

SUPPORT FOR THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC FROM THE EU FUNDS FOR THE 2015–20 PERIOD

Research project

English Summary

The project 'Support for the Cultural and Creative Sectors from the EU Funds for the 2015–20 Period' (Project No TB040MZV002) was initiated as a part of a research project completed under the BETA Programme of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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English Summary

The project output consists of a research report comprising two sections: a research section and a descriptive section. The first focuses on researching the current situation and the obstacles that prevent entities from the cultural and creative sectors from participating in international projects. The research results define recommendations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help them to better fulfil the requirements and to remove the obstacles that limit the participation of Czech entities from the cultural and creative sectors becoming involved in international cooperation projects.

The main objective of the research plan was to answer the following questions:

- 1) *What barriers prevent Czech entities from the cultural and creative sectors from becoming involved in international cooperation projects?*
- 2) *What causes these barriers to arise?*
- 3) *What recommendations can be made to improve the situation and to reduce or remove these barriers?*

The introduction to the research section identifies those EU programmes whose applicants, including potential applicants, are included in the target group of the research. One important criterion for the selection of the programmes was the existence and inclusion of contact points and intermediate bodies in the Czech Republic, specifically:

- Creative Europe (Culture and MEDIA sub-programmes);
- Erasmus+;
- Horizon 2020;
- COSME (Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs);
- Europe for Citizens;
- Cross-border cooperation (CZ–Poland, CZ–Slovakia, CZ–Austria, CZ–Bavaria, CZ–Saxony); and Interreg: European Territorial Cooperation,
- Programme for interregional and transnational cooperation (Interreg EUROPE, Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE, Interreg DANUBE).

At the start of the actual research, specific hypotheses were defined in cooperation with representatives from the contact points and the intermediate bodies. These hypotheses pertained to the barriers affecting the involvement of Czech organisations from the cultural and creative sectors, which were to be investigated within the context of the research. The following is a list of the identified barriers:

- Insufficient dissemination of information about the programme;
- Complicated programme structure;
- Incomprehensible language;
- Language barriers when submitting an application;
- Insufficient financial resources for pre-financing a project;
- Insufficient financial resources for co-financing a project;
- Lack of experience with project financial management;
- Complicated and demanding programme requirements;
- Insufficient personnel for the programme;
- Lack of experience with preparing an application for a cross-border project;
- Lack of contacts for obtaining foreign partners; and
- Problematic relationship with the project manager.

The primary data collection method was a questionnaire, the contents and phrasing of which were consulted with the representatives from the programme offices under the supervision of a sociology expert. The research was supplemented through structured interviews.

The final version of the questionnaire had two sections. The first required the research subjects to identify themselves and to provide information about the type of subject (legal form, areas of competence, organisation size). The second consisted of four questions, asked separately for each of the programmes. The questions asked the respondents to provide information about the following:

- Participation in the given programme;
- An assessment of the barriers;
- Additional barriers not included in the preceding question; and
- Personal recommendations.

A total of 174 Czech entities active in the cultural and creative sectors participated in the questionnaire survey. The largest proportion of the respondents consisted of non-profit organisations (82.9%); the remaining 17.1% were profit-generating organisations. At 33%, the most strongly represented group from the non-profit sector consisted of various alliances (formerly civic associations); this was followed by partially state-funded organisations at 17%; third place was taken by public-benefit companies/institutions. As far as the profit-generating sector was concerned, the majority were limited liability companies (6% of the respondents).

Of all of the participating entities, 52% were from the private sector (with the majority being alliances and limited liability companies). The remaining 48%, consisting of public sector entities, most often consisted of partially state-funded organisations and local self-government units (regions and municipalities).

The overall assessment of the barriers within all programmes is represented using a rating scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents the greatest barrier.



At the end, the results of the questionnaire survey were analysed by the research team (representatives from the contact points and intermediate bodies), and the following recommendations were made to those who commissioned the research project and other state administration authorities who are active in involving the Czech Republic in the relevant EU programmes. Prior to the official ending of the project, a round table discussion was organised by the contracting authority – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – with the participation of the authors of the research report as well as representatives from the Czech Centres, the Office of the Government, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Regional Development. The aim of the round table was to provide a forum for a final discussion with the relevant state administration authorities regarding the working version of the BETA research project.

Two-Round System for Calls for Applications

The representatives from the programme offices agreed that, although a two-round system would make things simple for applicants during the preparatory phase, the intermediate bodies would face some problematic issues. Two-round systems increase the administrative burden, therefore requiring more human resources on the part of the programme administrators and coordinators, leading to higher financing requirements. Nevertheless, this type of procedure could be implemented for some programmes and its implementation should be investigated and considered (e.g. for the Creative Europe – Culture sub-programme).

