



Comparing challenges in finding evaluators with the Czech Republic and Estonia



Public Procurement Principle: **Transparency**



Procurement Stage: **All phases**



Audience: **Procuring entity, Civil society, Policymaker**

Description

Estonia

Having a smaller population than the Slovak Republic, Estonia is confronted with similar challenges when it comes to finding evaluators that are independent to avoid a conflict of interest. Foreign evaluators are used as much as possible by some agencies, albeit not all, and overall experience with them has been described as positive for both the intermediate bodies and the beneficiaries. Although most potential foreign evaluators decline, it is generally possible to find two to three evaluators per application. If it is determined to use foreign evaluators for a given call, the applications are made available in English.

Moreover, it is common for intermediate body/agency employees to evaluate the project in-house at no extra cost; however, this is dependent on the project. When external expertise is required, compensation typically ranges from EUR 150 to EUR 500 per project. The time per evaluation is very project-dependent, from 1 to 16 hours or more. Compared to the Slovak Republic, Estonia thus pays slightly more per project, makes intensive use of foreign evaluators and has notably much shorter evaluation manuals, around 2-5 pages compared to 160 pages in the Slovak Republic.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the evaluation process is dependent on the intermediate body. The Prague Growth Pole, for instance, contracts companies through open calls in accordance with the Public Procurement Act to perform the evaluation which is part of the company's employees' duties. Other intermediate bodies use their own databases, which classify evaluators according to their scientific field. Qualification requirements vary depending on the intermediate body, with some demanding a minimum of a PhD and several years of experience for the scientific evaluation while for others, a high school degree can be enough if compensated by 15 years of relevant experience. Evaluators themselves are regularly assessed according to the validity of their evaluation results. The monitoring system automatically assigns evaluators in the relevant field to the project; however, it is common that in some areas, there is a shortage of evaluators. In this case, the intermediate

body will contact Czech bodies such as the Council of Universities or the Czech Academy of Sciences to ask if they can motivate their employees.

Otherwise, foreign evaluators may be used by contacting foreign institutions, not individuals, to publish a corresponding advertisement. In general, however, using foreign evaluators in the Czech Republic is rather complicated due to national law stipulating that these processes need to be conducted in Czech. Further, past experiences had shown it was only feasible to use foreign evaluators for select prestigious calls and only for the scientific part as they reached very different conclusions on the economic part.

As such, foreign evaluators would determine the wages as insufficient while those wages would be deemed excessive in the Czech Republic. Thus, foreign evaluators might only be tasked to assess the feasibility study, which is then provided in English, and whether the project is deemed cutting-edge internationally. For this matter, applicants are asked to provide relevant parts of the application in both Czech and English. The remuneration is comparable to that in the Slovak Republic, and even though it is deemed too low, it is bound by law to be indexed to Czech salaries. The length of the evaluations is very project dependent, but can be as much as 60 hours for the most complex projects, while evaluation manuals are 25-70 pages long and thus significantly shorter than in the Slovak Republic.

Overall, it is common in the benchmarking countries to make use of all external expert panels/companies, own full-time employees and foreign evaluators depending on the intermediate body. Remuneration is low in all countries, with Estonia being able to pay slightly above average as it is not held back by national legislation, as is the case for English language applications, which allows Estonian intermediate bodies to use foreign evaluators as much as possible if they want to. Evaluation time per project appears to vary per project in all countries, although the Slovak Republic has by far the longest manuals.

Evaluators in the Slovak Republic have complained that the allotted time for the evaluation, e.g. 10 hours, is not even enough to read all 160 pages of the manual. Requirements for evaluators are high in both benchmarking countries, although they appear to be lower than in the Slovak Republic and generally more flexible.

Source: Responses to OECD questionnaires, March 2021.

OECD (2021) "Promoting research and innovation in the Slovak Republic through an effective use of European funds" <https://doi.org/10.1787/f0e9d786-en>

