Evaluation of the Funding Program

"Forced Labour and Forgotten Victims" (2018)

An external evaluation conducted by Mainlevel Consulting AG analyzed the success and impact of the funding program "Forced Labour and Forgotten Victims" and the therein-funded projects. The goal of the report was to offer a basis for future planning decisions through an independent assessment of the program.

A team of three independent experts conducted the evaluation, between April and November 2018. In this timeframe, a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data collection was completed.

Summary

Between 2014 and 2019, the funding program "Forced Labour and Forgotten Victims" at the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future" (EVZ) supported "projects that pursue a multi-perspectival approach and thereby contribute to the development of a common historical understanding in Europe."[1] An overall goal of the funding program is to anchor the memory of forced labourers and other victims of National Socialism in European memory culture.

The funded projects realized these goals in a collection of highly differentiated formats, including (online) exhibitions and movies, art installations and graphic novels, websites, exchange programs and meetup projects, as well as workshops and thematic city tours. Most of the projects occurred in Germany, but many were also set in other European countries, including Poland, the Ukraine, Belarus, Czech Republic, Russia, Slovakia, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, North Macedonia, Croatia, France, and Norway.

The goal of the evaluation was to assess the effects of the program thus far and offer a clear basis for future decisions, against the backdrop of the program-planning phase for the period after 2020. The evaluation focused itself on the assessment of funding area A: Funding of projects in memory of National Socialist forced labour and "forgotten" National Socialist victims. Conference grants and international forums funded through the program were not object of this evaluation.

Methodological Approach

As a foundation for the evaluation program coordinators provided questions for both the program- and project-level evaluation. These questions were grouped into seven content-oriented points:

- Themes, Formats and Executing Agency
- Target Groups
- Outcomes at project-level
- Impact
- Transnational and multi-perspectival elements
- Sustainability
- Coherence, complementarity, and coordination

Data compilation was conducted in four collection steps. Through a mixed-methods methodology, collected results could be confirmed more robustly. The following methods were used:

1. **Document analysis**: Reading, sifting through and analyzing of a variety of documents (e.g. applications, testing certificates, licence approvals and narrative reports for each concluded project; documents of juror meetings and the original call for proposals).
2. **Qualitative data collection**: 25 guiding interviews were conducted: 6 with program coordinators from the EVZ and 19 with project participants, members of executing organisations and cooperation partners taken from the case study.

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[1] See: https://www.stiftung-evz.de/eng/funding/critical-examination-of-history.html

3. **Online Survey**: An online survey was conducted with project managers and cooperation partners. 75 projects were contacted through 168 email addresses, 65 participating in the survey.
4. **Case Studies**: Four case studies allowed the closer examination of projects, executing agencies and cooperating agencies, realized through expanded interviews and a more expansive document analysis.

Results

Themes, Formats and Executing Agency

The majority of the 75 examined projects were successfully completed. The projects fulfilled the proposed goals, reached target groups and received public recognition through various media. It seems that the format and themes of a project are only indicative of its potential in exceptional cases. Much rather, it is often the executing agency as well as the cooperative work done with partners that is decisive for the success of the project. To make the projects more visible in the future, the evaluation team recommends a focusing and, more importantly, a scaling of different funding streams. In this sense, funding of small projects, with local connections and roots in civil society, should continue. In a separate stream, funding of larger projects would enable a transnational and structural focus.

Target Groups

For this program, there was no explicit target group. 73% of those polled said that their set target group uses the products resulting from their projects. On top of this, 30% (17 of 55) responded that through the course of their projects they were able to reach their entire intended target group (100%). While some projects maintained a broad, undefined target group, a larger number of projects targeted specific groups, like students, young people or the academic community. Less represented are groups like policy makers, existing victim groups and organisations or civil society actors.

