

COMPARISON OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT 2021-2027 UNDER COHESION POLICY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND AUSTRIA

Olga NEBESKA

Prague University of Economics and Business, Czech Republic

olga.nebeska@vse.cz

Abstract

In the 2021-2027 programming period, the Cohesion Policy remains the main source of financial support in the area of employment and the labour market. On the cases of Austria and the Czech Republic, problem areas are analysed and their projection into the setting of goals financed from the ESF+ and the JTF in the field of employment. Based on established and comparable parameters, a number of similarities in strategic approach were identified, despite the fact that each of the analysed countries is in a different category as a developed region and have completely different funding from Cohesion Policy. Both countries face similar difficulties in the labour market, which are reflected in the setting of specific objectives, with an emphasis on disadvantaged groups, which differ slightly between the two countries. Both of the countries focus on improving access to the labour market for young people, people over 55, balancing work and personal life, healthy aging etc. On top of that AT places emphasis on the issue of women's employment and long-term unemployment, while CZ addresses the issue of low participation of certain groups of people in the labour market and modernization of the employment services.

Key words: Austria; Cohesion Policy; Czech Republic; employment; funding

JEL Classification: G32; J20; J68

I. INTRODUCTION

Employment policy is one of the key European policies. Although it was not present among the priorities from the beginning of the European integration, it found its place in the last decades of the 20th century, when the deepening of the globalization process, the pressure on competitiveness, the strengthening of the influence of new technologies and the related increase in requirements for the quality of the labour force together with the growth of unemployment and the aging of the European populations have shown that the competitiveness of the European economy cannot be solved in isolation from social issues (Palíšková, 2014).

Fundamental to the financial support of the European Union (EU) are the resources of the Cohesion Policy, which together with other initiatives (e.g. Youth Employment Initiative¹) create a framework for generating more and better jobs, as well as improving the working environment and its regulation. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe and other countries of the world with unprecedented force, with consequences leading to the most serious crisis since the Great Depression and World War II (Roloff, 2020), the European Union adopted a number of measures to help the economies and labour markets of its member states. The European Commission in its Communication Nr 442 of 2020 proposed to mobilize investment to bring about an even and fair recovery to avoid a "devastating, deep and prolonged recession".

A new instrument to support the recovery "Next Generation EU" has been introduced. At the same time the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027 has been strengthened (European Commission, 2020). For the years 2021-2023, the European Commission has enabled Member States to increase their resources in the European Social Fund Plus and to the Youth Employment Initiative with additional funds under the REACT-EU instrument². This activity was part of the new tool "Next Generation EU".

Employment support remains among the priorities financed from Cohesion Policy funds for more and less developed EU countries. In particular, the ESF+ remains an instrument that effectively supports the creation of

¹ Youth Employment Initiative belongs to the financial resources to support young people living in regions where youth unemployment is higher than 25 %. In programming period 2021-2027 is part of the European Social Fund Plus package.

² REACT-EU stands for a tool „Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and Territories of Europe“, which is not a new funding source but an additional allocation of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). It was possible to use it until the end of 2023, in a similar way as the original allocations.

new or preservation of existing jobs (compare e.g. Morosan, 2020). For the purpose of comparison, two countries were selected, representing “old” and “new” member states of a similar size of population that joined the EU in different waves of EU enlargement. Austria joined the EU in 1995, the Czech Republic as part of the largest EU enlargement in 2004. The goal of the contribution is to compare selected parameters for both countries and to prove whether they show the same or rather different elements in this area of Cohesion Policy.

II. RECENT RELEVANT RESEARCH

The topic of employment appears for the first time in European Union documents in the Treaty of Rome (1957), where in article 123 an expression of intention to create a European Social Fund “*in order to increase the employment opportunities for workers in the common market to improve and thus contribute to raising the standard of living*” can be found (Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, 1957). Harmonization in the social field was a very sensitive topic from the beginning, as there was no agreement between the states on a common type of social policy (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2013).

