified administrative tasks. This led to **reduction of administrative burden** of member institutions, which was also stated by 91% of respondents of the questionnaire survey. **The project has reduced the fragmentation of EIR provisioning in 95% of institutions**. At the same time, 80% of respondents said that the CzechELib project facilitated the management of purchases in their organizations. Another benefit was the unification of invoicing and licensing conditions. A detailed evaluation of the individual benefits is in the following table:

Table 8 Perceived benefit of the project from the perspective of representatives of the institutions involved

Note 1 scale 10=great benefit, 1=no benefit

Contribution	Evaluation in 2022	Evaluation in 2021	Comparison with 2021
Reduction of administrative burden for the organizations purchasing EIR	8,6	8,5	↑
Stabilisation of the EIR financing	8,6	8,8	↓
Unification of license terms	8,6	8,4	↑
Unification of billing practices	8,5	8,4	↑
Reducing overall EIR costs	7,5	9	↓
Increased user comfort and customer service for end users	7	7,6	↓
Quicker acquisitions of EIR	6,9	7,1	↓
CELUS statistical system	6,2	-	-
ERMS EIR management system	5,3	-	-



Compared to last year, there was a slight decrease in the evaluation of some areas of benefit, including the reduction of EIR costs, the stabilization of the EIR financing and the faster acquisition of EIR. On the contrary, the increase in value could be observed in the reduction of the administrative burden and in the unification of invoicing and licensing conditions. The expected reduction of support in the follow-up project may be a reason for the downgrading of the stabilisation of the EIR funding system, but member institutions reported that they are aware of and preparing for the changes. Drop in ratings *Reduction of overall EIR costs* it may be associated with the inflation rate or with the exchange rate of the Czech crown – but this was rather problematic in previous years. At the same time, an increase in the cost of EIR may be linked to the purchase of more resources and to the stabilisation of the financial costs of EIR in each institution. Downgrade in *increased user comfort and customer service for end users* may be linked to the standardisation of services for final customers. Evaluation *quicker acquisition of EIR* may have decreased due to the already established supply of EIR in individual institutions and the 3+ rule, which is accepted as proportionate by all organisations. At the same time, the evaluation may be linked to requirements for new products, such as music databases, etc., which are currently not possible to provide.

The benefits of ERMS and CELUS were the worst evaluated, but as already mentioned, the contribution was influenced by the size of the institutions. While it made sense for large institutions to manage EIR in each system, smaller institutions mentioned that there was no need to use ERMS for their purposes and managed the resource units separately. At the same time, the CELUS system played a role in making employees less familiar with the possibilities of use.

According to interviews with member institutions, **the project has exceeded most expectations**. During the interviews, all interviewees stated that they intended to continue with the follow-up NCIP project and would appreciate it if the process and communication setup remained the same. The member institutions were informed about the reduction in financial support for the EIR and perceived the risk of not being able to participate in the follow-up project primarily in relation to the institution's internal funding, i.e. if management support was reduced (relevant for example for regional libraries). As a result, the perceived benefits of CzechELib among member institutions are generally high.

EQ5 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ5 – What is the Project's ongoing perceived benefit by other key actors?

Other key actors perceive the benefits of the project positively. During the interviews, the majority of respondents mentioned small suggestions for improvement or possible risks, which mainly concern the follow-up NCIP project. Across the interviews, the perceived benefits are mainly the following:

- ▶ centralization of EIR provision, unification of contractual conditions
- ▶ establishment of NTK as a service, management of communication with the MYES
- ▶ cost-effectiveness
- ▶ community unification and centralisation

A major benefit of the project is the **centralization of EIR provision**. The CzechELib project replaced several parallel projects and consortia from the previous period. In the context of the Czechia, the project was perceived as an efficient tool for providing services for the RDI sector. In this context, the project met expectations and enabled **to unify conditions**, including contracting. Prior to the project, each institution independently negotiated the model of provision agreements with its lawyers and the terms were highly fragmented. This has been broken down, and at the same time, **the acceptance of a universal contract template has also been agreed**. These steps brought order to the process of concluding contracts. It is currently possible to predict the conclusion of contracts. In addition, the administrative burden and the



demands on the legal departments were reduced and the negotiating power of member institutions has improved.

The fact that **NTK was able to establish itself as a service** with the competence to provide cross-cutting activities was also cited as a benefit of the project. There is no other organization in the Czech Republic that would have the opportunity to implement activities like this under MYES. This development, according to one of the respondents, meant a step forward for MYES and NTK. Another respondent also pointed to the establishment of contact between the CzechELib Steering Committee and the Ministry. This led to increased communication about the EIR and higher education. Close contact and management made it possible to solve problems arising between the MYES and universities in the field of EIR.

Furthermore, **unexpected benefits of the project were identified**, most notably **cost savings and community unification**. These benefits were not intended at the beginning of the project but are positively perceived by member institutions and other relevant actors. The cost-effectiveness was possible mainly due to savings on EIR, when it was managed to negotiate lower prices than expected in 2015. According to a respondent, there is no objective data on potential costs without the project, but thanks to the lower negotiated EIR prices, member institutions saved funds and could possibly purchase of additional EIR. In addition, according to the respondent, the number of available EIR is also acknowledged by foreign students who come to the Czech Republic under the Erasmus programme. At the same time, thanks to savings on EIR, the budget of the CzechELib project was reduced and it was possible to invest this money in other OP RDE projects.

Last but not least, there were two things mentioned as a benefit of the project - **community building and unification of terrain**. Thanks to the project, it was possible to set up a functional platform that serves as a good starting block for future development. From the acquisition perspective, key actors were brought together, and a scientific council (expert plenum) was organised. At the same time, the activities of librarians were coordinated and the competences for coordination and negotiation regarding EIR were partially transferred to the hands of Vice-Rectors and other relevant stakeholders. According to one of the respondents, this was initially perceived by librarians as damage to their position, nonetheless, they gradually welcomed the reduction in administration and the opportunity to pursue other activities.

Risks, which respondents perceived at the beginning of the project, were eliminated (especially the concern about sufficient funding and quality staffing). Minor risks also exist for the follow-up NCIP project. This involves the risk of ensuring sufficient funding, including political support at the highest levels and setting up financial support so that it is acceptable to all member institutions. In relation to the transformation to Open Access, higher costs are expected, which is a risk that will require attention and mitigation.

EQ6 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ6 – Is the preparation and implementation of internal evaluations, i.e. evaluations within the Project, effective?

The evaluation of the CzechELib project takes place on two basic levels:

- ▶ internal evaluation provided by the beneficiary's capacities,
- ▶ external evaluation commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MYES)

The first systematic internal evaluation was established in 2020-2021. The CzechELib project team invited external assistance in the form of a consultant to prepare the internal evaluation, who helped to set up the methodology, implementation and assessment of the internal evaluation. At the end of 2020, the



MPM together with an external consultant prepared a questionnaire survey for project employees. The questionnaire was completed by 7 project employees.

In-depth interviews and workshops were also planned as activities, but these could not take place due to the pandemic. Employees therefore had the opportunity to comment on the draft evaluation report. In April 2021, a final, non-public version of the evaluation report was composed. The conclusions of the evaluation showed that the set goals were achieved, and the project processes are functional, nonetheless, in order to maintain the functionality of the project, it is necessary to adapt the processes and activities to the current requirements. A crucial factor is quality communication between key groups. Currently underway **collection of documents and data for the next (final) evaluation report**, which will be established in July and August 2022, internal evaluation is to continue in the follow-up NCIP project. The collecting of documents and data for the next (final) evaluation report, which will be published in July and August 2022, is underway. The internal evaluation will be also carried out in the subsequent NCIP project.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Is the methodological setting of evaluations and the scope of input data collection sufficient to evaluate the results and impacts of the supported project?

By this time, **first internal was evaluation created**. The main author of the evaluation is the MPM, who, together with an external consultant, prepared the structure of the evaluation report and the draft of the questionnaire survey for the project employees. A set of 15 evaluation questions was created, all of which are processed into the evaluation report, including a plan of further steps for the next evaluation period. However, the data collection has so far taken place only through a limited number of interviews and questionnaire surveys among NTK employees.

In the next phase of internal evaluation, data collection from member institutions is also expected to happen. Evaluation is also planned in the follow-up NCIP project. For a better comparison, it would be appropriate to maintain the form of evaluation questions from the current evaluation for the next phases. Currently, **documents for the final internal evaluation report are collected**.

The basic structure will be based on the first internal evaluation and the MPM again plans to involve an external expert. The deadline for submission is based on the project application. Given that the evaluation report is still being produced, it is not possible to evaluate the incorporation of the recommendations from the IER 2021, which primarily concerned the inclusion of qualitative methods of data collection and the focus on project processes. In the context of the transition to the follow-up NCIP project, it will be important to monitor the awareness and satisfaction of the employees of the implementation team with the ongoing changes. We recommend using qualitative methods of data collection, especially in-depth interviews.

