

Enhancing Governance, Stakeholder Involvement, and Communication in Czech Recovery Planning: Strategic Lessons for Ukraine

Alina Boiko*
February 2024

* 2023 Think Visegrad Non-V4 Research Fellow at EUROPEUM – Institute for European Policy (Czechia), D.Sc. (Econ), Professor of Public Administration Department of State University of Trade and Economics, Senior Expert – Recovery Plan Analyst in the Reform Support Team of the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine

This policy paper was produced within the Think Visegrad in Brussels Fellowship programme. In the first half of 2016, eight think-tanks from the Visegrad Group that have been cooperating in the Think Visegrad platform, agreed on the idea proposed by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, to create a common representation office in Brussels. The main motivation for it is the need to encourage debate on issues of common interest to the EU and the V4 and explain the positions of the V4 to a wide audience. Think Visegrad in Brussels would like to project an image of constructive partners, to explain the dynamics of the debates within our regions and to highlight our active contributions to EU policy-making. For more information about Think Visegrad and its members visit www.think.visegradfund.org.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... | 3 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 4 |
| ANALYZING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE RRF IMPLEMENTATION..... | 5 |
| <i>Governance model for European funds allocated to Portugal through the Recovery and Resilience Plan</i> | <i>9</i> |
| ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN RRP DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION..... | 9 |
| ASSESSING AND ENHANCING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN RRP's IMPLEMENTATION..... | 12 |
| CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UKRAINE | 14 |
| REFERENCES | 17 |
| About EUROPEUM | 20 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy paper delves into the Czech Republic's approach to implementing its National Recovery and Resilience Plan (hereafter RRP) and extracts vital lessons that could be instrumental for Ukraine in enhancing its policy implementation capabilities. The primary research question guiding this investigation is: "How can the governance, stakeholder engagement, and communication strategies in the Czech RRP implementation provide actionable lessons for Ukraine to bolster its institutional capacity for recovery plan implementation and enhance the effectiveness of policy formulation?"

The analysis reveals several highlights. The governance structure within the National RRP implementation underscores the importance of a coordinating authority, backed by strong political power, which is crucial for inter-ministerial coordination, and well-defined institutional roles. However, it also highlights the possible challenges of a decentralized performance, where the implementation and responsibility for components lie with the line ministries – component owners. Challenges arise when the coordinating authority, on one hand, covers monitoring and reporting scope but, on the other hand, lacks high-level political power to escalate the achievement of targets and milestones.

The implementation of the RRP should foster, not hinder, interaction among national authorities, businesses, and civil society, emphasizing stakeholder involvement in strategic planning. Open access to the RRP's development process is crucial, including participation forms, developer lists, feedback mechanisms, and schedules for interim results. Czechia's RRP, led by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, has a structured communication approach, but its limited digital presence suggests a need for more engaging and accessible public communication. Comparatively, the Slovak RRP's more dynamic digital strategy highlights areas for Czechia's improvement.

From these findings, several recommendations emerge for Ukraine. *First*, establishing a centralized authority for the recovery plan with high-level political back up and clearly defined roles is crucial for efficiently managing the RRP implementation. The RRP implementation should be equipped with a central information tool (IT system) provided by the coordination authority. *Second*, adopting an inclusive approach in stakeholder engagement from the early planning stages is key to ensuring policy legitimacy and effectiveness. *Third*, developing a comprehensive and multi-channeled communication strategy is essential for reaching a broader audience and maintaining transparency about the plan's progress. *Lastly*, Ukraine should focus on building its administrative and institutional capacities, emphasizing skilled human resources and analytical capabilities, to manage and implement its recovery plan effectively.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning in national development requires a harmonious blend of ambition and pragmatism, involving the careful setting of priorities, defining of goals, and allocation of resources for socio-economic growth. As an ongoing decision-making process, it is integral to government management, particularly under the constraints of limited human and financial resources. This form of planning must be adaptable, equipped to respond to changing conditions with a diverse array of methods and tools.

Within the European Union, each Member State formulates its own public sector strategic planning, complemented by overarching EU regulations for managing shared funds. The EU Cohesion policy legislative package for 2021–2027, covering eight significant funds, incorporates a crisis-response mechanism to tackle future challenges. The Recovery and Resilience Facility (hereafter RRF), a key component of the Next Generation EU (NGEU) recovery plan established by Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2020/2053, plays a vital role in countering the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. This substantial instrument, exceeding EUR 806.9 billion, is designed to mitigate the pandemic's effects and strengthen EU resilience. As a major portion of the NGEU funding, the RRF enables Member States to finance essential reforms and investments, in line with the European Semester's country-specific recommendations and cohesion policy.

