

( from the Czech OP)

### Priority axis 5 Transnational cooperation

Projects supported under this priority axis will contribute to the fulfilment of the fifth specific objective of the Human Resources and Employment OP. This priority axis, in accordance with Article 8 of the Regulation on the European Social Fund, focuses on promoting international cooperation within the scope of human resources development. According to research studies<sup>1</sup> international cooperation offers many benefits. In particular, there is direct support for innovations through exchanges of experience and skills; this is a cost-effective way of checking draft policies and of disseminating experience, which forms the basis for international comparisons, facilitates stimuli and contacts in international networks for individual participants, and helps build the capacities of participating organizations and bodies at regional and national level. Through international cooperation, it will be possible to increase the impact of projects and make the implementation of the European Social Fund more efficient at local, regional and national level thanks to the incorporation of the experience, credit and professional knowledge of foreign partners, make an improvement in the effectiveness of expenditure by applying solutions already discovered abroad, and facilitate international comparisons and the spread of good practice.

Within the scope of this priority axis, activities will be financed that focus on the promotion of international cooperation between projects in different Member States, between groups of actors specializing in specific areas, between actors from a joint regional area and actors from other areas, and between national organizations in several Member States.

This priority axis concentrates in particular on the following categories of intervention areas:

Cod e	Area of intervention
80	Promoting partnerships, pacts and initiatives through networking of national, regional and local actors
81	Mechanisms for the improved formation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes at national, regional and local level, capacity building for the implementation of policies and programmes

#### Description of the current situation and justification of the priority axis focus

International cooperation was encouraged in the 2004 – 2006 programming period primarily through the EQUAL Community Initiative, which is not supported in the 2007 – 2013 programming period; under the ESF Regulation, good experience and the principles of the EQUAL Community Initiative are to be transferred to individual operational programmes. One of these experiences is international cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. 'An investment in Europe's present and future: The added value of Transnational Co-operation at project level under EQUAL', Ruth Santos, ECOTEC, 2005

International evaluation studies<sup>2</sup> and the experience of the Czech Republic indicate that international cooperation is a highly valuable source of information, experience and know-how which facilitates the more efficient implementation of projects and makes a significant contribution to the achievement of quality outputs of these projects.

Twinning, an instrument implemented via the EU's pre-accession instrument Phare, has had very positive effects in international cooperation. It is a specific form of aid in the field of reinforcing institutions, where cooperating partner institutions of public administration from EU Member States posted their experts to recipient similar institutions in candidate/new Member States; these experts acted as long-term or short-term advisers who ensured the transfer of experience and examples of good practice in the implementation of the EU acquis in the legislative systems of candidate/new Member States of the EU. This aid entailed the preparation and implementation of training, seminars, and study trips for the staff of the recipient institutions, support in the processing of expert analysis and the provision of assistance in the transformation of European legislation, and a general increase in the administrative capacity of the recipient institutions.

As good experience of international cooperation should not be forgotten, the ESF Regulation facilitates and requires the support and transfer of this principle in individual operational programmes financed from the ESF. Specific forms of international cooperation were outlined by the European Commission and, during 2005, were developed by the Transnationality Policy Group of the ESF Committee into three versions. These variants include international cooperation as (i) a separate priority axis of the operational programme, (ii) a cross-sectional theme, i.e. eligible expenditure in all priority axes of the programme, and (iii) a combination of both the mentioned variants, i.e. a separate priority axis and eligible expenditure in other priority axes. The HREOP MA is inclined towards the third variant, which eliminates the weaknesses of the previous alternatives and offers the following benefits in particular:

- It combines the flexibility of a cross-sectional theme with the opportunity to increase the contribution from the ESF by 10 bps in the case of a separate priority axis;
- It facilitates the use of international cooperation in all the programme's priority axes;
- It provides all project promoters with the chance to achieve resources intended for international cooperation;
- It facilitates the concentration of a significant amount of resources in the field of international cooperation and allows due emphasis to be placed on activities in the field of international cooperation;
- It provides an opportunity to follow up on successful elements of international cooperation in the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme;
- It reinforces the principles of cooperation in the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy objectives;

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- It offers the chance to continue cooperation, international comparisons and capacity building particularly beneficial for poorer regions and new Member States.

This comprehensive concept of international cooperation provides the greatest degree of flexibility for the Czech Republic and for project promoters, encourages mutual cooperation, and supports the experience and skills of those whose outputs can be enriched through international cooperation.

