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ENGLISH SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

„EVALUATION OF THE CZECH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAMME
TEMPORARY EXPERT ASSIGNMENTS IN 2016 – 2018“

Public Tender: NIPEZ 79998000-6 Services of Professional Advisors

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This is an executive summary of main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the Czech Development Cooperation Programme “**Temporary Expert Assignments to Developing Countries**” implemented in 2016 – 2018 and coordinated by the Czech Development Agency (CZDA). The evaluation was carried out by the team of 4G eval s.r.o.; consisting of Maria Körner as a project manager, Inka Bartošová as a main evaluator, Vitalie Iovita as a local expert, Ota Potluka as a statistician, Jan Náplava as a data analyst and Jan Lehejšek as an administrator.

The programme objective is to share the Czech transition experience and know-how with partner countries. The programme indirect objective is to increase the competitiveness of Czech experts in the field of development cooperation and the possibilities of their involvement in projects financed by other donors (significant donors such as the European Commission - EC, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - EBRD, the World Bank, etc.)ⁱ.

According to available documentation, 59 applications were received between 2016 and 2018. A total of 28 assignments were approved and contracted in the same period, of which 24 (86%) were completed and at least partially reimbursed. The remaining 3 were continued in 2019 and 1 was not implemented at all. The average project expenditure was 446 thousand CZK (from 125 thousand to 1.4 million CZK). In total, 13 million CZK were allocated to the programme in the period under review; whereby 14.6 mil. CZK were contracted and finally 11.9 million spent (some projects had lower actual expenses).

The main purpose of the evaluation was to obtain independent, objectively substantiated and consistent conclusions, findings and recommendations applicable in the decision-making of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Czech Republic (CR) in cooperation with the Czech Development Agency (CZDA) and other actors related to the future focus and implementation of the Czech Development Cooperation (Official Development Assistance - ODA), taking into account the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Czech Development Strategy 2018–2030. An important purpose was to evaluate processes with an emphasis on the possibilities of increasing programme quality, efficiency and effectiveness. The conclusions and recommendations should be relevant to the future direction and funding of the program, taking into account that its coordination will be transferred to the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Department / the MFA CR from 2020 onwards. Systemic and procedural recommendations applicable to the Czech ODA were expected as well.

The evaluation focused on both the programme and project levels. The impact assessment covered implemented as well as not implemented projects from 2016 to 2018, including projects that started in 2015 and continued in 2016. Expenses of the latter projects in 2016 were accounted. Projects approved at the end of 2018 with implementation from January 2019 or later were not included in the evaluation. In addition to data collection in the Czech Republic, a mission took place in Moldovaⁱⁱ, the partner country with the highest number of implemented projects and the largest volume of expenses from the ODA budget (23%) within the evaluated programme. The findings from Moldova cannot be generalized - they serve a deeper understanding of the programme and its key influencing factors.

The main findings and conclusions of the evaluation are summarized below:

Relevance

The program is highly relevant to the strategic goals of the Czech Development Cooperation and the individual actors

It is based on the needs of public institutions in partner countries and their interest in diverse, specific expertise. It also provides them with an opportunity to establish long-term cooperation with Czech actors. Its unique feature in comparison to other Czech ODA instruments designed for public institutions is the fast start of expert assignments anytime of the year. Most involved experts do not perceive the programme as a chance to get references for work with other foreign institutions (program assumption). They are rather willing to share their experience (within this program and elsewhere). The evaluated program is coherent with the Transition Promotion Programme (TRANS¹). Its focus on public institutions, sharing transition experience and geographic priorities overlap also with Twinning, TAIEUX, SOCIEUX + or Expert on Demand (UNDP) programmes, therefore closer coordination and / or cooperation with respective (national) focal points is appropriate.