In addition, project management **includes evaluating the implementation of the plan, managing risks and gathering feedback from members of the implementation team**. From the point of view of the implementation team, the project is well set up and implemented, there are good relations with most of the representatives of the member institutions and problems are rather minor and isolated. The progress and description of the external evaluation is the subject of this report.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Does the beneficiary work with the findings and recommendations that resulted from the evaluations?

Given that the first internal evaluation was conducted during the evaluated period, with the final output prepared in May 2021, it is not possible to assess whether the Beneficiary works with the internal evaluation findings and recommendations. The evaluation, on the other hand, formulates specific recommendations in individual areas identified as problematic, the fulfilment of which can be verified in the final evaluation report. The outputs of the Supplier's external evaluation, in the form of annual evaluation reports, are the



source of any changes. Through monthly flash reports and other ad hoc communication, the beneficiary is kept up to date on evaluation activities even during the evaluation period.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Are evaluations in the implemented form perceived by the beneficiary as a beneficial tool for project management?

The final form of the internal evaluation is prepared as of May 2021. The evaluation determines whether the objectives were met and whether the procedures in place are effective. More time is required to evaluate the overall benefits of the internal evaluation.

EQ7 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ7 – To what extent is the created NLC functional and fulfilling its role?

NLC **fulfilled its role and can be described as functional**. The project was evaluated as beneficial by member institutions and other actors and its individual aspects, such as communication with the implementation team, provision of technical support, or the purchase and management of EIR, were also positively evaluated. Despite the fact that in some cases the 3+¹³ rule could not be complied with, and institutions acquired specific resources independently, the rule was seen as relevant. The ambition of the project was not to secure all EIRs, and the project aimed to secure important resources relevant to multiple institutions.

As stated in NTK's financial analysis¹⁴, the CzechELib project organizes an estimated 85 to 90% of public expenditure on the purchase of all types of EIR on a nationwide scale. As far as electronic magazines are concerned, in 2019 CzechELib facilitated 87.5% of purchases nationwide. The volume of expenditure of the commercial sphere has not yet been analyzed, according to fragmentary information, Czech companies in this area are significantly lagging behind developed countries. Institutions usually purchase EIR from their sources for small amounts compared to what resources they acquire through the CzechELib project (some resources could not be purchased by institutions without support due to the high price).

Nearly 70 contracts are planned for 2023+ period. In most cases, there is one contract with each publisher, with a few larger publishers, there are several contracts (2 to 4), primarily for very disparate types of products.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Does czechELib provide comprehensive information support on the newly introduced system of access to EIR? If so, how effectively?

According to the information obtained from the guided interviews and the questionnaire survey, it is possible to state that **information support in relation to access to EIR is adequate**. Given the fact that the implementation of the project has been going on for several years, it is possible to consider the awareness of EIR among member institutions to be stabilized and information support is used in case of any ad hoc

¹³ The minimum number of MIs required to negotiate the purchase of a particular EIR is set at three, with each member institution having one vote, regardless of the size of the institution. According to an interview with the project implementation team, a lower number of required votes would significantly increase the number of EIR and the number of votes reflects foreign practice.

¹⁴ Financial analysis of resources in access to scientific information, 2020. Available here:
<https://repozitar.techlib.cz/record/1604/files/>



needs. Member institutions obtained relevant information at regular meetings, through communication with staff of the NLC, but also on the project website and through the newsletter. For the needs of member institutions, a platform was established to serve as a forum for communication and sharing experience. Knowledge of the project was low among university students (see chapter 3.4. – EQ4). On the other hand, almost 70% of students said that the institution in which they work shared information with them about the available EIR. Therefore, although the CzechELib project does not work directly with this target group (it is not the aim of the project), the sharing of information is mediated through the respective member institution.

Evaluation of partial EQs – How beneficial are the implemented educational activities, seminars, conferences, etc.?

During the CzechELib project, member institutions had the opportunity to participate in **educational courses and seminars, or attend conferences** organized by the project implementation team. 86% of respondents took advantage of the opportunity to attend one of the conferences, and 65% of them used it for the offered education. The results of the questionnaire survey showed that most respondents (97%) from member institutions were satisfied with the offer of educational activities within the CzechELib project. More than half of the member institutions (51%) were further enabled by the project to communicate with other institutions involved. During the guided interviews, the connection with other institutions that solve similar problems and can share their experience with each other, was acknowledged.

Meetings of the member institutions were also well received, as they provided up-to-date information on the project's progress. Meetings and educational events were moved online during the pandemic, but some activities are already being brought back to physical form (as in the case of the April 7 meeting at NTK). While institutions wanted to return the meetings to a physical form, **there was interest in keeping the online form for education**. This was also confirmed in this year's survey, with the majority of respondents (37%) saying they would continue to welcome a hybrid form of education. The face-to-face form would be welcomed by 19% of respondents and 24% would welcome the online form, with the form of education not being important to the remainder.

Other topics for education included topics related to open resources and open science (Open Access, Open Data, Open Science) and the associated transformation contracts. There was also an interest in training in the field of web systems (ERMS and CELUS), which was connected with the proposal for training in the field of statistics. In addition to the subtopics, a recurring theme was to raise awareness of the NCIP follow-on project, specifically regarding specific opportunities, deadlines, and changes.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Is the centre successful in meeting the needs for the purchase of licences? If so, to what extent?

The method and process of purchasing EIR was evaluated by the member institutions as **adequate and corresponding to their needs and requirements**. The questionnaire survey showed that almost all member institutions were satisfied with the **purchase procedure** (1 respondent was dissatisfied). Compared to 2021, there was an increase in "definitely yes" responses from 49% to 58%. Thus, there has been an increase in the number of respondents who are completely satisfied with the purchase procedure.

According to the questionnaire survey, **35% of member institutions acquire EIR only through the CzechELib project**, and more than half of them also acquired EIR outside the NLC. Institutions that reported that they also acquire EIR outside the project were further asked about the ratio of resources acquired within and outside the project. Almost 13% of respondents said that they acquire 1/4 of EIR through the CzechELib project. More than half of the respondents (51%) said they acquire more than 3/4 of the EIR through the project. **We can thus state that thanks to the CzechELib project, member**



institutions acquire a significant amount of EIR, and the NLC thus manages to meet their demand to a fundamental extent. Despite this, nonetheless, the demand of member institutions for EIR is not fully covered, for the following reasons identified from the questionnaire survey as well as from structured interviews.

The largest proportion of respondents did not purchase certain resources via CzechELib because it was not possible to secure the EIR. Most often these were very specialized resources, for which it was not possible to fulfill the 3+ rule. Another reason for purchasing EIR outside the project was a long-term contract with the supplier.

5 respondents said that it is more advantageous for them to purchase EIR outside the CEL project, mainly due to smaller purchases of individual titles, when the institution does not use the entire collection, or negotiates prices and conditions with publishers. Participation in the VISK project (4 respondents) was also cited as the reason. Another reason given for acquiring an electronic resource outside the CEL project was the separate purchase of a title and a subject resource. At the same time, it was stated that the purchase of EIRs outside the CEL project was due to the need for long-term planning under the terms of the PPA within CEL, which makes it impossible to respond to current demand (during the pandemic, interest in Czech EIRs increased, but it was not possible to join the consortium).

Respondents were also interviewed as part of the questionnaire survey on **the impact of the CzechELib project on the amount of EIR acquired**, and how this amount has changed since involvement in the project. In this context, 15% of respondents said their organization **buy significantly more EIR thanks to the project**. Rather, more EIR is acquired by institutions thanks to the project, according to 39 respondents (40%) of their organization. According to 39 respondents (40%) the project did not affect the purchase of EIR in the institution in which it operates. Fewer resources are purchased by 5 respondents (5%). Very often a positive impact on the institution has been reported, when it acquires **more or the same number of resources for a lower amount of money**.

Evaluation of partial EQs – How do cooperating institutions perceive the way of involvement in the system implemented by the project (has voluntary proven itself or would they prefer a directive approach)?

Representatives of the member institutions evaluated the way **system of involvement in the purchase of EIR within the CzechELib project positively**. The benefit of the project was evaluated as an increase in the transparency of the purchase of EIR and the standardization of conditions. Although not all EIRs could be acquired through the project, the member institutions perceived a reduction in administration if the resources were mediated through CzechELib. The schedule of tasks and the transfer of information by the project implementation team were positively evaluated.

During the guided interviews, none of the institutions commented on the form of involvement, and when proposing for a future NCIP project, respondents often indicated that they would like to maintain the system of cooperation and processes as before. Some very specialized institutions have talked about the possibilities of expanding the offer, for example, to include music resources, and the focus on open data and database sharing has also been mentioned very often. According to some respondents, the position of smaller institutions was weaker than that of larger institutions, but they had no problem adapting to the set rules (including the already mentioned 3+ rule).

