

# *STRATEGIC REPORT*

## *FM14-21*

Czech Republic

Reporting period:

01 September 2020 - 31 August 2021

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Focal Point (NFP) submits its fourth Strategic Report of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 to the Financial Mechanism Committee and to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with the Article 2.6 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021.

The reserves from the Memoranda of Understanding on the implementation of the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 were allocated to the respective programmes based on the agreement between the Donors and the NFP and the Programme Agreement have been modified respectively.

Out of 49 calls planned under the programmes, 41 have already been launched and under 25 of them the evaluations of projects were already finished. Within these calls in total 313 projects and sub-projects were supported so far. Remaining open calls and/or calls under small grant schemes are under preparation.

In total 23 PDPs approved within the programmes (except for one) have already started their implementation.

No major problems within programmes are reported so far, although the implementation is slightly delayed. The COVID-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic has had limited effect on the preparation and implementation of the programmes especially because most projects have not started their implementation yet. The most affected are bilateral activities across all programmes as they are connected with travel restrictions – this means not only the initiatives under the Bilateral Fund or under bilateral ambitions of the programmes but also projects within programmes that have strong bilateral components that are interlinked with programme outputs and outcomes.

As most of the projects are only at a very early implementation stage, the contribution of the results to the overall objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants cannot be measured yet.

The Joint Committee for the Bilateral Funds (JCBF) established in 2017 is operational and actively involved in the implementation of Bilateral Funds. In connection with the impact of COVID-19 restrictions to the bilateral activities the 4<sup>th</sup> JCBF meeting was not held yet and is postponed till autumn 2021.

Already approved bilateral initiatives (pre-defined, from open calls as well as from bilateral ambitions within the programmes) were strongly affected by the COVID-19 restrictions so they either adjusted the activities to the on-line environment or postponed them to 2022. No bilateral calls were launched during the reporting period.

So far, the commitment rate in programmes reaches 72 % of the allocation in total (CZ-BF and CZ-TA not included). The amount disbursed within all programmes by 30 June 2021 and certified by the CA by 15 September 2021 (incl. CZ-BF and CZ-TA) equals 31,2 MEUR (ca 17,27 % of the total allocation including PRG co-fi). The amount of incurred expenditures is quite proportionate to the status of the implementation of EEA and Norway Grants in the Czech Republic.

In the publicity and promotion, the National Focal Point focuses mainly on increasing awareness of general public on the EEA and Norway Grants and on the promotion of launched calls. As there were almost no possibilities to organize public events due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the publicity activities of the EEA and Norway Grants were ensured via website and social networks (mainly Facebook and Instagram).

## 2. POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

During the last 12 months there have been no significant changes in political area that had or could have an impact on the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants.

The global COVID-19 pandemic crises that affected the whole world have negative influence on the economic development in the Czech Republic. In 2020 the decline of the economic activity was approx. 5,8 %, caused by all the governmental restrictions for the business and social life. Since spring 2021 in relation with the improvements in the epidemic situation the economic starts to grow again, for the whole year 2021 is it expected the growth of GDP approx. 3,2 %. The negative impact on the unemployment rate was not so significant because of the governmental support of all affected areas and it was increased only slightly to 3,2 %. It is expected that the unemployment rate will decline hand in hand with the economic growth. Although the inflation rate in the first months of 2021 dropped under 3 %, there are significant inflation pressures caused mainly by the increase in the price of oil and energy that affects all other commodities. The inflation rate in 2021-2022 is again expected in the range 3,2 – 3,5 %. Altogether, it is expected that the economic situation will generally improve in the second half of 2021 and in 2022, but the predictions are burdened by the risks related to the actual development of epidemic situation, mainly the new mutations of COVID-19 and efficiency of vaccination against them.

In general, the COVID-19 pandemic has had no significant effect on the implementation of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 in the Czech Republic as a whole. Majority of programmes are implemented according to the schedule or with a slight delay only. The open calls were launched more or less as planned, only the subsequent activities (seminars for applicants, Selection Committees) were organized by videoconferences. Especially in case of seminars for applicants, the organization of the events in on-line form have even positive effects when more applicants could participate and the related costs were much lower.

The most affected are bilateral activities connected with travelling restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It affects the realization of Bilateral Fund, in the sectors it is connected mainly to CZ-EDUCATION programme where all projects are bilateral including a number of mobility activities. Also the projects with strong bilateral components in other programmes that are interlinked with programme outputs and outcomes were affected. Within the bilateral activities the Promoters and partners use the on-line form of the meetings and conferences and also big part of the activities are postponed for year 2022 or later. This could in exceptional cases have an impact on achieving the programme outputs and outcomes.

## 3. EFFECTS OF THE GRANTS

Within the reporting period all 10 approved programmes (incl. Fund for bilateral relations) were in the implementation phase. The implementation concerned mainly preparation and

launch of the calls for proposals, start of the implementation of the predefined projects and the implementation of the first projects from the open calls. Until the end of the reporting period **336 projects** (23 predefined projects, 217 projects from the open calls and 96 sub-projects from the small grant schemes) were supported and **259 projects** are under the implementation (legal acts were issued and projects started the realization phase). Only 10 projects (all from the CZ-EDUCATION programme) were completed.

In accordance with the Article 1.11 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 the reallocation **of the reserve of 4 815 000 EUR** included in the Memoranda of Understanding was realised. The reserve was allocated to the programmes:

EEA Grants:

- **CZ-CULTURE programme (1 750 000 EUR)** to support projects in the area of Contemporary Art and in the area of Capacity Building of Umbrella Associations, Platforms and Networks
- **CZ-HEALTH programme (495 000 EUR)** to support the mental health care activities
- **Active Citizen Fund (250 000 EUR)** to support civil society projects

Norway Grants:

- **CZ-ENVIRONMENT (2 320 000 EUR)** to support projects in the area of Climate Change and in the area of Water Quality

The overall aim of the Grants to reduce social and economic disparities and to strengthen bilateral relations with Donor State entities was accentuated both in the call texts as well as in PDPs. As the main part of the projects are only in a very early implementation stage the contribution of the results is hardly measurable.

Steady progress towards strengthening bilateral relations is being monitored mainly within Fund for bilateral relations and within bilateral parts of projects. The progress was affected by the travel restriction during the COVID-19 pandemic times. The cooperation within the partnerships is functioning as the main part of the activities were done online or postponed to later date.

### 3.1 Horizontal Concerns

Horizontal concerns related to the inclusion and empowerment of Roma were supported in the Czech Republic especially within the CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS programme. Furthermore, in the Czech Republic there are Roma specific concerns addressed in the CZ-CULTURE, CZ-EDUCATION and CZ-HEALTH programmes.

#### CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS

Roma inclusion and their empowerment is a substance of two pre-defined projects – PDP1 (Creating system for quantitative data collection to evaluate the situation of Roma in the Czech Society) and PDP2 (Centre of Roma and Sinti in Prague) – which are financed within the Programme Area “Roma Inclusion and Empowerment”. The main aim of the PDP1 is to set up a quantitative system for data collection, which will allow better understanding of the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic and will make possible quantitative comparisons of the situation of Roma with the majority population. Project Promoter (the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs) has developed a professional expert platform that discusses project realization. It has been active since the project start. They also plan to cooperate with regional coordinators for Roma affairs, who could help them to assess the validity of the distribution of the target population.

The Museum of Romani Culture, the Project Promoter of the PDP2, presented the project and the villa in Prague (which will serve as a multi-purpose Centre for Roma and Sinti in Prague) to all relevant stakeholders (national and international guests) on 8 September 2020. The public event included a guided tour and an introduction to the history of the villa that will undergo reconstruction until summer 2022. The project activities shall lead to establishing a multi-purpose centre that will combine information centre for the public, premises for temporary exhibitions, depository, offices for staff, lecturers and historians and large open space for public events. A permanent exhibition of Roma folk fine arts shall be also established in Ethnographic Museum in Prague. The Project Promoter currently prepares educational activities and exhibitions.

The concern of Roma inclusion is reflected in the key activities of other PDPs as well – PDP3 - Strengthening the Public Defender of Rights’ activities in human rights protection - Towards establishing NHRI in the Czech Republic (educational activities), PDP4 - Place for All - Building a Space for Mutual Coexistence (promotion within the Hate Free campaign), PDP5 - The Awareness Raising on the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and other international human rights obligations of the Czech Republic (awareness raising), PDP6 - Improvement of access to justice for vulnerable groups (new position of forensic social worker) and PDP8 - Enhanced capacities and methodological support in prevention of domestic and gender-based violence (workshops in socially excluded localities).

In cases of all 3 Calls in the area of “Roma Inclusion and Empowerment” higher intensity of publicity activities were organized by the Programme Operator. The effort to inform the public about the planned open calls was focused on providing online information and organizing two seminars for potential applicants. These were organized in cities of Prague and Olomouc which enabled potential applicants from different parts of the Czech Republic to attend. The main aim was to reach all relevant organizations as potential grant applicants which was later found effective. The PO used also the communication channels of the Government Office and cooperated with the NGO Romea that helped to spread out the information about the Calls and the Programme to all relevant stakeholders. The working net of regional coordinators, closely working with Roma consultants, were also encouraged to provide information to all relevant stakeholders, as well as to social workers. These activities resulted in the very high interest expressed by the applicants especially in case of the Call 2. Over 50 applications were received, nevertheless due to the limit allocation of the call, only approx. 10 % of submitted applications can be supported for financing.