The issue of employment in the political discussions of the European economic community begins to assert itself more strongly in the 1970s. Oil crisis in the mid-1970s created economic problems across Europe. In 1975 European Regional Development Fund was established to help reducing disparities among European regions, to deliver financial support to poor regions to improve their infrastructure, create jobs and bring investments and member states – in the area of employment issues - were invited to contribute to the fulfilment of the Community’s objectives through their employment policies (Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, 2007). As Bekker et al. (2008) states, it was not easy for the EU in the era of globalization and population aging to offer a “European social model” and to stabilize an economically and socially strong Europe.

By the 1970s, a number of documents were adopted, based - especially initially - on documents adopted by international organizations (International Labour Organization, United Nations, etc.), which set up new principles aimed at improving working conditions, creating more and better jobs, work safety and working environment.

The first European Employment Strategy was adopted at an extraordinary summit in Luxembourg in 1997. Built on four pillars, social and economic objectives were now more integrated (European Council, 1997). Employment policy and social policy have thus become equal to economic policies (Goetchy, 2007). In both the Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 Strategy, increasing employment was included among the main goals. In the case of none of these strategies, the set goals - and not only in the area of employment - were not achieved, however the reasons may have been different. The fulfilment of the goals of the Lisbon Strategy was influenced by the deterioration of the conditions of the world economy after the economic crisis, but also by its internal setting, when in reality the goals often went against each other (European Commission, 2004). Even the Europe 2020 Strategy was not much more successful. At the EU level, no country has achieved the set targets; Denmark, Sweden, Austria, and Finland came the closest (Walesiak, Dehnel & Obrebalski, 2021). Kasprzyk & Wojnar (2021) confirm that significant differences between the highly developed western states and the south of Europe, which was fundamentally weakened by the economic crisis and subsequent recession, are still perceptible.

The European Green Deal, as a new strategy for the current decade, focuses on transforming the European economy into a climate-neutral economy. It is conceived differently than the previous strategies. We may encounter views that even this strategy may not achieve its goals, as it is set up in such a way that it will not lead to a “*just transition*” (Ponthieu et al., 2023). The topic of employment appears in particular in the context of addressing the impact of the transformation of economies to ecologically friendly models and in terms of the effects of digitization on the labour market (Gerger & Gerger, 2022).

At the same time, just a few weeks before the European Green Deal was submitted, the European Commission under the ending leadership of Jean-Claude Juncker presented the European Pillar of Social Rights, containing 20 key principles. The 60th anniversary of the founding of the European Union was an opportunity to redefine the European social model (Dumitrescu, 2020). To strengthen it, the European Commission under President Ursula von der Leyen in January 2020 informed about preparation of an Action Plan. Consultations were launched and the implementing Action Plan was adopted in March 2021 (Lange et al., 2022). According to Karlson and Wennerberg (2018) “*many of the principles and rights regulated under the social pillar have not yet materialized as mandatory rules at EU level*”. The authors believe that although the short-term effect will be minimal, positive effects can be expected in the long term, provided, however, that new EU legislation for the labour market will be drawn up, which would replace the policies of the Member States with the objectives of the Union. The European Pillar of Social Rights is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, even if it will not solve the social problems that Europe has. At a minimum, “*it will help identify the need for reforms in important areas*”, member States will have to find a solution independently (Moralyska & Tola, 2018).

III. EU FINANCING OF EMPLOYMENT UNDER COHESION POLICY IN 2021-2027 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

The main source of funding for social policy and employment policy is the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). The ESF+ supports in 2021-2027 two key objectives: (a) implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, employment, education, structural reforms related to education, social and employment policies, and (b) equal opportunities in access to the labour market, equal working conditions, social protection, and inclusion. Recovery from the covid pandemic belongs to priority areas, too (Regulation, 2021b). At the same time, support for reducing disparities among Member States and their regions is also maintained.

