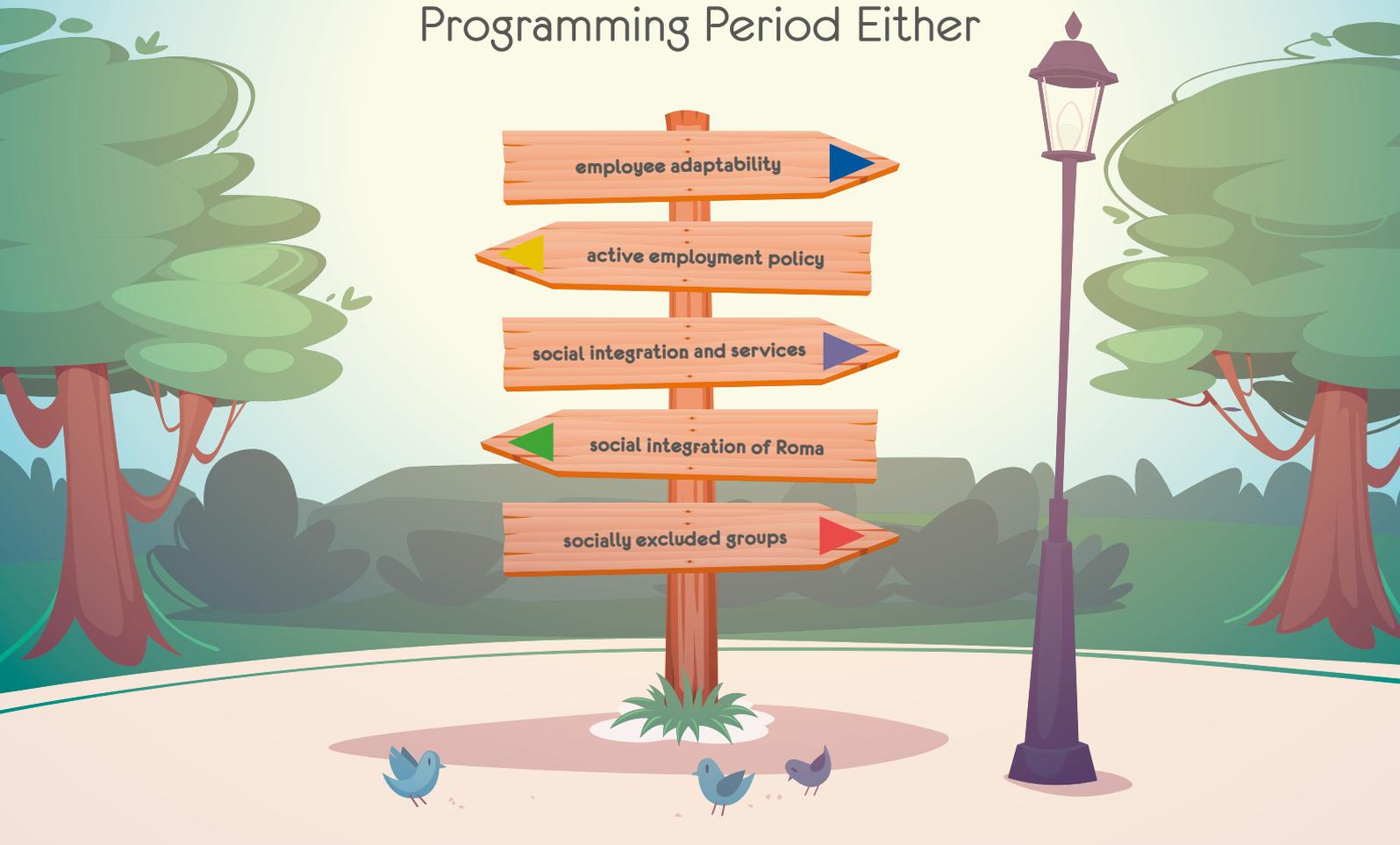


# Thanks to **MoLSA**, Money Goes in the Right Direction

... Which Won't Be Lost in the New Programming Period Either



## Dear readers,

On behalf of all my colleagues, I would like to present several life stories in this publication. These are the stories of people that we have supported through projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). There are thousands of projects and, of course, many more individuals that have been supported. The funds have been, still are and will also be distributed in the subsequent period (2014-2020), with maximum efforts to effectively help non-profit organizations, private companies, towns and others.