## CZ-EDUCATION

The programme CZ-EDUCATION includes measures directly targeting the Roma inclusion which addressed mainly Outcomes 1 and 4. During the selection process, the project applications supporting Roma inclusion are prioritized. These applications could receive up to 10 priority points (in case of Outcome 4 up to 15 priority points). Moreover, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals of the Outcome 4 was opened only for projects covering the Roma inclusion. There are running projects from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> calls for training teachers / multipliers in Roma inclusion (2 x 60 participants in total). As to Outcome 4, the targets will be reached (and even exceeded), although the number of the approved projects is not as high as expected. Within the Outcome 1, several projects also focus on inclusive education. However, there were difficulties in Institutional Cooperation Projects (ICPs) to find Donor State partners with extensive experience and considerable interest in this field. According to the PO's observation, universities usually want to cooperate on scientific subjects while primary and secondary school prefer to deal with democracy and active citizenship education thus inclusive education.

The Programme also competes in this issue with other sources of funding (e.g. the CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS programme, the European Structural and Investment Fund) which are more suitable for some applicants (they enable different types of activities, work with families, leisure time activities, etc., the partner is not mandatory, they offer more money). The DPPs recommend that the inclusion issue should be defined as broadly as possible in the future (e.g. to cover the topic of the Sami community or immigrants, for instance).

Regarding the future 4<sup>th</sup> Call for ICPs, the PO plans to promote the inclusion topic with help of the DPPs and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prague.

## CZ-CULTURE

Roma inclusion concerns were addressed in the announced open calls through extra points being assigned to projects that involve the cultural heritage of minorities, e.g. German, Jewish, Roma and other and if the project contributes to equality and integration of disadvantaged groups (mainly the Roma, but also other social, ethnical and cultural minorities).

Within the Art and Cultural Criticism (ACC1) call, the project AndroMedia that is under implementation supports development of art criticism dealing with Roma culture and arts as a part of the cultural and artistic European space. By the help of interdisciplinary means such as workshops, seminars and public discussions young critics and students including Roma persons are encouraged to participate as ethnomusicologists, journalists and writers. The project supports communication with the audience and development of strategies of online discussions.

Within the Contemporary Arts (CA1) call the GENDAL'IPEN – Zrcadlení project was supported. The project is focused on support of professional creation and presentation of Roma Contemporary Art in the Czech Republic and abroad and thus to contribute to professionalization, visibility, popularization and sustainability of Roma Contemporary Arts. This shall be achieved by training of young Roma in cultural management, increasing their competencies and competitiveness in cultural entrepreneurship and technical skills,

supporting artistic creation and enabling them and other artists to present their art (music, dance, literary, alternative works and performances, e.g. mainly at the World Festival of Roma Culture – Khamoro in Prague and in other cities of the Czech Republic, Norway and Iceland.

Concrete measures for Roma inclusion are directly targeted in the pre-defined project “Building of a memorial to the victims of the Roma holocaust in Lety – Písek”, that is still in its preparatory phase.

#### **CZ-HEALTH**

The Roma inclusion within the CZ-HEALTH programme belongs to specific objectives of the Open Call 2: (a) Improvement of targeted prevention and early diagnostics in specific communicable and non-communicable diseases in selected socially excluded localities with Romani communities and to (b) Improving Health in Excluded Localities. There were two submitted proposals within the Call (one for objective (a) and one for objective (b)) and both of them were selected. In contrary to rather low interest in the Call, both Project Promoters are high professional and well established state contributory institutions (MotoI University Hospital and St. Anne’s University Hospital Brno). These Promoters guarantee the projects will be realized duly and in high quality. It is appreciated the topic is to be promoted in two biggest Czech cities (Prague and Brno). There are great expectations connected mainly with the well drafted project the “Saste Roma – Improving health in excluded localities” to be delivered by the St. Anne’s Hospital. There are no reportable results by the cut-off date as both projects are at the beginning of implementation.

Even though the other programmes did not directly address Roma concerns, the principles to involve the Roma community and to combat the discrimination of Roma were naturally incorporated into the programme documents and provide the basic framework for a tolerant approach across all programme activities and deliverables.

The NFP plans to evaluate the implementation of the Roma concerns within the respective programmes in the Czech Republic. The evaluation will proceed in line with the Evaluation plan (Annex B) and the results of the evaluation will be presented to relevant stakeholders.

Based on the initiative of the FMO connected with the Action Plan for Roma inclusion and empowerment for the Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 the “Roma workshop” will be organized in October 2021 in the Czech Republic in order to map the current situation in the respective programmes, assess any possible risks and exchange information between the FMO, NFP, POs and Programme partners.

## **4. STATUS OF PROGRAMMES**

### **CZ-RESEARCH Research**

**Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

The PA was modified on 4 December 2020 upon request of the PO. The statement on retaining funds at the PO till the final settlement of projects was adjusted in Annex II as the financial flows are fully based on advance payments.

In the reported period, the single open call announced on 20 November 2019 had been closed (since February 2020), no other calls follow. The call allocation 32,5 MEUR is fully committed and distributed among the supported 25 projects (out of 163 applications), each of them with a Donor State partner. 12 projects are funded from the EEA Grants, 13 from the Norway Grants. The CCS topic is covered by 2 projects which absorb 30% of the allocation (as requested in the PA) and 16 SMEs are involved in total.

After the PO provided the formal control during the early spring 2020 – 154 applications passed the check - the evaluation process including the individual evaluation criteria and consensus assessment followed. It was based on the Horizon 2020 evaluation. Three international evaluators were addressed at each project to provide evaluation and then the consensus. The quality assessment process finished in late summer 2020. Two ranking lists (one for the CCS from Norway Grants, the other for projects from EEA funds) were discussed in the Selection Committee and approved in September 2020. The contracting phase including negotiations started immediately in September 2020. The situation with COVID-19 slowed down the communication between Czech Promoters and Donor project partners, in particular, concluding the Partnership Agreements. The project contracts signatures followed and were completed in early 2021.

According to the KAPPA Terms and Conditions, the projects can start before the Project Contract is signed, but in line with the planned project start in the project proposal (application). These Promoters work on projects at their own risk with their own financing, but these costs are eligible and will be reimbursed with the grant for the year 2021 after the Project Contract signature. 5 projects applied this opportunity, the other ones started in 2021. Currently, all 25 projects are duly under implementation.

Monitoring of the progress is based on monitoring reports and PO visits. The PO will make at least one monitoring visit or public administration control for each project. For the year 2021, monitoring visits will be organized within five projects, which started with the project implementation at the end of the 2020 year (before signing the contract). The first project interim reports 2021 on annual basis will be submitted in January 2022 thus without more detailed information from the interim report the control (on-the-spot inspection) is not effective. On-the-spot inspections will be scheduled starting from 2022.

**Challenges faces related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

The programme is in the middle of implementation passing successfully the preparatory phase and Call administration, whereas the contracted projects are at the start.

Some expected risks such as Lack of interest/capacity, Lack in CCS participation, Number of SMEs in projects etc. were fully mitigated or are no more relevant (sufficient number of participated SMEs, interest and quality of CCS) and lowered the programme overall risk. However, new potential risks occurred, related to the pandemic restrictions.



The COVID-19 pandemic does not affect the programme except slower negotiations of partnership agreements due to only online contacts between partners. The research work may be adjusted for remote cooperation in the future, if necessary, and only bilateral or joint collaboration in projects may face some difficulties or delays because of restrictions.

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

The bilateral allocation in the CZ-RESEARCH programme is solely intended to support joint activities organized by the PO. The bilateral relations were initially supported and facilitated thanks the launch conference together with a 2-day match making seminar in November 2019. With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic there are no other events expected in near future. The mutual communication with partners shall be provided via virtual means or remote collaboration.

In total 12 projects are funded from the EEA Grants, 13 from the Norway Grants. A Donor project partner is involved in each project. Icelandic project partners are involved in 2 projects and Norwegian project partners in 23 projects.

The bilateral relations in the research community are of high quality and potential, they were established mainly in previous periods and now coming to the realization in joint projects. The COVID-19 pandemic affected direct personal meetings and joint works on-site, nevertheless, the research teams cope with the problems efficiently and transform the form of collaboration into virtual and remote methods with only marginal impact on results.

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

As to the condition to simplify all additional provisions and to involve the DPP in preparation of documents/project contracts, the process was smooth and the DPP was closely involved in the call preparation, drafting manuals and guides, as well as in the evaluation and selection process. The final results (documents, rules) were confirmed by the Programme Committee in September 2020.

The condition to stream approximately 30% of allocation of Norway Grants to CCS projects was fulfilled - in the Call, 2 CCS projects were supported and they absorb the respective part of allocation.

The programme supports capacity building in applied research, including supporting the SMEs, social sciences, humanities and arts research, and careers of female researchers and early-stage researchers. During the evaluation, the Programme Committee was ready in case of the same point score to take into consideration also 1. potential impact, 2. female leadership, 3. scientific and/or technical excellence. The same score did not appear, finally.

The CZ-RESEARCH programme is not focused on Roma inclusion and no measures are adopted on the issue.

**CZ-ENVIRONMENT Environment, Ecosystem and Climate Change**

### **Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

The Addendum No. 2 to the Programme Agreement was signed on 5 February 2021. The modification consisted of updates of the total allocation of the Programme which was increased by EUR 2,320,000, which, with 15% national co-financing, amounts to a total increase in the allocation of EUR 2,729,412. Second part of the modification of the Programme Agreement consisted of reallocation between two calls (SGS-1: Rondane and 2A: Tromso) and increase of allocations for the calls 3B: Trondheim, SGS3: Oslo, 4A: Bergen as their allocation were found insufficient. The financial resources dedicated for the 3B open call was requested to be increased due to the fact that the issue concerning residues of pharmaceuticals in surface waters is not yet addressed by any other European or national financial program. The results of the support could also be used in the process of preparing appropriate legislative instruments. The calls SGS3: Oslo and 4A: Bergen were closed by the time of submission of the modification request, nevertheless the PO recommended to allocate additional sources to these already closed calls to projects that met all conditions and requirements but due to limited allocation were placed on the reserve list. The number of submitted applications exceeded the available allocation, in some cases by more than twice.

