



## CLLD country profile: **Czechia**

### 1. Key messages about local development and CLLD in this country

The CLLD has made full use of the potential that has been built in Czechia since 2004 through the implementation of the LEADER method and the expanded geographic coverage of LAGs. The CLLD support area consists of municipalities with less than 25,000 inhabitants and currently only 5% of the population that could potentially be part a LAG is outside a designated LAG area, i.e. is not covered by CLLD.

For the period 2014-2020, the management of the CLLD implementation is split between two ministries. The Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for setting LAG standards according to the Partnership Agreement. However, the Ministry of Regional Development was already responsible for the process of approving the CLLD strategies. Both ministries are also the managing authorities of the operational programmes implemented under the CLLD. The Ministry of Agriculture implements the Rural Development Programme and the Ministry of Regional Development is the managing authority of the Integrated Regional OP.

The interests of the LAGs are defended by the bottom-up association National Network of LAGs of Czechia (169 out of 179 LAGs are members of the network). The main mission of the network is to bring together LAGs to: develop cooperation with other actors working for the countryside and its inhabitants; create conditions for expanding the influence and the role of the LAG in the administration of subsidies from funds; to promote and popularise the role of LAGs in community-led local development; and to organise lectures, training and briefings for more efficient working for rural areas.

Regional networks and regional associations of LAGs have also been established.

### 2. CLLD used in the following Funds

Fund	CLLD budget from the Fund (€)
EAFRD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	165,523,000
EMFF <input type="checkbox"/>	-
ESF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	66,428,000
ERDF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	436,927,000

*Planned allocation at programme start*

### 3. Possibility of multi-funding (linking several Funds in one strategy)

All LAGs combine the use of EAFRD and ERDF in one strategy. 85% of LAGs combine the application of three funds (ESF, EAFRD and ERDF). Most of the LAGs that do not use the ESF would have liked to so but were not allowed based on selected criteria established at the national level. The EMFF could not be used in Czechia.

### 4. Number of LAGs

Fund	Number of LAGs using this Fund	
	Multi-funded	Mono-funded
EAFRD	178	-
EMFF	-	-
ESF	156	-
ERDF	178	-
<b>Total number of LAGs</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>-</b>

*Planned allocation at programme start. The ESF is currently used by 151 LAGs.*

178 LAGs were successful from the 179 LAGs that applied for support through the CLLD. Most LAGs focus on drawing funds under the CLLD initiative. However, many LAGs developed individual projects supported by various funding instruments. The activities of the LAGs are selectively supported by the governments of the Regions (NUTS 3) (mostly for operational costs). However, some Regions also support the LAGs to establish so-called "small LEADER" - a grant scheme to support small projects and events (especially for non-profit organisations and associations, which are difficult to support under the CLLD).

## **5. Purposes, objectives for which CLLD is used**

The purposes and objectives of CLLD are linked to topics that the LAGs can financially support based on national level definitions. In the case of the Integrated Regional OP (ERDF), most LAGs have included investments in: education (modernisation of classrooms, expanding the capacity of kindergartens), traffic safety (especially sidewalks), social services (mainly social service buildings), and cycling.

The Rural Development Programme focused on support for agricultural and non-agricultural businesses and agricultural products. For the OP Employment (ESF), the LAGs were most interested in supporting social inclusion, however, other themes were also widely supported (pro-family measures, employment growth).

## **6. State of play**

Most LAGs started to fully implement CLLD in 2018, as the evaluation of CLLD Strategies (approval of LAG support) by the Ministry of Regional Development was completed in 2017. In many LAGs, almost all allocated funds are already used up to support local projects. At the end of 2019, there were 6,600 supported projects in the implementation stage and 3,900 supported projects completed. Only a few cases are known of LAGs which have not yet been able to support local projects. LAGs submitted Mid-term evaluations by 30 June 2019 with only one LAG failing to do so.

## **7. Key achievements so far**

Apart from the number of supported projects or finance, any report showing the specific impacts of CLLD implementation on a factual level has not yet been published. LAGs appreciate that the situation has stabilised after a preparatory "uncertain" period. Most of LAG representatives have learned to work with the CLLD initiative and carry out the necessary administrative and animation activities. LAG representatives are aware that they can support the territory with a significant amount of funding, which is provided by the three funds. Compared to previous periods, support through CLLD applies to almost the entire, potentially eligible, territory of Czechia. Gradually, the key role of the Ministry of Regional Development as a managing authority was established, and this is expected to be further strengthened in the next period.

## **8. Key barriers encountered**

The LAG managers perceived the most important barriers of CLLD implementation to be the very tight definition of LAG activities, limited fulfilment of local needs and solution of local problems, and strict administrative and procedural conditions. Managers experience the different rules in the various programmes to be very limiting (e.g. designing calls for funding). According to the managers, the needs of the area, which are described in the CLLD strategy, cannot be met as they would like, because they feel that there is no funding for the necessary topics and that the conditions within the calls for the application of subsidies are too restrictive. Another reason for the discrepancy between the needs and the offered solution is the time span from the creation of the strategy, approval and its possible implementation (changing needs of the territory over time). In applying the LEADER method, LAGs also associate obstacles with staff numbers. Although they are able to carry

out activities related to the implementation of the CLLD strategy, they have no time capacity for activities related to the principles of the method (insufficient capacity to coordinate and meet with actors). According to the managers, the application of the method is further hindered by the difficulties in supporting innovative and “non-standard” projects. These types of projects do not meet the strict conditions of the calls, although they should be the essence of the LEADER method.

## 9. Some national specificities

The Czech model is characterised by the following:

- Fragmented structure - relatively small LAGs.
- Non-selective support of LAGs (almost all LAGs were selected to support and implement CLLD).
- Total coverage of the territory of Czechia (LAGs implementing CLLD operate on 95% of the territory that can be part of a LAG).
- A significant influence of public sector representatives (especially mayors) in the partnerships.
- Use of the CLLD initiative in three funds with a significant amount of resources.
- Need to know three different sets of procedures and rules due to the use of EAFRD, ERDF and ESF.
- Rather marginal support for non-profit organisations and associations.
- A mix of top-down and bottom-up practices, i.e. a significant influence of managing authorities on the implementation of CLLD.

*October 2020*

*Main author: Ondřej Konečný*

*Series coordination and editing: Urszula Budzich-Tabor, Stefan Kah, Haris Martinos*