The goal of NGEU, and by extension the RRF, is to guide Europe towards a more sustainable, digitally advanced, and resilient future in the post-pandemic era. The Recovery and Resilience Plans (hereafter RRP) devised by Member States constitute a unified EU response to the COVID-19 crisis, addressing challenges through green and digital transitions and enhancing economic and social resilience. Czechia's RRP, initially focusing on digitalization, climate protection, and key reforms in education, health, and the business environment, was initially funded exclusively through grants. In 2023, the plan was updated to include loans from the RRF, expanding the scope of resources available. The total targeted resources, amounting to EUR 7.036 million, represent 1% of the entire RRF and 3% of Czechia's 2021 GDP¹.

This policy paper sets out to identify lessons that could benefit Ukraine in enhancing administrative implementation capacity, based on an review of the Czech Republic's implementation of its RRP using interviews with key stakeholders from the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the European Commission and documentary analysis. The analysis

¹ Brussels, 24.5.2023, SWD (2023) 603 final, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, 2023 Country Report - Czechia. Accompanying the document, Recommendation for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the 2023 National Reform Programme of Czechia and delivering a Council opinion on the 2023 Convergence Programme of Czechia {COM (2023) 603 final}.

included regulatory documents outlining RRP development procedures and records from expert group meetings responsible for implementing the RRF. The paper is structured into three parts: the first part explores the features of the coordinating authority's role and the governance of RRF implementation in Czechia and other countries. The second part shifts focus to stakeholder engagement in both the development and execution of the RRP. The final part examines the communication strategies surrounding the RRF. This structured investigation not only provides highlights of the Czech approach but also potentially offers lessons for Ukraine's recovery strategies.

ANALYZING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE RRF IMPLEMENTATION

In the context of the RRP program, each EU country is required to set up a central authority for managing the plan, as mandated by the RRF Regulation. This directive, rooted in Article 19(2)(h) of the regulation, is further detailed by several key aspects. These include Article 15(3)(i), which emphasizes effective monitoring and implementation strategies involving milestones, targets, and indicators, and Article 19a, which outlines the rules on financial contributions and loan agreements². Together, these provisions underline the importance of a well-structured system for managing and overseeing the plan's progress in each Member State.

Additionally, the financial and borrowing agreements' appendices shed light on the specific roles of these organizational structures. A crucial responsibility for the member countries is appointing a *central coordinator*. This coordinator oversees the overall management of the RRP and serves as the main communication channel with the European Commission, as part of the Operational Arrangement each member country has with the Commission. Moreover, on January 22, 2021, the European Commission released directives focusing on the operational roles of the national coordinating bodies³. Included in the administrative arrangements section of the Commission's guidance for the RRPs, these directives define the governance model necessary for the effective rollout of the RRF.

² European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2021, *Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021*, Official Journal of the European Union.

³ European Commission 2021, *Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 12 final, Part 1/2, Brussels, 22 January; European Commission 2021, *Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 12 final, Part 2/2, Brussels, 22 January.

In the case of Czechia, such a governance model is detailed in Chapter 6 of Czechia's RRP⁴ and Appendices 1 and 2 to Government Resolution No. 467⁵. These include specific roles and responsibilities as outlined in the RRF Regulation, financial and borrowing agreements, and operational arrangements⁶. Czechia has set up a dedicated structure for implementing its RRP, overseen by the *Managing Council*, the highest decision-making and approval body, led by the Minister of Industry and Trade. *The Managing Council* meets at least twice a year, always before the submission of a summary application for the payment of funds and then as needed. The *Ministry of Industry and Trade*, acting as the coordinator, is tasked with overseeing the RRP's implementation and serving as the main contact point for the European Commission. The coordinator also handles important tasks related to data collection, monitoring, reporting and methodical support for the component owner⁷.

To ensure effective coordination and maintain uniform standards of reporting and monitoring, a central level above the component owners is established, represented by the *RRP Coordination Unit* at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, so-called Delivery Unit. This necessitates clear, strong guidance and technical instructions, which are particularly crucial given the large RRF envelope and the high number of involved component owners. Establishing binding common rules across all bodies involved in implementation is essential for efficient interaction between them throughout the entire period of the RRP implementation.

The organizational structure of Czechia's RRP features highly decentralized performance. The primary implementation tasks are carried out by *component owners* who are responsible for executing activities within individual components. Various authorities, termed component owners, are identified in the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Czech Republic*⁸. These include individual ministries (11 in total) responsible for implementing the 26 components. In other words, they are responsible for implementing

⁴ Národní plán obnovy. Plán pro oživení a odolnost České republiky, Praha, září 2021, s. 61-74. Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.cz/ke-stazeni>

⁵ 2024 Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Government Resolution No. 467 of May 17, 2021. Available at: <https://odok.cz/portal/zvlady/usneseni/2021/467/>

⁶ Recovery and resilience facility financing agreement between the Commission and the Czech Republic, Ares (2021)5793728, 22 September 2021; European Commission 2022, *Recovery and Resilience Facility. Operational Arrangements between the European Commission and the Czech*, 4 July.