Out of the 11 open calls which are planned in the Programme, four were launched in the previous reporting period, three in the reporting period of this Strategic Report, two will be published in late 2021. Two open calls are planned to be launched in the first half of 2022.

For the SGS-3 Oslo (Outcome 4), which was opened and closed in previous monitoring period, the allocation was increased as mentioned above. This allowed additional approval of 11 more projects. Overall 41 applications (out of 50) were recommended for funding; 39 projects are under implementation.

SGS1 – Rondane (Outcome 1) – the open call was opened on 14 September 2020 (till 30 Nov. 2020) – overall 22 projects were selected (out of total 23 submitted applications) on the Selection Committee which took place on 11 February 2021. 16 projects are in the implementation phase.

2A – Tromso (Outcome 2) – deadline for submission was set on 30 September 2020. Total of 8 applications were submitted; 6 of them were approved for financing by the Selection Committee on 4 December 2020. 3 projects have started their realization.

4A – Bergen (Outcome 4) – overall 19 project applications were submitted within the deadline on 30 October 2020, 9 of them were approved by the Selection Committee, which was organized on 4 February 2021. 1 project has entered in the implementation process.

SGS-4 “Reine” (Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4) – the submission process were opened to applicants on 15 December 2020. Total allocation amounts to 1 200 000 EUR. The Selection Committee, which took place on 16 June 2021, approved 29 projects for financing.

Call 1 – Rago (Outcome 1) was launched on 8 April 2021. Grant applications were accepted till 11 June 2021. The allocation of the call amounts to 5 779 023 EUR. The selection process is still on going by the cut-off date of the Strategic report.

Call 3B – Trondheim (Outcome 3) was launched on 8 April 2021. Grant applications were accepted till 11 June 2021. The allocation of the call amounts to 3 600 022 EUR. The selection process is still on going by the cut-off date of the Strategic report.

**Challenges faces related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

The programme implementation is delayed for approx. 4 months. This difference from the schedule of 2020 is caused by complications in administrative procedures which are mainly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the PO does not expect the projects' implementation to be negatively affected.

Minor delay is also evident in launching of open calls 3A and 2B - this was affected by future European legislature which is being prepared and unfinished projects implemented under the previous 2A open call. As the Programme Operator decided to include new legislation into the open call text, the launch of the 3A open call was postponed till the end of 2021.

As the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affect different areas of programme management, the insufficient interest of creation bilateral partnerships in submitted applications is visible. This is caused mainly by impossibility of travelling between partners' countries due to diverse national restrictions. The PO encourages potential applicants to submit such bilateral partnership projects via gaining extra points to those projects which plan to be implemented in cooperation with partner from Donor countries or a national institution or company.

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

The disbursement of the environmental bilateral programme has been negatively influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Project Promoters of bilateral initiatives challenged difficulties in organizing their bilateral cooperation activities, the Programme Operator agreed with the DPP during the Cooperation Committee meeting on extension of the eligibility date till 31 August 2022. This opportunity was seized by several Project Promoters to ensure proper implementation of bilateral activities in scope as they were planned. Overall 10 bilateral initiatives were approved.

Bilateral partnerships in projects are highly encouraged and recommended. But these are not mandatory. Applications submitted for projects with bilateral partnerships are given point advantage opposite to projects with no partnership or with another international partner or with a national institution or company. This is mostly due to decrease of interest of Project Promoters to design Donor partnership projects.

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

Special conditions set out in the programme agreement related to ownership, insurance and maintenance of buildings are fulfilled continuously within projects approval and setting conditions for grant acceptance and within changes approval.

The CZ-ENVIRONMENT programme is not focused on Roma inclusion and no measures are adopted on the issue.

## **CZ-HUMANRIGHTS Human Rights, Roma Inclusion and Domestic and Gender-based Violence**

### **Progress in developing and implementing programme**

The fourth revision of the Programme Agreement was submitted to the FMO on 3 June 2021 and approved by the FMO on 18 June 2021. The revision consisted of reallocation of funds within the Programme Area "Roma Inclusion and Empowerment". Due to lower interest of applicants in Call 1B, a part of the funds from Call 1B was reallocated into Call 1A and remaining funds will be reallocated into Call 2.

Under the Outcome 1 three open calls (1A - Support for Roma platforms at local and regional level, 1B - Capacity building of Roma advisors and 2 - The creation of motivational leisure time programmes and extracurricular activities for Roma children) were successfully finished; out of the calls 1A and 1B overall 10 projects were approved, 2 have started the implementation phase. Within the open call 2 - 45 applications were submitted and the Selection Committee is planned to be realized at the beginning of October 2021.

Outcome 2 - Open call for the Small Grant Scheme (MGSA) - Support of research, raising awareness and improving national implementation of human rights standards was finished. Overall 53 applications were submitted; 50 of them will be evaluated by the Selection Committee which will take place in September 2021.

Under the Outcome 3 overall four open calls were or will be launched. The open call 3 - Establishing new specialized services for victims of gender-based violence was finished and selection process continues. Overall 15 project applications were assessed by the Selection Committee in June 2021, now the verification process continues. It is supposed that 5 projects will be approved for realization. Open calls MGS B, C, D are planned to be announced as three separate calls during the fourth quarter of 2021.

Although the implementation of all projects has been partially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, no negative significant long-term effects were identified. Some activities were postponed (such as e.g. launch conferences, bilateral workshops with DPPs), some workshops/seminars were organized on-line.

**PDP 1** – a professional expert platform that discusses project realization has been developed and active since the project start. The Research Institute started preparatory work for collection and analysis of ethnically sensitive data including concept of the first sample survey

**PDP 2** – the building permit for reconstruction works was issued and came into force in mid-June 2021. The Museum of Romani Culture (Project Promoter) contracted technical supervision of construction and launched the tender for construction works in August 2021.

**PDP 3** – the Office organized several educational seminars for professional staff (such as social area workers, lawyers) in the areas of substitute family care and elaborated and published several new materials with recommendations in the area of human rights.

**PDP 4** – a nationwide media HateFree campaign that builds on the previous period financed from the EEA Grants 2009-2014 is being implemented in the project. The campaign on Facebook reaches an average of 50,000 users a day and 1,405,000 unique visitors visited either the website or watched campaign videos/HateFree Talks. As a result of the pandemic situation, the Ministry of Regional Development (Project Promoter) requested to modify the content of the project activity Mediation in schools. Instead of the complex mediation programme, the Project Promoter would like to aim at effective communication and dispute resolution skills. The modification was supported by the CoE and approved by the FMO in March 2021.

**PDP 5** – the Project Promoter realizes works on creation of the integrated web portal and the electronic compatibility manual for legislators. A tender for selection of a supplier of the web portal is being prepared. The supplier should be selected by the end of 2021 and the web portal and manual should be completed by the end of 2022.

**PDP6** – several educational seminars for professional staff held partly on-site and on-line were organized. Preparation of HELP e-learning courses is under way. Ten new employees took up the position of forensic social worker in the partner district courts in order to facilitate communication between justice system and vulnerable groups.

**PDP 7** – the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention works on mapping of the current situation in the field of domestic and gender based violence offenders and victim support as well as evaluation of existing measures applied to perpetrators. A project expert panel was formed and the outputs of the panel were processed in the analysis, which was published on the project website.

**PDP 8** – the Project Promoter organized an on-line international professional conference on topics of domestic violence, sexual violence and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in cyberspace in autumn 2020 with more than 220 followers. A website for the use of the movie Angry Man was launched with possibility of registration for seminars. Two side-events within the framework of the UN Commission on the Status of Women were organized by the Office of the Government in March 2021 with the topic of gender equality from the view of young generation and GBV in digitization time.

### **Challenges faces related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions**

In line with the updated risk analysis, the risk of insufficient programme absorption capacity within the Programme Area “Roma Inclusion and Empowerment” was lowered thanks to selection of ten projects within Call 1A and 1B and submission of many applications within Call 2. Thanks to the fourth revision of the Programme Agreement, a part of the funds from Call 1B were reallocated into Call 1A and remaining funds will be reallocated into Call 2.

### **Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme**

So far seven bilateral initiatives have been approved and successfully implemented. Due to the uncertain COVID-19 situation, the interest in bilateral cooperation has not been increased significantly yet. Nevertheless, one bilateral initiative was approved in August 2021 (the initiative is focused on Roma LGBT+ community) and one more initiative is expected to be submitted by the applicant during autumn 2021. The whole BA allocation could be spent by supporting both initiatives by the end of 2021.

Four PDPs - 2, 3, 4 and 8 - are being implemented in cooperation with Norwegian partners and PDP 5 with IPO. Bilateral cooperation in all the above-mentioned projects has been extensive since the beginning.

Bilateral cooperation is certainly very welcome in all the Calls of the CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS programme. Strongly supported by the PO is the bilateral cooperation in the selected Calls taking into account the conceptual setting and the whole context of the particular Call. As regards some statistics, under the Open call 2 seven grant applications have a Norwegian project partner; within the MGSA call 14 grant applications were submitted in the bilateral project partnership.

#### **How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns**

All conditions set in the PA have been continuously addressed and some conditions were already fulfilled. There have been no obstacles when fulfilling the conditions so far.

Roma inclusion and their empowerment are emphasized topics of pre-defined projects No.1 and No.2. These are implemented under the Programme Area "Roma Inclusion and Empowerment". Less not least, the Roma issue is also included in the project activities of other PDPs as well – PDP3 (educational activities), PDP4 (promotion within the Hate Free campaign), PDP5 (awareness raising), PDP6 (new position of forensic social worker) and PDP8 (workshops in socially excluded activities). The PO were effective during the preparation phase of the open calls to spread the information about the planned open calls and the Programme itself. Its activities, e.g. seminar for potential applicants, were found useful as it resulted in the very high interest expressed by the applicants especially in case of the Call 2.