A new element in this programming period is the combination of four instruments that operated separately in the previous programming period. Three other instruments operate under the ESF+ umbrella, namely Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). The ESF+ budget for 2021-2027 is almost € 88 billion (in 2018 prices), most are administered in shared management between the European Commission and Member States. Only a part of € 626 million (in 2018 prices) is managed by the European Commission itself (in direct or indirect management) within EaSI (Regulation, 2021b). The area of social policy and employment is reflected in Political Objective 4 “Social Europe”, which is financed primarily from the ESF+ and complementarily from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in volume in total € 112 billion. ERDF support is used synergistically to soft, non-investment activities supported by the ESF+ (Regulation, 2021a). This Policy Objective works with the largest allocation. The second largest Political Objective - in terms of the volume of the allocated amount - Greener Europe - slightly exceeds the € 93 billion (European Commission, 2024).

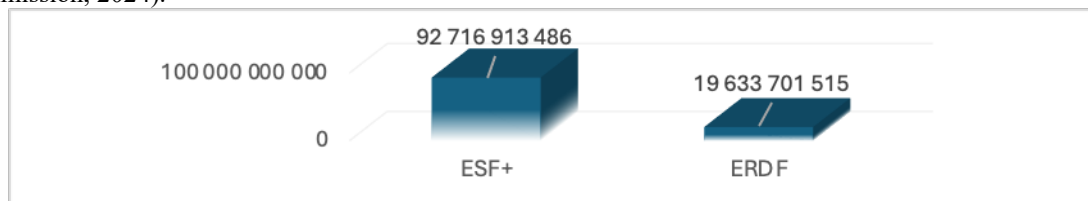


Figure 1: Allocation of Policy Objective 4 „Social Europe” in 2021-2027, by funds (EU share, in €)

Source: European Commission (2024), own processing

The area of the labour market is partly reflected also in the Political Objective 8 "Just Transition Fund" (JTF), which supports the areas most affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy. It also includes support for mitigating the socio-economic impacts of this transformation, which is also reflected in the labour market. Total allocation for this objective is € 19,2 billion (European Commission, 2024). As a complementary tool to Cohesion Policy support and in response to the covid pandemic, the EU created new instrument for mitigating unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE). The tool should help to fight the negative economic and social consequences of the covid pandemic on the territory of the EU, resp. Member States. It could provide financial assistance up to € 100 billion in the form of loans granted on favourable terms from the EU to affected Member States to address sudden increases in public expenditure for the preservation of employment (Council Regulation, 2020).

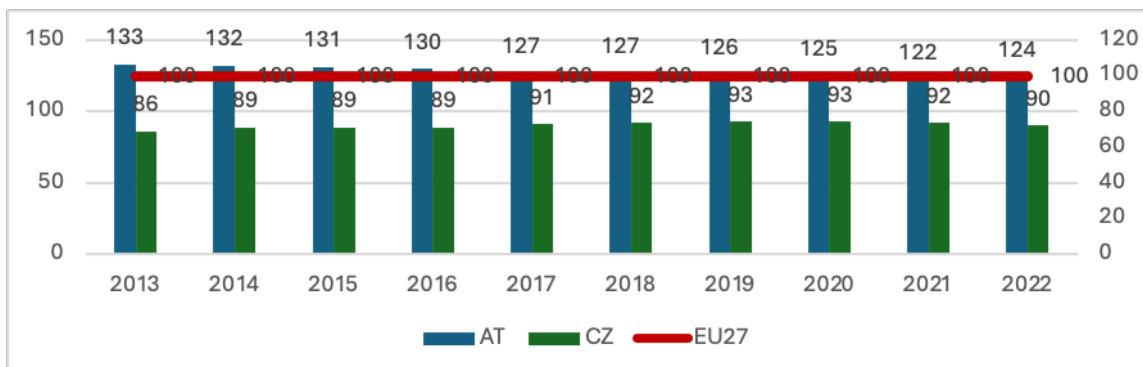


Figure 2: GDP per capita in Austria and the Czech Republic compared to the EU27 average in 2013-2022 (in PPS)

Source: Eurostat (2023b), own processing

For the programming period 2021-2027, three categories of regions are supported, measured according to

the level of maturity according to GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (PPS) relative to the EU27 average³.