⁷ Národní plán obnovy. Plán pro oživení a odolnost České republiky, Praha, září 2021, s. 63-64. Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.cz/ke-stazeni>

⁸ Národní plán obnovy. Plán pro oživení a odolnost České republiky, Praha, září 2021, s. 68-69. Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.cz/ke-stazeni>

RRP measures, signing management declarations for payment requests, and ensuring compliance with milestones, targets, and regulations.

Thus, the institutional separation of powers and responsibilities in the RRP implementation encompasses management, coordination, implementation functions, and distinct auditing. The RRP Coordination Unit at the Ministry of Industry and Trade has relatively less high-level political backing compared to the scenario where such a unit is situated within the Prime Minister Office or the Ministry of Finance. Meanwhile, this kind of political support is crucial for inter-ministerial coordination among line ministries (component owners). This is especially true in the case of the decentralized performance with many line ministries – component owners for implementing the large RRP envelope, which involves billions for reforms and investments.

In contrast, *Slovakia's* approach with its *National Implementation and Coordination Authority* (hereafter NIKA) illustrates a different scenario⁹. Initially established within the Ministry of Finance, NIKA was transferred to the Office of the Government of Slovakia during the implementation phase. This strategic move into the Government Office's structure, fostering collaboration with various ministries' units and sections, highlights the significance of high-level political backing. Such an institutional setup not only demonstrates a strong mandate and steering capacity but also emphasizes the necessity of such support. Furthermore, various European countries also demonstrate strong centralized management and steering power in their RRP¹⁰. Without it, coordinating authorities may struggle to drive cohesive action and address cross-ministerial issues, potentially impeding the effective implementation of the RRP¹¹.

⁹ *Plan obnovy cestovna mapa k lepsiemu Slovensku*, Bratislava, 2021, s.731-741. Available at:

<https://www.planobnovy.sk/site/assets/files/1019/kompletny-plan-obnovy.pdf>

¹⁰ Plan de recuperación, transformación y resiliencia, 2021, España Puede. Available at:

[https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/temas/fondos-recuperacion/Documents/160621-](https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/temas/fondos-recuperacion/Documents/160621-Plan_Recuperacion_Transformacion_Resiliencia.pdf)

[Plan_Recuperacion_Transformacion_Resiliencia.pdf](https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/temas/fondos-recuperacion/Documents/160621-Plan_Recuperacion_Transformacion_Resiliencia.pdf) ; Piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza. 2021. *Italia domani*, p. 239, Available at: [https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/sogei-](https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/sogei-ng/it/en/strumenti/documenti.html)

[ng/it/en/strumenti/documenti.html](https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/sogei-ng/it/en/strumenti/documenti.html) ; ECOFIN 2021, *The National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0."*, 13 July, pp. 660-661. Available at: [https://greece20.gov.gr/wp-](https://greece20.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NRRP_Greece_2_o_English.pdf)

[content/uploads/2021/07/NRRP_Greece_2_o_English.pdf](https://greece20.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NRRP_Greece_2_o_English.pdf) ; MINISTÉRIO DO PLANEAMENTO. 2021. *Recuperar Portugal, Construindo o Futuro - Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência*. 22 April., pp. 220-227. Available at: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PRR.pdf> ; Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2021,

Nacionalni plan oporavka i otpornosti 2021-2026, srpanj, 2021, pp. 1185-1187, Available at: <https://planoporavka.gov.hr>

¹¹ European Commission 2023, 'Governance of the Recovery and Resilience. Plans across Member States. Lessons learnt and possible way forward'. Presentation to the RRF Expert Group, 12 May 2023, p. 13-14 ; Zeitlin, J., Bokhorst, D., & Eihmanis, E. (June 2023). *Governing the RRF: Drafting, Implementing, and Monitoring National*

It is worth highlighting that payments under the RRF are performance-based and contingent on the country implementing the reforms and investments outlined in its RRP. To submit a subsequent payment request, it is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the milestones and targets. So, Slovakia is one of the six countries that managed to submit a fourth payment request by the end of 2023 (with the previous ones having been approved and paid)¹². Thus, Slovakia is among the fastest countries (alongside Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Croatia) in implementing the RRP at the European level. These countries have well-organized recovery organization architectures with strong centralized political management, as presented below.

Furthermore, the law adopted in Slovakia on September 24, 2021, and the Decree-Law adopted by Portugal on May 4, 2021, exemplify a proactive and structured approach in defining the recovery and resilience mechanism¹³. A legal analysis of these laws reveals their strengths: the clear delineation of authorities' competencies, detailed implementation plans for the recovery process, and provision of funding for the mechanism. By establishing these aspects in advance, the laws ensure a well-defined structure for managing and overseeing the recovery process. Such foresight in legislating roles and responsibilities demonstrates good governance and a commitment to effective, transparent management of the recovery process.

