

CZ-GOOD GOVERNANCE ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2020: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Year 2020 was the first full year of implementation of the Good Governance Programme in the Czech Republic since the signature of the Programme Agreement in September 2019. During this first full year of implementation three Pre-Defined projects started with the implementation, as follows:

1. Pre-Defined project no. 1 “Improvement of preconditions for decentralisation and availability of public administration in the territory”,
2. Pre-Defined project no. 4 “Deepening of the professional qualification of the law enforcement authorities in the field of the fight against corruption, money laundering and terrorism financing”; and
3. Pre-Defined project no. 5 “Strengthening the Fight against Corruption by Increasing General Awareness of the Public Sector Focusing on Judges, Prosecutors and Public Administration”,

Two remaining Pre-Defined projects were also approved with their implementation expected to take place from 2021 on:

4. Pre-Defined project no. 2 “Evaluation of the public administration performance in the Czech Republic and recommendations for the further strategic development” and
5. Pre-Defined project no. 3 “Strengthening public financial management and control”.

Furthermore, the Programme Operator initiated works on preparation of the Small Grant Scheme and organised an online Match-making seminar in November 2020 targeting Czech, Icelandic and Norwegian entities by presenting the outlines of the call planned for 2021 as well as to give them inspiration for their joint bilateral projects and to facilitate establishing partnerships.

In view of ensuring the visibility of the programme, the Programme Operator shares all information about the programme in Czech and English (including general information about the Norway Grants) on the website <https://www.eegrants.cz/en/programmes/good-governance>. The upcoming events or interesting news are also available on social media (Facebook). Recently the content related to the Match – making seminar has been shared repeatedly to attract potential project partners for the upcoming call.

In terms of lessons learned with respect to the early stages of the realisation of the projects and the start of the Programme itself it is apparent that development process of the future Programme should be prompter in order to avoid delays.

The COVID-19 pandemics and related restrictions have not yet influenced the Programme in major way as Programme outcomes and outputs fulfilment was not endangered yet. Valuable lesson learned was that many of the PO’s activities can be successfully carried out online, such as the Match - making seminar, which had to be first postponed and subsequently moved online, or Programme meetings such as Cooperation Committee. And PO could continue in those online meetings and seminars online

also in the upcoming year should the situation not allow otherwise. Pre-defined projects are largely in early stages of implementation with bilateral or multilateral activities planned mostly from 2021 on, with the exception of Pre-defined projects no. 1 and no. 4, where conferences attendance and study trips with donor project partners have been moved online too or postponed. However, should the situation with COVID-19 persevere until the end of 2021 or further, there is a risk of negative effects not only on many of the project activities within the Pre-defined and Small Grant Scheme call projects, which would have to find alternative solutions with support of the PO where online form of cooperation is not sufficient, but in the case of Pre-defined project no. 1 the relevance of the project results could be put in question due to changes of population movement patterns in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

Apart from COVID-19 related risks the Programme still faces some risks due to potential lack of political support, namely in the area of fight against corruption. A quick overview of the situation shows that the Czech Republic's Corruption Perceptions Index score lowered by three points to 56 in 2020, but also the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommendations have not been fulfilled (only one out of 14 recommendations has been fully fulfilled with 7 recommendation fulfilled partially so far as stated in INTERIM COMPLIANCE REPORT CZ - GrecoRC4(2019)29) and Czech Republic's evaluation is unsatisfactory with key legislation on protection of whistleblowers and legislation on lobbying still waiting in the Parliament to be approved.