



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 OP RDE multi
funding and support of regional
categories (more developed regions,
less developed regions) with the
multi funding OP RDE – Executive
Summary**

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The multifunction and support of all regions of the Czech Republic within one operational focused on research and education is still up to date and appropriate programme.

The multi-fund (combination of ESF and ERDF interventions) and the support of all regions of the Czech Republic (more than one category of regions) under one operational programme is relevant and appropriate, both for the current programming period, ie for OP RDE, as well as for the future similar operational programme in the programming period after 2020.

Multifunctional OP RDE allows combining financing of investment and non-investment activities in the field of research and higher education. In the area of research, for example, it is a combination of investments supporting the modernisation and upgrading of research infrastructure with non-investment activities which support the development of human resources in the field of research and development (for example by means of visiting researchers). In the area of higher education, this is a non-investment support to improve the quality of education (ie the creation of new or modernisation of existing study programmes), which is supported by investments to improve the infrastructure conditions of higher education institutions. In this respect, the relevance of the multi-rate was reaffirmed both by the beneficiaries of the projects of relevant calls and by interviews with individual stakeholders in the field of R&D and universities.

The specific report focused more closely on the additionality of PA1 and PA2 IP1 SO5 and the complementarity of the so-called quadruple call (4 calls for universities: calls 02_16_015, 02_16_016, 02_16_017 and 02_16_018), where the additionality of projects was logically higher due to the explicit definition of complementary links in individual calls. In the case of additionality of PA1 and PA2 IP1 SO5, according to the results of analytical and field surveys, the potential of additionality was not fully utilized, especially in Prague, ie in the territory of a more developed region of the Czech Republic (MDR), however, even here the multifunctionality can be considered relatively functional. The reason for lower utilization of the additionality potential of Prague institutions and organisations is mainly less experience with operational programmes supporting research and higher education from the previous programming period, ie also less experience with mutual coordination of projects.

Support for all regions of the Czech Republic in the area of research and education is relevant. This finding results both from the results of focus groups with beneficiaries of OP RDE projects and interviews with individual stakeholders in the field of research and universities, as well as from the experience of the previous programming period in which research organizations could not draw support from OP RDI and the schools in Prague drew only limited support from operational programs. Significantly higher share of projects with the place of implementation in Prague from all projects is evident in this respect, both in terms of number of projects and their financial volume in all priority axes.

The ITI tool used for the OP RDE calls focused on pre-application research and long-term cross-sector cooperation in some regions was assessed as not entirely suitable for the support of oriented research. The main reasons are:

- the risk of supporting projects with similar or same focus in more regions and possible duplication of projects;
- lower quality of projects in the calls which included the ITI tool against national calls;



- ITI is a good idea but the quality of a given strategy of the territory and its functionality is very important. The use of ITI must be part of the long-term strategy of the regions and not just the possibility of using the funds allocated to the region.

Supporting multi-funded and multi-regional support is relevant and appropriate for the future programming period, including the possibility of supporting one project from multiple funds. The key to the successful implementation of multi-funded and multi-regional support in the next programming period will be to ensure that co-financing rates for beneficiaries from different categories of regions are uniform and that measures for coordination of the additionality are co-financed within the future operational programme.

Therefore, the evaluator recommends, following the findings for the preparation of the follow-up OP, to choose the model of the multi-fund operational programme which, despite certain barriers and shortcomings, proved to work well for the MA of the OP RDE and beneficiaries and stakeholders in research and universities. In connection with this, the evaluator also recommends maintaining a uniform level of support across the regions of the Czech Republic as implemented in the OP RDE, through the co-financing of various maximum support rates for different categories of regions from the state budget, or with at least a partial contribution from the budgets of individual regions.



Fulfillment of complementary links and additionality within OP RDE is functional.

Fulfilling the additionality of OP RDE activities can be most efficiently observed in projects supported under the so-called quadruplecall, as they are projects of calls with explicitly defined complementary linkage. The beneficiaries of the quadruplecall have already prepared their project intentions.

According to the project beneficiaries, the main identified benefit of these mutually complementary calls is the possibility of combining development (creation, modernization, innovation) of study programmes with the modernisation of educational infrastructure and equipment (eg laboratory facilities, quality equipment). Other benefits mentioned are internationalisation, involvement of experts, again with the support of the development of educational infrastructure.

The co-ordination of complementary links within the quadruplecall can be assessed as functional, the beneficiaries of the projects from quadruplecall evaluate positively both the concept itself and the benefits resulting from the implementation of internal complementary links, primarily at the level of two calls, to a lesser extent in the entire complex of all quadruplecall.

Additionality of PA1 and PA2 IP1 SO5 calls is based on the synthesis of field survey results. The multi-fund nature of the OP RDE enables beneficiaries to implement additionally the PA1 projects financed from the ERDF and at the same time the PA2 IP1 SO5 projects financed from the ESF so that these projects complement each other in terms of their activities and especially the achieved outputs, results and benefits.

Examples mentioned by representatives of research institutions which demonstrate specific benefits of additionality of PA1 (investment) and PA2 IP1 SO5 (non-investment) projects:

- The acquisition of modern tools, which is unique, has attracted a great deal of interest from foreign R&D personnel, both for the next project of excellent research supported under PA1



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and for arrival mobilities. At the same time, this equipment attracted greater interest from these workers and enabled the selection of quality candidates.