On the other hand, an organizational structure in RRP implementation that has weaker political backing of the Coordinating Authority can be one of the factors leading to delays in submitting payment requests. For instance, the second and third payment requests, which included scheduled milestones (reforms) and targets (investments) for Q3-Q4 2022 and Q1-Q2 2023, were submitted by the Czech-appointed authority to the European Commission on December 6, 2023¹⁴.

At the same time, the delay in submitting payment requests could also result from the timeline of the milestones and targets. Information obtained through interviews with civil

Recovery and Resilience Plans as an Interactive Multilevel Process Policy Study. p. 59. Available at <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Governance-RFF.pdf>

¹² European Commission 2023, 'Press release. Commission disburses payments to Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia under the Recovery and Resilience Facility', Brussels, 28 December 2023. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_6827

¹³ Slovak Republic 2021, *The Law on the mechanism to support recovery and resilience and on the amendment of some laws*, 368/2021 Coll. Available at: https://www.slov-lex.sk/static/pdf/2021/368/ZZ_2021_368_20230801.pdf ; Portugal 2021, Governance Model for European Funds allocated to Portugal through Recovery and Resilience Plan, Decree-Lei #29B/2021. Available at: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/legislacao-consolidada/decreto-lei/2021-216138232>

¹⁴ Fulfilment of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Czech Republic, Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.cz/plneni-npo>

servants at the Ministry of industry and trade of the Czech Republic indicates that effective planning for recovery and resilience under the RRF mechanism should prioritize implementing reforms in the early years of RRP implementation. Conversely, prioritizing investments in the initial years entails risks for on-time RRP implementation, because of possible unexpected challenges in tender processes, in public procurement, constraints in the availability of specialized workers, as well as in the development and assessment of design and estimate documentation. Thus, this approach to scheduling milestones and investments mitigates the risk of impeding RRP funding at the outset of its implementation, while simultaneously enhancing the potential to attract additional funding for targets associated with these investments.

Governance model for European funds allocated to Portugal through the Recovery and Resilience Plan

Information from interviews also suggests that the implementation process of the RRP could greatly benefit from a unified information system for implementation that includes detailed tracking features for milestones and targets. However, the current internal document circulation system within the Czech ministries is not designed to track the progress of reforms and investments. At the same time, the adoption of this system would facilitate the early detection of any deviations from the planned RRP implementation schedule and improve data collection efficiency from the implementing line ministries. Additionally, establishing an early warning system, supported by a dedicated IT-tool and specific procedures, would be an asset for the coordinator to effectively monitor the timely implementation of RRP measures. The introduction of such digital innovations would undoubtedly lead to more efficient and responsive management of recovery efforts, highlighting the potential of technology to optimize organizational processes.

In conclusion, while technology plays an influential role, the successful execution of the Czech Republic's RRP also hinges on adequate administrative capacity. This includes not only the integration of an advanced IT system but also ensuring that the central coordinating body and the teams within various line ministries are bolstered with sufficient administrative resources. These resources encompass skilled personnel, institutional knowledge, and expertise, all essential for preventing delays and ensuring the smooth execution of the RRP.

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN RRP DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION

The legal framework governing the involvement of stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of RRP within the European Union is anchored in *principles of collaboration and transparency*. As stipulated by Article 18(4) (g) of the RRF Regulation,

Member States are legally bound to detail their stakeholder consultation processes in their national plans. This Regulation mandates the inclusion of a summary of *consultations conducted with local and regional authorities, social partners, civil society organizations, youth organizations, and other relevant stakeholders* in the preparation and, where applicable, the implementation of the plan.

The EU guidance provided to Member States further emphasized this collaborative approach, instructing them to detail *“the scope (list of consulted social partners, civil society organisations, stakeholders etc.), the type (conference, bilateral, tripartite etc.), and timing of the outreach efforts and whether stakeholders have been consulted selectively on specific components or whether a general consultation has taken place on a comprehensive draft plan”*¹⁵.

For the implementation phase of the RRP, the guidance suggested that Member States should, *“as far as possible explain the envisaged steps to involve and consult the relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the plans overall”*¹⁶. This approach underscores the EU’s commitment to ensuring that the inputs and feedback from various stakeholder groups are effectively integrated into both the development and execution of the RRP.

