

Outputs and Results of EU funds in the Central Bohemian Region in the Programme Period 2014-2020

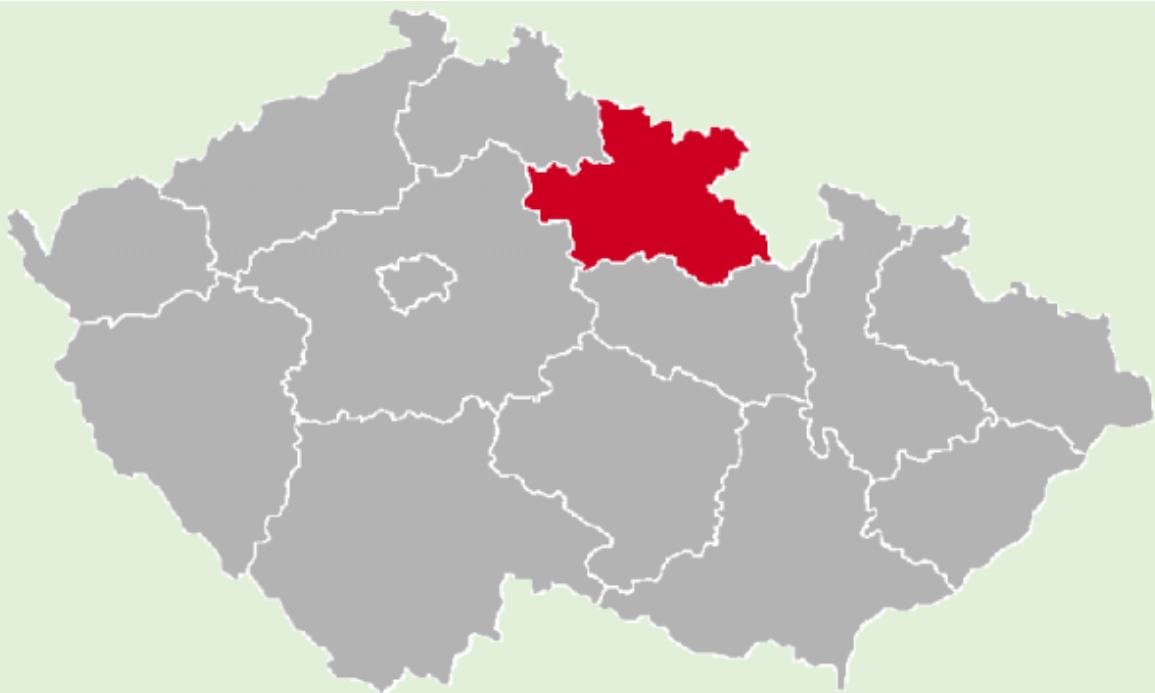
Executive Summary

Interim Report from the Results
Evaluation of the Benefits of
European Funds at Regional Level,
Tasks 5 a 6

July 2022

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Executive Summary

1. Main benefits of EU funds in the Hradec Králové Region

In the Hradec Králové Region, thanks to EU funds, the quality of education has been improved, another part of the D11 motorway and several important transport terminals were built. Successful was the field of the environment, the length of the sewerage network increased by 7%, recycling capacity have increased by 20% and thanks to this, the increase in municipal waste has been slowed down. On the contrary, it was not possible to reduce social inequalities within the region and the competitiveness of enterprises was only negligibly supported. Overall, the Hradec Králové Region used EU funds below average per capita and support of economically weaker parts of the region more was not successful.

THE TOPIC OF TRANSPORT WAS CRUCIAL FOR THE REGION

The Hradec Králové Region is one of the regions with a dense road network, but with a low proportion of motorways and highways. One of the main needs was the completion of the D11 highway. At the same time, the region wanted to develop public transport and a network of cycle paths on its territory. This was successful, several transport terminals were built, which were also connected to new or existing cycle paths in the region. An example is Jaroměř, which we examined in more detail in a case study. Thanks to the new terminal, public transport connections in the region have been improved and the surroundings of the terminal have been revitalized. New cycle paths then helped to connect the area to the neighboring Pardubice Region. Thanks to the completion of the D11, the inhabitants of Jaroměř have easily accessible both the regional capital and other regions of the Czech Republic.