The European Social Fund supports projects that help both the unemployed to reintegrate into the work process, as well as employees, and these projects will also be supported in the 2014-2020 period. The projects are aimed at different disadvantaged target groups, such as young people under 25 years old, people with disabilities, people over 50 years old, ethnic minorities, persons leaving prison, etc. The projects focused on social services and social inclusion help people find their way back into society. Other areas that are supported include the training of social service providers' staff, planning availability of social services, implementation of the quality development process of social services provision, as well as transformation of residential facilities of social services, and creation and development of new business activities aimed at social enterprises. All of these will also be included in the following programming period.

The publication "Thanks to MoLSA, Money Goes in the Right Direction ... Which Won't Be Lost in the New Programming Period Either" that you are holding tries to show, using the stories of specific people, how the funds received from the ESF, within the operational programmes focused on employment, can help. The published stories have been recorded based on the authentic words of people who found themselves in difficult life situations and who, thanks to projects supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), were given a chance to change their situation. I believe that when you read these stories, which were a great inspiration for us in the preparation of the new operational programme providing similar support in the coming years, you will have a good feeling, just like us at MoLSA, about how public resources can assist in solving specific problems.

PhDr. Karel Vít, Ph.D.  
Director of the EU Funds Implementation Department  
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs



Area of support >



Increasing the Adaptability of Employees from Restructured Enterprises

# Dagmar Lapáčková

I don't mind being a cleaning lady



Type of project: Regional individual project 1.2

Project title: Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region

Project number: CZ.1.04/1.2.00/37.00010

Recipient: Labour Office of the Czech Republic, Regional Branch in Ústí nad Labem

The project primarily helps people who are laid off by their employers for organizational reasons, as part of collective redundancies, or whose employers either do not pay their wages or do not extend their fixed-term employment contract.

The project will run until August 2015, and up to 450 laid-off employees from the Ústí region can become involved in it. The help it offers has been used by 313 persons, with nearly 150 still waiting for their opportunity. The project provides individual counselling, training in labour law, financial literacy, psychology and soft skills, and enables participants to take retraining courses based on their needs in the labour market and, last but not least, it offers active assistance in finding new employment. Project participants also receive a bonus in the form of a contribution to the labour costs for their new employer. Out of approximately 300 people participating in the project until the end of August 2014 half have found a new job.

Dagmar Lapáčková from Most is a person whose career was connected to a factory. She produced threads. When the market was flooded with imported goods, she and most of her colleagues lost their jobs. Now she works as a cleaner. Thanks to the "Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region" project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, she was given a new job immediately after training, without getting stuck in the records of the unemployed.

In the Litvínov textile factory she was told that production was ending and that she could join an education project which would teach her how to find opportunities in the labour market and to extend her knowledge. Why did she join it? *"It's better than sitting at home,"* says the forty-six-year-old woman. The "Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region" project, implemented by the Regional Branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in Ústí nad Labem, followed on from the success of the "Restart" project, and it continues to help employees in the Ústí Region who are collectively made redundant, as well as those who lost their jobs because their employers went bankrupt or didn't renew their employment contracts for a specified period. What seems to be most important is the active help in finding new employment and providing salary contributions to employers that hire new employees.

Dagmar would recommend this project to everybody. She has learned a lot, just like her colleagues from the factory who also decided to join the education project. She hadn't experienced anything like it before, because she had never been unemployed. She had worked in the factory for 27 years. She believes that the project made her move to a new phase of life easier. It was also through the project that she found the cleaning job.

*"I don't mind being a cleaning lady. My husband is happy too, because one salary wouldn't be enough for the family,"* she says. Moreover, Dagmar doesn't have to get up at 4 a.m. and commute to the nearby town. She works as a cleaner in an electrical company in Most. In her new company overalls, with a broom, and in cleaner and quieter electrical halls, she sees a better future for herself.