Despite these guidelines, Czechia’s Recovery and Resilience Plan faced criticism for its preparation and implementation process. Some stakeholders, including industry and environmental organizations, have expressed concerns over the lack of transparency and inadequate consultation during the plan’s drafting¹⁷. This has led to the perception of a top-down approach, side-lining meaningful stakeholder engagement. However, these issues were not unique to Czechia but were also present in the Visegrad Group countries¹⁸. There, a common problem was the ineffective use of consultation procedures, often perceived by

¹⁵ European Commission 2021, *Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 12 final, Part 1/2, Brussels, 22 January.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Pape, M. 2023, *Czechia's National Recovery and Resilience Plan. BRIEFING Next Generation EU (NGEU) delivery – How are the Member States doing?*, EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, Next Generation EU Monitoring Service, Members' Research Service, PE 729.311, March. ; Bittner, J. 2022, 'National Recovery and Resilience Plan: Czechia', in *The NextGeneration EU in Action: Impact on Social and Labour Policies*, Italian Labour Law e-Journal, Special Issue 1, Vol. 15, pp. 11, DOI: 10.6092/issn.1561-8048/15672; Nemecek, D. 2020, 'Czech National Recovery Plan: A Missed Chance for Change?', International Sustainable Finance Centre, December 2020.

¹⁸ Serowanec, M. & Przychodzki, M. 2023, 'The Introduction of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans in the Light of the Visegrád Group Countries' Experience', *Prawo i Więż*, no. 1 (44), spring, P.57, DOI: 10.36128/priw.vi44.390.

NGOs and opposition parties as mere formalities without real impact on the development of national recovery plans.

Further studies have highlighted that the involvement of social partners and civic society in creating the RRP was limited to later stages and characterized by non-transparency and confusion¹⁹. It is fair to mention that the initial approach was driven by tight schedules and the urgency to secure RRP investment contributions. This was objectively due to the establishment of the RRF by the Council Decision (EU, Euratom) as an emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis and partly because of the relatively weak institutional infrastructure for strategic planning in Czechia²⁰. Consequently, this led to a ‘bottom-up’ approach focused on project feasibility within a five-year timeframe, rather than a cohesive, vision-driven strategy.

The lessons learned from the RRP experience underscore the need for a more inclusive, transparent, and strategically focused approach to policy development. They highlight the importance of a capacity-oriented policy-making process, ensuring the creation of effective, legitimate, and widely supported policies. Considering these issues, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance future policy formulation and execution:

- To broaden the scope and depth of stakeholder consultation processes, actively engaging and incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise from various interest groups, ensuring a more inclusive planning process that effectively addresses the needs and potential contributions of key sectors and communities.
- To implement measures such as publishing detailed policy frameworks and rationales, conducting regular and detailed reporting, and initiating open data projects for greater transparency in policy development processes, clearer communication about decision-making, project prioritization, and fund allocation, thereby rebuilding the credibility and legitimacy of the plans and restoring public trust.
- To shift towards a more adaptive and responsive policy-making approach, it is necessary to establish permanent feedback mechanisms and enhance communication channels. These should accommodate evolving challenges and opportunities, allowing for flexibility in response to stakeholder inputs and changing circumstances, which are essential for the success of complex initiatives like the RRP.

¹⁹ Guasti, P., Mansfeldova, Z., Myant, M., & Bonker, F. (2022). *Czechia Report*. Sustainable Governance Indicators, Bertelsmann Stiftung: Gütersloh. P. 28, 30.

²⁰ *ibid.* P. 28.

- To encourage a collaborative decision-making environment, where government entities and stakeholders work together in both planning and implementation stages, establishing a culture of collaborative policy development to ensure comprehensive consideration of all voices.

ASSESSING AND ENHANCING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN RRP'S IMPLEMENTATION

Member States are mandated to transparently acknowledge the source of Union funding, as stipulated in *Article 29(2) of the RRF regulation*. Additionally, financing and loan agreements reinforce these obligations, requiring Member States to develop strategies for raising awareness of the RRF's role in Europe's recovery. Such strategies should include maintaining a dedicated web space for information on RRP. Furthermore, these agreements provide guidelines that highlight the necessity for Member States to effectively communicate key aspects, such as the RRF's impact on Europe's recovery, its role in green and digital transitions, and significant milestones in the implementation of their RRP.

The Czech Republic's communication strategy for its RRP, outlined in Chapter 6 of Czechia's RRP document, aims to raise awareness and understanding of the financial contributions from the EU's RRF. The National Communication Strategy for the National Recovery Plan for the period 2021–2026 (hereafter NCS) is a comprehensive framework that addresses key aspects of communication, including answering the questions of when, how, and to whom to communicate. This NCS is in line with EU Regulation 2021/241 and emphasizes transparency, clarity, and neutrality in its approach²¹. Key elements of the NCS include:

- Unified Web Presence: Development of a central website for RRF presentation, continuous updating, and expansion.
- Targeted Online Promotion: Use of social media and targeted advertising to communicate the RRP's objectives and progress.