## **CZ-JUSTICE Justice**

### **Progress in developing and implementing programme**

There was no change to the Programme Agreement in the reporting period.

Within the programme, two open calls under the outcome 2 were launched on 14 January 2021. The Small grant scheme call "Support of reintegration of persons conditionally released and released from prison" aims to create suitable conditions for re-socialization of persons leaving imprisonment on parole or after serving their sentence. By deadline for submission of applications on 24 March 2021, 8 applications were received. All applications were assessed of the administrative and eligibility criteria and then assessed by two external evaluators according to evaluation criteria. The Selection Committee was held on 23 June 2021 and

recommended 4 projects for funding. Currently, the selection process and recommended grant applications are ongoing the verification process taken by the Programme Operator. Start of the approved projects' implementation is expected in October/November 2021.

The second Open Call for proposals' "Professional care for imprisoned drug users and its continuity after release" objective is to reduce likelihood of relapse to drug use and potential of criminal activities by released drug users. Deadline for submission of applications was prolonged to 31 May 2021. Within this call, 2 applications were submitted. Both applications were assessed of the administrative and eligibility criteria and then assessed by two external evaluators. The Selection Committee will be held on 9 September 2021.

All PDPs are under implementation.

**PDP1** – the implementation smoothly continues despite several difficulties due to the COVID-19 restrictions at the beginning of implementation. Nevertheless, no more delay is expected. Within the project activities educational courses and workshops are organized.

**PDP2** continues in its implementation. The preparation phase of public procurements on the reconstruction of rooms suitable for the new programmes is ongoing. Communication between Project Partner and Project Promoter runs smoothly as several online sessions were organized. Project activities as translation of syllabi and standards of the programmes, study trip and job shadowing are being prepared.

**PDP3** – the affection of the COVID-19 pandemic was more significant than previously expected. Major delays, caused by longer approval process of the construction documentations, created savings within the project budget (probation house will be in operation 1,5 year instead of 2 years as planned). Though one project change concerning the postponement of project activity of the Probation House and creation one Programme Centre in Prague was approved after consultations with the Programme Partner. Moreover, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several bilateral activities within the project were moved to the online environment.

#### **Challenges faces related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions**

The less communication between partners, as stated in previous Strategic report, has been successfully eliminated as Project Promoters and their bilateral partners started to use alternative way for bilateral meetings, mostly via online environment.

Although the programme implementation were not seriously affected by COVID-19, the risk of delays in projects' implementation is still valid and could become more visible. In case the activities within the PDP2 and PDP3 will not be possible to realize within the next 6 to 8 months, delays can affect the projects' implementation. Within the PDP2 – bilateral activities could not been realized so far due to COVID-19 restrictions. Within the PDP3 – delays were caused due to longer administrative procedures (opening of the Probation house) by 6 months. The NFP plans to monitor and communicate the state of the projects with the PO to ensure the projects' outputs will be fulfilled in the scope they were planned. For mitigation of the risk, all activities and schedules are regularly monitored by the PO. Moreover the Project Promoters

are obliged to create a risk management and alternative plans, which should be able to react to immediate change of the likelihood of the risk.

### **Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme**

Bilateral activities were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, as no initiatives were implemented in the respective monitoring period. Nevertheless, the bilateral initiative planned within the Bilateral ambitions, prepared by open prisons Jiřice and Bastoy, previously postponed, is ready to be implemented immediately when possible. As the pandemic restrictions seem to be stabilized recently, the Project Promoter plans to continue in implementation of the bilateral initiative as soon as possible.

Bilateral cooperation between Project Promoters and their bilateral partners is well functioning, as they communicate and share knowledge and good practice in the online environment, i.e. via videoconference and online meetings. If necessary, simultaneous translation is used. All bilateral trips were postponed to the 1Q of 2022 due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

### **How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns**

Conditions set in the PA (related to ownership, insurance and maintenance of buildings and the maximum level of funding for infrastructure - hard measures shall not exceed 30% of total eligible expenditure of the programme) are continuously monitored as projects are selected for funding or during the further implementation process.

The CZ-JUSTICE programme is not focused on Roma inclusion and no measures are adopted on the issue.

## **CZ-HOMEAFFAIRS Home Affairs**

### **Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

Addendum no. 2 to the PA was approved and accepted in Grace in November 2020. As reported previously, it concerned integration of two smaller SGSs into one Call and corresponding changes in estimated timing and financial parameters. In parallel, the text of the CfP was extensively discussed between the Programme Operator and the NFP. It was submitted to the FMO for comments in February 2021. The Call was launched on 13 April 2021 and terminated on 1 July 2021 with ten submitted proposals (for ca 2,5 – 3 MCZK each). Taking the financial ceiling of the SGS into account, 3 or 4 projects will be implemented. The Selection Committee will take place in October 2021. Launch of implementation of selected projects is expected 4Q 2021. It should be noted that number of submitted proposals confirmed there was a big interest in the media literacy, combatting hate crime disinformation or hybrid threats. These dangerous topics are permanently developing and thus it is essential to continuously and flexibly react on the newly emerging threats.



All four PDPs are under implementation. Communication between the Project Promoters and the Programme Operator is assessed as good, system of regular monthly meetings was established.

**PDP1** is very complex and administratively demanding project with diverse activities. Some training activities were realized online, some are waiting for pandemic measures phasing out. The full scope of trainings should be duly delivered with stipulated deadline. Small procurements should be prepared and tendered slightly after cut-off date.

**PDP2** was launched. Preparatory works are – so far – in line with planned time schedule. Public procurement for construction works was launched on 5 February 2021 and prolonged until 1 June 2021 with 13 submitted tenders. The total price will be significantly co-financed from the national resources. Should there be no complaints, construction works should be launched in September 2021. Opening ceremony will take place in Kutná Hora in September 2021. Joint opening conference for PDP1 and PDP 2 is planned in October 2021 in Prague.

**PDP3** is delayed. No training activities have been delivered by the cut-off. Trainings are very specific and it is difficult or even impracticable to reach sufficient interaction between trainers (psychologists) and trainees only online. If the pandemic situation and restrictive measures come soon to an end, trainings will be delivered with personal attendance in the second half of 2021 and mainly in 2022. If not, trainings will have to be delivered online in modified (compromise) version. As far as the IS for psychologists and adjustments of IS EVIN are concerned, serious obstacles were identified during preparation (by the cut-off). The issue is under careful monitoring of the NFP and may result in PA amendment.

Even **PDP4** is slightly delayed, still the risk of not meeting the goals is considered low. Negotiations between stakeholders (self-governments, local police, national police) took place, first workshops were realized online, other workshops are ready to be delivered physically, courses for psychologists were done. Still, less than 150 municipalities is involved in the pilot model of information exchange and cooperation with the national Police (as stipulated in the respective indicator of achievement). This is mainly due to the unexpected huge administrative and personal burden caused by the pandemics. However, cooperation with 78 municipalities come off and other municipalities are being continuously addressed.

#### **Challenges related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

There are no visible major changes in policy or in priorities of the resort. Management of the Programme still has to fight consequences of the COVID-19 pandemics (mainly as far as epidemiological measures and travel restrictions in the Czech Republic are concerned – e.g. limits of participants in the same place, only online contribution of foreign participants) which negatively influence implementation of pre-defined projects. It was inevitable to postpone number of planned training activities or opening conferences. As an inevitable solution, original time-schedules of PDPs (and the SGS) were moved and planned conclusions are now closer to the implementation deadline. Still, all four PDPs shall be delivered without obstacles. Risks of not meeting the deadline are considered low at the moment, however, the NFP is more closely supervising fulfilment of individual activities using timesheets of activities prepared for each PDP. As reported previously, there are no fundamental changes affecting the overall aims

or outcomes of the programme. There may be significant changes in PDP3 concerning replacement of creation of IT system for psychologist (potential amendment of the PA).

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

PDP1 and PDP4 are implemented in partnerships. It is necessary to take into account the potential anti-covid measures when planning or implementing bilateral activities which is difficult or impossible. SGS grant applications submitted in partnership with partner institutions from Norway will be advantaged in the scoring of the grant application. The Selection Committee will take place in October 2021. Ten proposals were submitted and two of them in partnership with Norwegian institution.

There is one bilateral initiative under implementation “Sharing Good Practice in State Police Cooperation with Local Authorities” interlinked with PDP4. Another initiative “Development of knowledge in the field of forensic expertise and new methods of investigation” was drafted in cooperation with Norwegian partner and will be submitted to the JCBF for approval (after cut-off date).

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

The CZ-HOME AFFAIRS programme is not focused on Roma inclusion and no measures are adopted on the issue.

Special conditions set out in PA are mostly fulfilled. The PO contracted an external entity to carry out a sociological survey to determine the baseline value of indicator “Share of target group with positive perception of police behavior”. Relevant data have not been submitted to the FMO as the PO intended to provide the data together with results of survey carried out to determine the baseline for indicator “Police officers’ level of knowledge of preventing and combating crime, providing public security, and safeguarding human rights” which is to be done within PDP1 project activities in the autumn 2021. The survey outputs may be available only in 2022. The NFP asked the PO to provide the FMO with available information immediately. As far as two baselines for Outcome 3 Indicators are concerned, and external entity carried out a sociological survey and respective baseline values are at the disposal. Though the selection of municipalities has not been finished, the NFP advised the PO to provide these values to FMO as soon as possible.

## **CZ-EDUCATION Education**

**Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

The PA was modified to reflect the financial balance after completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of calls as well as the absorption capacity in Outcomes. The remaining funds from Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 were reallocated to Outcome 1 to support 6 reserve projects and to enable launch of the 4<sup>th</sup> Call. The Cooperation Committee supported the reallocation and other related adjustments on 7 May 2021 and the PA modification was approved in mid-June 2021.