# Jitka Rybková

She was experienced, yet she lost her job, but thanks to the project she's working again



Type of project: Regional individual project 1.2

Project title: Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region

Project number: CZ.1.04/1.2.00/37.00010

Recipient: Labour Office of the Czech Republic, Regional Branch in Ústí nad Labem

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Even many years of experience and an important position in company management don't guarantee that you won't lose your job. This is what forty-two-year-old Jitka Rybková from Cítoliby near Louny found out. Her happiness after the birth of her child was followed by disillusionment when she lost her job. She found a new job thanks to the "Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region" project, which is financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

She worked in construction and trade for ten years. During her absence the company was streamlined. *"Until the last moment I believed I would return to some sort of position. But within a week I found that there was no work for me,"* says Jitka Rybková. With her career and experience she wasn't worried that she would be unemployed. *"But it's hard to find a job in the Louny region,"* adds the mother of three children. Her notice period was almost finished and there were only two days left. Then a lucky chance helped her. *"A friend of mine told me about the 'Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region' project. I thought that I shouldn't refuse a helping hand,"* recalls Jitka Rybková.

The "Restart - Revival in the Ústí Region" project, implemented by the Regional Branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in Ústí nad Labem, is a regional project for people who are working out their notice period or whose employment for a definite period is going to be terminated soon, especially for organizational reasons. *"There was only one day left, to top it all it was a Friday. It was then that I experienced the helpful approach of the Labour Office workers and we arranged what was necessary,"* describes Jitka Rybková.

Then came the possibility of a new job. A company from Louny was looking for a person with a technical focus. *"After retraining and the necessary specialist preparation I was hired,"* she smiles happily.

She would recommend the project to anyone who loses a job. Although she has a lot of experience, she believes that the retraining course was beneficial to her. *"If you want it, you can get new professional skills that will help you find new employment,"* says Jitka. Thanks to the project she learned technical drawing in a special programme. And that was essential to finding a new job.



# Václav Šimek

## Return to locomotives

A former railwayman and tradesman, Václav Šimek from Litvínov-Janov lost his job when the textile factory where he worked was closed down. At the age of 55 he found a new job with the “Restart – Revival in the Ústí Region” project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. He used the opportunity to receive education, utilized the skills he had acquired, and returned to the engines.

Václav heard about the “Restart – Revival in the Ústí Region” project, which activates people who are working out their notice period and are at risk of unemployment, in the textile factory. At a time of collective redundancies, the factory worked with the Labour Office in Most. *“I knew that I might not find a new job quickly and that I might get some help from them, so I joined the project,”* says Václav Šimek. That was a very good step. Thanks to the project that is implemented by the Regional Branch of the Labour Office in Ústí nad Labem, he learned how to behave at job interviews and how to write a CV. It was a completely new experience for him, because he had never been unemployed. *“I would recommend taking part in a project like this to anyone who has lost their job. It was useful and it definitely wasn’t a waste of money,”* he believes. He found work during a training course that was part of the project. *“What I found remarkable about Mr. Šimek was that he completed the project even though he knew that he would be starting a new job. Others wouldn’t have taken part in the project activities, but he approached the project positively from the very beginning,”* says Zuzana Hladíková, a project counsellor from the Contact Point of the Labour Office in Most.

What Václav likes about his new job is that he already knows it. He is an engine driver again. But now he is going to drive heavy and powerful “machines” in the mines. Having completed technical school in Děčín, he drove freight trains from 1978 to 1992. Then he worked as a tradesman-roofer. After the loss of contracts he worked in the textile factory for 16 years. He believes that he will keep the new job until retirement. *“Coal will always be necessary,”* says the father of two adult sons, adding: *“If you really want, try hard and don’t get discouraged by setbacks, you will always find a job.”*

Type of project: Regional individual project 1.2

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Project number: CZ.1.04/1.2.00/37.00010

Recipient: Labour Office of the Czech Republic, Regional Branch in Ústí nad Labem

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# Pavla Adamcová

In her new job she also thinks of her parents



After working as a postwoman and in a factory, Pavla Adamcová from Strážov in the Klatovy area did a U-turn in her life thanks to the “New Professional Life Begins” project, which was financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. *“I heard about the project from my colleague, and because the company I worked for wasn’t doing well, I was looking for another job. Also, there aren’t that many career opportunities in the Strážov area, so I joined the project,”* says Pavla.