Evaluation of partial EQs– Can project management be considered effective?

During the review period, the NLC served its purpose. In comparison to the start of the project, the processes have been stabilised and the satisfaction of the member institutions' involvement has grown,



resulting in a strong desire to continue with the follow-up project. The results of the questionnaire survey and guided interviews revealed that the member institutions had no major issues. According to other actors interviewed, the NTK's role has been strengthened, as has communication with the Ministry (MYES).

Individual activities were carried out in accordance with the timetable. Following a conversation with a foreign organisation, it was discovered that the Czech Republic is on the path to Open Access as a result of the project, which is consistent with the trend in Europe and around the world. Last but not least, the transition to the follow-up NCIP project is proceeding smoothly. The project management can thus be considered effective, especially given the significant shift that has occurred since its inception.

EQ8 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ8 – To what extent is the electronic access (web interface) created by CzechELib user-friendly?

ERMS and CELUS are evaluated within this EQ. The evaluation of the instruments took place already in 2020, when they were perceived as useful by the member institutions. According to the evaluation, the use of ERMS has made it easier for most respondents to manage and acquire EIR, and the use of CELUS makes it possible to obtain statistics in a significantly simpler and faster way. User-friendliness was mostly regarded positively. IER 2020 monitored and briefly evaluated parameters (frequency of interface use, interface functions, user-friendliness, CzechELib awareness and communication, interface benefits, recommendations) based on the evaluation by the supplier's UX expert. The following is a preliminary description of both interfaces:

Table 9 Description of the evaluated interfaces

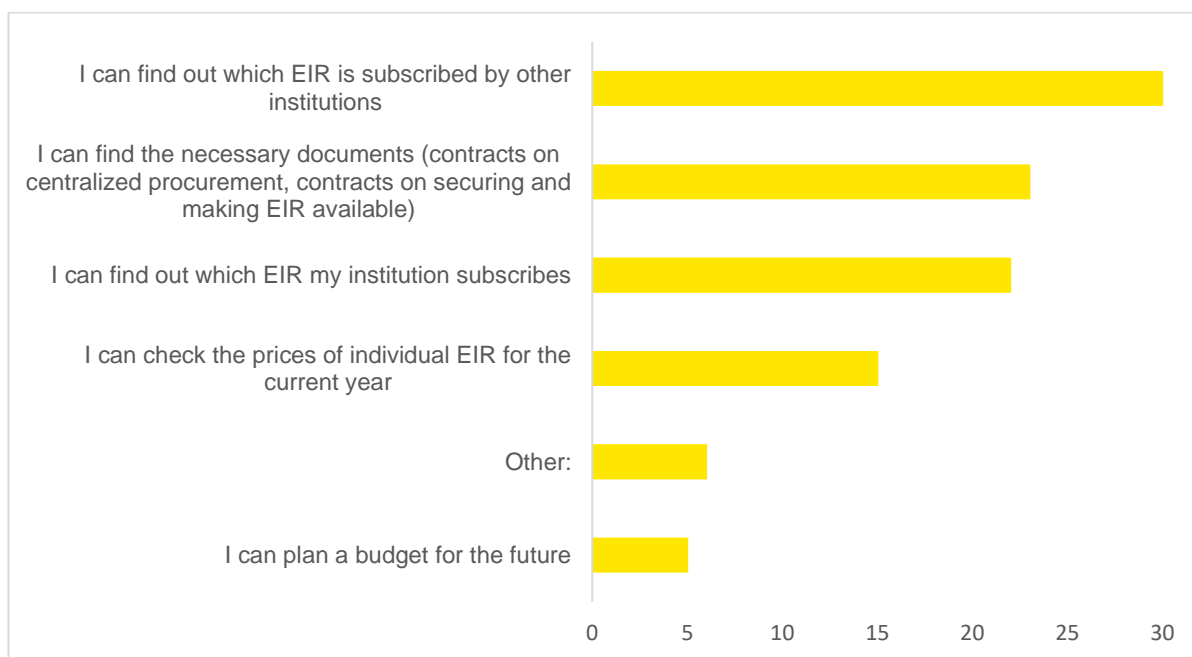
Web interface	Description
ERMS	<p>The ERMS (Electronic Resources Management System) web interface is used by representatives of member institutions to manage the agenda associated with the acquisition and disclosure of EIR. Member institutions representatives can monitor the individual phases (workflows) of acquired EIR and through ERMS, they have access to the records of contracts, the budget and an overview of resources and consortia.</p> <p>Member institutions can also use ERMS for EIR acquired outside CzechELib and the web interface allows them to manage all acquired EIR in one tool. The ERMS system was developed during 2019 and in autumn of 2019 was piloted and launched in a fully functional version.</p>
CELUS	<p>The CELUS interface is used by member institutions to obtain statistics on the use of EIR. Authorized people in member institutions have to monitor statistics on the use not only of their own EIR, but also of the use of EIR in other (anonymised) institutions or to monitor rejected access to EIR within their institution.</p> <p>As in the case of ERMS, representatives of member institutions can collect statistics for EIR acquired outside CzechELib. The CELUS interface was developed during autumn 2019, was tested between November 2019 and January 2020, and was officially announced for launch at the end of January 2020.</p>



In terms of frequency of use of the interface, **ERMS has the highest proportion of those who use it several times a year or once a year¹⁵ (52 %)**. Just under 7 % of respondents used ERMS several times a month and 9 % once a month, very often from larger and medium-sized institutions. Almost 19 % said they did not use the tool and the remaining 13 % were not familiar with the tool. Compared to 2020, the number of people who use the tool exceptionally (once or several times a year) and several times a month has increased. There was also an increase in the number of those who were not familiar with the tool, which could be due to the aforementioned change in staffing in the Member Institutions. At the same time, the number of those who never use the tool decreased from 30 % to 19 %.

Also, in the case of CELUS, the **highest proportion of those who use it more than once a year was also discovered (54 %)**. CELUS was used by 19 % of respondents about once a month, and only 3 % used it several times a month. Less than 17 % of respondents never use the tool, and 8 % are unaware of its existence. In comparison to 2020, the number of people who use the tool infrequently (once or twice a year) and once a month has increased. There has been a slight increase in the number of people who do not know about the tool and a decrease in the number of people who never use it, from 30 % to 17 %.

Chart 1 The most important features of the ERMS interface (multiple options possible)

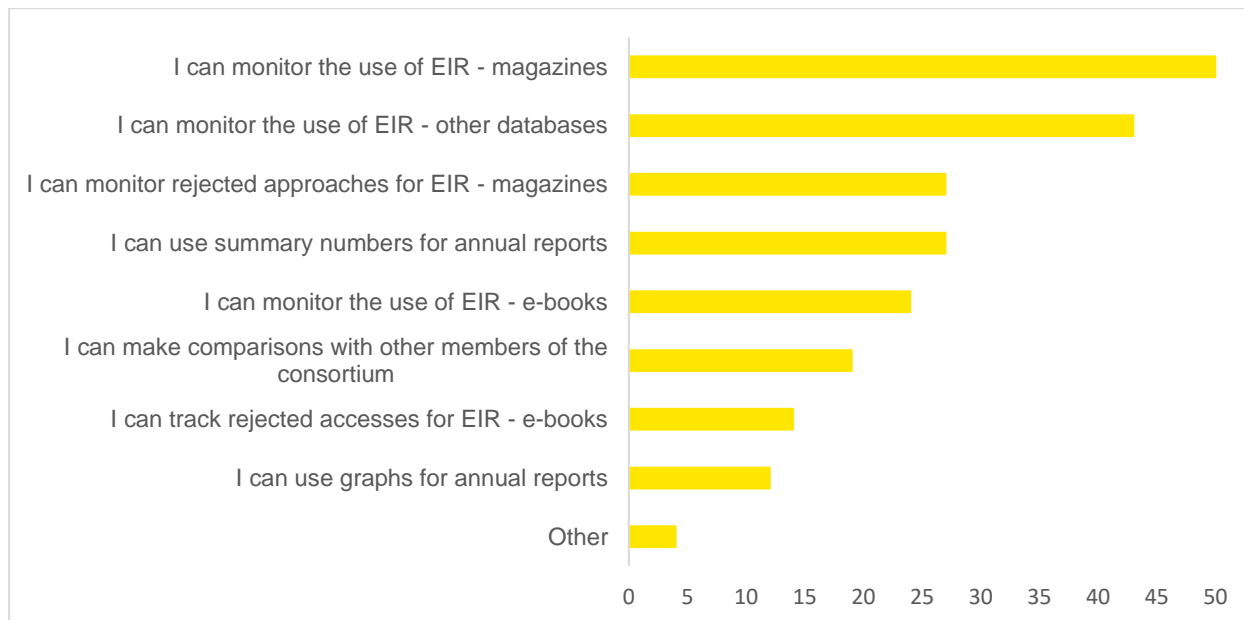


We also investigated what **the most important functions of the interface** are for users (what users use/plan to use the interface for) during the evaluation. Respondents used information about **which EIRs are subscribed by other institutions (30 %) and which EIRs are subscribed by the institution (30 %)** for the ERMS (22 %). Furthermore, the ERMS was used to locate the required documents (23 %) and to compare the prices of EIRs for a given year (15 %).