REDUCING REGIONAL DISPARITIES THROUGH INTERVENTIONS BY EU FUNDS WAS NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL IN THE HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ REGION

On the territory of the region there are problematic regions Broumovsko and Královédvorskó with specific problems, which are defined in documents both at the regional and national level. The aim was to support these regions, by improving access to social services and by promoting education. According to the management of the region however, it is not possible to minimize the problems of these regions in the long term and thus eliminate interregional differences within the county.

The largest amount of funds in absolute terms went to Hradec Králové District (CZK 6.6 billion), which is the economic and administrative center of the region. On the contrary, the least funds went to four Districts, Jičín, Nová Paka, Hořice and Trutnov, which are characterized as economically and socially endangered areas, or as the inner periphery of the region. On average, the other mentioned problem regions, Broumovsko and Královédvorskó, were also supported. This repeats the trend noticeable in other regions, and relatively few funds go to the most economically backward parts of the regions.

THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION OF EU FUNDS IN THE REGION CAN BE SEEN MAINLY IN WATER PURITY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT, BUT ALSO IN EDUCATION

Promoting a quality environment

Compared to other regions of the Czech Republic, the Hradec Králové Region belongs to regions with a relatively high-quality environment. In the collection and treatment of wastewater, however, the region lags behind the national average of the share of connected municipalities and residents in public sewerage ending with a wastewater treatment plant. The Region wanted to make waste management more efficient, to increase air quality and to eliminate environmental burdens. These needs have been successfully met.



Thanks to EU funds, a 158 km sewerage system has been built, which means an increase in length of 7 %. 21 399 inhabitants have access to better water quality and 3 830 to better wastewater treatment. Recycling capacity improved thanks to projects by 20 % (by 6 469 t/year). The increase in the volume of municipal waste has also been slowed down – thanks to the projects, almost 12,000 tons of waste are not produced annually.

In particular, the reduction of heating emissions from more than 5,000 households contributed to the improvement of air quality. To removal of old environmental burdens contributed two key projects in Jaroměř and Nové Město nad Metují revitalizing more than 7600 m² polluted territory.

Education

Another important topic for the development of the territory was education. In education, the region focused on supporting technical fields whose graduates are missing from the labor market, as well as on expanding the offer of combined and distance forms of education. In addition, schools in the region had significant gaps in material equipment and had to deal with insufficient qualifications of teachers in some rural areas (especially in information technology and foreign language teaching).



Thanks to EU funds, the number of graduates of higher education in the region has increased several times. More than 40,000 children have access to better quality primary education. The end result of better education is better employment on the labour market.

In addition to the University of Hradec Králové, where 51 new accredited study programmes have been established, it is possible to see examples of good practice in the development of primary schools. Emphasis was placed on sharing good practice in the region in solving specific problems, such as bullying or pupil segregation.

IN WHICH AREAS THE SUPPORT IN THE REGION DID NOT MEET THE EXPECTATIONS?

Tourism and culture

From the point of view of nature, the territory of the Hradec Králové Region belongs to highly important regions and is characterized by a great diversity of natural ecosystems. The region is also a well-known **Touristic** area. Exceptional landscapes, natural formations and sights, cultural and historical monuments of the region are becoming a goal destination of domestic and foreign visitors.



Although considerable resources were directed to the development of tourism, their amount was not sufficient for the restoration of all monuments located in the region. The topic was supported mainly through ITI. Museums were built in the region, an effort was made to connect interesting cultural objects through a network of cycle paths.

Despite this, it was not possible to comprehensively solve the capacities of tourism infrastructure or to improve the condition of important cultural monuments. An example is the Josefov Fortress, where the need for financing is more than ten times higher than allocated money for its restoration.

Business support

The Hradec Králové Region is one of the regions with the highest economic performance and competitiveness and benefits primarily from the historical focus of the academic sphere. However, the region still lacks effective support for the innovation and research ecosystem, failing to reconcile the academic and private spheres. In its strategic documents, the region emphasized the development of the knowledge economy, the interconnection of the research and private sectors, or the development of the competitiveness of the business sector.



Through EU funds, only the creation of a few social enterprises was supported, but otherwise the development of the business sector was a neglected area of the region's needs.