Choosing a field she wanted to work in wasn’t that difficult for her. She was interested in working as a carer, and this is what she became – with the help of the project implemented by the Klatovy District Chamber of Commerce. *“I had no experience with this kind of work. I could have tried another direction, but as my parents are approaching retirement, I didn’t hesitate,”* says Pavla and explains: *“So I’m glad that I’ll be able to help them and take care of them.”*

As part of the project she completed a retraining course which gave her a lot of experience for her new profession. *“The course lasted from mid-January to late March. Meanwhile, I had about 40 hours of practical training to try everything and to get a feel for the work,”* describes Pavla.

Now she takes care of the elderly, and the greatest reward for her is when an old woman or man caresses her, smiles at her or says “thank you” to her. *“This job is a hundred per cent better than the one I had before in the factory, where you just ‘slave away’ to meet tighter and tighter standards,”* remembers Pavla.

She admits that in the beginning she was a little hesitant whether she should stay in the “New Professional Life Begins” project or not. She was only convinced by the joy she saw in elderly people when she helped them and took care of them.

She wouldn’t hesitate to recommend the project to her friends. *“I met different people. It was a nice period in my stereotypical life,”* admits Pavla, who doesn’t even mind commuting, because she takes turns with her colleague.

Type of project: Grant project 1.2

Project title: New Professional Life Begins

Project number: CZ.1.04/1.2.05/36.00036

Recipient: Klatovy District Chamber of Commerce

The aim of the project is to increase the stability of employees of restructured companies – members of the Klatovy District Chamber of Commerce. It seeks to connect the needs of employers with the supply of skilled labour in order to provide jobs, as well as skilled and qualified job seekers in the Pilsen region. It aims to respond to the needs of the labour market, focusing also on the readiness of employees to work in different, more necessary fields, as well as on speed and flexibility in this regard. In order to prevent mere job offers, the project interconnects different services, linking educational services, personal assistance, skill diagnostics and building of self-confidence. The target group consists of people who have been laid off for organizational reasons or people whose fixed-term employment contract has expired.

# Lenka Latková

She helps people because it makes them happy



Lenka Latková from Běšiny in the Klatovy region had to meet the set standards at the factory every day, which was not always easy. In addition, she was afraid that she could lose her job, so she began to look for a new one. Thanks to the “New Professional Life Begins” project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, she succeeded. *“I heard about the project from a friend of mine who is on maternity leave and who was also looking for a job. I liked it, so I joined too. I stopped looking for anything else, because I was determined that if the project people offered me employment, I’d accept it,”* describes Lenka.

She found her vocation as a carer. Within the project, implemented by the Klatovy District Chamber of Commerce, she had to first complete a two-month retraining course. The course provided her with all the experience necessary to be able to properly care for the elderly and to be able to help them with their needs. For example, she helps them with hygiene, brings them food, talks to them and fulfils their wishes. *“I learned a lot from health education which was very useful. I like helping people and I’m pleased to know that I don’t do it just because I have to, but because I make them feel happy and because they caress me as a reward. It’s definitely better than working in a factory,”* says Lenka.

Combining her new job with care for her own family and her husband’s work wasn’t easy for her. However, they managed, so she could accept the position of carer in a home for the elderly. *“I have two small children, so we had to find a compromise with my husband. He adjusted his working hours,”* recalls Lenka, who was not put off by this minor obstacle or by subsequent commuting to Sušice.

After her own experience she wouldn’t hesitate to recommend the project to other people. *“I’m satisfied with my work and I like it, so I’ll definitely tell my friends about the project,”* said Lenka.

Type of project: Grant project 1.2

Project title: New Professional Life Begins

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# Iveta Vintrová

## She didn't enjoy sewing, so she helps the elderly

Before going on maternity leave, Iveta Vintrová from Rabí near Sušice worked as a seamstress. However, this job wasn't fulfilling enough for her to stick to it. Everything changed with the "New Professional Life Begins" project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic. "A friend of mine told me about the project and I became interested in it. One of the reasons was the fact that I couldn't get a job and what I liked about the project was that I could try something new," explains Iveta.

The "New Professional Life Begins" project offered several retraining courses. Iveta's choice was clear - carer. She completed the retraining course where she learned how to care for the elderly and how to treat them. She learned what might happen and how to help people in such situations, which comes in handy in the home for the elderly.

