



# Ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the Operational Programme Research, Development and Education

Ministry of Education, Youth and  
Sports

## Evaluation of the Fulfilment of Horizontal Principles in the Implementation of OP RDE

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## Executive Summary

OP RDE calls are generally designed in such a way that **project applications must be in accordance with the horizontal principles in order to be considered and assessed**. The OP RDE cannot accept a project that is in a negative relation with the horizontal principles mentioned in the text of OP RDE. **Neutral relationship is not considered negative.**

### Sustainable Development

**OP RDE projects are realized in accordance with this horizontal principle and in some cases, they can contribute to its deepening.** Contributions to the fulfilment of horizontal principles are evident especially in PA1 projects, which are focused on basic research in the environmental field. In PA2 and PA3 the principle is deepened especially by projects focused on improving the quality of teaching at primary schools, and when the quality of teaching focused on environmental issues is improving too.

In projects in PA1, PA2 and PA3, the rules of resource management are generally respected in the area of administrative and material implementation of projects. This means that, for example, all project documentation and communication is operated in electronic form (e-mails, teleconferences, etc.). Furthermore, shared document repositories are used, not only to save money, but also to work more efficiently.

#### **Priority axis 1: Strengthening capacity for high-quality research**

**PA1 projects are implemented in accordance with this HP. These projects partially contribute to the deepening of HP.** 47% of projects declared a targeted contribution and a positive impact on HP. In practice, this means that, for example, when upgrading R&D infrastructure, they acquire an environmentally friendly infrastructure.

There are basic research projects that focus on sustainable development at the environmental level and have a high potential to make a major contribution to the principle of sustainability in the future (e.g. by research in the study of agricultural plants, their response to stress conditions and the ability to survive and maintain even under adverse conditions). As it is a basic research, it is not possible to describe particular contributions to deepen this HP at the moment. Projects should create an important information base for subsequent application research or collaboration with the application sphere. Only after the application of the project results it will be possible to evaluate the significance of the real impact on the deepening of HP.

#### **Priority axis 2: Development of universities and human resources for research and development**

**PA2 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. Projects do not contribute significantly to deepening of the HP.** Most of the PA2 projects are neutral to HP (94%). The minimum of projects has positive impact on HP, solely from the 16\_016 - ERDF Call for Universities. In most cases, the projects of this call form a R&D infrastructure whose construction is to be implemented in accordance with the principles of sustainability (e.g. the use of so-called brownfields) or which operation is to be environmentally friendly.

The deepening of the horizontal principle may be partly due to the fact that the quality of teaching at universities will improve the quality of education of subjects focused on sustainable development (in



technical, economic and scientific fields). Improving the quality of teaching these subjects may deepen the horizontal principle, especially among students of these subjects, where knowledge and competence in the field of sustainable development are deepening.

### **Priority axis 3: Equal access to high-quality pre-school, primary and secondary education**

**PA3 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. Projects do not contribute significantly to deepening HP.** All PA3 projects are neutral to HP (100%). These projects do not have any specific activity to target the deepening of HP, or to directly help to improve the current situation.

In some cases, at the environmental level in the projects the HP can be deepened by leading students to economical management of materials and resources. This way students learn about the rules and principles of waste material recycling. The students may not have the habit of sorting waste from their homes.

In addition to that, projects can partially contribute to the deepening of HP in the area of personal and civic competences by contributing to the social development of students but also to their parents and thus the whole society. Projects can help to reduce occurrence of socially pathological phenomena in society and reduce the number of early school leavers.

### **Priority axis 4: Technical assistance**

**PA4 projects are implemented in accordance with HP.** All existing PA4 projects are neutral to the horizontal principle of sustainable development. Other PA4 projects are not expected to contribute significantly to the deepening of the horizontal principle. The OP RDE administration is managed completely electronically (in accordance with the horizontal principle of sustainable development), printed documents have been eliminated.