### **Global objective**

The global objective of the priority axis is 'Intensification of international cooperation in human resources development and employment'.

### **Specific objectives**

- To increase the efficiency of strategies and policies in the field of human resources and employment;
- To streamline the implementation of the European Social Fund at national, regional and local level.

Priority axis 5 will not be broken down into areas of support.

The target group in Priority axis 5 is (1) institutions responsible for the relevant policies and institutions contributing to the implementation of the HREOP and their employees: the Managing Authority, the intermediate bodies, the Paying and Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority, the Monitoring Committee; (2) Others: in particular central state administration authorities, employment offices, regions, municipalities, associations of local authorities, NGOs, social partners, research and educational institutions, local partnerships.

For these target groups, the following areas of activity (this is an indicative list) will be carried out within the scope of individual operations (projects):

- the exchange of experience and transfer of good practice between Member States in matters concerning the management and administration of the ESF;
- the exchange of experience and transfer of good practice between Member States in matters concerning the physical focus of the ESF (the active employment policy, the handling of problems concerning the social inclusion of specific groups of the population, further education, the modernization of public administration, etc.);
- support for the establishment and development of local partnerships;
- the exchange of experience and transfer of good experience between local partnerships in a matters concerning the building and management of partnerships, specific activities of local partnerships, etc.;

- cooperation between projects in various Member States with the aim of improving the results of their own projects or achieving joint results;
- the formation of thematic networks to address a specific problem.

The specific outputs of these activities will be, for example, joint projects, international networks, conferences, policy forums, training and seminars, study trips, placements, consulting organized via short-term experts.

### **Type and form of aid**

This priority axis will be implemented through a centrally notified grant scheme (non-repayable financial assistance, such as grants) and individual projects (direct allocation).

### **Innovation**

Under Priority axis 5, considerable attention will be paid to the support and application of innovative approaches and activities horizontally across projects and in the form of projects directly focusing on the creation and dissemination of innovations in the field of policies supported by the HREOP and in the field of the management of programmes co-financed from the ESF.

### **Transnational cooperation**

Considering the direct focus of this priority axis on international cooperation, the principle of international cooperation will be supported within the scope of all projects as a prerequisite of their eligibility for financing.

### **Partnership**

In accordance with Article 5 of the Regulation on the ESF, the preparation and implementation of the priority axis and individual projects will include the organization and support of participation by social partners and all entities affected by the implementation of the relevant projects. Potential partners are part of the target groups on which the priority axis is focused. The priority axis is directly based on the principle of partnership; partnership here is essentially a necessary condition for the preparation and implementation of projects.

### **Cross-financing**

In the implementation of Priority axis 5, it will be possible to use ESF resources to finance the necessary complementary activities and costs of a 'capital' nature which are otherwise costs eligible for financing from the ERDF, such being up to 10% of the resources allocated to the priority axis.

### **Implementing body**

Priority axis 5 will be implemented by the MoLSA, via its HREOP MA department.

**Priority axis 5 – Transnational cooperation**

Code (from national code list)	Type of indicator	Indicator name	Unit of measurement and definition	Target value	Source of data
	<b>Input</b>	<b>Total budget for the priority axis</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>42 631 655</b> €	<b>HREOP</b>
	<b>Input</b>	<b>Total amount of resources refunded</b>	<b>EUR</b>		<b>MoLSA</b>
<b>07.51.01</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Number of projects assisted</b>	<b>Number of projects assisted</b>		<b>MoLSA - (HREOP)</b>
<b>07.41.00</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Number of persons assisted</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>6.000</b>	<b>MoLSA - (HREOP)</b>
<b>07.45.00</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Number of organizations assisted</b>	<b>Number of organizations assisted</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>MoLSA - (HREOP)</b>
<b>07.46.00</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Number of persons successfully assisted</b>	<b>Number of persons in respect of whom the aid fulfils the predefined purpose</b>	<b>5.000</b>	<b>MoLSA - (HREOP)</b>
<b>43.05.00</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Number of partnerships created</b>	<b>Number of partnerships created on the basis of projects assisted</b>		<b>MoLSA - (HREOP)</b>
<b>43.06.00</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Rate of drawdown of HREOP resources</b>	<b>(%)</b>		<b>MoLSA</b>
<b>43.07.00</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Increase in the effectiveness of HRE strategies and policies</b>	<b>Evaluation based on evaluation studies</b>		<b>Evaluation study</b>