*"It's hard work, but enjoyable. Even a client's smile or caress makes you happy. Working as a seamstress, sitting and sewing all day, is something completely different than this work. I like this a lot more because I can work with people,"* says Iveta.

She is responsible for the day care of the home's clients. "I go to the client's rooms, do morning hygiene, prepare them for breakfast, make beds, then prepare everything for lunch, do hygiene again, and then help them with what they need. We go out or on the terraces, and I try to make their day as pleasant as possible," Iveta describes her activities.

Although she is the mother of four children, she and her husband manage to combine work and family in such a way that everything runs smoothly. She would recommend the "New Professional Life Begins" project, implemented by the Klatovy District Chamber of Commerce, to her friends as well. "I've even told one of my friends about the project. She might join it," concludes Iveta.

Type of project: Grant project 1.2

Project title: New Professional Life Begins

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Area of support >

Reinforcement  
of Active  
Employment Policies





# Jaroslava Slížová

Thanks to a project supported by MoLSA, a young mother has returned to work

The trained dressmaker Jaroslava Slížová from Písečná in the Jeseník region worked as a security guard at reception for seven years. Then she gave birth to two children and looked after them for eight years while on maternity leave. After that she wanted to go back to work. But ... Although she went to different employers for seven months, nobody wanted to hire her. Finally, she found employment through the “Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region” project, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. *“I really like it here. There’s a nice environment and good people,”* she says about her new job.

Her two small children were an obstacle in finding employment. *“They asked me whether I had children almost everywhere, even though they shouldn’t. They also tried to find out indirectly,”* says Jaroslava Slížová. But then she received an invitation to an information meeting for the “Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region” project from the contact point of the Jeseník Labour Office. *“I tried it, because I was convinced that I would be able to get a job,”* says Jaroslava Slížová.

The “Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region” project helps vocational certificate holders increase their chances of finding a job. It also includes creation of supported jobs. Thanks to the project, Jaroslava was employed as a cleaner and helper in a nursing home in a nearby village.

*“Of all the jobs I have had I like this one the most. My personal life has calmed down and my mental state has improved. Now I know for sure that I will have an income,”* she says, adding: *“The project certainly made it easier to get a job than if I had gone to potential employers myself.”*

The director of the organization that has employed her for one year is satisfied with her. *“If Mrs. Slížová wants a reference, she’ll definitely get one from me,”* says Štěpánka Beníčková, the director of the nursing home.

Type of project: Regional individual project 2.1

Project title: Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region

Project number: CZ.1.04/2.1.00/70.00053

Recipient: Labour Office of the Czech Republic, Regional Branch in Olomouc

The project has been implemented since 1 May 2013 and it aims to increase the employability of unemployed persons through the targeted use of active employment policy tools in the Olomouc region. All contact points of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in the Olomouc region have been involved in it. The project responds to the demands of the labour market and provides assistance to employers in finding appropriate staff. Its main aim is to assist participants in finding employment through counselling, retraining and provision of wage subsidies to employers that create new jobs for project participants. The original plan was to create 55 supported jobs within the project. However, from February 2014 to September 2014, 112 supported jobs were created, which is about 104% more than originally planned.

# Petra Vlčková

I didn't hesitate and joined the project



Type of project: Regional individual project 2.1

Project title: My Opportunity in the South Bohemian Region

Project number: CZ.1.04/2.1.00/70.00002

Recipient: Labour Office of the Czech Republic, Regional Branch in České Budějovice

The project was implemented from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2014. It helped young people under 30 years of age and job seekers registered with the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in the South Bohemian Region to enter the open labour market. These people were in the target group whose greatest obstacle in finding a job was primarily insufficient or missing work experience and, in some cases, also missing or unusable current qualifications. The project participants gradually attended planned motivational, counselling and educational activities. The aim of the project was to prepare people in the target groups for as many situations that may arise throughout their career as possible.

The project was joined by a total of 413 people. 289 of them entered employment (i.e. 70% of participants). The retraining courses were successfully completed by 160 clients of the project. The goals that had been set for the project were met.

