



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

THE CZECH REPUBLIC USES EVALUATIONS TO STRENGTHEN SCHOLARSHIPS AND DEEPEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNIVERSITIES

Key messages

Evaluations revealed shortcomings in two education programmes, including brain drain and poor completion rates. In response, the Czech Republic redesigned its scholarships and teacher-sending programmes and deepened partnerships with universities. These changes have increased the number of scholars studying in English, reduced dropouts, and engaged more Czech and partner universities.

Keywords

[Human resources](#) | [Learning and knowledge management](#) | [Partnerships](#)

Key partner

[Czechia](#)

Challenge

The Czech Republic used evaluations to assess two education programmes both of which highlighted several shortcomings.

An [evaluation of the scholarships programme](#) in 2018 revealed:

- Half of alumni stay in the Czech Republic after the end of their scholarship, leading to brain drain at home.
- Scholarship holders have lower rates of completion than other students.
- Despite personal gains for scholarship holders, the programme has had limited development impact.

An [evaluation of the teacher-sending programme](#) in 2019 found:

- Czech universities had little interest in sending teachers to developing countries.
- Universities in developing countries wanted more than temporary placement of Czech teachers.

- Both Czech and partner universities wanted two-way teacher exchanges and collaboration on research and management.

Approach

The Czech Republic redesigned the scholarships programme to reduce brain drain, increase completion rates and further contribute to development co-operation:

- Students are encouraged to study in English rather than in Czech to reduce brain drain. In addition, a guaranteed assignment in their home university when they return is promoted.
- Scholarships mainly focus on higher degrees (Master or Doctorate) to avoid students changing study areas or dropping out.
- Students are encouraged to study in sectors linked to bilateral development co-operation so that they can then qualify for expert positions in development co-operation project implementation or evaluation.

It transformed the “Sending of Czech teachers” programme into “Capacity building of public universities in developing countries”:

- The redesigned programme includes research and management (e.g. fundraising, private sector partnerships). It also allows two-way exchange of teachers, students and non-teaching staff of universities. Universities can send teachers for shorter periods (one to three months), which makes it easier for smaller institutions to take part.

It created links between programmes and focused both on the same seven countries:

- As one linkage, students with strong potential to become teachers or researchers are encouraged to apply to the scholarships programme. Since 2020, the programme has implemented about ten projects each year across all six priority countries and Ukraine.

Results

- **The language of study has dramatically shifted from Czech to English for scholarship students.** The language of study for scholarship holders jumped from 77% in Czech to 66% in English. Scholarships offered in Czech are reserved for students already speaking Czech or another Slavonic language (e.g. students from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).
- **Drop-out rates have been reduced significantly.** The focus of scholarships on students with higher degrees has reduced the drop-out rate from 50% to less than 10%.
- **More Czech and partner universities are participating.** The number of Czech universities participating in the programme has increased from 2 to 13. In 2022, 4 of them started new partnerships with 12 partner universities across seven partner countries.

Lessons learnt

- **Inclusive evaluations are a strategic tool to improve development co-operation.** Discussions with internal and external stakeholders, including successful and unsuccessful scholarship holders, helped understand how to improve programmes.
- **A focus on fewer countries helps deepen partnerships.** Limiting co-operation to a few countries helped deepen the scope of partnerships with universities, now including management and research collaboration.
- **Adjusting to the needs of partner universities is key.** Following Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine, the Czech Republic has shifted its efforts in Ukraine and Moldova to build the capacity of partner universities to integrate internally displaced students and deploy digital solutions.
- **Linking scholarships to development co-operation has trade-offs.** Linking scholarships to bilateral development may help former scholars get jobs and build local capacity. But it may also prevent students from getting skills that are in high demand in their country.

Further information

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic (2019), "Sending of teachers to developing countries in the period 2016-2018", in *Annex 1 Executive Summary*, www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/development_cooperation_and_humanitarian/bilateral_development_cooperation/evaluation/evaluation_summary_sending_of_university.html

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic (2018), "Executive Summary", *Evaluation report - Government Development Scholarship Programme*, www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/development_cooperation_and_humanitarian/bilateral_development_cooperation/evaluation/evaluation_report_government_development.html

OECD resources

OECD (2023), OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Czech Republic 2023 (forthcoming).

OECD (2023), "Determining how Iceland's scholarship and training programmes contribute to development", *Development Co-operation TIPS*, www.oecd.org/development-cooperation-learning/practices/determining-how-iceland-s-scholarship-and-training-programmes-contribute-to-development-a695529b/

To learn more about the Czech Republic's development co-operation, see:

OECD (2023), "Czech Republic", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4e4c3092-en> (accessed on 27 July 2023).

See more *In Practice* examples from Czech Republic here: <https://www.oecd.org/development-cooperation-learning/?tag-key+partner=czech+republic#search>

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