Thanks to 5 projects, 5 new enterprises were created, and EU funds through 15 projects enabled the additional creation of 18 jobs. Given the size of the region, this is an insignificant result. That was confirmed by an analysis of the relationship between the impact of EU funds on the number of jobs created.

Transport

The Hradec Králové Region is one of the regions with a dense road network, but with a low proportion of motorways and highways. In the previous period, the region lacked a direct capacity connection to neighboring regions, respectively to the European transport network, which was related to one of the main defined needs of the region – the completion of the D11 highway. At the same time, the development of a regional transport network or the development of cycle transport was identified as a need. Last but not least, the region addressed the need to ensure sufficient public transport service for the region.



The major project of completing the D11 highway was not completed and the highway was only extended to the town of Jaroměř.

In the Hradec Králové Region, 33 vehicles for public transport were purchased, which is below average in comparison to other regions, due to the settlement structure (only 2 cities over 25,000 inhabitants) the number of vehicles is adequate. The Hradec Králové public transport fleet is 131 vehicles. In addition, 6 terminals were modernized and 344 new parking spaces were created.

2. The case study of ORP Jaroměř showed the necessity of linking activities in the social area

On the territory of the JAROMĚŘ District, in addition to the transport affected by the aforementioned completion of the D11, the quality of education and the access of schools to the socially excluded have improved. There was a lack of more specific projects to support social services.

The city of Jaroměř did not implement a large number of projects, but projects were financially demanding. In addition to the above-mentioned transport terminal, the city financed the repair of part of the Josefov Fortress. The management of the town of Jaroměř perceives the potential of the Josefov Fortress for tourism. The problem is the limited budget of the city for co-financing projects that would lead to revitalization and thus to the revival of the fortress. The Josefov Fortress is also a socially excluded locality, which leads to a higher incidence of socio-pathological phenomena in Jaroměř. In addition, due to the occurrence of a socially excluded locality, there is negative competition among schools in Jaroměř, the school in Josefov is a segregated school. Other schools in the city do not want to accept potentially problematic pupils.

To this responded partially projects aimed at increasing integration and inclusion in schools, as well as other important topics such as reducing bullying. Implemented projects enabled a more individual approach to pupils and developed a dialogue of stakeholders in the territory.

However, no projects aimed at improving access to social services, despite the fact that needs of the territory in this area were clearly defined in community plans. The city management itself did not consider this area to be the main problem of the territory, and therefore directed the projects to other topics.

3. Projects with a territorial dimension better solve specific problems of the territory

Through integrated tools, projects in the areas of business support, transport, culture development and tourism, and education were supported. The ITI of the Hradecko-Pardubice agglomeration in the region has helped to fundamentally modernize the capacity of schools, connect the region with cycle paths, including the connection to the neighboring Pardubice Region. Many museums were reconstructed and modernized, and funds were also directed to the restoration of the Josefov Fortress in Jaroměř. The most significant financial support through LAG projects was directed to the construction of sidewalks in smaller municipalities. In addition, mainly professional and language classrooms were built, including several outdoor classrooms for modern science teaching. Through calls with some form of territorial dimension, CZK 16.1 billion was used in the Hradec Králové Region, i.e. 67 % of all funds.

Despite the relatively high proportion of these instruments, for beneficiaries the difference between the implementation of projects through individual calls and the calls focused on the territorial dimension, including integrated tools, are not evident. More than half of municipalities do not see a difference in these projects. A more visible impact on the shift in the quality of life was seen in smaller municipalities, where projects were often implemented by LAG, by applicants who have little chance of succeeding in individual challenges.

BENEFITS OF CLLD

CLLD represented an important source of investment funds for small municipalities and small entrepreneurs. A total of 18 local action groups intervene in the territory of the region, one of which only with its peripheral part.

Traffic safety and the renovation of sidewalks, thereby improving infrastructure for citizens, were most strongly supported. Significant support through the LAG was also directed to the development of social services, especially increasing the availability of these services in the peripheral mountain areas of the region. LAGs were important for the development of education, financing the establishment of several children's groups, as well as sharing good practice between primary schools. Several outdoor classrooms were established in the region for modern science teaching. Investments were also made in the development of social services in the region, mainly by purchasing cars for the care service. This has helped to increase the availability of social services in the territory, especially in mountainous areas. Furthermore, the projects were implemented from the RDP (LEADER), from which it was drawn primarily for the purchase of agricultural equipment.