IV. THE CASE OF AUSTRIA

Austria joined the EU in 1995. According to National Statistical Institute (2023) the size of the Austrian population reached at the beginning of 2023 almost 9,2 million inhabitants. In the period 2021-2027, Austria uses three basic funds within the Cohesion Policy: ERDF, ESF+ and JTF. Austria no longer meets the eligibility rules for drawing from the Cohesion Fund. Its allocation for the current programming period is € 1,1 billion (€ 521, 4 mil. of ERDF, € 409,7 mil. of ESF+ and € 135,8 mil. of JTF).

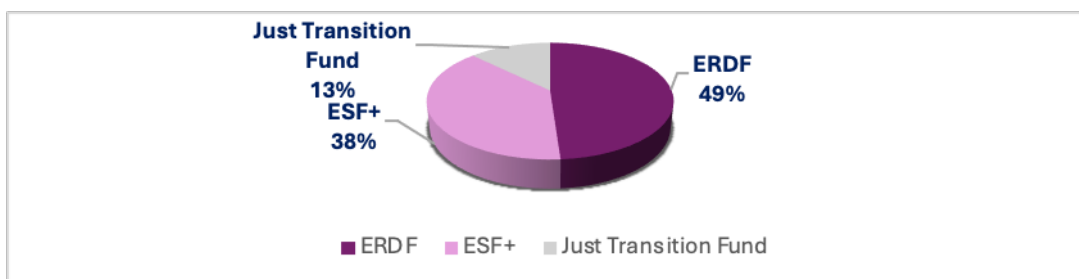


Figure 3: Allocation for Austria in 2021-2027 by fund (EU share, in €)

Source: European Commission (2024), own processing

When developing the ESF+ implementing strategy, Austria focuses primarily on fulfilling the European Pillar of Social Rights and its approach is based especially on the National Reform Program, Country Specific Recommendations of the Council, and national strategies. It focuses on the fight against unemployment and the risk of poverty, as well as on strengthening employment and at the same time on the fight against the consequences of current crises (e.g. regarding health, the movement of refugees, the climate etc.). For a long time, Austria has been in the middle zone in terms of the unemployment rate within the EU. The COVID-19 pandemic brought a sharp increase to the Austrian labour market, similarly to other European countries. A number of successful measures have been taken to reduce unemployment and return it to pre-covid pandemic levels. Austria introduced short-time work scheme and it is estimated that it has protected roughly 4 % of the labour force. Increasing productivity and resource productivity, as well as increasing skills and the supply of labour according to demand, remains a challenge (European Commission, 2022). There continues to be a significant increase in the number of long-term unemployed, which mainly affects the elderly and people with health limitations. A risk of poverty and exclusion has been identified for young people as a result of more difficult access to the labour market, particularly as an impact of increased competition in the apprenticeship market. The share of the long-term unemployed in the total number of unemployed was almost 40% in 2021 (AMS Österreich, 2021).

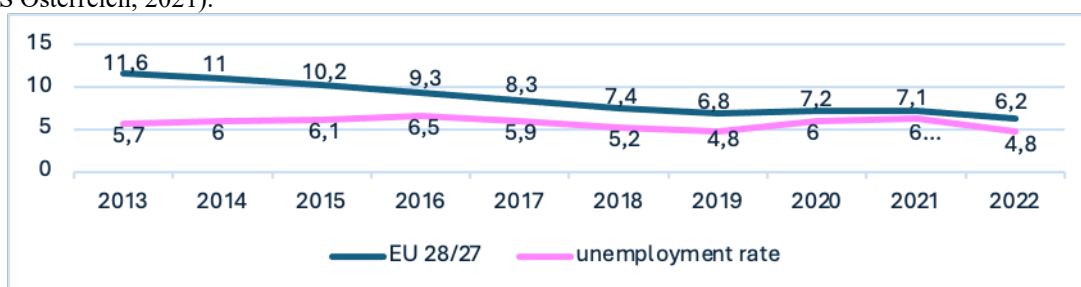


Figure 4: The development of unemployment in Austria in 2013 – 2022 compared to the EU27/28 average (in %)

Source: Eurostat (2023c), own processing

The Partnership Agreement mentions as problematic the high proportion of women employed part-time as well as the difficult childcare situation, especially in rural areas. The low employment rate of people 55+ and their adaptation to the digitizing labour market also represents a challenge. Conditions should be created to allow