*In overall, the relevance of the program is assessed as **high**.*

¹ The Transition Promotion Programme, the MFA CR, accessed on 17 September 2019 at https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/human_rights/transition_promotion_program/index_1.html

Efficiency

The cost-effectiveness in terms of the overall “Value for Money” is rather high

Cost-effectiveness was assessed within the framework of the Value for Money analysis, i.e. as expenses related to achieved revised program objectives². Around three quarters of program expenses (73%) were spent on projects where either partners or other sources confirmed further use of the experts' outputs. There is no comparison with similar programs; from the perspective of the evaluation team, this ratio is rather high taking into account the contextual factors in partner countries (reform of public institutions, political instability, etc.). The expected follow-up cooperation within the Czech ODA and with Czech actors beyond the Czech ODA was relatively high (62% was spent on projects with subsequent cooperation within the Czech ODA and 42% on projects with subsequent involvement of Czech actors beyond the Czech ODA). In most of these cases, partners have already had cooperated with the Czech Republic within the framework of the Czech ODA. However, this can be assessed positively, because the evaluation shows that long-term cooperation and in particular a follow-up are key sustainability factors.

Main factors of program efficiency from the process and content point of view

Ongoing submission and fast approval of applications (on average within 4–6 weeks) is a unique feature of the programme, which distinguishes it from other ODA instruments and similar tools for sending experts. Therefore this setting should be retained. The programme promotion through embassies and experts; the identification of experts by focal points at ministries with the support of main applicants and a longer period of cooperation, including repeated field trips, contribute to the program efficiency.

On the other hand, unclear program settings (name, objectives, indicators, responsibilities, risk management, but also unclear anchoring of the program within the CZDA and its processes); different expectations of the CZDA, experts and partners; low participation of partners abroad in all phases of the project cycle; in some cases low or inappropriate budget with unclear eligible expenditures; a high administrative burden from the point of view of experts and the CZDA program coordinator; too low participation of partner institutions; too general requests; inconsistent interim and final reports as well as an absence of post-monitoring limit the program efficiency.

The criteria for programme are relatively well set

The focus on public institutions in partner countries as the main beneficiaries of expert assignments is highly appropriate in the light of the (revised) long-term programme objective to strengthen sustainable institutions in these countries. The evaluated program thus differs from other Czech ODA instruments. It is assessed positively that the thematic and geographical focus has been adjusted in practice taking into account the needs of Czech Development Cooperation partners and the Czech ODA priorities. Given the vague definition of “transition experience”, it cannot be unequivocally evaluated to what extent this adjusted focus has affected the programme purpose.

The transparency and efficiency of the selection process has been negatively affected by the fact that applications were too general and inconsistent with project selection criteria, which were not publicly available. Most applications were approved and implemented within the program or within in the framework of the Czech bilateral ODA. However, given the increasing number of applications, this practice seems unsustainable. Among others, clear evaluation of the follow-up is missing, whereby this factor evidently positively influences sustainability of results and positive impacts of projects.

Regarding the focus primarily on Czech experts from public institutions, it has not been confirmed that they would be more effective than experts from the private sector. The qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) suggests that previous experience with the assigned expert is crucial as this contributes to sustainable project benefits. Expert assignments primarily on the basis of a contract of mandate or a

² Programme overall objective (as agreed by the evaluation reference group, coordinated by the MFA CR): Ensure development of mutually responsible and transparent public, non-profit and private sector partnerships in priority countries of the Czech bilateral development cooperation.

- Outcome 1: Promoting sustainable institutions, an enforceable legislative framework and good governance in partner countries.
- Outcome 2: Use of the Czech transition experience in bilateral and multilateral development cooperation.
- Outcome 3: Creating partnerships with public, private and non-profit sectors with an overlap with multilateral development cooperation of the Czech Republic.

contract for work resulted in public administration experts' taking unpaid leaves or holidays to be able to participate in their field missions, whereby the missions were undertaken either with or without their employer's consent. This is completely unsystematic, although probably the only available solution for the CZDA under the circumstances. Other systemic solutions need to be identified.

*In overall, the efficiency (economy) of the program can be assessed as **rather low**, given a number of limiting factors related especially to procedures (including unclear programme setting, documentation or low participation of partners abroad in all phases of the project cycle). On the other hand, high cost-effectiveness (Value for Money) and flexibility (until spring 2018) are highly appreciated.*

Effectiveness

The program has not influenced Czech experts' further involvement in the ODA of the EU, UN and other donors

This was not even the (main) motivation of the experts. However, after experience with the evaluated program, 90% of the experts expressed their interest in further cooperation within the Czech ODA and 35% were actually further involved. The program thus benefited the Czech development cooperation in particular.