Outcomes at program-level

Overall, it is apparent that essential program goals were achieved. This insight is qualified by the relative lack of international media coverage of many projects. On top of this, it is difficult to track to what extent the target group actually functioned as educational multipliers, able to transmit their knowledge. According to the accounts of the 46 project executing agencies given in the online survey, the 46 projects together reached 355 840 people directly. Based on the document analysis it can be ascertained that most of the projects occurred within the framework of a transnational cooperation. It is notable though, that many of the project executive agencies see the demand for a multi-perspectival approach only as a cooperation between two countries. Here a clearer formulation of multiperspectivity, on the part of the EVZ, was amiss.

Impact

In summary, the projects and the program as a whole developed to have a rather significant and broad impact. Projects affected memory culture in and through a variety of formats at the local, national and even the international level. Through this, products resulting from the projects, like online databases or memorial sites of target groups, will continue to be available years after the end of the project.

Transnational and multi-perspectival elements

In total 77% of the projects are international, meaning they have executing agencies from at least two countries or speak to a target group from a minimum of two countries. 23% (17 of 75) of projects were conducted either by one or two organisations from the same country.

Both the executing agencies and the program coordinators deemed transnational cooperation to be integral to the success of the projects. At the same time, many co-operations only occurred at the surface level, sometimes only existing on paper.

Sustainability

Based on the results it can be assumed that at least projects with products existing past the program end contributed to the establishment of the theme of National Socialist forced labour and the memory of "forgotten" victim groups in European memory culture. The majority of the executing agencies indicate that the products resulting from their projects will continue to be available after the end of their projects. The online survey indicates that most executing agencies will continue to be active in the area of memory culture long term. 90% of the respondents will continue to realise similar projects around the theme of National Socialist crimes in memory culture. On top of this, respondents confirmed that they were able to find alternative funding sources (87%), even though funding applications at the EVZ continue to play a large role (76%).

Coherence, Complementarity, and Coordination

The question of complementarity of the funding program "Forced Labour and Forgotten Victims" with funding programs of other institutions was answered through comparative research and analysis of calls for application of other funding institutions. Interviews and research shows that most alternative funding programs for politico-historical projects at other institutions have very high funding sums, making the respective application process time-consuming and complex. Funding for small projects is relatively rare.

Suggestions

Below a short introduction of the most important suggestions of the evaluation.

1	Strategic Development	**Differentiation of goal model:** The goal of "anchoring forced labourers and forgotten groups in the European memory culture" must be more clearly formulated
		Development of an internationalizing strategy: To ensure that memory culture is strengthened on a European scale, especially in countries with relatively few domestic organisations or actors
2	Focusing / Division of Funding Streams	**Funding of small projects:** Through targeted communication small projects should be funded
		Funding of large projects: Through targeted funding large projects with effective publicity should be attained
3	Call for Proposals Development	**Making the call for proposals more accessible:** a) simplify language, b) increase spread and breadth of call, c) take up concrete target group suggestions into the call for proposals
4	Selection Process and Project Consultation	**Eliminate the Jury**, enabling praxis oriented selection criteria
		Content-oriented consulting of projects, to get closer to projects and enable quicker, more flexible reactions
		To assure true "international cooperation", not only on paper but in the realization of the project, ensure that funds also flow into foreign countries
5	Sustainability / Capacity Building	**Target capacity building towards smaller executing agencies** and if possible also with and for foreign partners (e.g. reintroduce seminars or consulting)
		Use the resulting products of the program to make it more visible to the general public
		Networking and exchange between executing agencies and cooperation partners should be strengthened
		Develop tools for internal knowledge management, to be used for content consultation and the networking of applying organisations
6	Strengthening of Content Quality	**The criteria of multi-perspectivity needs to be more clearly defined**, to strengthen the profile of the program
		Create a new criteria "Connection to the Present" to maintain a link to current developments

7	Further Suggestions	**Consider political situation in the partner countries,** if necessary, flexible funding formats should be adjusted accordingly
		External perceptions of the program should be invigorated and a larger network should be established
		Targeted appeal to groups that have been less considered, like policy makers