³ Less developed regions have a GDP per inhabitant less than 75 % of the EU27 average; transition regions have a GDP between 75 % and 100 % of the EU27 average and developed (or the term “more developed” might be used) have a GDP per capita above 100 % EU27 average.

to remain in employment as long as possible. Additional measures for active and healthy aging should also be financed from the ESF+. The risk of social exclusion not only for young people, but also for other groups (people with health limitations, single-parent households, economically inactive people, etc.) remains high, although the overall rate of social exclusion is below the EU average. Nevertheless, this risk affects in Austria approximately 1,5 million people. Activities financed by Cohesion Policy should support measures aimed at restoring the employability of these persons if they are able to do so (ÖROK, 2022). Although Austria is one of the EU countries with a relatively high female employment rate (71,3 % in 2021; EU-28 average 67,7 %), however, almost half of it are part-time based (49,9 %) (Eurostat, 2023a).

Austria has created two programs for the area of social affairs and employment. Program “Employment Austria & JTF 2021-2027” is financed from ESF+ and JTF and the Policy Objective 4 is fulfilled through it. The European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is implemented in its own program. Of the total allocation for Austria, 33 % of the available funds fall under Political Objective 4 (ESF+ source). Two categories of regions can be used for support: transitional and developed.

ESF+ Program Employment Austria & JTF 2021-2027

The „ESF+ Program Employment Austria & JTF 2021-2027” was prepared as a multi-fund. Measures to support employment and social innovation financed from the ESF+ make up the majority of the program and are divided into seven specific objectives. A separate specific objective financed by the JTF is aimed at (re)training and (further) education measures in certain regions that are particularly affected by the effects of the greening of the economy. The program operates with an allocation of € 512,2 mil. (€ 452,5 mil. of ESF+ and 59,7 mil. of JTF). Specific objectives related to employment:

1. promote balanced participation of women and men in the labour market, equal working conditions and better work-life balance, including through access to affordable childcare and care for dependents
2. supporting the adaptation of workers, companies, and entrepreneurs to changes, supporting active and healthy aging and supporting a healthy and well-adapted work environment that combats health risks
3. support of lifelong learning, in particular flexible opportunities for qualification improvement and retraining for all, with regard to business and digital skills, better anticipation of changes and new skill requirements based on the needs of the labour market, facilitation of career transitions and support of professional mobility
4. promoting active inclusion to improve equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation and increase employability, especially of disadvantaged groups
5. enable regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition to the Union's energy and climate targets by 2030 and the Union's transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050 based on the Paris Agreement.

The JTF finances an objective that will enable regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition to the Union's energy and climate goals by 2030 and the Union's transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050 based on the Paris Agreement. The transformation process has a direct impact on the labour market. It is estimated that out of 71 thousand 32% of people employed in industries subject to the transformation process will be affected by the transition. Employers will need to train their employees to change the skills and competencies required. For people with low qualifications, the worsening of the situation on the labour market is expected to worsen, especially for unskilled professions in production, warehouses, and transport. On the contrary, the need for highly qualified professional groups will grow, which will further exacerbate the existing shortage of qualified workers. It is desirable that the formation of the local labour market takes place quickly and in a socially acceptable manner, therefore it is necessary to support the changes from the JTF public funds. There were selected 12 regions, based on the territorial plan, eligible to use the JTF funds.

Table 1: Allocation on relevant objectives in ESF+ Program Employment Austria & JTF (EU share, in €)

Priority	Fund	Category of regions	EU share
1	ESF+	Developed regions	29 525 588
		Transition regions	465 552
2	ESF+	Developed regions	8 722 897
3	ESF+	Developed regions	105 831 488
		Transition regions	15 611 406
5	ESF+	Developed regions	79 205 195
		Transition regions	3 520 003
6	ESF+	Developed regions	13 870 990
Total			256 753 119
7	JTF		59 738 478
Total (incl. JTF)			316 491 597

Note: An indicative breakdown of the JTF allocation into sub-categories of interventions is not available, the amount includes complete resources for all supported activities under JTF. Source: ESF+ Program (2021), own processing

V. THE CASE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic is one of the countries that joined the European Union as part of its biggest enlargement in 2004. Its population reaches almost 10,9 million inhabitants (Czech Statistical Office, 2023). For the 2021-2027 programming period, the Czech Republic gained an allocation of the volume € 21 billion.