## **Equal opportunities and non-discrimination**

**OP RDE projects are implemented in accordance with this horizontal principle. PA1 and PA2 projects contribute to its deepening partially.** While these projects are in most cases not directly focused on activities that should enhance the perception and adherence of HP to the target group, at least at the level of project implementation teams, and in some cases at the level of their target groups, according to the project implementers, the conditions to this principle has been strengthened (e.g. measures to facilitate the involvement of parents on maternity leave in the workforce through part-time work and the possibility of working from home, compensatory aids and measures for disabled students, i.e. students with LD and SN).

**PA3 projects are aimed at eliminating barriers to participation of children and pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education, thus they significantly contribute to deepening the observed horizontal principle. PA4 projects are mostly neutral to the horizontal principle.**

### **Priority axis 1: Strengthening capacity for high-quality research**

**PA1 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. These projects partially contribute to deepening the horizontal principle.** No PA1 project introduced targeted focus on HP. Most projects (56%) declared a neutral impact on HP and a less than half (44%) declared a positive impact on HP. For both the positive and the neutral impact (of the declared projects) the research teams in PA1 projects should, according to the implementers, be based on objective professional prerequisites for the performance of the desired position, i.e. without taking into account any other factor that could be



considered discriminatory (e.g. race, gender, religion, etc.). Also access to the built R&D infrastructure is ensured in a non-discriminatory way for the entire target group. In a minority of cases (in tens), projects state that the project is being implemented in a barrier-free building.

The R&D Czech Republic organizations have regulations considering all tenders for positions of various workers (R&D workers, academic workers, technicians). These tenders are designed to be open, in setting firm criteria that define objective requirements for the worker.

### **Priority axis 2: Development of universities and human resources for research and development**

**PA2 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. These projects are about half focused on deepening HP.** Among the PA2 projects, the positive effect on HP (45%), in conjunction with the targeted focus (6%), is tight. Both the positive and the neutral impact (declared projects) is that projects are implemented in a non-discriminatory environment of higher education institutions.

According to the project implementers, the university environment is traditionally considered to be an environment based on the principle of non-discrimination, especially in the area of student admission and study. For admission to universities, as well as for the successful completion of studies, there are flat criteria that must be met, regardless of factors such as gender, race, religion, and so on. Universities are often bound by codes of ethics or internal regulations that define clear and non-discriminatory terms for recruiting staff for academic and R&D positions. Therefore, projects implemented by universities can be considered as projects that are non-discriminatory, both in terms of impacts on target groups and in the selection and creation of the implementation team.

For example, in some projects, universities create psychological counselling centres and other departments that focus on working with students with SEN. These funds, thanks to the financial resources obtained from the OP RDE, expand their portfolio of activities and expand their activities for a larger number of students. The aim of the activities of the department is to provide students with SEN support measures to eliminate the barriers to participation of these students in the admission procedure and further throughout the study process (e.g. preparatory courses for admission procedures, digitisation of study materials and their transfer to a form applicable to people with visual impairment, etc.).

### **Priority axis 3: Equal access to high-quality pre-school, primary and secondary education**

**PA3 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. These projects make a significant contribution to the deepening of the HP.** PA3 projects are directly focused on **equal access to high-quality education** and the removal of barriers to participation in education for children, pupils and students from a socio-economically disadvantaged environment, to compensate for special educational needs and generally to mainstream children, pupils and students with SEN. The vast majority of PA3 projects declare a positive impact on HP (91%). Furthermore, the projects are fully in line with HP, so that project activities are accessible to every member of the target group, regardless of gender, race, nationality, or other factors that could discriminate against the target group.

Projects are aimed at removing barriers that prevent pupils at risk of socio-economic deprivation from participating in mainstream education. For example, projects provide tutoring for pupils, which helps them to better manage the subject matter at school, and clubs are organized to support the inclusion of at-risk pupils beyond compulsory schooling. New forms and methods of teaching are being introduced in schools to divert teaching from frontal to creative and experiential learning. These forms



and methods develop key competences of pupils and students with SEN, their better participation in classes and better readiness for further education or entry into the labour market.