¹⁵ Used to prepare annual reports.



Chart 2 The most important features of the CELUS interface (multiple options possible)



In the case of CELUS, the most frequently used tools were the monitoring of the use of the EIR - journals (23 %) and the monitoring of the use of the EIR - other databases (19.5%). A similar number of respondents appreciated the possibility to monitor denied access to the EIZ and the usability of data for annual reports (12 %). The importance of the journal monitoring tool was also significant in 2020. For both interfaces, all the offered functions are used by at least some users. The least used functions are budget planning for the next period for ERMS and the use of graphs for annual reports for CELUS.

User-friendliness was assessed by the section of the questionnaire designated to member institution and by guided interviews.

Table 10 Evaluation of the ERS-M-CELUS interface

Statement	ERSM ¹⁶	CELUS
I can find the information I'm looking for in the interface quickly and easily	70 %	84,5 %
Learning to work with the interface was easy	70 %	80 %
The interface's control is straightforward and simple to grasp	68 %	80 %
All the terminology in the interface is understandable and I know what it means	64 %	70 %
The tool is reliable, I have not encountered errors	59 %	55 %
CzechELib sufficiently informs about news or planned changes to the system	76 %	72 %

¹⁶ Agreement with the statements in (%) - the answers "strongly agree" and "rather agree" are included.



Within the ERMS, **sharing information about new or planned changes to the system was rated highest** (70%). In addition, most people reported that information was easy to find in the tool, and learning the interface was not difficult. The fewest respondents agreed with the statement that there were no errors in the ERMS, and the tool was reliable. The CELUS tool was rated slightly more positively, with respondents **rating the ease of finding information** (84.5%), the ease of learning to use the tool (80%), and the ease and clarity of use (80%) the highest. Again, CELUS was the least likely to be satisfied with the reliability of the tool (also influenced by the quality of the input data).

During the interviews, some respondents stated that they did not know how to use the tools and thus did not take advantage of all of the options available to them. Because of errors or incomplete data, some people have reported downloading statistics directly from the producers in Excel format. At the same time, according to the respondents, some of the data were too general and thus did not fully serve the purpose of the institutions. In preparation for the new version of CELUS, one respondent stated that suggestions for additions/adjustments were gathered from member institutions. In the case of ERMS, a new service to replace the system is being sought (see EQ 1).

Information about launching the interfaces were assessed as sufficient in 2020, as well as other general information on the tools and possible updates. This year's questionnaire survey showed that approximately 13% of respondents do not know ERMS, and CELUS is unknown to 8% of respondents. During the interviews, most of the respondents were aware of the tools. In the case of ERMS the transfer of information is no longer relevant (due to the search for a new tool), in the case of CELUS it will be important to inform member institutions in time and to prepare training on the new version, which was also one of the topics suggested in the questionnaire survey for further training.

As the main benefit of ERMS, the simplification of EIR management, due to the concentration of documents in one place, was evaluated. As interviews with member institutions in 2020 showed, the benefit varied slightly according to the size of the institution. While larger institutions had the appropriate software to manage EIR, smaller institutions without similar software saw ERMS as a major improvement in managing EIR. The different size of institutions was also reflected in the use of ERMS for EIR acquired outside CzechELib. Respondents from smaller institutions appreciated the possibility to add their own EIR to ERMS (i.e., purchased outside the Project).

One respondent made a recommendation to find a better replacement for this tool. In the questionnaire survey, most respondents did not suggest any recommendations. Some stated that they felt the system lacked information on titles within the databases. Another respondent missed the implementation of a discovery system (a barrier was the suboptimal organisation of data within ERMS for this purpose) for the whole consortium, i.e., the possibility to quickly and easily (ideally outside the interface) search for a specific journal or resource and get quick information on which institution subscribes to it.

According to the guided interviews, **the most significant benefit of the CELUS interface** was time savings and overall simplification of statistical work. Some interviewees also appreciated the opportunity to compare themselves to other institutions involved in the project. Respondents who work in libraries would welcome the addition of training to teach them how to better utilise CELUS's potential. Some respondents would like to see more data collected. Some respondents also mentioned statistical inconsistencies or long delays in updating statistics.

„We are rather satisfied with the CELUS system, we use it for orientation findings of interest in EIR. However, the primary source for us is still self-generated statistics; we found out that the resulting numbers are not always the same in CELUS and in the



statistics from the publisher, so we use both methods." [respondent, questionnaire survey]

EQ9 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ9 – Are there any other identifiable shortcomings/weaknesses or gaps in the centralized purchasing system not mentioned in the Project that need to be addressed? If so, what are they and what are the proposed solutions?

The majority of member institution representatives **were pleased with the centralised purchasing system** (process and method of selecting EIRs). The main advantages cited were the **financial and time savings** brought about by the project for the institutions. Furthermore, as evidenced by the results of the guided interviews and questionnaire survey, the project met their expectations in this regard. Other benefits identified included transparency, technical support, and timeline adherence (when compared to the start of the project), which resulted in better internal planning within member institutions.

There have been minor criticisms in recent years of the length of the process or the requirement to have only one contact person per institution. However, in this year's survey, the institutions were mostly pleased with the project's progress and the assistance provided. Some respondents mentioned that the 3+ rule made acquiring some EIRs through the project impossible, but they saw this rule as logical and given, so they had no objections to establishing it.

94 % percent of respondents were satisfied with the price calculation of the EIR, while 5 respondents were dissatisfied with the price calculation. These respondents later stated as a reason that universities receive more support than research organisations due to higher usage, or that the price calculation reflects the large amount of the so-called historical subscription, on which the calculation was based. According to the respondent, considering the number of EIR would aid in the calculation; however, this would imply ensuring the agreement of all consortium members to redistribute the payment for each publisher/title (CEL negotiates the payment for the entire consortium).

As a minor issue, the **exchange rate of the koruna and the euro (or other currencies) was mentioned**, which may change the amount allocated to EIR. In some cases, the respondent's institution had to pay extra. On the other hand, a reserve was created by the implementation team this year, and as expected, part of the money will be returned to the member institutions.

Due to the small number of complaints, a change in processes cannot be recommended, however, focusing communication on benefits even for smaller institutions could lead to the removal of some minor complaints. In addition, the results show that larger problems were eliminated during the project and **member institutions are largely satisfied with the current set-up**. According to one respondent, administration is now even lower than before, and he appreciates the digital signing of contracts without the need to print an electronic contract guide.

EQ10 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ10 – Has the Project's implementation led to a greater efficiency in the acquisition and management of EIR?



As already mentioned in previous evaluation questions, centralization of EIR purchasing **enabled more efficient sourcing and saved member institutions significant financial and time capacities**. This resulted not only from the questionnaire survey, but also from additional interviews with member institutions and interviews with other actors. According to the respondents, the increase in the efficiency of EIR acquisition was reflected not only in individual institutions, but also in the whole RDI sector. By securing an intermediary, the acquisition process has been simplified and it has been possible to better monitor the spending of funds of individual institutions. More specifically, the contribution of the project in this respect is broken down in the following sub-questions.

Evaluation of partial EQs – Has the implementation of the project succeeded in eliminating the fragmentation of EIR provision?

The results of the questionnaire survey show that **95% of respondents think the project managed to reduce the fragmentation of EIR provision** (60% of respondents chose the answer "definitely decreased", the answer "rather decreased" by 35% of respondents). In 3 organizations (5%) it was not possible to reduce fragmentation thanks to the CzechELib project. In the supplementary interviews, it turned out that institutions largely acquire EIR through a project and individually provide mainly very specialized resources that do not comply with the 3+ rule, i.e., resources that at least two other institutions were not interested in. For better communication and agreement on sourcing, a forum has been created where project members can agree on the acquisition of additional EIR.

Evaluation of partial EQs – How much do end users use the access mediated by the CzechELib Centre?

As part of the evaluation, a questionnaire survey for university students was carried out, which showed that **the largest group of respondents (35%) are exceptional EIR users**. Another large group were respondents who use EIR at least 1 time per week (32%). Daily or at least 2 times a week is the access used by 9% of respondents.