²¹ Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu České republiky 2022, *Národní komunikační strategie pro Národní plán obnovy na období 2021–2026*, Verze 1.0, účinnost od 11 May. Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.cz/ke-stazeni>; Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu České republiky 2022, *Metodický pokyn pro publicitu a komunikaci pro Národní plán obnovy na období 2021–2026* Verze 2.0, účinnost od 11 May. Available at: <https://www.planobnovy.cz/ke-stazeni>;

- Information Dissemination: Sharing information about successful projects and activities, along with printed materials and regular updates.
- Engagement Activities: Organizing regional and online meetings, creating content for news media, and producing promotional videos.

An annual communication plan details the specific activities, monitoring progress, and timelines. The strategy's primary focus is on informing the general and expert public across Czechia about the RRP's goals and achievements. It involves various communication channels like a website, social media, print and radio media, and a comprehensive media campaign. This multi-channel approach aims to effectively communicate the RRP's impact and the EU's role in Czechia's recovery and development.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade coordinates these efforts, ensuring compliance with EU publicity rules. A communication officer is designated for coordinating informational and communication activities related to the RRF. This coordination is detailed in the Methodological Guideline for Publicity and Communication for the National Recovery Plan for the period 2021–2026. The responsibilities associated with the person responsible for communication activities at component owners are defined in the same Methodological Guideline. There are meetings of the working group for RRP publicity (at least once a year), convened and led by communication officer, to discuss these responsibilities and coordination.

While the role of a designated communication officer is vital, the scale and complexity of the RRP under the RRF would be better served by a dedicated communication team. This approach enhances capability in communication efforts, ensuring that the demands of communicating about the RRP are met effectively. Thus, there are such communication channels about Czechia RRP as a [central website for RRF presentation](#), pages on [Facebook](#) (created June, 2023; with almost 250 followers) and [LinkedIn](#) (with almost 400 followers), and a list of 6 RRP promo-videos on the [official YouTube channel of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic](#). If we compare communication channels metrics with the Slovak RRP's [Facebook](#) (created June, 2021; with more than 6300 followers) and [Instagram](#) (with almost 2400 followers), it becomes evident that the Czech RRP's digital presence, though significant, lags behind that of the Slovak RRP in terms of follower count and audience engagement. This discrepancy highlights the potential for growth and improvement in Czechia's RRP communication strategy.

The central website for Czechia's RRP provides a general overview of the announced calls, featuring links to the pages of the responsible institutions, although these linked pages exhibit varied formats and lack a standardized presentation of call details. Additionally, the site offers an overview of the RRP's fulfilment, including generalized information about the

milestones achieved. Based on the analysis of Czechia’s RRP communication channels and their metrics, as well as the official websites of other Member States’ RRP, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of a central recovery plan website:

- Develop a *National Scoreboard* to track and display the progress of various initiatives under the RRP. This should include key metrics such as milestones achieved, funds allocated and disbursed, and the status of ongoing projects. This will provide a clear, up-to-date overview of the RRP’s progress and facilitate public trust and engagement. Take, for instance, the monitoring tab on the “Recuperar Portugal” webpage²². This page effectively showcases both the Execution of Milestones and Goals, and the Financial Implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Its comprehensive design makes it an excellent prototype for a national scoreboard that fulfils all the necessary criteria.
- Create an *Interactive Investment Map* to visually represent the geographic distribution of investments across the country, detailing project types, scopes, and statuses with traffic lights. The map’s interactive features should allow users to easily access tailored information, aiding in the transparency of RRP implementation and serving as a valuable resource for businesses and stakeholders. As an example, the Ukrainian digital solution – DREAM²³, could be used, as an e-platform meets all these requirements.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UKRAINE

- In Czechia a fully functional institutional recovery architecture has been created, the necessary and possible tools for involving stakeholders have been applied, and communication means are sufficiently used to inform the public about the progress and results in RRP implementing. Accordingly, the conclusions will be based on what could be done better, drawing from the practices in the Czech Republic and other EU Member states.
- Placing a *central coordinator* at the level of a line ministry is relatively less effective from the point of view on political support of the inter-ministerial coordination than situating it in a Government Office. If the decision is to establish a coordinator within a line ministry, prioritizing the Ministry Finance is advisable due to its control over public finances, that gives it a special power in the inter-ministerial

²² Monitoring. Recuperar Portugal, 2023. Available at: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/>

²³ Digital Restoration EcoSystem for Accountable Management, 2023. Available at: <https://dream.gov.ua>

coordination. A central coordinator could be also an independent special public service with the data collection, monitoring and reporting functions, as well as methodical support, but under the Office of Government or the Ministry of Finance.