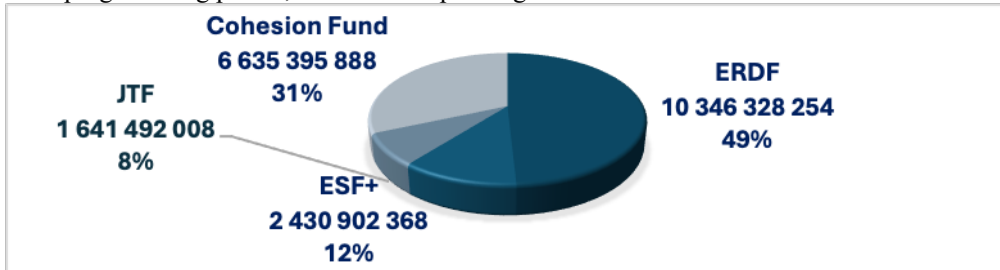
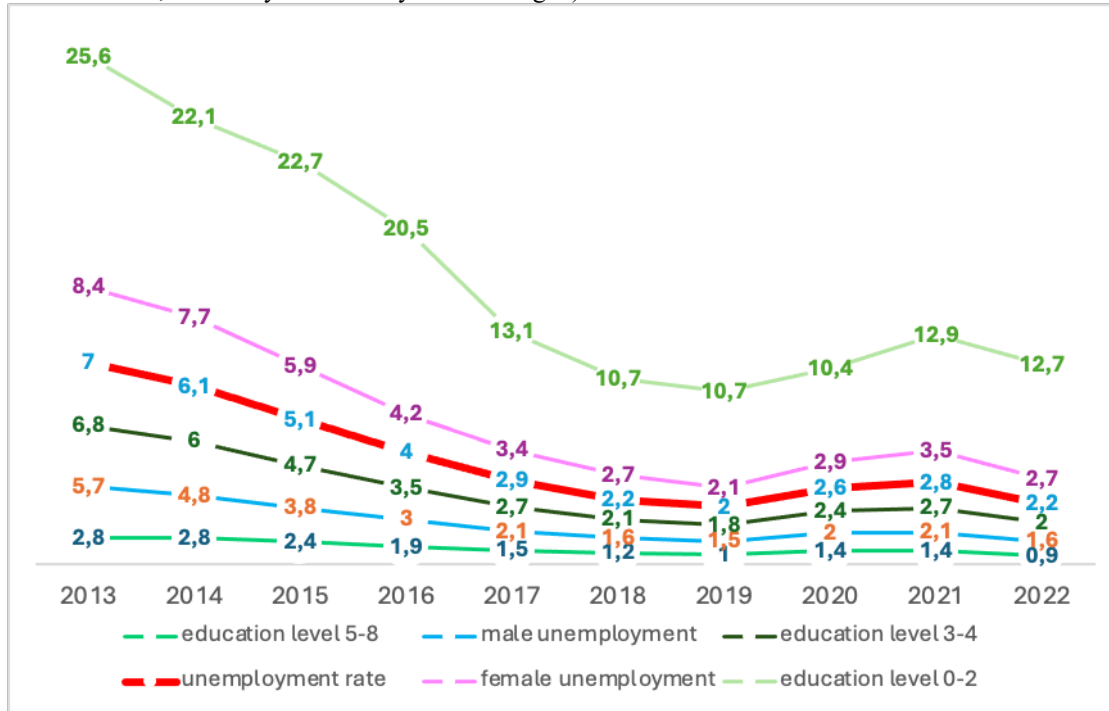


Figure 5: Split of allocation for the Czech Republic in 2021-2027, by fund (in €)

Source: European Commission (2024), own processing

The Czech Republic is one of the countries with the lowest unemployment rate. As it is stated in the Czech Partnership Agreement (Ministry of the Regional Development, 2022), however, there are still issues in the field of employment that need to be addressed. The country faces lower participation of certain groups of people with a certain type of disadvantage in the labour market (e.g. people with low education, women with small children, medically and socially disadvantaged).