The Hradec Králové Region considers LAGs to be one of the drivers of changes in the territory and actively supports them in their activities. The Region contributes to the activities of the LAG offices in its territory, rehabilitating the period when LAGs are not supported by EU funds, especially between programming periods, until the LAG strategy is approved. Region also convenes LAG meetings beyond the permanent conference, promoting the exchange of good practice. This was also evident from the field surveys, LAGs had a great influence, for example, on the dissemination of procedures for preventing bullying at primary schools in the region.

Beneficiaries from the region positively evaluate the LAG's assistance with the preparation of projects, but also the interconnection of, for example, mayors in building cycle paths. On the contrary, the conditions of some calls that were not adapted to the rural territory are perceived negatively. There are often smaller municipalities in the territory that cannot meet the conditions of some thematic areas (e.g. the requirement for an architectural contest or the excessively long sustainability of social housing projects) and these topics are therefore omitted by the LAG.

BENEFITS OF ITI

The ITI Hradecko-Pardubice agglomeration extends through its territory into the neighboring Pardubice Region. Most of the projects from this tool are concentrated in regional cities, more in Pardubice than in Hradec Králové.

The ITI was focused on four thematic areas – business support, development of culture and tourism, transport and education. Most of the funds went to the area of culture and tourism, which is surprising in the context of the regional needs. Although this area was mentioned in the strategic materials, it was not fundamentally accentuated. The situation was affected by the successful development and approval of several large projects to support monuments, museums and libraries.

Furthermore, ITI funds managed to fundamentally modernize the capacities of schools, connect the region with cycle paths, including the connection to the neighboring Pardubice Region. Synergies occurred during the implementation of cycle path projects, and mayors agreed on interconnections. ITI resources for the development of culture and tourism were essential. Many museums were reconstructed and modernized, and funds were also directed to the restoration of the Josefov Fortress in Jaroměř.

The environment was a less supported area, although it was one of the key areas mentioned in the strategic documents and by the individual actors. There was not enough allocation for the implementation of plans and the fulfillment of needs, moreover, communication with the Managing Authority of OP ŽP was very difficult. Even in supporting entrepreneurship and connecting the research and application spheres, ITI did not succeed as much as expected, also due to the attitude of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which encouraged potential applicants to submit their projects to the national calls.

As part of the implementation of the ITI Hradec-Pardubice agglomeration in the program period 2014-2020, the holder assessed small projects up to 2 million CZK as unnecessarily complicated and administratively demanding, as their operation is just as demanding as for large projects, but their impact is lower. In the period 2021-2027, ITI decided not to support such projects.

WHAT SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE SUBSEQUENT PERIOD AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

GOOD PRACTICE OF EU FUNDS	BAD PRACTICE OF EU FUNDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Strengthening strategic planning at municipal level, encouraged by integrated tools (ITI tool). ▶ Creation of a partnership relationship of actors in the territory, thanks to integrated tools and cooperation between the region, LAG and municipalities. ▶ Connecting schools in the territory thanks to LAG activities, solving common and complicated topics, such as bullying. In general, in the field of education, development has also been visible in practice thanks to EU funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Setting of some call's conditions (blue-green conditions for historical buildings, barrier-free access for school projects and others). ▶ Persistent large paperwork and generally a high level of administration. ▶ LAG calls often copy the announced calls at national level.

4. The report processed based on a combination of data analysis and an in-depth field investigation.

The preparation of the report for the Hradec Králové Region was carried out based on data from the MS2014+ monitoring system valid as of 31 December 2021. The outputs were developed from the documents prepared on the basis of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

We worked on the report between December 2021 and May 2022. We have compiled data from the monitoring system and subjected it to in-depth analysis, including an assessment of the net effect of EU funds based on an assessment of the evolution of selected socio-economic indicators. We complemented this quantitative analysis with robust qualitative field research, primarily in the Jaroměř District in the case study. We conducted more than two dozen interviews with important stakeholders of the region and Jaroměř District, a questionnaire survey at the level of municipalities and citizens of the Jaroměř region and a focus group with representatives of social services and elementary schools in Jaroměř. District. The evaluation will take until October 2023 and in the next phase reports will be produced for the regions of Ústí nad Labem, Zlín, Moravia-Silesia and South Bohemia.