The EIR search method suited 18% of students and rather suited 58% of students. The method of searching for EIR definitely did not suit 6% of students. In terms of the sufficiency of the resources provided, the largest number of students (64%) said that the number of resources available was sufficient, but they occasionally came across an unavailable resource. Conversely, 21% of students said that the number of resources is rather insufficient and relevant resources are often not available. The same number of respondents (6%) said that all relevant sources are available to them or that most relevant sources are not available to them.

The questionnaire survey for students also resulted in several recommendations. Some respondents would appreciate a clearer search and easier login to school databases, or education and on the topic of "predatory" articles. Member institutions also have the possibility to check the readership of individual EIRs through the CELUS system. According to the data, they can further adapt the provisioning of EIR. These statistics make it possible to effectively manage EIR according to their readership.



Evaluation of partial EQs – Has the implementation of the CzechELib project saved public funds spent so far by end users in connection with the provision of administration associated with the administration and acquisition of EIR? If so, is it possible to estimate (at least approximately) how much financial and time savings the introduction of the system generated by the participating institutions?

In the questionnaire survey, **91% of respondents said that the project reduced the administrative burden of the institution.** Five respondents (5%) said that the administration has definitely or rather not decreased. During the supplementary interviews, the majority of respondents confirmed the reduction in administration workload. The handover of the obligations with the negotiation of EIR provision and prices to the CzechELib implementation team and the provision of technical support in case of ambiguity were evaluated as a considerable relief. According to one of the respondents, the project was also a relief from a legislative point of view (standardization of contracts). Another respondent said that she had previously worked with a colleague to manage resources and is currently managing them independently. The specific time savings were reflected in the number of EIRs managed and the size of the institution (savings in the order of hours and days were reported).

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, the financial savings were also significant. **More than half of respondents (54%) replied that the cost of EIR is lower for them thanks to the CzechELib project.** On the contrary, for 25% of respondents the costs were rather higher and for 9% of respondents the costs were significantly higher (in total there were 34 respondents, from all sizes of institutions). Half of the respondents who said their costs were higher at the same time purchased more EIR. Around 44% procured the same number of resources, and the other two institutions reported that they were sourcing less than before they were involved in the projects.

For 12% of respondents, the costs are the same as before the project. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in the proportion of respondents whose organisation had saved money by purchasing through CzechELib, from 38% to 54%. **The financial savings ranged from tens of thousands to several million according to the respondents.** Most respondents said that the savings were several hundred thousand CZK.

Evaluation of partial EQs – To what extent have the purchase conditions (license conditions, invoicing matters, etc.?) been unified?

Thanks to the unification of processes, the project also contributed to the creation of standardized contracts or the mediation of verified lawyers, which can also be used by member institutions when negotiating access to EIR outside the CzechELib project if they do not comply with the 3+ rule. Respondents could evaluate the benefits of CEL on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means I would not appreciate at all, and 10 means I would greatly appreciate. *“Unify license terms”* received an average rating of 8.6 and *“Unify billing practices”* received an average rating of 8.5. The highest rating (i.e., 10) *“Unify license terms”* was chosen by 45% of respondents and in the case of *“Unify billing practices”*, it was 48% of respondents.

Table 11 Perceived benefit of the project from the perspective of representatives of the institutions involved

Note 1 scale 10=great benefit, 1=no benefit

Contribution

Evaluation

Comparison
with 2021



Unify license terms	8,6	↑
Unify billing practices	8,5	↑

Evaluation of partial EQs – Is it possible to identify partial persistent problems?

The processes of acquisition and administration of EIR were evaluated by respondents (member institutions and other actors) mostly positively. Specific shortcomings in relation to member institutions have already been mentioned during previous evaluation questions. The full centralisation of EIR provision is mainly hindered by the 3+ rule, which, however, is accepted by member institutions as relevant by consensus. Partial shortcomings were mentioned by students, who pointed out mainly the lack of clarity of school databases and the complexity of registration, which is, however, beyond the competence of the project.

EQ11 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ11 – To what extent has centralised procurement management enabled better strategic management and evaluation of the RDI sector at both national and institutional level? In what ways and to what extent do the various institutions indicated below (or their representatives) handle and evaluate research results using CzechELib's data and methodological support?

According to RDI public administration representatives, the project made a visible contribution to better strategic management and evaluation of the RDI sector. The centralised management of EIR purchases **has increased transparency of actual costs for individual institutions**; prior to the CzechELib project, it was not always clear how much EIR was sent from the Czech Republic to a given institution (in the case of large entities). Distortions and misinterpretations could have been caused by EIR subsidies, which frequently resulted in low costs, or by the koruna's exchange rate. **Simultaneously, the centralisation and reduction of support has made EIR acquisition more efficient** (see EQ12 below).

According to a respondent from one of the universities, the project contributed to the **improvement of data for strategic management and management of universities** (i.e., where a lot/little is published, what areas are popular, etc.). This has made it possible to better compare institutions. This was also confirmed by some respondents in relation to the statistics available under the project, which can be used by member institutions as well as other actors in the RDI sector. Some member institutions have benefited from **purchase of new software**, specifically analytical programs, API extensions, or software for the evaluation of science at universities.

CzechELib data support was used by **14% of member institutions** for research analysis and evaluation, and all of them reported that the data support was adequate. The data were primarily used to monitor the use of individual EIRs, as well as for access statistics and further analysis. In this context, some respondents reported using CELUS data, but encountered issues with incomplete or incorrect data in some cases.

Respondents who did not use data support cited irrelevance to the institution or a lack of interest on the part of management (11 respondents), a lack of knowledge of this option (6 respondents), insufficient or inadequate data (6 respondents), or use of their own system (3 respondents) as the primary reasons. One respondent stated that the opportunity for use was not yet appropriate because they were new to the project, and another stated that the complexity of the internal evaluation system was a reason.



Less than 7% of respondents used CzechELib's methodological support for research analysis and evaluation, and they all agreed **that the methodological support was adequate**. Respondents who did not use methodological support most frequently cited irrelevance to the institution or management's lack of interest (14 respondents), lack of knowledge of this option (7 respondents), use of their own system (6 respondents), or insufficient and inadequate data (2 respondents) as the reason.

EQ12 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ12 – Has the Project's implementation improved the quality of the information infrastructure and, as a result, the conditions for increasing RDI productivity in the Czech Republic?

According to the interviews conducted, it can be assessed that the **project has contributed to the improvement of the information infrastructure**. The main benefits of the project in this respect were the increased transparency of funds spent and the provision of data on the use of the EIR. At the same time, several factors play a role in this context. According to several respondents, before the CzechELib project, the level of support in the Czech Republic was sometimes enormous, which often led to institutions having resources they did not need. With the increase in co-financing, according to the respondent, the **environment has been sanitised and the waste of funds has been reduced**. At the same time, joining consortia has been democratised and simplified. **These processes have in turn led to a more responsible approach of member institutions towards the acquisition of EIRs**. Thus, the project did not increase the number of EIRs acquired but ensured transparency of the individual institutions and their actual costs.

Another respondent also confirmed the increased transparency, with the CzechELib project functioning as a "service to science". The respondent mentioned Open Data as a challenge for the future for the RDI sector, which would mean moving forward similarly to what is happening in Europe. If data could be collected only once and shared, it would help the whole research world, which was also confirmed by several representatives of member institutions. According to one respondent from a member institution, the CzechELib project also discussed the **ORCID consortium and the promotion of R&D**. These are areas where the respondent felt the project should be expanded and where there would be significant added value for universities.

The main benefits to the RDI sector were cited **as longevity, sophistication of the system, funding and data for the functioning of the institutions**. The project has brought certainty to the RDI sector through long-term contracts and a system where titles are selected for purchase through negotiated procedures. It has also enabled greater financial stability by dampening year-on-year price increases. Last but not least, it has reduced administration in the sector and allowed better comparison between institutions (see EQ11).

Evaluation of partial EQs – Do scientists have better access to information sources? Has this improved their work?

The improved access to the EIR for scientists has not been fully demonstrated, but according to the stakeholders interviewed, **the project's initial expansion of the Open Access regime, which will be expanded further with the follow-up NCIP project, is contributing in this direction**. According to one respondent, the project achieved its goal, for which NTK was responsible. The key now will be to maintain this trend, which is partially succeeding due to the negotiation of new contracts, which will be in OA in some cases, subscriptions in others, and in some cases a combination of these options (14 transformation contracts are planned so far).



Another respondent stated that access to information resources had improved, but it is unclear to what extent this was due to the project. The respondent also mentioned the possibility of future agreement on where Czech scientists will publish. Publishing through the project would ensure higher citation rates and thus provide motivation for scientists. This information was also confirmed by one of the member institutions (a university library), according to which scientists differentiate primarily on the basis of whether they have a given resource available. The added value for them, however, is, for example, publication in Open Access.