Three rounds of Calls were implemented up to now:

The first round from late 2018/spring 2019, 19 projects supported, the second round from late 2019/1Q 2020, 38 projects supported, and the third round, duly announced within Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 on 6 November 2020 with deadlines February/March 2021. There were 41 applications submitted and 31 (+6 reserve) projects supported.

The PO summarized balance of allocated/unallocated means, evaluated interest in particular measures. There are unallocated means in Outcomes 2, 3, 4 (especially in Outcome 3, VET, where only 22% were allocated and the absorption capacity is definitely low). In the contrary, in Outcome 1 (ICP) the interest exceeds the call allocation and 6 reserve projects were waiting on the reserve list. The Cooperation Committee agreed on launching an additional 4<sup>th</sup> Call for Outcome 1 (ICP) in October 2021 with the deadline in February 2022. Projects will start in August 2022 with shorter implementation period (12 or 18 months instead of 24 due to the final deadline 30 April 2024).

To enable these steps, modification of the PA was necessary to provide transfer of financial means between Outcomes and to adjust indicators and conditions for implementation of projects.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> round of calls, 9 projects are still running, 10 projects were completed. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of calls, all 38 projects started on 1 August 2020 and are duly running, no of them completed yet. Especially the mobility projects (Outcome 2) and VET projects (Outcome 3) were affected by COVID-19. All the planned mobilities were postponed or prolonged. The other types of projects (Outcome 1 and 4) are able to replace the physical activities by virtual ones and still fulfil the planned targets. Cancellation fees for travel and accommodation are applied when necessary.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> round of calls was closed in spring 2021. 31 projects were supported (plus 6 reserve projects ready on the list) from the 41 submitted applications. The projects were launched in August 2021, the reserve projects shall be realized thanks to the reallocation of means between Outcomes via PA modification and shall start in October 2021.

**Challenges faces related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

There are two concerns in the focus of risk monitoring: the pandemic impact and the absorption capacity in particular measures/Outcomes.

The Promoters and partners are not able to undertake physical mobilities abroad or to organise project events due to COVID-19 protective measures. The PO has developed a strategy how to cope with the risk in line with FMO recommendation, and is applying a flexible approach – i.e. postponing activities (bilateral meetings, travelling, mutual visits and internships) and/or providing modifications incl. the prolongation.

After closing the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of calls (88% means allocated), the PO can insist, that the real absorption capacity within the Outcome 3 (VET) is low. The low interest demonstrated already in the results of the 1<sup>st</sup> call in 2019, indicated possible problems in achieving the Outcome 3 indicators (only 1 project was submitted and supported with only 5% of the allocation committed). The 2<sup>nd</sup> call in 2020 confirmed the risk (5 projects submitted and supported with only 16% of allocation committed) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> call in 2021 as well (4 projects submitted and supported, only 11% committed). Together with the balance of other Outcomes the PO choose the strategy to reallocate all remaining means to the Outcome 1 (ICP) for final reasonable absorbing the means. This has been processed via PA amendment in mid-2021.

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

The programme facilitated bilateral project partnerships through preparatory visits, via promotion and support of the partner search databases as well as electronic leaflets with the brief overview of particular Outcomes. The Call for preparatory visits was launched in November 2019. Czech schools could apply until end of October 2020, however, the interest was low because of COVID-19 restrictions - only three preparatory visits were realized.

The PO participated in the conference on VET higher education hold by HK-dir (Diku, the DPP) in November 2020 and presented the calls for proposals with stress on opportunities for the Czech-Norwegian school cooperation.

Partnership with entities from the Donor States is mandatory for all projects under all Outcomes. After 3 selection rounds in 2019, 2020 and 2021, in total 88 projects (94 incl. the reserve list) with partners from the Donor States were approved. The implementation was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: project activities had to be postponed, cancelled or replaced by the on-line format. Besides this, the target set for the bilateral output indicator (i.e. 170 bilateral partnerships supported) cannot be achieved, because the allocation is being absorbed by fewer projects. Currently, about 110 partnerships are estimated.

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

The special concerns are preferably addressing the Roma issue in the programme. The programme was designed to directly target at the Roma inclusion via relevant measures mainly in Outcomes 1 and 4. During the selection process, the applications supporting Roma inclusion were prioritized by priority points. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for proposals in Outcome 4 was opened only for projects covering the Roma inclusion. As to Outcome 4, the targets will be reached (and even exceeded). In Outcome 1 (ICPs) the applicants faced lack of Donor partner institutions involved in the fields relevant to inclusive education. Regarding the future 4<sup>th</sup> Call for ICPs, the PO plans to promote the inclusion topic with help of the DPPs and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prague.

**CZ-HEALTH Health**

### **Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

There were in total five amendments of the PA approved by the FMO and accepted in Grace. The first two amendments were mentioned in the previous Strategic Report. The third amendment concerned increase of the grant rate for NGOs (SGS applicants) from 90 % up to 100 % and technical corrections. The fourth amendment incorporated new indicator “*Umbrella patient organisations established*” under the output 3.1. During preparation of the SGS3 Call and as a result of number of expert debates, the Ministry of Health suggested to split the allocation of SGS3 into two areas (instead of one) and support “creation of umbrella patient organizations”. The fifth amendment concerned reallocation of additional funds from the MoU reserve and savings from Open Call 2 into Open Call 1 and rather minor update of relevant indicators within Outcome 1. All the amendments resulted from actual new needs identified by the directly involved experts.

All PDPs are under implementation.

**PDP1** (Outcome1) was launched on 1 November 2020. The legal act has not yet been issued as it still awaits signature of the partnership agreement. The process was delayed due to changes of management and responsible persons at the partner institution (Arctic University of Tromsø). The revised partnership agreement will be signed by both sides in the 3Q/2021. The implementation process is at the very beginning. PDP1 is implemented by the Ministry of Health and five selected health-care-centres. Conclusion of the selection process and international launch conference are planned in September 2021. The conference will be attended by experts, general practitioners with personal attendance of experts - guests from Norway. Taking the high number of stakeholders involved in this project, its administration imposes serious administrative burden on staff of the Ministry of Health. Potential insufficient personal capacity is thus mentioned among risks.

**PDP2** (Outcome 2) is ongoing smoothly and encounters no serious obstacles. Despite the pandemics it follows the schedule. Preparation of recommended procedures for the prescription of antibiotics continues as planned. The above-limit tender for selection of supplier of the comprehensive antibiotics resistance prevention campaign as well as tender for project management were successfully concluded.

**PDP3** (Outcome 3) establishes space for the HUB. Premises of the HUB are available, rental agreement was signed, web portal developed. Unfortunately, due to restrictive measures within COVID-19 pandemics, the HUB had not been open to public at the beginning and all activities had to be moved online. It has been opened for public since May 2021. Some activities are realized in the premises some are online. The launch conference was organized online in December 2020. The e-learning part of the project is delayed due to lack of communication with the Norwegian partner in 2021. Slightly before cut-off date of this Report the communication was renewed and plans and activities for 3Q/2021 discussed.

As far as SGSs (SGS1 - mental health of children and adolescents, SGS2 - prevention measures targeting dementia and SGS3 – support of patient organizations) are concerned, all three Calls were successfully finished (in May or June 2021). The total amount requested within all the three Calls (and number of submitted proposals) always far exceeded available allocations of

individual Calls (64 submitted proposals within SGS 1, approx. 5 proposals can be supported, 10 submitted proposals within SGS2, approx. 2 proposals can be supported, 48 submitted proposals within SGS3, approx. 15 proposals can be supported). There is noticeable interest in the topic among potential applicants. The high number of submitted proposals inter alia means that only high quality proposals will be selected. It is presumed that both selection and verification processes will be finished in 3Q or 4Q/2021 and implementation of selected projects should start in December 2021.

Even Open Calls (Open Call 1 – mental health of children, Open Call 2 – prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases) were successfully closed within actual monitoring period (in July and in September 2020). Thirteen projects supported within Call1 were launched. Two projects were supported within Call 2, both of them were launched.

**Challenges related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

No fundamental challenges are foreseen. No doubt, the global pandemic crisis had large impact on capacities and priorities of the Ministry of Health and its partners, mainly the National Institute of Public Health, which – inevitably – has to put great emphasis on introduction of anti-covid measures. However, priorities of the programme are well established and cover areas where additional financial support is indeed essential (mental health, prevention of diseases, etc.), always needed and is not vulnerable to political changes. PDP Promoters but now also Project Promoters within Open Calls are mainly experienced institutions working on the socially beneficial issues on a long term basis.

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

All bilateral initiatives were closed and taken the anti-pandemic measures into account, no new bilateral initiatives are planned at the moment.

All PDPs are implemented in cooperation with Norwegian partners, unfortunately, communication between partners faced difficulties (PDP1, PDP3 and had to be mediated by the DPP). Call 1 and Call 2 aim at strengthening partnership between the Czech entities and entities from Donor States, therefore the bilateral cooperation with Donor partners within the calls was favoured by extra points in the evaluation process. In the first Call, 38 proposals were submitted, 10 were submitted in partnership, 13 proposals were selected, 5 with international partner. In the second Call, two submitted proposals did not include Donor partners.

As concerns three SGSs, selection process has not been finished but there were 122 submitted proposals out of which 26 submitted in partnership.

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

MoU special concerns and conditions set in the PA are fulfilled. The Roma inclusion belongs to specific objectives of the Open Call 2 which was concluded with two selected projects (to be delivered by the Motol University Hospital in Prague and St. Anne's University Hospital in

Brno). There are no reportable results yet as both projects are at the beginning of implementation.

