

CZ-JUSTICE

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2020: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Justice Programme formally started after the signature of Memorandum of Understanding between the Czech Republic and the donor states of Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland in September 2017. Very complex and in-depth process of preparation and development of the programme has led to the signature of all required documents needed to approval of pre-defined projects and near announcement of open calls. Within the Justice Programme, there are in total three pre-defined projects and all of them started their implementation phase during the year 2020. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hit the whole world and this new and difficult situation has affected everybody and as well teams of pre-defined projects.

Addendum No. 2 to the Programme Agreement was submitted to the FMO and approved via IS GrACE in July 2020. The modification consisted in the conversion of the Open Call 1a to a Small Grant Scheme “Support of reintegration of persons conditionally released and released from prison” (Annex II), incorporation of the possibility to waive the 10% co-financing for the NGOs (Annex II), change of baseline values and sources of verification within selected Bilateral indicators (Annex I).

Pre-defined project no.1 “Common Education System – strengthening cooperation in the criminal justice and social system” has postponed the beginning of common educational trainings and workshops to the next year according to the safety measures adopted by the Czech Government to prevent the further spread – especially restriction of gathering people within educational activities. All stakeholders agreed that the organization of trainings on site is the priority; however, project promoter is ready to shift some trainings to the online environment if needed. Pre-defined project no.2 “Strengthening the rehabilitation of prisoners through treatment” struggles especially with the restriction forbidding travelling and impossibility to implement bilateral activities – mainly job shadowing and sharing of experience with intervention programme, which are going to be introduced in the Czech environment. Project Promoter and Donor Project Partners hope to meet in person during next year. Pre-defined project no. 3 “Back to life” is working hard on the reconstruction of the probation house and opening of the Programme centres, which is just slightly delayed.

Open Call for proposals of small grant scheme projects as well as Open Call for proposals of projects were prepared both during the whole last year. It is important to mention that this is the first time that the PO prepares the open call in the Justice programme. Due to the legislation and many involved participants as well as the specification of both calls, the whole process of the preparation was quite complicated and as follows delayed than it was firstly expected. Nevertheless, both call texts were finalized at the end of December 2020 and are ready to be launched in January 2021. At the beginning of February, there will also be organised a Seminar for Applicants. The seminar will introduce the open calls and conditions for submission of projects.

However, despite this complicated year, there are some important news in the programme contexts. In July, the president of the Czech Republic signed an amendment to Act No 40/2009, the Criminal Code, and Act No 141/1961, the Code of Criminal Procedure, governing financial penalties, damage thresholds and other changes leading to faster criminal proceedings. This amending legislation, which took effect on 1 October 2020, can be viewed as a tangible step towards decriminalisation and the attendant depenalisation under the Czech Republic’s criminal justice policy. In relation to parole, there

is a change in the submission of the convicted person's application via the Prison Service of the Czech Republic. The aim of this change is to reduce the administrative burden and streamline enforcement procedures. The proposed change underlines the fact that a parole application submitted by a convict person should be a manifestation of their own will and is the result of comprehensive work with convicted persons that has been carried out by the Prison Service in cooperation with the Probation and Mediation Service, social workers and non-governmental organisations. It is also consistent with the Justice Programme's objectives.

PO in cooperation with the National Focal Point has updated and revised risk analysis of the Justice Programme. The delay in the implementation of the bilateral activities and key activities within pre-defines projects due to the COVID-19 safety restrictions belongs to the most serious risk factor identified during the last year. Risk related to the time delays in contracting of pre-defined projects caused by complicated internal procedures of the project promoters and project partner is not relevant anymore. All three projects are contracted and Legal Acts are issued.

Since last year, there have not been organized any bilateral study visits due to the safety restrictions of COVID-19 pandemic. All bilateral activities were postponed for the following years and current epidemiological situation. However, there all stakeholders keep in touch via online tools. Activities regarding the communication and publicity rely on the social media and continuous update of the programme.