EQ13 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ13 – As a result of the implementation of the project, have the links (National Technical Library (hereinafter referred to as "NTK") x EIR providers, NTK x similar institutions acting as service intermediaries) strengthened at the international level?

The project contributed to the strengthening of ties at the international level and established NTK as an active representative of the Czech Republic. This is evidenced by involvement in several international platforms, a held conference, and the stabilization of communication with publishers. **Communication with the CzechELib implementation team was evaluated as very good.**

In this respect, the CzechELib project team was in the position of a "newcomer" at the beginning of the project, according to the representative of the implementation team. However, he was able to quickly orient himself in the functioning of the system at the international level and the project brought, among other things, **cross-platform engagement** and currently CzechELib operates in:

- ▶ **ICOLC Consortium**¹⁷ – an informal platform established in the US and operating in North America, Europe and Australia. According to the implementation team, it is one of the most useful platforms where good practice on EIR is shared, informal information is exchanged and communication between individual members in a similar position takes place. This is beneficial for the Czech conditions due to the advanced development of Western foreign institutions, but also for obtaining up-to-date information about world events among EIR publishers, which are global players.
- ▶ **OA2020**¹⁸ – it is an initiative that acts at the personal and highest level, i.e., at the level of policymakers. The platform is operated by similar institutions such as NTK, which deal with similar technical details regarding the transformation to Open Access. In addition, networking takes place between institutions.

A key element of engagement is the transfer of good practice. In addition to these platforms, a member of the CEL implementation team is part of **ICOLC Coordinating committee** as one of three representatives from Europe. Webinars are held here regularly. In addition, the implementation team participated in **ICOLC Working Groups** and was part of **ICOLC mailing letter**, where up-to-date information is transmitted (e.g. on issues with publishers).

Finally, the CzechELib team as part of its involvement at the international level **organized a conference in Prague in November 2019** “*Knowledge, Research and Education Conference*” (KRECon) subtitled “*Open Access – Seeking balance*”. Open Access and the search for a balance in the issue of open access

¹⁷ icolc.net

¹⁸ <https://oa2020.org/>



to scientific information was the central theme of the conference. The aim of the conference was to bring together key personalities from the fields of education, research, industry, as well as representatives of libraries and publishing houses. The conference was also attended by Pavel Doleček, Deputy Minister for Management of the Higher Education, Science and Research Section of the MYES.

As far as publishers are concerned, the CzechELib project has made it possible to: **greater centralization of communication with foreign publishers in the Czech Republic**. Most publishers had experience with the Czech Republic within sub-projects, but in the course of the project, they found out that NTK is a functioning partner, which strengthened mutual trust. Gradually, there was a greater anchoring of cooperation. Similarly, the trust of the institutions involved has deepened. **The benefit of the project was the anchoring of a previously fragmented system**, in which each publisher had one partner. At the same time, by creating one partner representing the Czech Republic, **communication has been simplified**.

On the part of the interviewed representatives of the foreign publisher, the communication was also **rated as functioning and effective**. According to the respondents, the negotiations on EIR went smoothly. According to the publishers, CzechELib is performing very well compared to other Eastern European countries, and a multi-year planning model has been cited as a positive. Initially, according to the publisher, CzechELib started negotiations on EIR late, and it was not clear what the hierarchy was in the team and who was responsible for what. This had a negative impact on the negotiations with the publisher interviewed. However, the initial problems were solved, and the communication was rated as good.

The occasional high level of bureaucracy and the aforementioned guarantee of exclusivity were rated as slightly problematic (see EQ1). The signing of exclusivity and negotiation was rated as a complex process, the terms of which are not favourable to either party. The willingness to commit to exclusivity is low on the part of publishers, which was also mentioned by the CzechELib implementation team. According to the publisher contacted, the problem is not on the part of the CzechELib team, but on the part of the lawyers with whom the team is negotiating. From the information received from NTK, the negotiation process will continue.

According to the foreign institution addressed, **communication with the CzechELib team excellent and very responsive**. From the point of view of Open Access, the implementation team has done a great deal of work in involving important stakeholders who should be part of the discussion regarding the future development of OA in the Czech Republic. At the level of openness, the Czech Republic lags slightly behind some countries in Europe¹⁹ (e.g., Sweden, the Netherlands), but this is due to the starting position, which varies from country to country, according to the respondent. However, progress in the Czech Republic is great, as is the potential for the development of OA.

According to the implementation team, there is currently **no risk of breaking links at the international level** given that the activities are no longer linked to the project itself (which enabled and kick-started the engagement) but to the NTK unit.

¹⁹ The country overview from the OA perspective offers a graphic overview in the Country overview section (<https://esac-initiative.org/market-watch/>)



EQ14 Evaluation

Evaluation of the EQ14 – Is it possible to identify some unintended consequences (both positive and negative) of the Project? If so, what are they?

The principle of this question will be to map the intervention and describe the context that led to the unplanned impacts. The solution of the evaluation question is based on knowledge obtained from questionnaire surveys and guided interviews, but also from desk research relevant sources.

In The Theory of Project Change created in 2017 (available in the Entry Report), the main identified outputs of the project were:

- ▶ establishment of the project team
- ▶ establishment of a National Centre for EIR
- ▶ setting up rules for the selection of EIR and the distribution of support
- ▶ setting up rules for negotiating license agreements
- ▶ setting up functional cooperation of the entities involved
- ▶ competition of EIR providers
- ▶ functional system for the use of EIR
- ▶ setting up the mechanism of changes
- ▶ stabilization of ties with other (foreign) entities.

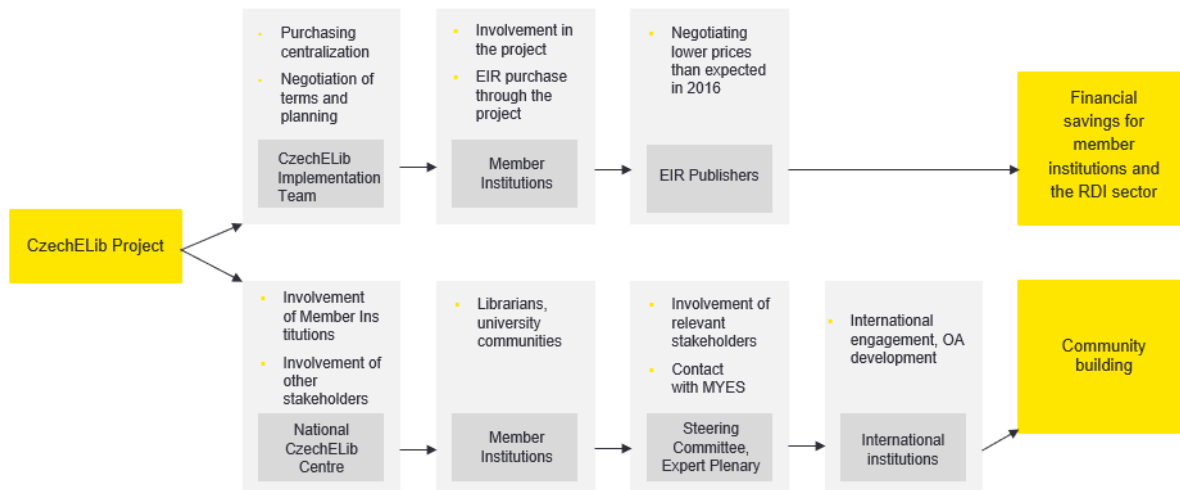
In addition to these outputs, the Theory of Change also included short-term impacts and long-term impact in the form of increasing the performance and efficiency of the RDI sector in the Czech Republic. From the results, it can be evaluated that the project has achieved all the specified outputs, but the long-term impact can be evaluated only after a longer period. Beyond these outputs, unintended consequences of the project were also identified during the interviews, in particular:

- 1) saving financial resources of member institutions,**
- 2) unification and community building.**

Based on the above, we define the following scheme of the causal mechanism (chain):



Diagram 1 Unexpected project results



The explanation of the unintended impacts is supported by claims from guided interviews. In terms of **financial savings**, this is an unanticipated benefit of the project that member institutions consider to be one of the most important. According to the interviewees, the financial benefits were visible not only for the member institutions but also for the entire RDI sector. The project has increased the efficiency with which individual institutions acquire EIR and has improved the assessment of real costs. The CzechELib implementation team was able to secure better quotes than anticipated before the project began. Because of the member institutions' involvement, the purchase of EIR has been centralised, and the cost of EIR provided by individual institutions has been reduced.

During the project, the exchange rate of the Czech crown had an impact on the prices of the EIR, to which the implementation team responded by creating a reserve when collecting advance payments from member institutions. This was also seen as a very positive step during the guided discussions with member institutions. Overall, the reduction of the project budget also had an unexpected impact on the sector. According to one of the interviewees, **the project has made significant financial savings on the EIR**. As a result, the project budget was reduced, and the money saved could be invested in other projects in the OP RDE.