## **CZ-CULTURE Culture**

### **Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

The amendment of the PA was completed in the reporting period, submitted and approved by the FMO on 16 April 2021. The related Addendum No.1 to the PIA was issued on 1 July 2021. The overall programme allocation in the amount of 1,75 MEUR was increased from the MoU reserve and streamed to Outcome 2. The related co-financing was increased as well. According to modification, the PO is now allowed to provide shifts in allocations between calls within the same outcome. The allocations for coming calls were adjusted, the respective indicators updated.

The first round of open calls had been closed since April 2020, altogether 245 applications were received within the four supported areas (CA1, CB1, ACC1 and CH1) and 56 projects were selected by the Selection Committees that took place in August and November 2020. Finally, 64 projects, including 8 from the reserve list, were supported after the increase of allocation from the reserve.

In relation the PO organized two online seminars for Project Promoters on 3 March 2021 (ACC1 and CB1) and on 11 May 2021 (CA1 and CH1).

The second round of calls was announced in summer 2021 - the "Contemporary Art" (CA2) on 21 May (with deadline 31 August 2021), the "Capacity Building of Umbrella Associations, Networks and Platforms" (CB2) on 26 April (deadline 26 July 2021) and "Innovative Use of Movable and Immovable Cultural Heritage" (CH2) on 2 August (still open, deadline 1 November 2021).

Most of the supported projects have already started their activities incl. public procurements. Currently, 64 projects from the CA1, CB1 and ACC1 calls are in the early phase of the implementation. First monitoring reports were due by July 2021.

The PDP is still in its preparatory phase, i.e. before grant application submitting. The Museum of Romani Culture shall submit the grant application document with annexes which are in delay. The winner of the landscape-architectural competition for the design of the new memorial in Lety delivered the architectural proposal in early 2021. The overall delay consists in sequencing of administrative steps and financial uncertainties. Submitting the grant application is dependent on obtaining the building permit (deadline 31/12/20 was not met) and "Founder's Declaration of Consent" from the Ministry of Culture which is expected after clarification of overall financing including demolition works. The opening of the memorial is still planned according to the original plan in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2023 since the winning architectural proposal consists of simple construction modifications and works, and it still allows to meet planned deadline of project implementation in April 2024.

**Challenges faces related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

Several anticipated risks were mitigated such as the delays in development of the information system, or risks related to the calls. On the contrary, new risks occurred (COVID-19 issue) or became more complicated (PDP issue).

After the first round of calls the absorption capacity proved to be high (e.g. in CB1 only 50% of applications and in CA1 only 25% could have been supported). Thus according to the advice of DPPs and support of the NFP the PO asked for additional funds from the reserve in the amount of 1,75 MEUR (Outcome 2) to be able to cover reserve projects and additional call(s) which was approved in May 2021 (PA amendment, Addendum to PIA). The programme complexity is still under control. The collaboration between the PO and partners is close, based on the Partnership agreement which underwent adjustments with regard to the PA/PIA amendments.

As to the COVID-19 issue, the sector has been affected quite a lot, however, the programme does not suffer from the problems thanks still the early status of implementation. There will be probably some adjustments in projects to reflect replacing personal meetings with distant forms, electronic media or remote cooperation.

The PDP is currently a top risky issue. The project faces serious delays since the beginning due to financial uncertainties, dependency on large terrain works outside the PDP and administrative steps at the Museum of Romani Culture (MRC) founder (the Ministry of Culture - MoC) as well as at other authorities. The deadline for building permit (31/12/2020) set in the PA was not reached. Currently the MRC focuses on collecting all annexes to the grant application, especially the building permit and the "Founder's Declaration of Consent". In September 2021 the NFP invited negotiations with the PO, MoC, MRC and the Norwegian Embassy to initiate a risk management approach with the aim to keep milestones and the final project deadline. NFP will closely monitor the preparatory phase of the project via monthly meetings with PO, MoC and MRC.

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

Considering the persisting travel restrictions due to COVID-19, the MoC does not plan a repetition of bilateral open calls in 2021. Instead, an alternative of online match-making was considered and two matchmaking seminars were planned for June and July. Unfortunately, due to low interest in the summer period, both seminars were cancelled. Together with the Arts Council Norway (ACN) and MoC a "pool of project ideas and partner contacts" for mediated match-making was created, the direct facilitation worked well and partnerships were confirmed.

The applicants and partners are also encouraged to use the Partner Database created by NFP. From remaining bilateral funds (115 899 EUR) a bilateral initiative "Post Covid Adaptation Models in Culture" prepared by Arts and Theatre Institute and ACN shall be organized. Another initiative in relation to the Czech EU Presidency in autumn 2022 is proposed. The PO shall apply for increase of bilateral funds at the JCBF.



All projects were encouraged to include partner(s) from the Donor States. Bilateral cooperation with Donor partners in projects is optional, however the partnerships are being favoured by extra points in the evaluation process. In the call ACC1: 4 out of 10 projects will be implemented in Donor state partnership, CB1: 6 out of 12 projects in cooperation, CA1: 25 out of 26 selected projects and CH1: all 16 projects are in cooperation with Donor state partners.

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

The specific concerns and conditions set out in the Programme Culture were transposed in the open calls mainly through eligible activities, selection criteria, set up of the allocations and infrastructure limitations and will be continuously fulfilled within projects approval and setting conditions for grant acceptance and within changes approval. The condition of obtaining the building permit for the Roma memorial within the PDP – 31/12/2020 – was not fulfilled. The non-compliance did not result into PA amendment, however the issue is strongly monitored by the NFP and shall be reported.

The inclusion concerns are in focus of the programme design and are duly applied in the implementation. In open calls extra points were assigned to projects that involve cultural heritage of minorities including Roma and to those who contribute to integration of disadvantaged groups. The PDP “Building the memorial to the victims of the Roma holocaust in Lety – Písek” implemented by the Museum for Roma Culture and supported by the Ministry of Culture in close cooperation with the Norwegian partner constitutes an important part of the programme target.

## **CZ-GOVERNANCE Good Governance**

**Progress in developing and implementing programme:**

There was one amendment of the PA submitted to the FMO in the monitoring period. Savings from PDP3 (Outcome 2) amounting to 0,046 MEUR and savings from PDP4 (Outcome 3) amounting to 0,095 MEUR were reallocated to SGS (Outcome 1). Respective indicators of achievement were updated accordingly. There was also a change of the target value of indicator for PDP2 (Output 1.1). The Addendum no. 1 to the PA was approved and accepted in Grace in February 2021. Due to serious obstacles occurred within preparation of the legal act for PDP3, further changes of the PA will be discussed with IPO and submitted to the FMO for approval in the form of a request for approval of the second addendum to the PA. The request is expected to be sent after cut-off date (in the 3Q/2021).

All five PDPs were approved. Unfortunately, the legal act has not yet been issued within PDP2 and PDP3 as these two projects still await signature of the Partnership Agreement (with OECD). As far as the SGS is concerned, the call for proposals will be terminated in October 2021.

Implementation of **PDP1** is ongoing, times schedule of the project is adhered to, except activities requesting traveling which were postponed after COVID-19 phase-out. Some activities were successfully completed (establishment of the expert panel and the

multidisciplinary group, methodology of using geolocation data in public administration). Public procurement for database suppliers should be prepared in 3Q 2021.

**PDP2** faced serious administrative difficulties. There was an extensive, long-term discussion concerning the legal form of involvement of the OECD and the final consent was found (certain exemption from Czech procurement law was approved and submitted to the Czech Government for information only in May 2021. Signature of the legal act is expected in the 3Q/2021. As the project will start with significant delay in September 2021, its time schedule will have to be postponed until 4/2024). Implementation of the project will be under close supervision of the PO and the NFP.

**PDP3** has not started yet. Contrary to PDP2 while planning similar cooperation with OECD, the Project Promoter along with the Programme Operator have not found the way how to fit the relationship with OECD to the Czech Law and to the Budgetary Rules of the Czech Republic. Despite very demanding and time consuming negotiations among relevant national stakeholders, the OECD had to be informed that joint cooperation within PDP3, financed from the EEA Grants, was not possible. Project Promoter prepared in consultation with PO an alternative solution. The Czech Masaryk University, Faculty of Economics and Administration, should take over all activities planned for the OECD and an independent expert in the field (from the University of Bologna) along with his team of other respected foreign experts should ensure objective, international comparison (analysis). Such solution - that would certainly need PA amendment - presumes savings which could be reallocated to the SGS. PO proposed the PA amendment that was approved by NFP. After the consultation with IPO, PO will send the request for PA amendment to the FMO.

**PDP4** is under implementation. Works on methodological manuals and trainings are ongoing. There is sufficient time gap to deliver postponed training activities. Single procurement of specialized virtual currencies investigation software (Chainanalysis and Elliptic) had to be re-tendered and divided into two separate procurements. Meetings with ARO (Asset Recovery Office), trainings and conferences should start in the 4Q 2021.

**PDP5** is under implementation and encounters no serious obstacles. Works on announcing the public tenders for suppliers of the comparative studies on whistleblowing, and conflict of interest, including methodologies of trainings on the same topics and for media campaigns for whistle-blowers protection, are ongoing.

The SGS Call was launched on 28 June 2021 and will be terminated on 14 October 2021. Sufficient publicity of the Call was ensured via publication in nationwide journals and by email addressed to all municipalities, the Seminar for Applicants was organized.

**Challenges related to implementation, absorption/disbursements, with suggested solutions:**

Although there were concerns about potential lack of support from the leadership at the Ministry of Interior (Project Promoter of PDP2), implementation of the PDP2 is now close to the signature of the Partnership Agreement with the OECD. The Ministry of Interior proved its political commitment to previously identified needs, i.e. project outcomes and went through administratively demanding process (approval of the project by the Working Group for Transparent Public Procurement was received and relevant information to the Government

was submitted). There are no visible major changes in policy or in priorities of the resort. As far as PDP3 is concerned, it cannot be implemented as agreed due to serious administrative obstacles and the PA will have to be amended.