- The organizational structure is crucial for managing the implementation of the RRP. Equally important is the *legal definition of the recovery and resilience mechanism*, which should include a clear distribution of powers among the public authorities involved in RRP implementation. There should be a specific law that defines in detail the institutional recovery architecture, especially if the approved RRP includes only its brief overview. It is recommended that Ukraine establish a coordinating authority under the Office of the Prime Minister and develop a mechanism for recovery and resilience.
- The internal ministry document circulation system is not designed for tracking the progress in the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plan, as well as for submitting necessary information by implementing bodies or final beneficiaries. The use of an *information system for RRP implementation* (i.e., a special IT platform, aligned with FENIX²⁴) will also allow for the identification of deviations from the planned schedule of reforms and investments implementation and will enhance the efficiency of data collection from implementing bodies and final beneficiaries. This recommendation applies to both the Czech Republic and Ukraine.
- The implementation of the RRP and other strategically significant national programs should enhance the potential for interaction among national authorities, businesses, and civil society. In the context of *involving stakeholders in strategic planning*, it is advisable to ensure open access to the approved procedure for developing the RRP. This should include the form for requesting participation in the development of the RRP, a list of the developers and involved experts, mechanisms for feedback, and the schedule for presenting interim results, etc.
- Czechia's RRP demonstrates a structured *approach to communication*, coordinated by the Ministry of Industry and Trade with a designated communication officer. However, the current communication strategy, primarily centered on a central website and a modest social media presence, reveals areas for improvement, particularly in enhancing public engagement and information accessibility. The Czech RRP's digital footprint, while noteworthy, is outpaced by counterparts like

²⁴ About FENIX Network. European Federated Network of Information eXchange in LogistiX, 2023. Available at: <https://fenix-network.eu/about/>

the Slovak RRP, indicating a need for more dynamic and inclusive communication practices.

- For Ukraine, drawing lessons from Czechia’s experience, a recommendation would be to establish a robust and *interactive communication framework for its RRP*. This could involve the creation of a dedicated communication team, going beyond a single officer, to manage the diverse aspects of RRP communication effectively. Emphasis should be placed on developing a user-friendly central website with comprehensive and accessible information about the RRP’s progress, like the proposed National Scoreboard. Digitalization of the recovery plan implementation, at least for a portion of the investments, allows all interested stakeholders, foreign partners, and society to monitor progress in real-time.
- In this study, while the primary focus was not on absorption capacity, the insights gleaned from the interviews conducted reveal a critical element for the effective implementation of the Recovery Plan: *the vital role of human resources*. The efficient execution of specific projects necessitates a robust framework comprising project offices strategically networked, enough skilled project managers, and a cadre of specialized professionals such as architects, engineers, and designers, all working cohesively on-site.

REFERENCES

1. Bittner, J. 2022, 'National Recovery and Resilience Plan: Czechia', in *The NextGeneration EU in Action: Impact on Social and Labour Policies*, Italian Labour Law e-Journal, Special Issue 1, Vol. 15, pp. 1-13, DOI: 10.6092/issn.1561-8048/15672.
2. Brussels, 24.5.2023, SWD (2023) 603 final, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, 2023 Country Report – Czechia. Accompanying the document, Recommendation for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the 2023 National Reform Programme of Czechia and delivering a Council opinion on the 2023 Convergence Programme of Czechia {COM (2023) 603 final}. Available at: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/CZ_SWD_2023_603_en.pdf
3. Carron, G., Mahshi, K., De Grauwe, A. & Gay, D. 2010, *Strategic Planning: Techniques and Methods*, Education Sector Planning Working Papers, no. 003, UNESCO, pp. 46.
4. Cecchi, M. 2023, 'A Comparative Analysis of the European Recovery and Resilience Facility and Cohesion Policy: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward', *ASTRID RASSEGNA*, no. 16. Available at: <https://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/8a4f/8a4f9b1bfb57ae3b09d8310823c35795.pdf>
5. Czech Republic 2021, *The Law on the mechanism to support recovery and resilience and on the amendment of some laws*, 368/2021 Coll., temporary version effective from 1 August 2023. Available at: https://www.slov-lex.sk/static/pdf/2021/368/ZZ_2021_368_20230801.pdf
6. ECOFIN 2021, *The National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0."*, 13 July, pp. 660-670. Available at: https://greece20.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NRRP_Greece_2_o_English.pdf.
7. España Puede, 2021. *Plan de recuperación, transformación y resiliencia*. 343 p. Available at: https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/temas/fondos-recuperacion/Documents/160621-Plan_Recuperacion_Transformacion_Resiliencia.pdf
8. European Commission 2021, *Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD(2021) 12 final, Part 1/2, Brussels, 22 January, Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/document_travail_service_part1_v2_en.pdf
9. European Commission 2021, *Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans*, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 12 final, Part 2/2, Brussels, 22 January. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/document_travail_service_part2_v3_en.pdf
10. European Commission 2022, *Recovery and Resilience Facility. Operational Arrangements between the European Commission and the Czech*, 4 July. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/countersigned_cz_rff_oa_en.pdf
11. European Commission 2023, *2023 Country report - Czechia*, SWD (2023) 603 final, Commission Staff Working Document, Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the 2023 National Reform Programme of Czechia and delivering a Council opinion on the 2023 Convergence Programme of Czechia, {COM (2023) 603 final}, Brussels, 24 May. pp. 11-12.
12. European Commission 2023, *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Ukraine Facility*, COM (2023) 338 final, 2023/0200 (COD), Brussels, 20 June. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-06/COM_2023_338_1_EN_ACT_part1_v6.pdf.
13. European Court of Auditors 2023, *EU financing through cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility: A comparative analysis*. Available at: https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/RW23_01/RW_RFF_and_Cohesion_funds_EN.pdf

