

# 1 Executive summary

## 1.1 Objectives and context of the survey

The aim of the investigation was primarily:

- **understanding of the functioning of thematic working groups** in support of the development of metropolitan areas and agglomerations, which in their integrated tools ITI (Integrated Territorial Investments) and IPRÚ (Integrated Territorial Development Plan) should use the OPZ (Operational Programme Employment) programme framework (evaluation task I.). These were metropolitan areas and agglomerations that participated in OPZ calls No. 45, No. 46, No. 48 and No. 49.1
- **noticing differences** between differently set ways of cooperation in these working groups,
- **evaluation of the contributions of the activities of working groups** / besides other things for the quality of project plans or for better coordination of interventions in the territory).

additional

- **survey among representatives of the metropolitan areas and agglomerations** with ITI / IPRÚ, which did not include the OPZ program **framework** in their integrated strategy
- **to map the reasons** that led the ITI / IPRÚ managing committees to the decision **of non-inclusion**.

The participants in this survey were:

- thematic coordinators of working groups,
- members of working groups from the ranks of experts,
- members of working groups from the ranks of project promoters
- members of the ITI / IPRÚ managing committees.

## 1.2 Summary after the evaluation tasks

### **Evaluation task 1**

Most of the addressed respondents across the target groups of experts, coordinators and proposers were satisfied with the setting of the OPZ program framework. They highlighted in particular the activities of the work groups. At the same time, experts and promoters appreciated the work of coordinators who were interested in local issues and were well accessible when needed, both in terms of location (due to the location of the call) and time, when they were willing to provide support beyond

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.esfcr.cz/vyzva-045-opz>  
<https://www.esfcr.cz/vyzva-046-opz>  
<https://www.esfcr.cz/vyzva-048-opz>  
<https://www.esfcr.cz/vyzva-049-opz>

working group meetings. They were dissatisfied in exceptional cases where the coordinators only played a formal role.

The main perceived positives included the local focus of the OPZ program framework, in particular the composition of working groups of local experts who are interested in resolving the situation in the specific region and they know most of the proposers. At the same time, it was appreciated that the groups were created so-called "from below", i.e. they included people from the field, experts and specialists who encounter the issue in the everyday practice. The local dimension of financing is also perceived positively, thanks to which it is possible to finance, among other things, quality but financially demanding services (recognition of the quality on the basis of local knowledge). Overall, the groups were perceived as a useful platform for the project improvement, especially in terms of including suitable target groups and fine-tuning indicators, as well as in terms of optimizing funding and obtaining feedback, although the influence of groups on project intentions by applicants was sometimes assessed as only partial. At the same time, it was the obligation to present the intentions in person to the work groups, which enabled the personal meeting of the proposers and members of the groups and supported mutual knowledge and communication between actors in this area. In some agglomerations it established completely new connections. The connection of state entities with non-profit entities and possibly private entities was emphasized in particular.

Efforts for integrated solutions and synergy effects were perceived very positively. In particular, it was about reducing duplication in projects and trying to solve the problems of the region comprehensively. In case of identical focus of the projects, the work groups tried to lead the proposers to divide either the target groups or to focus the projects in more detail. However, integrated solutions and synergy effects were not always achieved and sometimes they were not even sought, the obstacle was mainly the small amount of submitted projects and their isolation. According to the coordinators, avoiding overlaps with other interventions was difficult in the field of employment, as calls from the Labour Office are widely focused and often include the target group and activities that overlap with OPZ calls within the ITI / IPRÚ. From the ranks of coordinators, the incongruity between the planned strategy and what the project managed to accomplish at the end was pointed out. By the time organizations could draw, the strategy was outdated or they had found another OPZ call by the time their project was approved, because they wanted to fund the plan much faster. At the same time, the synergy of projects was often complicated by competition between applicants, who did not want to share complete information about the submitted project due to strong competition within some agglomerations. They feared that this information could be used by competitors to prepare their project plan.

The locality was partly perceived as a weak point of the program framework, as it can also lead to the closure of the call to lesser-known applicants or to the support of projects based on personal ties. There was also criticism that the focus of the OPZ program framework was not flexible with regard to the socio-political situation (e.g. taking into account the development of unemployment in the regions and the entire Czech Republic).

Specific allegations also appeared in the area of unclear competencies of individual actors (i.e. clarification of competencies, especially between members of working groups and coordinators), which on the one hand leads to higher formal burdens, on the other hand due to this it came about that the competencies of other actors were exceeded and restricted, in some cases, the actors did

certain activities beyond their competencies and they were not therefore financially rewarded for them.

Insufficient feedback at various levels was also a problem. The proposers lacked feedback from the work group during and after the project, when they asked to be acquainted with the results of the evaluation<sup>2</sup>. Feedback on projects could also be improved by keeping the members of the work groups in contact with the proposers during or after the solution of the projects.

**The coordinators and experts of the work groups then lacked information from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on the final evaluation of projects.** They had to complicatedly look up or find out from the proposers themselves how the projects were evaluated. Although the conditions of the OPZ do not prescribe the obligation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to inform about the final evaluation of projects, the coordinators and experts of the work groups would very much welcome this. At the same time, from their subjective point of view, criticism also led to unequal and unclear evaluations from external evaluators of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, where due to the lack of the feedback it was not clear why one specific project was accepted and another with similar parameters from their point of view was rejected. It is necessary to remind that they were mainly based on information from proposers, who can compare their applications in different calls, but can no longer take sufficient account of whether the calls have any significant differences. It was then unclear for the proposer why the project, which was approved at the level of the work group, was not approved in the final evaluation. According to the project settings, the evaluation criteria of the project plan and the evaluation criteria of the application for the support are not the same. For example efficiency and economy are not equally evaluated in the project plan, because the project plan does not contain a detailed budget, only a total amount. However, it seems that either the coordinators and the experts were not sufficiently informed or for some reason they worked insufficiently with this information. Unfortunately, this resulted in the feeling that they lacked information on the transparency of project evaluations in the next step by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Some respondents saw the evaluation interview as a space where they could make certain remarks to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs that could improve the functioning of project calls. For example, there was a remark for the individual calls not to overlap, or a request to improve the communication of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with applicants. This discrepancy in communication could arise if individual holders did not inform the OPZ about the specific applicants, and thus the OPZ staff did not have the opportunity to communicate with someone they did not know about from the seminars or did not register for a consultation. At the same time, it was mentioned that program calls are often too complicated, they should be simplified.

### ***Evaluation task 2***

Among the main reasons for not including the OPZ program framework was the low priority of the topics in the given region on which the program framework focused. At the same time, other program frameworks were a barrier, which burdened potential applicants and prevented them from submitting

---

<sup>2</sup> Note Analyses: the holders expected something that is not stipulated in the conditions of the OPZ

projects to more than one program framework. Insufficient knowledge and readiness for the given program framework was also mentioned:

- a. fear that projects will not be realised in time.
- b. the general low readiness of project applications, for which requirements were still being specified, it was therefore considered more appropriate to address them through individual calls,
- c. difficulty in meeting the conditions of the OPZ (especially with regard to the form of target groups - too strict orientation - and the included activities, i.e. the program did not correspond with the thematic area, or did not cover the areas they identified as necessary, etc.).