The projects introduce specialized pedagogical positions to schools (special schoolteachers, social educators, school psychologists, school assistants, etc.). Workers in these positions contribute to the individualisation of education and the opportunity to pursue all pupils according to their needs. Workers also communicate actively with pupils' families to provide better support for pupils from family's side.

The activities of the projects are also targeted at the parents of these pupils, for which workshops and seminars are organized, aiming to provide parents with such knowledge and competence to be able to provide their children with sufficient background for their successful inclusion.

Projects partially contribute to removing barriers by presenting work with a disadvantaged group in public places. By presenting the work of pupils with SEN, it is possible to prove to parents of pupils and the public that even these pupils have the potential and can achieve good results if allowed and supported in their efforts.

#### **Priority axis 4: Technical assistance**

**PA4 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. Projects do not contribute to deepening this HP.** PA4 projects in most cases (65%) have a neutral effect on the horizontal principle. Another 35% have a positive effect. In most cases, these projects state that the project will apply a transparent and fair system of employee income, remuneration and redundancy, which, together with quality management, will contribute to stabilising the staffing.

#### **Equal opportunities between men and women**

**OP RDE projects are implemented in accordance with this horizontal principle. PA1 and PA2 projects contribute to its deepening partially.** While these projects are in most cases not directly focused on activities that should enhance the perception and adherence of HP to the target audience, but at least at project implementation team level, and in some cases at the level of their target groups, they are trying to create conditions to make this principle strengthened (e.g. measures to facilitate the involvement of parents on maternity leave in the workforce, compensation for barriers to students with LD and SN).

**In most cases, PA3 projects do not have activities that directly target HP.** At the same time, however, these projects promote **equal access to high-quality education (girls, boys)** and inclusion in education, through the compensation of SEN of children, pupils and students. Compensatory measures require a specific approach, including with regard to **SEN of girls and boys**.

Furthermore, the investigations revealed that there is still a lack of awareness of the issue of gender equality, and the principle is in some cases fulfilled formally - declaratively.

#### **Priority axis 1: Strengthening capacity for high-quality research**

**PA1 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. Projects partially contribute to the deepening of the HP.** No PA1 project is targeted at HP. Most projects then declared a neutral relationship (58% of projects). 42% of projects declared a positive impact on HP. Both the positive and the neutral impact (declared projects) are that according to the implementers, the personnel policy of the projects is set on a non-discriminatory basis with respect to the sex of the employee (i.e. the gender of the job seeker



is not a factor on which the decision to accept or not accept a worker into the project). At the same time, according to the implementers, the target groups of projects should not be discriminated on the basis of their gender in the approach to project outputs and results (i.e. the gender of the target group member is not a factor on which to decide whether or not a target group member can use project outputs).

Field investigations have shown that all projects are implemented in accordance with the career guidelines of the R&D centres on which they are implemented. According to these rules, there is no discrimination based on any criteria when selecting and evaluating workers. For example, employees are selected on the basis of educational attainment, work experience, etc. Some projects offer opportunities to reconcile work and family life for employees (e.g. part-time work, flexible working hours, including the possibility of working from home or a place for children in a university kindergarten).

### **Priority axis 2: Development of universities and human resources for research and development**

**PA2 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. In part, projects contribute to the deepening of this principle.** 41% of projects declared a positive impact on HP, 58% declared neutral impact. According to the implementers, both positive and neutral projects are implemented in the academic environment of universities, where the principle of gender equality is to be rooted in the long term (at least in terms of equal access to the application to study at the university, during the admission procedure and during the study itself). According to the implementers, the personnel policy of the projects should therefore be set on a non-discriminatory basis with respect to the sex of the worker. Significant positive impact can be seen in Call projects 02\_16\_028 - Development of research and development capacities (71% - 5 projects). The projects of this call are focused on the objective of the call, which is to set up the strategic management of the research organization in accordance with the terms of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers with the aim of winning the "HR Award".