She was unemployed for a year and couldn't find a job. But she didn't give up. And then she heard about the "My Opportunity in the South Bohemian Region" project, implemented by the Regional Branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in České Budějovice. *"I didn't hesitate because it was clear to me what kind of chance I would get,"* says Petra Vlčková, who works as a field worker for a regional charity in Strakonice. She helps to make life easier for the elderly who have almost nobody to look after them.

She found the project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, on the Internet, and it immediately caught her attention. *"I've always wanted to work in the social sphere, even though I'm a trained dressmaker. I've also completed a follow-up business school,"* says the young woman, who had to leave her original job for health reasons.

After a year of looking for work she thought that the chance of finding herself a new job in the region was almost nil. Therefore, she was not deterred by retraining or the practical training that she also had to do in České Budějovice. The "My Opportunity in the South Bohemian Region" project finally helped her out of a scrape. By employing Petra, the regional charity became entitled to the six-month wage subsidy.

What are Petra Vlčková's responsibilities now? *"Assistance, lunches, cleaning, accompanying people and the like. It's very diverse and active work. I'm definitely not bored,"* she says.

There are many people around her she would recommend her experience to. *"A lot of people have asked me about the project and one of my friends didn't have a job after maternity leave, so she tried it and found a job in the Blatná region,"* mentions Petra Vlčková.

She would like to continue doing her work. She considers the service to people who are not able to manage everything themselves as very beneficial and vital.

# Darina Samcová

Unemployed, retrained, working



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Twenty-six-year-old Darina Samcová was without any income for a long time. After maternity leave, when she was looking for a job, she found help with the "My Opportunity in the South Bohemian Region" project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

*"I was registered with the Labour Office and then they called me saying that there was this project and that they had an offer for me,"* the mother of two children from Strakonice tells her story, adding: *"I was on maternity leave and I had no income. We made an agreement that if I got a job, the employer would receive contributions from the European Social Fund."*

Darina Samcová successfully completed the initial interview and then was given individual assistance by a counsellor that offered her and other candidates retraining courses aimed at enabling them to find employment in the South Bohemian Region. *"The counsellor recommended me for the position of carer for the elderly. I went to Prachatice for one and half months where I acquired the necessary knowledge,"* she describes her successful retraining, which helped her find a job in the home for the elderly in Strakonice. *"It was in that home that I was given practical training and I really liked it there, so I tried to get a job there. Which I finally did, and I'm very happy,"* says Darina. She is employed, receives a regular salary, and likes both the job and the environment she works in. All that with the help of the "My Opportunity in the South Bohemian Region" project, implemented by the Regional Branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in České Budějovice. *"I would recommend this project to anyone who gets this opportunity. In fact, some of my friends have asked me about it and they should definitely try it,"* concludes Darina Samcová.



# Miroslava Navrátilová

Employers didn't want her because of her age but with MoLSA's support she is working again

She had worked all her life but after she reached fifty, she discovered that employers didn't need her anymore. But then Miroslava Navrátilová found a job thanks to the "Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region" project, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

In her youth she had worked as a shop assistant. When the workforce was reduced, she found a job in a textile factory. However, the factory went bankrupt. After she reached fifty, and after 32 years at work, Miroslava suddenly found herself without an income. She looked for a job for a year and a half. "There are four supermarkets in Jeseník. When I was told ten times that I wouldn't be hired, I didn't go there for the eleventh time. Getting a job is really tough here. If you're over fifty, no one wants you," says the woman.

She had first-hand experience of what it's like to be discriminated against by prospective employers because of one's age. "I worked from eighteen to fifty. I never thought that I would look forward to retirement. In fact, I had no other way out," says Miroslava Navrátilová.

Through an intermediary at the contact centre of the Labour Office in Jeseník she learned about the "Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region" project, implemented by the Regional Branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in Olomouc. Within the project, which helps vocational certificate holders return to employment, candidates may attend counselling activities (both group and individual counselling), where they learn how to write a CV and prepare for a job interview.

"It was a chance for me to finally find a job. I'd recommend participation in the 'Chance for Vocational School Graduates in the Olomouc Region' project to everyone. It helped me get a job," says Miroslava Navrátilová, who is earning a living again as a shop assistant in a small self-service shop in a Jeseník borough. "I'm really happy here. I live not far from here, so it only takes me two minutes to get to work. It's an ideal situation," says the mother of two daughters, who wants to keep the job for as long as possible.