**Progress in strengthening bilateral relations with donor state entities, including the use of bilateral funds allocated to the programme:**

In line with the PA, the SGS focuses on topics related to the involvement of the public in decision making processes. The mandatory partnership of the Donors States enables to share their knowledge and best practices on how to communicate with citizens effectively and involve them in community activities. Matchmaking seminar took place in November 2020 and was targeted to partners from Norway and Iceland. The Call will be terminated in October 2021 but based on the number of inquiries by potential applicants, it is expected that the full allocation will be utilized.

There are three partners within PDP1 (Norwegian public institutions) and mutual cooperation is running on the basis of online participation in working groups. In general, progress in bilateral relations has been unfortunately hindered by COVID-19 pandemics.

**How MoU special concerns and/or conditions set in the PA have been addressed, especially Roma inclusion concerns:**

Concerning specific conditions, an ex-ante control of public procurement procedures and documentation for the pre-defined project under section 5.1 of Annex II to the Programme Agreement, will be carried out by the Programme Operator. No international conferences took place in the monitored period.

The CZ-GOVERNANCE programme is not focused on Roma inclusion and no measures are adopted on the issue.

## 5. STATUS OF BILATERAL FUNDS

The Bilateral Fund has been strongly affected by the challenging COVID-19 pandemic situation. The **4<sup>th</sup> JCBF meeting** needed to be postponed because of restrictions related to the pandemic and currently it is planned to be held in Q4/2021 before the Annual Meeting takes place. The **4<sup>th</sup> Open Call** text and framework together with the Guidelines for Applicants and Final Beneficiaries will be key issues of the meeting. In line with the Work Plan, the **4<sup>th</sup> Open Call** may still be announced in 2021 or postponed to 2022 if agreed by the JCBF. The JCBF **Work Plan** will be updated in terms of the **4<sup>th</sup> JCBF meeting** conclusions.

Due to a significant interest of applicants, the allocation of the **3<sup>rd</sup> Open Call of the NFP** (300 000 EUR), which was launched on 18 June 2020, was increased by 100 000 EUR in line with the Open Call text, based on the decision of the JCBF in September 2020, so that more submitted initiatives could have been supported. The call was closed in January 2021. In total, 26 out of 36 submitted grant applications were approved and the allocation was fully committed.

As for **the pre-defined initiatives** (PDIs), the preparations of the Czech-Liechtenstein school exchange planned for 2020 and 2021 were cancelled due to the epidemiological situation of COVID-19. Similarly, the Exchange of good practices in the implementation of modern technologies Iceland - Czech Republic was postponed to 2022. For the PDI My Father's Story, implemented in Czech-Norwegian partnership, the Implementation contract was issued in March 2021. Although its implementation period started (first part was implemented in August 2021, the second part will be implemented in autumn 2022), the activities are delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The implementation of contracted initiatives was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions as stated above. As the situation did not enable proper realization of bilateral activities such as meetings, conferences, study visits, etc., the Project Promoters of several initiatives submitted modification requests for extension of the implementation period to organize bilateral activities in scale they were planned in grant applications later. In other cases the activities were adjusted and were implemented online or via virtual communication means. Despite the complicated situation, no contracted bilateral initiatives have been cancelled yet.

**At programme level**, disbursement of the Bilateral Fund (bilateral ambitions) was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Due to persisting COVID-19 uncertainties the Programme Operators did not launch any new open calls for bilateral ambitions. One pre-defined initiative was approved under bilateral ambitions of CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS programme (focused on LGBT+ information campaign targeting the Roma minority).

Within the initiatives which are being implemented, the extensions of the eligibility date were requested by Project Promoters due to delays in their implementation as COVID-19 restrictions affected the planned schedules. All Programme Operators cope with the problem flexibly and no cancellations of bilateral initiatives have been reported yet.

So far, **the NFP itself** has not implemented any bilateral initiative. In addition, no activities are planned in the following 12 months.

The overall balance of the bilateral funds reflects the current COVID-19 situation – disbursement slowed down in comparison with previous monitoring periods. From the allocation of 3 690 000 EUR the amount of 1 269 313 EUR has been spent (by 30/6/2021, IFR No. 6) which represents 34,4 %.

In the upcoming monitoring period, the little speed up in spending is expected, as postponed initiatives are planned to be completed and the possible 4<sup>th</sup> open call (if agreed by the JCBF) will be launched.

*The text of this chapter was consulted and agreed on by the JCBF.*

## 6. MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

### a. Management and control systems (MCS)

The national level Management and Control System (MCS) was officially acknowledged by the Donors in December 2018. No changes to the MCS have been carried out since then and no changes are expected in the near future. The same applies to the setup of the national authorities. As concerns staffing, it is generally stable.

The descriptions of MCS at the level of POs (PO MCS) for all programmes were approved by the NFP and the FMO was informed until the end of year 2020. Last MCS of the Technology Agency (CZ-Research) was approved by NFP and audited by the AA and then made official on 7 December 2020.

Within the reporting period the Management and control system of POs were updated in several programmes: MCS of the Technology Agency for programme CZ-RESEARCH, MCS of the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (DZS) for programme CZ-EDUCATION, MCS for programmes managed by the Ministry of Finance, i.e. CZ-CULTURE, CZ-HEALTH, CZ-GOVERNANCE, CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS and CZ-JUSTICE programme.

In line with the conditions set out in the Programme Agreements of CZ-CULTURE, CZ-HEALTH, CZ-JUSTICE, CZ-GOVERNANCE and CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS, the NFP contracted external assistance Deloitte Advisory, Ltd. for the whole implementation period of EEA/Norway Grants 2014-2021 to ensure the supervision of NFP activities and responsibilities and verification of compliance with the set methodology and set conditions (the Methodology was developed by Deloitte Advisory in cooperation with the NFP and acknowledged by the FMO in August 2020).

Up to now, two cycles of supervision were done:

The 1<sup>st</sup> supervision of the NFP's functions was officially commenced on 2 September 2020, the interviews were organized mainly in the 4Q 2020. As a result, a summarized report on NFP activities in the period 11/2019 - 10/2020 was issued in November 2020 and accepted on 6 January 2021. The report was based on interviews with the NFP staff and staff of the POs CZ-CULTURE, CZ-JUSTICE, CZ-RESEARCH, CZ-ENVIRONMENT. The function of the NFP, compliance with all rules and conditions and operability regarding risk management was fully confirmed. No findings nor recommendations for improvement were formulated.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> supervision covered the period 11/2020 - 4/2021, using the same methodology of investigations / interviews. Besides interviews with the NFP, the POs of CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS and CZ-HOME AFFAIRS were addressed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> report was completed in June 2021 and approved on 2 July 2021. No findings were identified as well.

Changes of the Annexes B of the Memoranda of Understanding on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 were implemented in the reporting period of this Strategic Report. The changes were results of the negotiations about the allocation of MoU reserves that were based on the mid-term review and finally agreed between the Donors and the NFP after the Annual meeting in November 2020.

Changes of Annexes B of the MoUs also included corrections of the names of same DPPs and POs and were completed on 1 March 2021. Allocation of reserve to the selected programmes

were further incorporated into the respective Programme Agreements and subsequently to the Programme Implementation Agreements.

## b. Complaints

The complaint mechanism for EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 is established and procedures how to submit complaints are visible on the NFP website [www.eeagrants.cz](http://www.eeagrants.cz) and [www.norwaygrants.cz](http://www.norwaygrants.cz). The information is also included in the call texts of all programmes.

In the reporting period there were 5 complaints submitted to the NFP – 2 related to the programme CZ-ACF (two different complainers to the same Project Promoter) and 3 related to the programme CZ-EDUCATION (all from the same complainer to one mobility project). The NFP always consulted the respective Programme Operators and used their answers in the answers to the complainers. In all cases, the complaints were evaluated as non-relevant and the NFP informed the complainers about the results of its investigation within the deadline of 30 days.

## c. Irregularities

The irregularities till now were discovered in programmes:

- CZ-BF (**IR-4**: closed/error in payment claim/amount reported in irregularity report - 24,70 EUR - only Grant part; **IR-3**: closed/error in payment claim/219,13 EUR - only Grant part; **IR-22**: closed/error in payment claim/125,94 EUR - only Grant part),
- CZ-HEALTH (**IR-7**: closed/error in payment claim/533,41 EUR - including PRG co-financing),
- CZ-CULTURE (**IR-5**: closed/error in payment claim/131,06 EUR - including PRG co-financing; **IR-6**: closed/error in payment claim/81,58 EUR - including PRG co-financing; **IR-60**: closed/error in payment claim/38,14 EUR - including PRG co-financing),
- CZ-JUSTICE (**IR-8**: closed/error in payment claim/20,86 EUR - including PRG co-financing),
- CZ-RESEARCH (**IR-59**: closed/error in payment claim/1 EUR - including PRG co-financing) and
- CZ-ENVIRONMENT (**IR-61**: closed/error in payment claim/4,62 EUR - including PRG co-financing).

The irregularity cases were reported to the FMO in November 2019 (3Q 2019 – IR-3, IR-4, IR-5, IR-6, IR-7, IR-8), in February 2020 (4Q 2019 – IR-22) and in May 2021 (1Q 2021 – IR-59, IR-60, IR-61).

There were two irregularities discovered and reported in the IFRs within the current September 2021 certification of programmes CZ-ENVIRONMENT and CZ-HUMANRIGHTS (CZ-ENVIRONMENT - error in payment claim/617 EUR - including PRG co-financing, CZ-HUMANRIGHTS - error in payment claim/76 EUR - including PRG co-financing). The irregularities will be reported to the FMO in November 2021.