According to the project implementers, the university environment is traditionally considered to be an environment based on the principle of non-discrimination, especially in the area of student admission and study. For admission to universities, as well as for the successful completion of studies, there are flat criteria that must be met, regardless of factors such as gender, race, religion, and so on (i.e., there are no formal barriers). Universities are often bound by codes of ethics or internal regulations to define clear and non-discriminatory terms for recruiting staff for academic and R&D positions.

For example, in some projects, educators are trained in gender equality. The teachers should then implement the knowledge into the methods and forms of teaching, thus transfer this topic of gender equality to students.

### **Priority axis 3: Equal access to high-quality pre-school, primary and secondary education**

**PA3 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. Projects are not significantly focused on the deepening of this HP.** In the vast majority of projects, the projects declared a neutral impact (95%), and in part they reported a positive effect (5%). Regional education, in which PA3 projects operate, is principally gender neutral in terms of pupils participating in education. Therefore, the positive and neutral impact lies in equal access to men and women in the project implementation team as well as in the target groups of the project (according to implementers and applicants, the sex of the target group member / candidate should not be considered as a factor on which to decide and accept or not to accept to the project, or to make the project outputs and results of the target group member



accessible). Projects focusing on inclusion of pupils with SEN provide remedies to compensate for handicaps caused by SEN, regardless of gender. Gender is not a factor that would play a role in introducing remedies, which implies that men and women are equal in this regard. Projects aimed primarily at the development of key competences then partially strengthen the awareness of pupils in the field of gender equality, and may deeply deepen this HP. Thus, in most cases, projects do not explicitly suppress inequality between men and women. But they are set so that they do not deliberately or unintentionally deepen this inequality.

Measures aimed at compensating for special educational needs in the inclusion projects are provided to the target group without gender differences. Projects can contribute to the deepening of HP by trying to transfer gender equality to pupils and students and to suppress gender stereotypes (for example, eliminating gender stereotypes in career guidance choices).

#### **Priority axis 4: Technical assistance**

PA4 projects are implemented in accordance with HP. These projects do not significantly contribute to deepening HP. A total of 75% of PA4 projects have a neutral relationship to the horizontal principle. 25% of projects registered positive influence. In these projects, a transparent and fair system of employee income and remuneration is applied according to the MS2014+ records, which will contribute to the support of the administrative capacity of the Managing Authority of the OP RDE. Employees have the opportunity to benefit from a shortened employment / service relationship, flexible service scheduling, shorter working hours, leave for the father after the birth of a child, etc. Different needs of women and men are taken into account (e.g. flexible forms of family care). Employee selection procedures are in line with equal opportunities, wage and salary conditions are the same for both men and women.

#### **Recommendation**

Establishing a unified methodology for determining the nature of the contribution of the project to HP - at the level of the OP RDE programming document, resp. general rules for applicants and beneficiaries, it is recommended to provide a more detailed description of what kind of contribution is considered to be a targeted, positive and neutral impact. The reason for this is identical descriptions for projects that have declared a positive and neutral impact on HP. There has always been a situation in which projects themselves "underestimate" when they report a category of influence in their project application, e.g. neutral, but their description of the impact in the application rather indicates a positive impact on HP (similar to "underestimation" of projects can be observed although in a significant way to a lesser extent for projects that categorized their influence as positive in the application, but the description of the impact indicated a rather targeted effect - especially in PA2 and PA3 projects. It can therefore be assumed that the actual contribution rate of projects to HP may be slightly higher for positive and targeted effects and slightly lower for neutral effects.

To discuss on the methodological level the possible inclusion of HP as qualitative evaluation criteria for project applications in the next programming period - following the recommendation above, we propose to discuss the possibility to include HP evaluation criteria in the qualitative evaluation criteria of project applications, especially for the future programming period.

#### **Methodology of the survey**

The conclusions of the report were drawn up on the basis of the following investigations:

- analysis of secondary information sources of data / deskresearch;
- focus groups among the OP RDE beneficiaries;
- individual interviews between beneficiaries and case study processing;

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- telephone conversations with recipients and other persons involved in projects (e.g. administrator, field worker, etc.);
  - Inquiring electronically by target group representatives;
  - synthesis of information from all the above sources and investigations.

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