Note: The education attainment is classified according to international standard classification of education: levels 0-2 (less than primary, primary, and lower secondary education), levels 3-4 (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education), levels 5-8 (tertiary education).

Figure 6: Unemployment rate in the Czech Republic by sex, age (15-74 years) and educational attainment in 2013-2022 (in %)

Source: Eurostat (2023c), own processing

Inequalities also persist between women and men in terms of income for comparable work. The employment rate of women is considerably lower than that of men (Ministry of the Regional Development, 2022). Support from EU funds is expected to contribute to improving access to employment and job placement for persons disadvantaged on the labour market, in the automated, digitized, and social economy, the development of social enterprises and social entrepreneurship. Flexible and alternative forms of work that will not lead to precarious and unstable position of workers will be introduced. The work process will be adapted to the elderly and employees. Efficiency and modernization of employment services will be increased. A comprehensive and individualized counselling system that responds to changes in the labour market will be created. In the area of gender inequalities, a balance between men and women in the labour market will be

promoted. Role of social dialog needs to be strengthened. Focus will be on reconciling work and personal life, including access to childcare and care for dependent persons.

The Czech Republic requested the transfer of 10 % of the ESF+ allocation to the Cohesion Fund (CF) precisely with justification that the situation on the labour market in the Czech Republic shows favourable results in the long term and social programs are mainly tackled from national resources (unemployment support, child allowances, protected jobs, etc.). On top of that, the Just Transition Program has allocated 18 % of its budget to social investment to increase the adaptability of the workforce in affected regions. The Policy Objective 4 is filled via three programs, one of them is focused purely on the social and employment issues: Employment+ Program.

Of the total allocation for the Czech Republic, 23,65 % of the available funds fall under Political Objective 4 from ESF+, ERDF and FS. All three categories of regions are represented: less developed, transitional, more developed. The Just Transition Fund finances the retention of employment in companies undergoing transformation and the transition to a new sector, increasing the quality of formal and informal education to increase job readiness forces for new jobs.

Employment + Program

The program operates with an allocation of nearly € 1,5 billion. Priority 1, which consists of four specific objectives, focuses on the area of employment. The target group is mainly people who accumulate more disadvantages on the labour market, such as people 55+, looking after a child, returning from maternity/parental leave, people with a low level of qualification, young people without praxis, long-term unemployed people, members of minorities.

Specific objectives related to employment:

1. better access to employment, especially for the young, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, support for self-employment and the social economy
2. equal working conditions, gender balanced, better work-life balance, affordable childcare, and dependent care
3. adaptability of employees, employers and entrepreneurs, active and healthy ageing, adaptable work environment with regard to health risks
4. modernization of labour market employment institutions and services, with the aim of ensuring timely and individual support, creating harmony between supply and demand on the labour market.

Table 2: Allocation on employment objectives (priority axis 1) in Employment + Program by category of regions

Priority axis 1 (EU share, in €)		
Category of regions	Co-financing	Allocation
Developed regions	40%	4 500 983
Transition regions	70%	338 042 574
Less developed regions	85%	377 004 207
Total		719 547 764

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2022), own processing

Part of the supported activities is linked to support from the separate Just Transition Program - support for access to employment in regions affected by restructuring as a result of the shutdown of the coal industry.

Just Transition Program

In the Czech Republic, three regions were chosen, which are expected to have the greatest impact of the transition to climate-neutral economies. These are the so-called coal regions, economically heavily dependent on fossil fuels and industry with a high emission load, which are also less developed regions. Coal regions account for more than 73% of employment in the territory (Ministry of Environment, 2022). All three regions also face a high percentage of long-term unemployed compared to other regions. The priorities are divided by region.