Other programme objectives (results) have been partially achieved; partially they can be only achieved in long-term

The original programme objectives of the program, i.e. the sharing of Czech transition experience and know-how, were so vague that their fulfilment cannot be concluded. Concerning the specific program objectives, confirmed by the MFA and the evaluation reference group, the following conclusions can be drawn: Support for sustainable institutions, an enforceable legislative framework and good public administration in partner countries (program result 1) is rather of a long-term nature; no specific changes at this level have been demonstrated during the evaluation. The use of transformation experience (program result 2) is evident especially in the Czech ODA, even after the expert assignments concluded. On the other hand, increased engagement of experts with foreign donors has not been confirmed. The program likely contributed to a certain extent to the creation or strengthening of partnerships between Czech and foreign ODA actors from different sectors (program result 3). Yet, other factors (Czech bilateral ODA projects, etc.) also acted in this direction. With respect to the project level, outputs of experts have been further utilized in around 70 % of cases.

Long-term project results are neither sufficiently specified, nor documented

The awareness of individual actors about the project impacts is rather low. Revision of the program logic, its forms including report templates, process procedures and output documentation is needed to strengthen the focus on results and impacts. These aspects are reflected above in the evaluation of efficiency.

*If the evaluation of effectiveness is to be based solely on the evaluation questions concerning Czech experts' further involvement in the ODA of other donors and further concerning documentation, then it would be rated as **low**. Yet, experts' further involvement was just a secondary objective, not relevant according to most experts. Further, the question of documentation is related to processes, i.e. efficiency. The original, primary programme objective, i.e. sharing Czech transition experience and know-how, is so vague that its achievement cannot be conclusively evaluated (this was not even requested). Moreover, mere sharing cannot be understood as a success, if know-how would not be further utilized (in case of the evaluated programme, it was indeed utilized in at least 70 % of cases). Taking into account the level of achievement of revised programme results, approved for the purpose of the evaluation and specified above, the overall programme effectiveness can be considered as **rather high**.*

Impacts

The main programme development impacts go from individual to system levels

The programme impacts in partner countries evidently concern strengthened partnerships with foreign actors (within and beyond the Czech ODA) and follow-up projects (including those supported by other foreign donors), as well as in specific changes in institutions, legislation, policies, concepts, follow-up trainings or practice, which have taken into account the measures recommended by assigned experts. These changes affected at least half of the supported projects, but the impacts are broader (e.g. links to projects in another country involved in the Czech ODA). The programme support was essential in this regard. Long-term cooperation and continuous communication; sufficient expertise, background,

capacity and ownership of Czech as well as partner institutions; clear goals and expectations of both the Czech and partner institutions as well as political and legal stability (legislative proximity) and security were crucial determinants.

*Identified positive impacts of min. half of the projects related to specific measures taken in the field as well as systemic changes. It has been proved that the programme contributed to strengthened partnerships with Czech actors and to follow-up cooperation. In overall, the programme impact can be assessed as **rather high**. Long-term programme impacts (on institutional and system level in partner countries) are recommended to be evaluated at least 3-5 years after the implementation period.*

Sustainability

The program strengthened the projects' sustainability

Although sustainability was not favoured (in applications), systematically monitored or evaluated, the evaluation confirmed the positive programme impacts on sustainability of projects' benefits. The benefits of about 40% of the projects appear to be sustainable, which accounts for about 39% of programme expenditures. Further quarter of projects seems unsustainable and 35 % do not provide sufficient information to make any conclusion about sustainability. Established partnerships are also more sustainable.

Key sustainability parameters - duration of cooperation and previous experience with experts

The evaluation confirmed that the overall duration of cooperation, the applicants' requests for specific experts, applicants' previous experience with the expert and expert assignment as a follow-up to previous cooperation are key sustainability parameters. Ownership by foreign partners and experts (i.e. agreement on objectives and outputs, active joint engagement etc.), adequate project objectives, involvement of key actors, sufficient absorption capacity of foreign partners, synergies with other projects and contextual, especially political factors also appear substantial to sustainability. All these factors may be among the criteria in selecting suitable projects.