Language Barrier

The main problem of a language barrier does not exist so much in the actual use of a foreign language, but rather as a result of how the contents of various materials are interpreted. As a result, the offices that face this problem must work on explaining the programme objectives and priorities in Czech, but, at the same time, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the project applicants must be able to prepare and manage their programme in English and must therefore learn the required terminology. However, a recommendation has also been made to the managing authorities of the programmes regarding the comprehensibility of their interpretations and to limit the use of official gobbledegook.

Publication of Calls

Applicants need to know about the calls sufficiently in advance, as the preparation of applications is a very complicated process. In many cases the managing authorities publish the calls with very short submission deadlines. One of the ways in which the offices could resolve this situation is by, for example, publishing forms used in previous years. At the same time, efforts should be made by the Czech representatives, aimed at the managing authorities, to improve the situation in this respect.

Project and Financial Management

It would be appropriate to resolve issues with the project and financial preparations and with project management through educational programmes with the aim of improving these necessary skills. It would be possible for the offices to pay more attention to education, for example, through seminars and organising special educational events, etc. However, it is recommended that these issues be resolved systematically at the national and regional level, and that more be invested in building capacity and expertise – that is to say, in education particularly as regards project thinking, management, etc., in order to ensure that it will be possible to more effectively apply for and use funding not only from the EU programmes, but also from other international and national sources.

Project Pre-Financing

It would be appropriate to resolve the issue of pre-financing systematically through the use of financial engineering instruments, such as loans and credit. The representatives of the offices also support the recommendations made by the applicants to create a platform linking sponsors and providers of financial instruments, which would help funding recipients to survive the period prior to the time they receive their subsidy.

In addition, it would be suitable to promote the inclusion of the expenses from the preparatory phases of the projects into the allowable expenditure for projects implemented under programmes where this is not yet possible (it is possible in the case of, for example, the cross-border cooperation programmes). Allowable expenditure should include such things as the costs associated with meetings with project partners, the expenses outlaid for consultancy services within the context of project planning and budget planning, etc.

Project Co-Financing

In the case of the Creative Europe – Culture sub-programme, the Ministry of Culture has a subsidy programme that helps to finance supported projects. However, this programme has only a limited budget, which covers the necessary final financing for projects only to a small degree. It would be appropriate to increase the budget for this programme, which has remained the same over the past few years in spite of the fact that the number of Czech partners participating in the programme has increased. The respondents to the survey also pointed out that the transparency of this programme should be improved.

Using Agencies to Prepare an Application

One of the possible ways in which an application is prepared is through working with one of the agencies specialising in European subsidy issues. The representative of the offices agreed that they tend to use the services of an agency more in the case of the European structural and investment funds and less in the case of community programmes. They also agree that they have not always had good experiences with agencies. Particularly in the case of community programmes, the agencies have difficulty grasping the topics applicable for the entities active in the cultural and creative sectors. It is therefore recommended to work with agencies primarily for large demanding projects and to select an agency based on its expertise and references.

Positive Discrimination within the Programmes

The representatives of the programmes also discussed the problematic issue of the low number of involved entities from Central and Eastern Europe (i.e. including the Czech Republic) in the projects implemented under some of the community programmes as compared to the involvement of entities from the old EU member states. There is an opportunity to open a discussion about introducing specific criteria for positive discrimination, such as those that exist in the case of, for example, the Creative Europe – MEDIA sub-programme (more advantageous point ratings for an application that includes a participant from Central or Eastern Europe).

Centralised Information Platform

The increased involvement of Czech entities in European projects would significantly be helped by establishing a centralised information platform in the form of an internet information portal, which would present information about all of the options available for obtaining financing and the involvement of Czech entities in programmes suitable for the cultural and creative sectors.

Experience Exchange between Offices

The representatives from the programme offices agree that it would be useful to organise regular meetings at which they could provide each other with information and exchange findings and experiences with the systems they use for defining, realising and administering programmes, including topics such as the system used for evaluating projects and the settings for the contextual and budget criteria for projects.

The second part of the project provided descriptions of the relevant programmes suitable for supporting projects from the cultural and creative sectors as well as examples of projects that have received support from the specified programmes. The descriptions and examples have been prepared for the publication entitled **European Union Support for Culture to 2020**, which, once the security restrictions are lifted, will be published and distributed to potential subsidy applicants and other target groups. It will be available in both printed as well as electronic format.

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