All the irregularities that have been discovered and reported to the FMO so far, have been discovered during the CO verification of the PO's and PP's management cost. PO (or PP) mostly claimed expenses that are considered ineligible from the Guideline of NFP for eligible

expenditures under EEA/Norwegian FM 2014-2021 or Regulation point of view (e.g. expenses not accounted under FM, incorrectly calculated or demanded wage cost or travel expenses). The PO was notified of these irregularities so the similar expenditures were no longer claimed in the following certifications.

#### d. Audit

In 2020 the assessment of the management and control system of the CZ-RESEARCH Programme Operator (TACR) was completed. The identified shortcomings of the CZ-EDUCATION programme management and control system, on the basis of which the AA issued unmodified opinion with an emphasis of matter paragraph included, were remedied by the Programme Operator. The AA verified the implementation of corrective measures.

In accordance with the audit strategy the system audit of the CZ-EDUCATION programme was completed at the Programme Operator – Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (FM3/2020/S/001) and the system audit of the Fund for bilateral relations (CZ-BF) was completed at the National Focal Point, which is responsible for the use of the fund's resources (FM3/2020/S/002). The scope of these audits and their results were described in the annual audit report 2020.

In 2021 the AA has updated the audit strategy. The update consists mainly in specifying the method of selecting a sample of projects with regard to the methodological support issued by the FMO.

The AA has started system audit of the Ministry of Finance – the Programme Operator for CZ-HEALTH, CZ-CULTURE, CZ-GOVERNANCE, CZ-HUMANRIGHTS and CZ-JUSTICE in 2021. The AA has conducted also audit the NFP system in terms of fulfilling its specific responsibilities arising from the Regulation.

A sample of expenditure for audits of operations has been selected from the beginning of the implementation until 30. 6. 2020 (first reference period). From the selected sample of expenditure, the AA has compiled an audit plan to ensure auditing of actual expenditures declared within the first reference period which contains – with regard to the implementation phase – expenditures for programme management and bilateral initiatives across all programmes. Audits of operations based on this sample have started in 2021.

The scope and results of the system audits and audits of operations will be described in the annual audit report 2021.

## 7. COMMUNICATION

As the main goal of the NFP Communication Strategy is to increase awareness of general public on the EEA and Norway Grants, the most of activities made and planned in past months were focused mainly on general public. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the NFP did not plan any major public events but focused its publicity activities on communication through the website and social networks (mainly Facebook and Instagram).

The overview of promotional activities made in September 2020 – August 2021:

- The NFP prepared **promotional materials** (disinfections, kites, appendages, rebuses) planned to be used during Open Day of the Ministry of Finance in September 2020, but the event was finally cancelled due to epidemic situation. The materials will be used at the same occasion in September 2021.
- The NFP together with several Programme Operators and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prague prepared **six on-line debates on actual topics within the well-known discussion forum Meltingpot** (usually connected with the music festival Colours of Ostrava, but in 2021 held only on-line). The aim was to **ensure a high visibility of the EEA and Norway Grants**, increase audience interactions and page traffic.

The debates were focused on actual issues, among the speakers were e.g. popular Czech couple therapist **Honza Vojtko** or well-known Norwegian journalist and nature books author **Ole Mathismoen**. The debates were streamed live on Facebook page and YouTube channel with the opportunity for audience to ask questions and participate in the accompanying competition. During each live stream the NFP posted a competition question in the comments that was directly related to the topic of the debate. Viewers could respond in the comments and the winner was announced the next day.

The NFP ensured the **overall publicity of these debates and complementary contest** related to the debates (Campaign “EEA and Norway Grants: topics of today”). Videos with all on-line debates are available on the websites and also on YouTube channel.

#### Campaign results:

- total reach of more than 20,000 users;
- total of 139 viewers participated in the competition.
- total number of views of all videos on Facebook is 5,300 and on YouTube 1,580;
- during the campaign, the number of followers of the Facebook page increased by 18 % (from 1448 followers to 1707 followers);
- The **website** [www.eeagrants.cz](http://www.eeagrants.cz) and [www.norwaygrants.cz](http://www.norwaygrants.cz) is continuously updated to be more user friendly and to provide relevant and actual information. The section of approved projects is regularly updated after the approval of projects within programmes.
- The NFP regularly uses **social media** such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The main topics of the information published were calls within programmes, bilateral initiatives, presentation of same approved projects etc.

In the current situation still affected by COVID-19 restrictions, it is very difficult to plan activities for the public. On 28 September 2021 the Open Day of Ministry of Finance will probably take place, where the participation of the EEA and Norway Grants is presumed.



In the coming months the NFP will continue in communication activities aimed at general public to increase awareness of the EEA and Norway Grants mainly through websites and social channels and in cooperation with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prague.

The NFP will also cooperate with Programme Operators in promotion of the programmes' open calls and information about approved projects.

## 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### a. Monitoring

During the reporting period the main regular monitoring tools of the NFP included organisation of Steering Committee meetings. Due to the restrictions in the COVID-19 pandemic situation the NFP done the Steering Committee meetings partly via online platform, partly per-rollam and partly physically with Programme Operators and Programme partners. NFP was also present at the Cooperation Committees and Programme Committees in relevant programmes as an observer. NFP regularly checks APRs of the programmes and IFRs (the part of achieved indicators in the programmes). NFP monitor the bilateral ambitions on the basis of regular written reports for the IFR of the Bilateral Fund drafted by the POs. Besides that the NFP was in regular informal contact with the POs whenever necessary.

NFP also contracted the external company Deloitte Advisory, Ltd. to proceed the on-the-spot verification at the level of programmes and sample of projects. With respect to the advanced status of implementation, the first on-the-spot verification was focused on the CZ-EDUCATION programme and the verification covered the period 2019-2021. The check was done via online sessions in February 2021 (at the PO CZ-EDUCATION) and in March 2021 (at the Project Promoter – the sample project “Czech-Norwegian Memorabilia: university bilateral cooperation“, the Charles University). The report was issued in April 2021, no findings were identified. The PO was recommended to formalize the risks in a single document in order to effectively apply risk management approaches.

The next monitoring in autumn 2021 shall address two programmes - CZ-BF and CZ-HEALTH.

### b. Evaluation

As reported previously, preparation of public procurement for external evaluation of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 was postponed. Works on the Terms of Reference (ToR) started only after cut-off date, however, the evaluation plan annexed to this Strategic Report was modified to be in line with the newest evaluation plan and the ToR.

The NFP drafted schedule of eleven evaluations: (1) Bilateral relationship – strengthening bilateral relations CZ-Norway-Iceland-Lichtenstein and appraisal of the preparation and implementation system of the Bilateral Fund, (2) CZ-EDUCATION (except for Roma issues), (3) CZ-ENVIRONMENT, (4) CZ-HEALTH (except for Roma issues), (5) CZ-CULTURE (except for Roma issues), (6) CZ-JUSTICE, (7) CZ-RESEARCH, (8) Roma Issues (crosscutting issue: CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS, CZ-HEALTH, CZ-EDUCATION, CZ-CULTURE), (9) Improvement, Effectiveness and Transparency of State Administration (crosscutting issue: CZ-GOVERNANCE, CZ-HOME AFFAIRS), (10) Protection of human rights - different forms of discrimination, stalking and

improvement of medial literacy within predefined target groups of children, youth, woman, seniors (crosscutting issue: CZ-HOME AFFAIRS, CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS), (11) Comprehensive evaluation of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 in the Czech Republic (summary and implications of all evaluations and appraisal of the preparation and implementation system).

The new plan comprises of different kinds of evaluation types and approaches (formative and summative, ex-post and mid-term evaluations, programme approach, crosscutting approach).

## 9. ISSUES FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

Based on the experience from the realization phase of the programmes **NFP would like to discuss the simplification of the procedures regarding the approval of pre-defined projects' modifications**. As the PDPs are stated in the Annexes to the Programme Agreement (project description in the Annex 2 and relevant indicators in the Annex 1), the modification of the PDPs can cause the modification of the Programme Agreement. Therefore, project modifications of the PDPs have to be approved by NFP, Donors (as the Programme Agreement modification) and after the Donors' approval of the PA the project modification is approved at the level of Programme Operator. This procedure can prolong the project modification to couple of months. During the year 2021 the NFP discussed modifications in the PDPs in various programmes (for example in the programme CZ-HUMAN RIGHTS the modification of the project PDP4 - Place for All - Building a Space for Mutual Coexistence). These modifications were connected with PA modification and it took half a year or more to go through all the administrative steps (PA modification and project modification). This approach is not flexible for the project implementation when the Project Promoter wait such a long time to realize the needed modification in order to continue with the project activities.

NFP proposes more flexible approach regarding the PA modifications caused by the project modification of the PDPs. We propose to have the PA modification approved at the level of the NFP, inform the Donors and then proceed the technical modification through the GRACE IT system.

As the COVID-19 restrictions paralyzed almost all sectors of the Czech society during the monitoring period of this Strategic Report, the stakeholders have to challenge difficulties now resulting in delays of project activities, mostly those of bilateral nature. The NFP **would like to discuss the possibility of extension of relevant programmes** (for example CZ-JUSTICE) **or exceptionally projects** (for example PDP "Lety" within CZ-CULTURE programme) where reaching of the target values of outcomes will be hardly possible till the final deadline (April 2024). The Project Promoters should be encouraged by positive attitude taking into consideration this unusual situation. The extended implementation period (by one year till April 2025) would enable realization of project activities in scope they were planned. The NFP regards them to be more efficient and valuable than realizing the activities in provisory manner.

## ANNEXES

### A. Risk assessment and management plan

### B. Evaluation plan

## C. Cooperation with Donor Programme Partners and International Partner Organisations

### D. Technical assistance report