*Taking into account that the evaluation was conducted relatively soon after the projects' completion and that insufficient data were available to assess sustainability in a complex manner, sustainability can be only predicted. The likelihood of sustainability of projects at the level of 40 % can be assessed as rather high according to the experience of the evaluation team with similar projects and programmes. Follow-up partnerships are also more or less sustainable. Therefore in overall, the programme sustainability can be assessed as **rather high**.*

External presentation (visibility)

Promotion of the program abroad was adequate, but was lacking in the Czech Republic

Promotion of the program abroad depended on the engagement of the concerned Embassy and the Czech experts. The media coverage of Czech support in Moldova (analysed as an example) was also adequate, given the fact that it was not officially requested by the program. Promotion of the program in the Czech Republic was minimal during the period under review, which was a lost opportunity - Czech public institutions thus had virtually no opportunity to ascertain the current programme benefits and good practices. They could not clarify for themselves the reasons for supporting their employees to join the programme and the ways how to actually second the experts.

*The overall programme visibility can be assessed as **rather low**, yet given the current budget, it seems quite sufficient.*

Cross-cutting principles

Cross-cutting principles were not required, but were partly reflected in the supported projects

Cross-cutting principles of the Czech ODA were not systematically applied and required by the Czech Development Agency - they were not a part of applications' assessment or of final project reports. In practice, however, projects partly dealt with the principles, in particular with good governance (63%) and environmental prudence (41%). Respect for human rights and gender equality was reflected to a smaller extent (15%).

Good governance of the program needs to be strengthened, in particular by setting up processes and involving partners

The programme good governance was affected by low participation of key actors – mainly the participation of foreign partners seems to be inadequate at all stages of the project cycle. Unclearly set

consultations during project preparation (including work plan and budget) as well as implementation could have had a negative impact on foreign partners' commitments to experts and on projects' sustainability. Furthermore, the program was not clearly anchored within the Czech ODA - processes and competencies of individual employees were not clear. Specifically, the programme was not assigned to a specific department within the CZDA and there was no clear division of responsibilities for outputs / outcomes among employees (e.g. with respect to monitoring). At the same time a big number of implemented projects led to an overload of the program coordinator. Monitoring and internal evaluation conducted to date have not led to changes in practice except for the programme geographical focus. The main changes in the program (process and content) now need to be adapted to the capabilities of the Czech MFA and the needs of both applicants and experts.

*The overall reflection of cross-cutting principles of the Czech ODA in the programme was assessed as **low**.*

Recommendations derived from evaluation findings and conclusions can be summarized as follows:

Recommendation	Degree of importance ⁱⁱⁱ	Main addressee
Programme level recommendations		
1. Make changes in the programme methodology ideally with effect from 2020 onwards.	1	MFA CR
2. Clearly set internal procedures within and among the MFA CR, CZDA and „focal points“.	1	MFA CR
3. Involve foreign partners more in all phases of the project cycle.	1	MFA CR
4. Discuss at the Development Cooperation Council the current obstacles to the assignments of employees of public institutions and the possible solutions. Thereupon take legislative as well as practical steps to create enabling conditions.	1	MFA CR
5. Utilise synergies with similar programmes (Twinning, TAIEX, SOCIEUX+, the Czech - UNDP Trust Fund, TRANS programme within the Human Rights and Promotion Department of the MFA CR).	2	MFA CR
Systemic and procedural recommendations (generally applicable)		
6. Evaluate the concerned programme (and other programmes / instruments) annually and share key results and examples of experience sharing with key actors.	1	MFA CR
7. Set-up monitoring and evaluation already at the inception stage of the revised Czech ODA programmes. Collect, evaluate and utilise data on an ongoing basis..	1	MFA CR and CZDA (per programme)

Notes and links:

ⁱ The Guidelines for Temporary Expert Assignments, accessed 7 August 2019 at <http://www.czechaid.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/TEA.pdf>

The Expert Request Form, accessed 7 August 2019 at <http://www.czechaid.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Expert-Request-Form.doc>

ⁱⁱ See the detailed Moldova Evaluation Report, which is expected to be published on-line together with this summary in October 2019 at https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/development_cooperation_and_humanitarian/bilateral_development_cooperation/evaluation/index.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Rating of importance according to the Evaluation Terms of Reference: 1 - most serious, 2 - serious, 3 -least serious.