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# Radka Komárková

Even blind people can read – and help, with the contribution of MoLSA in the Czech Republic



Type of project: Grant project 2.1

Project title: Work Integration of People with Visual Impairments

Project number: CZ.1.04/2.1.01/91.00048

Recipient: TREMEDIAS

This project has been implemented by the Tremedias civic association and its partner organizations – SONS and Mathilda digital libraries. The target group of the project comprises blind and legally blind people. The project has a nationwide scope and it has supported fifty people from the target group. The project participants appreciated most of all the opportunity to use the work diagnosis, which was provided to most blind people for the first time in their life, retraining aimed at developing computer skills with a specific focus on document digitization, and the related work experience in digital libraries. Beyond the key activities, the project team members organized an open competition for the newly created jobs in digital libraries. For many participants, this was also their first real experience of a job interview.

The year 1989 was a turning point for Radka Komárková. But in a different way than for millions of Czechoslovaks. During her medical studies, her eyesight deteriorated. Diagnosis: glaucoma. Despite her health problems, she completed school. She knew, however, that she would have a limited choice of occupation. *“I couldn’t really do operations, so I chose hygiene as my major,”* says Radka, who applied for a disability pension in 1997.

She liked reading books, so she looked for a way to be able to read them again – despite her handicap. *“When I got a computer, I began to scan books into digital form,”* Radka recalls the fiddly work, adding: *“I thought that once I scanned the books, it would be nice if other people could read them as well. And so I became a volunteer for Czech Blind United (SONS).”*

When the TREMEDIAS association, which implements the “Work Integration of People with Visual Impairments” project, informed SONS about the possibility of taking part in the project, Radka didn’t hesitate. This helped her complete the year-long course. *“I attended a hundred-hour course with special focus on digitization of texts, and another part involved practical training in a digital library. We also did psychological tests. Looking back, I realize how useful everything was. The tests were designed to find the best occupation for you. In my case, the tests revealed that working with texts is something that corresponds to my natural abilities and skills,”* says Radka, who also found through the psychological test that she underestimated herself. *“It was also thanks to the sessions with a psychologist that I felt like starting something new, not throwing in the towel,”* smiles Radka.

The forty-four-year-old woman would recommend participation in the project to anyone who is willing to be active. *“It’s great when someone appreciates if you’ve done something well. Also financially. And I know what I’m talking about. After all, I got my first salary at the end of winter, just at the right time when my gas boiler broke down,”* concludes Radka Komárková.

# Jiří Škrába

He learned how to advise the visually impaired when working with text



Type of project: Grant project 2.1

Project title: Work Integration of People with Visual Impairments

Project number: CZ.1.04/2.1.01/91.00048

Recipient: TREMEDIAS

This project has been implemented by the Tremedias civic association and its partner organizations – SONS and Mathilda digital libraries. The target group of the project comprises blind and legally blind people. The project has a nationwide scope and it has supported fifty people from the target group. The project participants appreciated most of all the opportunity to use the work diagnosis, which was provided to most blind people for the first time in their life, retraining aimed at developing computer skills with a specific focus on document digitization, and the related work experience in digital libraries. Beyond the key activities, the project team members organized an open competition for the newly created jobs in digital libraries. For many participants, this was also their first real experience of a job interview.

Fifty-five-year-old Jiří Škrába from Libušín worked as an upholsterer for years. However, in the past ten years, his eyesight has deteriorated. *“Having ten per cent vision is no fun. And when you suddenly realize that you only have half of that ten per cent and then even less ... When I heard customers’ reactions like ‘Don’t give that to the blind guy’, I decided to stop working at the end of 2007,”* Jiří Škrába recalls sadly.

Doctors diagnosed him as being legally blind. *“In my case, it means that in a good light I can recognize a figure. But otherwise I generally see all white in the light and all black in the darkness. Everything is constantly covered with English fog. And with a diagnosis like that it is difficult to find a job,”* says Jiří, not giving up. He called various companies and asked friends, but without success. *“And then suddenly I came across the ‘Work Integration of People with Visual Impairments’ project. It was like a sign. I knew I had to ‘snap’ at that opportunity and make the most of it,”* says Jiří.

