

Land consolidation in the Czech Republic and support from EU Funds in 2007-13

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The basic European fund for the drawing down of support in the land consolidation area is – in the Czech Republic, as well – the **European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development**, which directly fulfils three goals of the EU Common Agricultural Policy. Towards the realization of these aims, a basic legislative document has been formulated, which is **Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005, on support for rural development from the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)**.

The Czech Republic's National Strategic Rural Development Plan for the period 2007-2013 (NSPRV) issued from the EU main strategic priorities for 2007-2013. The Czech Republic National Strategic Rural Development Plan ensures connections between the general goals of European rural area development (stated by Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005) and the Czech Republic's rural development aims, complying with European strategic directions and three strategic developmental axes (competitiveness; protection of nature, the environment and the landscape; and development and diversification of rural life). The National Strategic Rural Development Plan also ensures cooperation and coordination with other Czech Republic and European Union policy tools (structural policy, policy of cohesiveness, protection of the environment and natural resources, and fisheries policy) with the aim of preventing an overlapping of utilization of these tools and enhancing their effectiveness.

The Czech Republic's National Strategic Rural Development Plan shall be implemented in the period 2007 – 2013 through **the Czech Republic's Rural Development Programme for the period 2007 - 2013 (PRV)**. The Czech Republic's Rural Development Programme for the period 2007 – 2013 issues from the National Strategic Rural Development Plan and has been processed in compliance with Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 and implementation rules of the given standard. The Rural Development Programme specifies strategies in particular axes set by the National Strategic Rural Development Plan up to implementation level and thus ensures its effective implementation.

EAFRD and land consolidation

Land consolidation is one of the areas in which the support from the EAFRD shall be directed. Their inclusion in the Rural Development Programme for the period 2007 – 2013 is well-founded, based on these documents and conclusions:

1. Land consolidation is incorporated as a measure for support in Article 30 "The infrastructure related to the agriculture and forestry development and adaptation" *Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005*: "The support according to Article 20 letter b) point v) can be related particularly to operations relating to access to agriculture and forest land, **land consolidation and improvement**, energy supplies and water management."

2. In 2005 and early 2006, a number of conferences and discussion seminars took place in the Czech Republic's districts and regions, the aim of which was to familiarize the agricultural public with the priorities of the common EU agriculture policy and rural development. From

each conference or seminar conclusions have been made as to which areas of the support and measures incorporated in Regulation No. 1698/2005 are preferred by participants. In Axis I, the following measures were the most preferred:

- enterprise modernization and infrastructure for agriculture
- comprehensive land consolidation.

3. The necessity to speed land consolidation in the Czech Republic is also emphasised in the *Czech Republic's National Strategic Rural Development Plan for the period 2007-2013*:

Chapter 1: Analysis of the initial state of the economic, environmental and social situation in the Czech Republic's rural areas and determination of indicators, SWOT analysis – weaknesses:

- unclear ownership rights to the land;
- large share of land endangered by soil erosion and degradation;
- decreased water retention in soil and landscape, insufficient preventive flood control measures;
- low ecological stability of the landscape.

SWOT analysis – endangering:

- slow procedure of comprehensive land consolidation.

Chapter 2: General strategies, transfer of Community interests and national priorities, subchapter 2.4. Projection of Community's strategic directions for rural development – land consolidation is incorporated among key actions.

Chapter 3: Strategy according to axes, quantified aims and indicators, Axis I – “from analyses the necessity issues of securing and supporting the land consolidation”.

4. Absorption capacity of the given measure.

In the SAPARD and OP Agriculture (programme document for the structural fund EAGGF) programmes, land consolidation authorities, as applicants the Land Consolidation measure, showed the ability to prepare a number of high quality projects.

- 2002 – 2004 Program SAPARD

Measure 1.4. Improvement and land consolidation

Submitted projects 46.5 mil. EUR

Adopted projects 25.1 mil. EUR

- 2004 – 2006 OP Agriculture

Sub-measure 2.1.1. Land consolidation

Submitted projects 67.6 mil. EUR

Implemented projects 53.5 mil. EUR

5. Facts stated in points 1 – 4 were reflected during the preparation and creation of *the Czech Republic's Rural Development Programme for the period 2007 - 2013*. Land consolidation is incorporated in the Axis I., priority I.1. Modernisation, innovation and quality, measure I.1.4. Land consolidation.

The support in this measure can be provided for the following types of projects:

The implementation of plans of common facilities on the basis of an approved proposal for land consolidation

- implementation of the measure for making lands accessible;
- implementation of erosion control measures for land resource conservation;
- implementation of water management measures serving for harmless drainage of surface water and territorial protection against floods;
- implementation of a measure for landscape conservation and landscape planning and increasing of the ecological stability of the landscape.

Geodetic projects

- surveying of the territory and all topographical elements and other geodetic works carried out with the purpose of processing the land consolidation design,
- staking out newly designed plots on the basis of land consolidation design,
- staking out plots on the basis of Article 21a of Act No. 229/1991 Coll., on the Regulation of Ownership Rights to the Land and other Agricultural Property

Land consolidation authorities shall be the recipient of support. Acceptable expenses for which the support shall be provided are from 10 thousand EUR to 1.6 million EUR per each particular project. The maximum amount of support per one support recipient (i.e. land authority) shall be 6 million EUR in the period 2007 - 2013.

For measure I.1.4., 28.3 million EUR is annually set aside.

Operational Programme (OP) Environment

The OP Environment is one of the programme documents for drawing subsidies from the European Union's structural funds. It was carried out by the Ministry of the Environment; this document develops the "Environmental quality protection and improvement" priority of the Czech Republic's National Strategic Rural Development Plan for the period 2007-2013. This plan is divided into 9 priority axes, whereby, from the point of view of land consolidation, Axis 6 is particularly significant.

Priority Axis 6 Nature and Landscape State Improvement

6.3. Regeneration of Landscape Structures – the subject of support is the implementation of measures designed in the framework of comprehensive land consolidation and aimed at greenery planting in the landscape and soil conservation, preparation and implementation of elements of territorial systems of ecological stability, landscape element establishment and regeneration (planting and regeneration of hedgerow, alley, solitary trees, windbreak, etc.), bank vegetation and historical landscape structures (including field roads and tree treatment in significant alleys).

6.4. Landscape Water Regime Optimisation – an implementation of measures beneficial from the point of view of landscape and ecosystem diversity leading to increasing the landscape retention capacity, natural runoff proportion protection, and restoration and elimination of hazardous situation occurrence, particularly floods; measures for water and wind erosion control and elimination of adverse impacts of surface water runoff (hedgerow, infiltration belt and drainage channels or erosion control ditch establishment and regeneration).