The second unexpected impact, according to the actors surveyed, was **community building**. Despite the initial resentment of some librarians, involvement in the project proved to be beneficial, and CzechELib communities were created to connect individual member institutions regarding similarly addressed topics. Building of a university community that acts as a platform for communication was also acknowledged. CzechELib has brought order to the disparate negotiations on the EIR and has enabled librarians and librarians to coordinate their activities. In terms of acquisition, it was possible to bring together key players and to organise a scientific council (expert plenary).

At the same time, closer contact was established with MYES through the Steering Committee. According to one respondent, communication regarding higher education was increased and therefore pressing issues or problems could be addressed. The involvement of key actors in the process of negotiating the EIR and OA was also positively assessed from the perspective of the foreign organisation. The implementation team managed to reach relevant stakeholders who play an important role in the direction of the Czech Republic



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in relation to the transition to OA. Last but not least, the team has also managed to establish contacts at international level and engage in several international platforms.



Assessment of implementation of the recommendations throughout the Project

In this chapter, we briefly review how all of the IER's recommendations have been put into practise. The following recommendations were identified during the evaluation:

► **Creation of a detailed project communication strategy that incorporates current topics**

The communication strategy has been developed and focuses on providing information about the project to both internal (NTK employees) and external (member institutions, library visitors, EIR providers, employees/external members of member institutions, representatives of other institutions such as the Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, the Czech Rectors Conference, and others) audiences.

► **Setting up and anchoring the internal evaluation process and its use in project management**

The first internal evaluation had been completed by this point. The MPM is the primary author of the evaluation, having prepared the structure of the evaluation report and the draught questionnaire survey for project employees with the assistance of an external consultant. A set of 15 evaluation questions was developed, and all of them were incorporated into the evaluation report, which also included a plan for the next evaluation period. A second internal evaluation is currently underway and will be continued as part of the follow-up NCIP project. It will be critical to implement effective evaluation in the follow-up project so that the results can be compared year after year. Because of the takeover of the structure from the first evaluation report and the invitation of an external expert, it will be possible to set the design in such a way that continuity is maintained, and qualitative data collection methods are included (recommendations from 3 IERs).

► **Preparation of sufficient supporting documentation for the needs of control/audit bodies describing the reasons for not publishing the negotiated procedure**

During the evaluated period, the supplier of legal services was replaced, and the existing ex-post inspections were free of major control findings due to the significant reduction in vz. According to the implementation team, a public administrative inspection took place at the end of 2021, with only one finding in the amount of CZK 200 and satisfaction expressed with project management and reporting.

► **Take into account the Open Access theme in the project settings**

The topic of Open Access was taken into account more, which corresponded to the conclusion of transformation agreements and participation in international platforms where good practice and other information on the transformation to OA is shared. According to the interviewed foreign organisation, the implementation team managed to involve relevant stakeholders in the discussion on future developments and the potential of the Czech Republic is at a high level.

► **Use eventual capacities and funds for additional support to member institutions**

The recommendations have largely been implemented, for example by establishing regular meetings with member institutions and sharing information through other communication channels (website, newsletter, etc.). The cooperation and support from the implementation team was very positively evaluated by the



member institutions. In the internal evaluation it will be important to continue to continuously gather feedback and current issues from the institutions involved.

- ▶ **More ways of dealing with comments from member institutions on electronic interfaces should be communicated.**

According to the information available from the interviews, feedback on the CELUS web interface is currently being collected by one of the member institutions. This feedback will be passed on to the implementation team. In the case of ERMS, a new system is being sought to replace the existing one. In this case, it will be important to communicate well the process of commenting and settling comments by member institutions.

- ▶ **Maintain relevant online activities.**

Due to pandemic mitigation measures, the last two member institutions meetings were held face-to-face (also online in September 2021). The meetings' presentations are also available on the CzechELib website. During the interview, some respondents stated that they would be unable to attend the meeting. The popularity of online learning was also confirmed. It is worthwhile to consider the possibility of introducing hybrid forms of activities.

- ▶ **Set up the processes of the National Centre for Information Support for Research, Development and Innovation**

As part of the follow-up project, a gradual reduction in financial support was approved. All member institutions were asked if they wanted to participate in the follow-up project. Contracts for transformation and centralised procurement are also being negotiated. Additionally, proposals for the development of information systems and the development of project publicity have been prepared. The methods guidelines have been revised. The processes for the follow-up project should be carried on in the same way that they were for the CzechELib project.



Assessment of Cooperation with the Client and the Stakeholders

Cooperation with the supplier has been going on since 2017. Once a month, flash reports were sent out with information about the activities completed in the previous month as well as information about the activities planned for the following month. An entry report and four interim reports were also prepared (at intervals of 1 time per year). Ad hoc e-mail and phone communication occurred as needed.

Furthermore, communication with the CzechELib implementation team occurred twice a year (in spring and autumn), during which the current state of the project, potential problems, and plans for the coming period were discussed. A questionnaire survey was sent to member institutions once a year. Following that, those respondents (or a sample of respondents) who agreed to further contact were approached for additional interviews. They were also approached once a year by representatives of public administration in the field of RDI, whose list has been updated by the Customer.

According to the established schedule, interim reports were due at the end of May each year. Representatives of foreign organisations and publishers were also addressed in the Final Report, and the formation of international links was discussed with the implementation team.

Cooperation with the Client was established on a regular basis, with the Client providing relevant information for ongoing evaluation (including a list of contacts to other public administration representatives) as needed. Cooperation with the implementation team was excellent, with regular meetings and the provision of sufficient scope and quality data and documents for evaluation. The long-term nature of this project also provided for effective collaboration. At the same time, the implementation team provided contacts with member institutions and foreign actors.

Due to the number of comments and requirements on the evaluation set-up, terminology, and so on, the submission of the outputs and the commenting procedure was initially complicated. However, these processes and requirements had been refined throughout the project. The scope of work was adequate given the time constraints, which was aided by the timely distribution of evaluation questions.

Recommendation

Communication with the Client and the implementation team has been set up well and we recommend maintaining the current scope. A minor stumbling block was addressing other members of the public administration, who were difficult to reach due to time constraints. Addressing representatives through representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports would most likely be beneficial here, as patronage of a request for cooperation may have a greater motivating effect on respondents.

We recommend reducing the number of evaluation questions or harmonising the number of sub-questions. Some information and conclusions were repeated within the evaluation question and sub-questions in some cases. Simultaneously, the number of sub-questions varied and was absent entirely in some evaluation questions. Unifying the system of evaluation questions and sub-questions would improve text consistency.

The final recommendation is to standardise the questionnaire survey so that it is only minimally adjusted based on current needs. This would save time in preparing the questionnaire survey and allow for consistent comparisons of individual years.



Conclusions and Recommendations

The following chapter summarizes the conclusions on evaluation issues and are based on the information presented in Chapter 3. Furthermore, 5 recommendations are made in this chapter.

Main Conclusions within the Final Report

In the last phase of the project, **all planned activities were implemented according to the project timeline** with no or minimal postponement of deadlines. License agreements were regularly signed, tender documentation was prepared, etc. At the same time, funding has been shifted to the follow-up NCIP project and preparations for the completion of the CzechELib project are underway, including gauging the interest of member institutions to continue with the follow-up NCIP project. For the subsequent project, reduction of the financial support for member institutions was approved. The implementation team continues to emphasize the transition to Open Access and, in this context, signing of 14 transformation agreements with publishers is planned. From the evaluation of cooperation with the implementation team and from the point of view of the overall satisfaction of member institutions with the progress of the project, it is clear that **there has been a big shift and anchoring of the project processes since the beginning of the endeavour.**

Member institutions

The implementation team of the project negotiated with the publishers a fixation or only a slight increase in the year-on-year growth of EIR prices. According to the results of the questionnaire survey and guided interviews, the demand of member institutions is vastly met. According to the financial analysis, the institutions acquire 87.5% of electronic journals via the project. The CzechELib project manages an estimated 85 to 90% of public expenditure on the purchase of all types of EIR on a national scale.

Cooperation with the implementation team and technical support was evaluated very positively, without significant problems. According to the member institutions surveyed, the project met the expectations with which they entered the project and largely provided them with financial and time savings. Also, according to other actors, the project fulfilled its purpose and as **the main benefits were centralization, unification of conditions, saving of financial resources, building a community, or better opportunities for comparing institutions and evaluating the cost of EIR.** A significant benefit of the project was the reduction of waste of financial resources and the setting of processes so that they lead to a more responsible approach of member institutions to the acquired EIR.

