



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

Ministry of Education, Youth and
Sports

**Evaluation Report of Relevance and
Effectiveness of Multi-funding of the OP
RDE and Support of Regional Categories
(More Developed Regions, Less Developed
Regions) within the Multi-funding OP RDE**

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1 Executive Summary



The multi-funding and the support of several categories of regions within one operational programme are relevant and appropriate, both for the current programme period and for the new programme period.

The multi-funding (combination of ESF and ERDF interventions) as well as the support of all regions of the Czech Republic (multiple categories of regions) within the framework of one operational programme is relevant and appropriate, both for the current programme period (i.e. for the OP RDE) and the new programme period and the P JAC.


Also within the framework of the new programme period, multi-funding is supported and the P JAC is financed from two funds (ERDF - European Regional Development Fund and ESF+ - European Social Fund plus). The difference in the new programme period, which should contribute to a better connection of interventions in the P JAC, is the reduction of the number of priority axes from three to two where one OP is focused on research and development (note funding from the ERDF) and the other OP is focused on education (note the combination of ERDF and ESF+ funding).

As part of the meta-evaluation of previously implemented evaluations, analyses and studies capturing the environment of the Czech Republic in the field of research, development and education, no changes were identified that would threaten the relevance of the multi-fund setting. On the contrary, it is also clear from the analyses and the subsequent national strategies/policies that there is a need to maintain support and investment in infrastructure and human resources in the future, both in the field of research and development and in the field of education.

The multi-funding OP makes it possible to connect and manage interventions in different areas within one OP, which affects the entire environment of education and research and development. The multi-funding operational programme also enables interventions to affect the entire education environment which is interconnected where, for example, support for lower levels of the education system (primary, upper secondary) will also have an impact on research and development in the future. The benefits of the multi-funding nature of the OP RDE are visible, for example, at universities where there was the closest connection between interventions from different funds (ESF and ERDF). The benefit of the multi-funding OP RDE was also the linking of support for universities and research, which enabled the development of infrastructure as well as human resources for research. This link should be maintained in the future as well (note that everything from the ERDF is already in the P JAC).

The relevance of support for multiple categories of regions, even with regard to its maintenance in the following programme period, was confirmed on the basis of the investigations carried out and no changes were identified that would threaten the relevance of the setting of support for multiple categories of regions. On the contrary, it is also clear from the analyses and the national strategies/policies that follow them that there is a need to maintain the support of several/all categories of regions within the Czech Republic in the future. Support within the OP RDE was aimed at more and less developed regions and the distribution of projects is relatively even from the point of view of regions, considering their size. Interventions within the framework of OP RDE thus contributed to the support of maintaining equality and everyone's access to education throughout the Czech Republic and to ensuring a unified education system in the Czech Republic. In the field of education, it is not appropriate to divide support between different regions as schools/teachers/pupils across the Czech Republic have similar problems and needs. In the field of research and development, the support





of more and less developed regions within the OP RDE contributed to the fact that barriers to cooperation were not created, but on the contrary, institutions could establish cooperation with all subjects from different regions. This enabled the sharing of equipment, which in addition did not have to be duplicated, and also enabled the sharing of know-how, which is also important for setting up cooperation with foreign countries in the future. It is advisable to maintain this state of support in the future.

In P JAC, as well as in the OP RDE, there is the effort to cover the entire Czech Republic with interventions, both in the field of research and development and in the field of education. The difference in the 2021-2027 programme period compared to the 2014-2020 period will be the inclusion of a third category of regions - transition regions (TR). The new programme period will also bring a change in the maximum rates of co-financing from EU funds and in the co-participation of beneficiaries. Given that the P JAC and its activities fall under possible exceptions to these rules, it is possible to reduce/not apply beneficiary co-payment rates. The specific level of co-financing will always be declared in the terms and conditions of the individual calls for the P JAC.