Table 3: Overview of Just Transition Program allocation and funds set aside to support the adaptation of workers and businesses (in €)

Priority	EU share	Adaptability intervention
2.1.1.	241 102 345	2 073 480
2.1.2.	608 271 279	52 189 675
2.1.3.	726 458 704	13 948 007
Total	1 575 832 328	68 211 162

Source: Ministry of Environment (2022), own processing

Indicatively, approximately 4 % of the program allocation is earmarked to support the adaptation of

workers, businesses, and entrepreneurs to changes.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The research has led to the conclusion that despite the different amount of support, both countries show many similarities in the approach to strategic planning of the use of the given support and it can be stated that they are also based on similar problematic areas that they need to address. The differences are rather in the partial targeting of the support. Both countries are comparable in population size. Even from the point of view of the labour market, they show many similar characteristics. The Czech Republic has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the entire EU, the unemployment rate in Austria is higher than in the Czech Republic, but still below the European Union average. European Cohesion Policy funds represent an opportunity to improve the situation in problematic areas. The Czech Republic is still among the countries that receive more significant support from Cohesion Policy, even though its level of development (measured by GDP per capita) is systematically increasing. Austria's GDP remained well above the European average in the observed decade, with the exception of the period of the covid pandemic. The total allocation for the 2021-2027 programming period, which the Czech Republic received, is many times higher than the total allocation of Austria (almost twenty times higher). The allocation to the ESF+ in favour of the Czech Republic is also significantly higher (almost six times higher), however, the amount of funds allocated from the ESF+ for activities related to employment policy is not so different if we consider the total allocation and the total allocation of the ESF+ (less than three times). A comparison of the JTF allocation cannot be made relevant, as there are no data available for Austria, how much is indicatively allocated to the transformation of the labour market in the regions supported in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Table 4: Summary and comparison of the relevant analysed data

Parameters	AT	CZ
Size of population (mil. inhabitants, 2023)	9,2	10,9
GDP per capita in PPS (2021)	122	92
Total allocation for country 2021-2027 (in bil. €)	1,1	21
ESF+ allocation (in €)	409 668 103	2 430 902 368
out of that to the relevant priorities (in €)	256 753 119	719 547 764
JTF allocation (in €)	59 738 478	1 575 832 328
out of that to the relevant priorities (in €)	N/A	68 211 162

Note: AT = Austria, CZ = Czech Republic
Source: own processing

The specific objectives of both countries are defined similarly and are aimed at improving access to the labour market for young people, people over 55, incl. improving their abilities in relation to the requirements of the modern labour market (digitalization, etc.). Both countries similarly include objectives aimed at balancing work and personal life, health, and healthy aging, however, the Czech Republic still perceives a need to invest in the modernization of labour market institutions and employment services. Austria places great emphasis on solving the issue of women's employment, or the type of their work involvement, and long-term unemployment. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, perceives the need to address the low participation of certain groups of people in the labour market (with lower education or otherwise disadvantaged). Support from the JTF is directed within the Czech Republic to three regions burdened by coal mining, the so-called coal regions. A separate program is created for this purpose. In the case of Austria, the support is included in the program financing ESF+ activities and will be divided into smaller units for approximately 12 regions.

An analysis of the basic strategic and legislative anchoring of the employment policy at the level of the European Union was carried out. The topic of employment is still present among the main priorities of European policies, although in recent years it is possible to perceive its slight marginalization at the expense of climate and environmental issues. A research of professional articles was carried out. It shows even certain doubts regarding the fulfilment of goals in the social area to which employment policy belongs. Financial resources within Cohesion Policy that primarily focus on financing needs affecting the labour market have been summarized. Even though Austria has less funds for relevant activities in the field of employment, the set objectives show significant similarities in the case of both countries. It can be expected that they will be supported more targeted or in a smaller volume. The size of the allocation and the JTF concept is apparently also the reason for one joint program for ESF+ JTF in the case of Austria and two separate programs in the case of the Czech Republic. In conclusion, we can summarize that both countries show many similarities, although the one is among the net payers and the other still among the net beneficiaries. It can be expected that the Czech Republic will follow a similar development in cohesion field to that experienced by Austria, if the trend of strengthening GDP continues.

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