Electronic tools of the project

Slight complications were noticed in relation to the ERMS web interface. The implementation team decided not to update the service after the end of the project. A system is currently being sought to replace the existing one. **Simplification of EIR management was evaluated as the main benefit of ERMS,** mainly thanks to the concentration of member institutions' documents in one place. As interviews with member institutions in 2020 showed, the benefit varied slightly based on the size of the institution.

The CELUS system was evaluated by the implementation team as successful and is currently being updated for a follow-up project. **The biggest benefit of the CELUS interface,** according to the interviews, was time efficiency, and overall simplification of work with statistics. Some of the respondents in the questionnaire survey also appreciated the possibility of comparison with other institutions within the project. On the contrary, some respondents pointed to occasional missing or erroneous data in the system, which



was given mainly by the quality of the input data. Suggestions were collected as part of the update, and these complaints should be resolved soon.

Internal evaluation

The implementation team **completed the first interim evaluation**, and the final internal evaluation, especially data collection, is in the works. The follow-up project will generate annual final reports for the peer review process. The NCIP implementation team will produce the reports internally.

International level of the project

By utilising **international platforms**, the implementation team was able to establish communication with publishers and other organisations on a international scale. These enable informal information, best practises, and experiences to be shared with publishers and similar bodies around the world. Foreign stakeholders rated the collaboration as very good, and respondents mentioned the project is well on its way to a successful transition to Open Access (the implementation team managed to reach out to relevant stakeholders and engage them in discussions on further developments).

Recommendations

Based on the findings for each evaluation question, we summarize below our recommendations for the follow-up NCIP project.

1. Anchor the current internal evaluation setting for the follow-up NCIP project.

Taking into account the previous IER recommendations and the information presented in this report, particularly in EQ 6, we recommend establishing a regular internal evaluation within the follow-up NCIP project. The first internal evaluation and its structure should include qualitative data collection methods not only from the project team but also from member institutions and other relevant actors, as applicable. Furthermore, the internal evaluation should be designed so that the data can be compared year after year.

2. Consider current topics when developing a communication strategy.

We recommend focusing on the follow-up NCIP project in the coming period. Interviews with member institutions revealed that some institutions lack information on the project schedule for the coming months (for planning activities also during the summer months) as well as more detailed information on the project's conditions and possibilities. It is also recommended that institutions be informed about where they can obtain project information. Some respondents said there was no information on the follow-up project's website yet, so they didn't know where to look.

Simultaneously, in light of the search for a new system to replace ERMS and update CELUS, it would be beneficial to focus on more promotion of data and methodological support within the project, as well as sharing information on the web interfaces. We also infer from interviews with representatives of member institutions a desire to share information on the use of statistics.

3. Maintain relevant online activities.

Member institutions have expressed a desire to continue education and other activities online or in a hybrid format. Given the already lax governmental measures in the context of the coronavirus, we recommend that the interest of member institutions in a physical form of the events be determined -



especially given the need to commute (to Prague). We recommend that at least some of the activities include an online form with the possibility of sharing recordings on the project website.

Following the interviews, we recommend that the online community for negotiating resources between institutions be promoted and developed further.

4. Maintain the existing experienced team for the subsequent NCIP project.

With the CzechELib project coming to an end, it will be critical to retain the core team for the follow-up project in order to preserve key know-how and maintain links within the Czech and international communities surrounding the EIR.

It is also advised to concentrate on the search for dedicated personnel in order to maintain and develop the existing quality and expertise of the services provided. We recommend an early start to increase the team's capacity because the search for specialist staff capacity is deemed problematic.

5. Continue to foster a sense of community around the EIR through conferences, meetings, participation in international platforms and effective communication.

Community building at the national and international levels has been shown to be effective. As a result, we recommend that the existing activities in the follow-up NCIP project be continued, as well as the community be developed further through meetings, conferences, and other relevant platforms. It will be critical to establish links with countries that can share their experiences in the context of OA. Simultaneously, in the Czech context, it will be critical to continue to engage relevant actors in the discussion about the transition to OA.



List of Used Sources

The following sources of information were used for the preparation of the Final Report:

1. Methodological basis for ESIF/evaluations:

- ▶ Operational Programme Research, Development and Education,
- ▶ Evaluation Plan of the Operational Programme Research, Development and Education,
- ▶ Methodological documents of the MMR-NOK – the unified methodological environment for the programme period 2014–2020.

2. Project documentation

- ▶ Project application,
- ▶ Project Charter (version valid as of 2.5.2021),
- ▶ CzechELib Communication Plan 2021–2022,
- ▶ Presentation on the NCIP project, presentation for the meeting of representatives of member institutions
- ▶ Methodological document "Preparation and management of Individual Systemic Projects within the Implementation of the OP RDE",
- ▶ Information on the CzechELib website,
- ▶ Evaluation of pilot operation I.

3. Questionnaire survey among institutions involved in the CzechELib project

4. Guided interviews with representatives of institutions involved in the CzechELib project

5. Guided interviews with representatives of other organisations (e.g., public sector organisations)

6. Guided interviews with representatives of a foreign organization and publishers

7. Questionnaire survey among university students

8. Three meetings with the CzechELib project team.

Attachments

List of Annexes:

Annex 1 – Technical Report (see the Czech report)

Annex 2.1 – Questionnaire Template: MIs (CAWI) (see the Czech report)

Annex No. 2.2 – Questionnaire Template: University Students (CAWI) (see the Czech report)

Annex No. 2.3 – Anonymized Results of MI Questionnaire (see the Czech report)

Annex No. 2.4 – Anonymized Results of University Students Questionnaire (see the Czech report)

Appendix 2.5 – – Interview Script with MIs and Anonymized Transcripts (see the Czech report)

Annex 2.6 – Interview Script with Other Stakeholder Representatives and Anonymized Transcripts (see the Czech report)

Annex No. 2.7 – Interview Script with Representatives of foreign organizations and Publishers and Anonymized Transcripts (see the Czech report)

Annex No. 3 – Graphical Overview of Evaluation Output

Annex No. 3 – Graphical overview of evaluation outputs



Results of the Final Evaluation Report of the Systemic Project "National Centre for Electronic Information Resources - CzechElib"

Key project activities carried out throughout the evaluation period:



Selection and purchase of EIR,
preparation of several transformation
agreements (OA)



Information and
methodological support for
member institutions



Preparation of the follow-up
NCIP project

Key findings:

- ▶ Project met the expectations and goals of the stakeholders. The acquisition of EIR was made easier and more efficient. The project helped to centralize purchasing of EIR in the Czech Republic.
- ▶ Member institutions and other stakeholders were pleased with the project's communication and processes.
- ▶ Project was successful in creating a community centered on EIR in the Czech Republic as well as engaging in international platforms.
- ▶ Project contributed to stabilization and centralization of the Czech Republic's EIR system.
- ▶ The approved follow-up NCIP project ensures the project's sustainability.

Recommendations:

- ▶ Anchor the current internal evaluation setting for the follow-up NCIP project.
- ▶ Consider current topics when developing a communication strategy.
- ▶ Maintain relevant online activities.
- ▶ Maintain the existing experienced team for the subsequent NCIP project.
- ▶ Continue to foster a sense of community around the EIR through conferences, meetings, participation in international platforms and effective communication.



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The project has succeeded in meeting its objectives, primarily:

- ▶ To improve the quality of research information infrastructure supported by public funds and, as a result, the conditions for increasing RDI productivity in the Czech Republic.
- ▶ Ensure more favorable contractual conditions for the EIR.
- ▶ To save administrative and time capacities of member institutions.
- ▶ Increase the transparency of funds spent on EIR.
- ▶ Ensure cost-effectiveness and proportionality in the acquisition of EIR.
- ▶ To build international networks and share good practice not only in the field of Open Access.

The following changes have occurred as a result of the project:

	Changes anticipated as a result of the project	
1.	Elimination of fragmentation in the provision of EIR through the establishment of an institutional background called CzechELib under the National Technical Library (NTK), which will centrally provide EIR for the field of RDI in the Czech Republic. Ensuring more favourable conditions and reducing the administrative burden on participants. Centralized monitoring and evaluation will allow for better resource allocation.	✓
2.	Enhancement of EIR accessibility and development of a comprehensive information support system. CzechELib will provide a variety of services required for the provision, management, and evaluation of the efficacy of EIR use. Provision of long-term archiving of purchased EIR, information and reference service, training, seminars for users, conferences with international participation, etc.	✓
3.	Increased support for tools to evaluate the results of research, development and innovation. This will enable better strategic management and evaluation of the RDI sector, both at national and institutional level. CzechELib will provide data and methodological support in the processing of analyses.	✓
4.	As a result, international ties will be strengthened. CzechELib will be able to officially represent the Czech Republic in negotiations with other countries on cooperation. Access to best international practices will be made easier, which will be reflected in how CzechELib operates.	✓



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