- The MSCA-IF researcher who arrived in a PA1 research project will also be involved in applications for aid of Horizon 2020.
- Thanks to the introduction of excellent staff of research centre (project investigators in PA1) as future postdoc mentors in advertisements, foreign researchers and foreign researchers working abroad have been significantly more interested in the position within arrival mobility. Mobility researchers could subsequently be involved directly or indirectly in research activities of the centre, including excellent research projects.
- As a result of the implementation of international mobility projects, language courses for all foreign and Czech R&D workers took place, followed by the introduction of a bilingual administrative agenda (internal guidelines) aimed at creating an international research environment with a positive impact on excellent research teams supported by PA1.
- Following the HR Award and increased internationalisation due to the arrival of foreign R&D personnel (as part of a project to support excellent research teams where most of the team members are foreigners and PA2 mobility projects), English was introduced as a second language of communication within the research centre.
- Developed know-how in technology transfer within universities is available through training, methodologies and consultations for all R&D personnel, including research teams that implement projects supported by PA1 as well as R&D personnel who have arrived within mobility projects of PA2 (whether under Call 02_16_027 or 02_17_050).
- The mentor of a R&D worker who has arrived within the PA2 mobility project under call 02_17_050 is also a member of the project implementation team supported by PA1.

The benefits of additionality were only partially reflected, since only a part of the beneficiaries of projects financed from PA1 and PA2 IP1 SO5 pursue, coordinate and evaluate additionality. Targeted coordination of ESF and ERDF projects within the research organization is significantly reduced by the beneficiaries in Prague (MDR).

When comparing the approach of the beneficiaries of the MDR and LDR to the additionality of PA1 and PA2 IP1 SO5, there is a clearer and more targeted approach of LDR beneficiaries, both U and PRI. Additionality is already taken into account by beneficiaries of the LDR when project plans are prepared and projects are coordinated more intensively in terms of their activities, outputs and results. In the case of beneficiaries in MDR, the reason for lower utilization of additionality is mainly due to their insufficient experience with ESIF projects from the previous programming period when they had no or only limited possibilities of drawing from ESIF funds

The process setting of measures to ensure complementarity of the coordination within the programme is in compliance with all relevant functional requirements set out in the OP RDE Operational Manual and is also consistent with the Uniform Methodological Environment. The whole process of coordination of internal complementary links and additionality is then covered by the function of the OP RDE Coordinator, which provides the possibility of time and material coordination of the PA1 and PA2 calls.





Support of multi funded OP RDE and support of multiple regional categories carries advantages and weaknesses.

Advantages of multi funding and support of more developed and less developed regions are as follows:

- Continuity in operational programmes from the previous programme period within one multi funded OP and, consequently, the possibility of more effective coordination of the additionality of activities supported within a single multi-operational program than in the case of two separate programmes.
- Equal opportunities for funding in R&D and education in the CR, with the disposition of disparities on R&D in Prague as a result of the rules of previous operational programmes (inability to support R&D from OP RDI in Prague).
- The possibility of support and realization of projects in MDR with MDR effect, and projects in MDR with effect on both MDR and LDR, including supra-regional projects.
- The possibility of supporting collaboration among research organizations, universities and application spheres from different regions, regardless of the location or impact of the project, thanks to a single level of support for final beneficiaries.
- The possibility of an effective combination of ESF and ERDF interventions at the level of beneficiaries, research organizations and universities from one operational programme, eg:
 - Acquisition of modern tools increased the attractiveness of the given research centre for foreign cooperating institutions and ensured a great interest of foreign R&D workers in the area of access mobilities, and thus enabled the selection of quality candidates.
 - Significant increase in attractiveness of doctoral study programmes thanks to the acquisition of equipment (latest microscopes) in laboratories and the possibility to participate in university research projects as part of doctoral theses.

At the same time, it is possible to mention some weaknesses and risks of the multifunctional OP RDE and support of more developed and less developed regions:

- Disadvantage of increased administrative demands for projects with additionality within the quadrouplecall - although the OP RDE is multifunctional and complementary, the individual calls and subsequently the multi-fund projects are not. The weakness of the additionality of the projects of the quadrouplecall was reflected in the evaluation where projects, although separate, were considered in terms of complementarity together (long and demanding project evaluations where, for example, reducing the costs of the project led to reducing the cost of the complementary project). At the same time, in the implementation phase when projects are administered separately, their interdependence must be monitored. This in general raises the increased administrative burden of this type of projects (ie complex workload sharing, wage reporting, coordination of interrelated activities across projects).
- Insufficient awareness of beneficiaries about the additionality of PA1 and PA2 calls and the consequent lack of coordination of such projects at the level of the institution or organization - especially in the case of Prague universities and research organizations;
- Time criterion for making use of the potential of additionality and complementarity ties - it is difficult for beneficiaries to plan the use of additionality because of the difficult planning of the evaluation process and the subsequent issuance of legal acts. Moreover, it cannot be predicted whether all complementary projects will be supported.



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- Lack of clarity of the beneficiaries that the ERDF is not just an infrastructure support and the ESF is not just a so-called “soft” project - insufficient explanation of the possibilities on specific real cases which can be supported from individual funds within the OP RDE.

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