14. European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2021, *Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021*, Official Journal of the European Union. Available at: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/241/oj>.
15. Guasti, P., Mansfeldova, Z., Myant, M., & Bonker, F. (2022). *Czechia Report. Sustainable Governance Indicators*, Bertelsmann Stiftung: Gütersloh. Available at: https://www.sgi-network.org/docs/2022/country/SGI2022_Czechia.pdf
16. Italia Domani – The National Recovery and Resilience Plan for Italy, 2021, 13 July, pp. 239-245. Available at: <https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/sogei-ng/it/strumenti/documenti/archivio-documenti/piano-nazionale-di-ripresa-e-resilienza.html>
17. Italia domani, 2021. *Piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza*. 273 p. Available at: <https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/sogei-ng/it/en/strumenti/documenti.html>
18. Leino-Sandberg, P. 2023, 'Recovery and Resilience Facility two years after – quo vadis EU money?', *Verfassungsblog*, 28 September. Available at: <https://verfassungsblog.de/recovery-and-resilience-facility-two-years-after-quo-vadis-eu-money/>.
19. Liliyanova, V. 2023, 'Governance and oversight of the Recovery and Resilience Facility', EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, NGEU Monitoring Service, Members' Research Service, PE 747.883, May. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747883/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747883_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/747883/EPRS_BRI(2023)747883_EN.pdf).
20. Maksak, H. 2023, 'V4 in challenging times of war: how to preserve assistance to Ukraine', *Globsec*, 9 February. Available at: <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/v4-challenging-times-war-how-preserve-assistance-ukraine>.
21. Ministério do Planeamento. 2021. *Recuperar Portugal, Construindo o Futuro - Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência*. 22 April. Available at: <https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PRR.pdf>.
22. Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu 2021, *Národní plán obnovy: Plán pro oživení a odolnost České republiky*, Konsolidované znění po konzultacích s Evropskou komisí, September, Praha. Available at: www.planobnovy.cz.
23. Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic 2021, *The European Commission Has Approved the Czech National Recovery Plan*. Available at: <https://www.mpo.cz/en/guidepost/for-the-media/press-releases/the-european-commission-has-approved-the-czech-national-recovery-plan-262836/>.
24. Nemecek, D. 2020, 'Czech National Recovery Plan: A Missed Chance for Change?', *International Sustainable Finance Centre*, December. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f7709cd633d6220bbe2709/t/5fd21c56ebc7ce75e8ba03cd/1607605578392/ISFC+CZ+National+Recovery+Plan+Report>.
25. OECD (2022), "Towards good practice principles for government transparency in the use of recovery funds", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 24, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/odof2c90-en>.
26. Pape, M. 2023, *Czechia's National Recovery and Resilience Plan. BRIEFING Next Generation EU (NGEU) delivery – How are the Member States doing?*, EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, Next Generation EU Monitoring Service, Members' Research Service, PE 729.311, March.
27. *Recovery and resilience facility financing agreement between the Commission and the Czech Republic*, Ares (2021) 5793728, 22 September 2021. Available at: <https://www.mpo.cz/assets/cz/podnikani/2021/11/RECOVERY-AND-RESILIENCE-FACILITY-FINANCING-AGREEMENT-between-the-Commission-and-the-Czech-Republic.pdf>

28. Serowaniec, M. & Przychodzki, M. 2023, 'The Introduction of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans in the Light of the Visegrád Group Countries' Experience', *Prawo i Więź*, no. 1 (44), spring, pp. 49-58, DOI: 10.36128/priv.vi44.390.
29. Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2021, *Nacionalni plan oporavka i otpornosti 2021-2026, srpanj*, 2021, 1266 p. Available at: <https://planoporavka.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Plan%20oporavka%20i%20otpornosti,%20srpanj%202021..pdf>.
30. Zeitlin, J., Bokhorst, D., & Eihmanis, E. (June 2023). *Governing the RRF: Drafting, Implementing, and Monitoring National Recovery and Resilience Plans as an Interactive Multilevel Process Policy Study*. 90 p. Available at <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Governance-RRF.pdf>

About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making. We are the recipient of institutional funding from the European Commission under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



• **Visegrad Fund**