In general, it can be assessed that the OP RDE projects significantly contributed to the fulfilment of relevant parts of ITI strategies in individual areas. The projects aimed primarily at measures/activities that were aimed at building capacities to strengthen long-term cooperation with the application sphere, interdisciplinary cooperation and cooperation with foreign partners. OP RDE projects have already contributed to achieving/overachieving the target values for more than half of the indicators (i.e. 26 out of 50) established within individual ITI strategies. Within the scope of the OP RDE projects, there was an expansion/modernisation of research workplaces, the involvement of new researchers in supported entities, the support of cooperation between R&D and the private sector and the creation of modernising strategic management systems in research organisations. Research teams supported within the framework of the projects participated in international cooperation programmes, created professional publications, including co-authorship with foreign partners or co-authorship of a research organisation and company. The projects also generated international patent applications.



The objectives of internal complementarities of the OP RDE are being met and measures to ensure coordination of synergies and complementarities within the programme can be considered effective.

The overview of the fulfilment of synergies and complementarities shows that, considering the current status of the projects, the fulfilment of all activities can be considered successful, the objectives of the calls are continuously being met and the system of synergies/complementarities can be considered effective. However, at the same time, it is not possible to assess the final outputs of the projects for the time being. Also, on the part of the OP RDE Managing Authority, no problems or risks in the management of internal links were identified for any internal link.

The coordination mechanism of complementarities and synergies within the OP RDE was set up and tested at the beginning of the programme period, in accordance with the setting of the Unified Methodological Environment, relevant methodological guidelines and at the same time in accordance with the Operational Manual of the OP RDE MA. This mechanism/process of coordination is in principle and formally set appropriately and expediently, during the implementation of the OP RDE there were only partial adjustments when setting specific synergies. During the preparation of the P JAC, the mechanisms and processes of coordination of complementarities/synergies (note in the P JAC = additionality) were based on the experience and settings of the OP RDE. The methodological environment in the new programme period does not exert such pressure on complementarities and



on the provision of synergies within the P JAC. The effort will lie in seeking links to other programmes and other funding sources.

Based on the synthesis of the results of field investigations, the complementarity of PA2 IP1 SO1 and PA3 IP1 SO4, PA3 IP1 SO5 cannot be assessed as fully functional. Complementarity was resolved at the level of the OP RDE MA, taking into account the defined SO and the expected results of the OP RDE. Specific calls were discussed with relevant partners, including representatives of typical beneficiaries. The representatives of the beneficiaries stated that they were not aware of this complementarity, mainly because the complementarities and related rules were not stated as mandatory in the calls. Another fundamental reason was that projects implemented within PA2 are "university-wide" and are prepared/managed at the level of the institution as a whole/rector's office, while projects within PA3 are implemented primarily at faculties of education/faculties training teachers. For that reason, PA3 projects often stand "aside" and are not directly linked to projects implemented within PA2.

According to the beneficiaries, the barriers that could have an impact on the fulfilment of the OP RDE complementary bonds or could have an impact on the fulfilment of complementarities in the new programme period are:

- Lack of information about other planned interventions and their setting at the time of project applications.
- The implementation of projects financed from operational programmes is relatively demanding (e.g. from the point of view of reporting, administration, etc.) and it would be even more demanding if it was necessary to implement specifically focused projects implemented at components/faculties and to coordinate with other teams at the institution and to implement projects as complementary.
- The administrative complexity of complementary projects is also related to the reporting of indicators, which is duplicated, and at the same time, if they are changed in one project, the change must also be written into the other complementary project - i.e. the change request must be processed twice.
- The implementation of two ESF/"soft" complementary projects could also be a barrier to the realisation of complementarities, for the reason that it would be difficult to find boundaries/overlaps between projects and as a result unwanted duplications could occur.

Among the factors that could contribute to a better fulfilment of complementarities are, according to the beneficiaries, the following ones:

- Posting call notices so beneficiaries know well in advance what is coming up and can start preparing.
- It could also help to ensure a certain "pre-selection" of suitable beneficiaries - i.e. before the application is submitted, the MA determines who is a suitable candidate, what criteria they must meet, etc.
- It is more appropriate to implement complementarities between ESF and ERDF ("soft" and "hard") projects that complement each other appropriately.

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