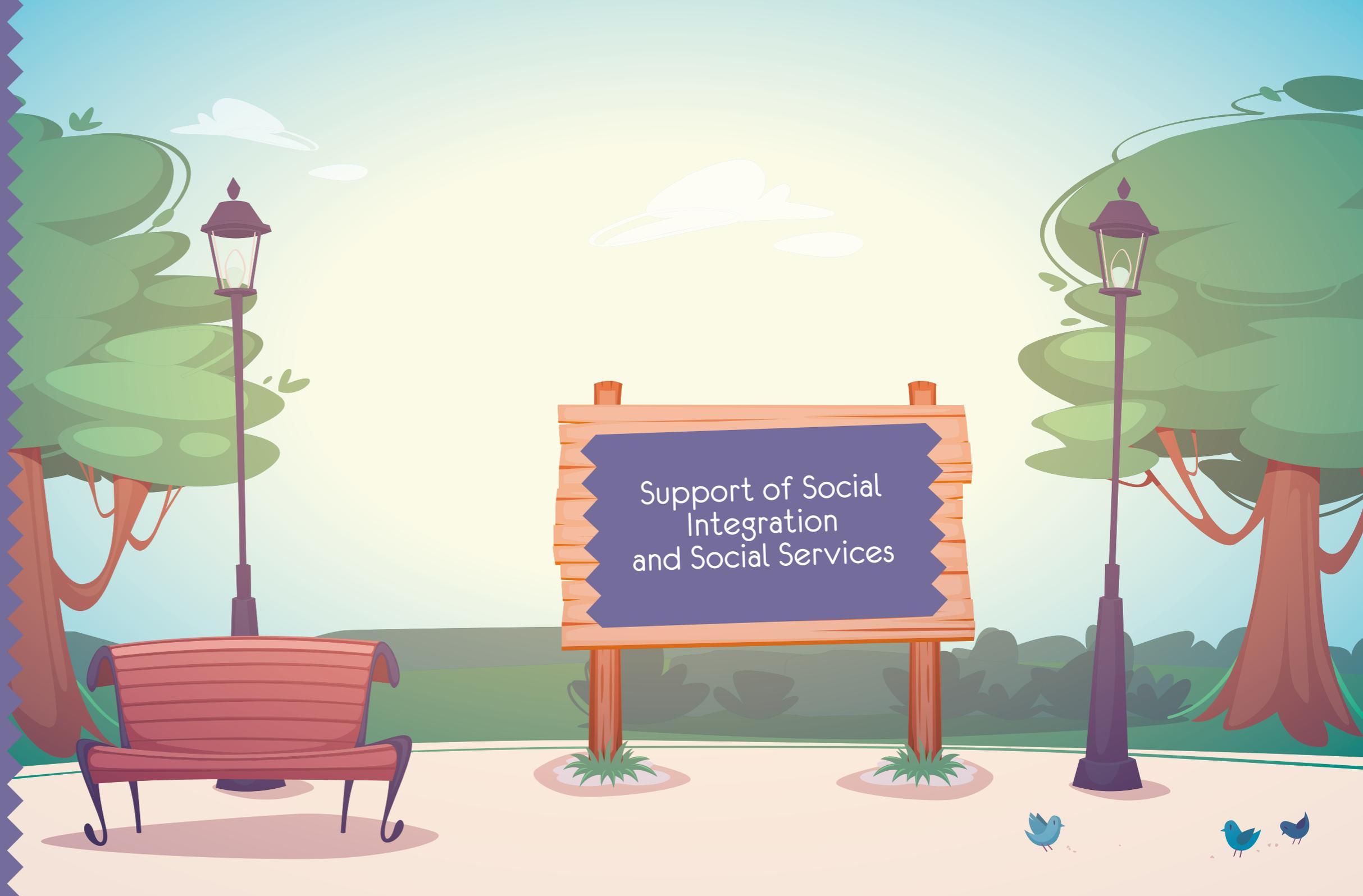
He heard about the project, implemented by the TREMEDIAS association, from his friends. And he didn’t hesitate a minute to register. He had loved working with computers for a long time. While he had been an upholsterer he had converted books into mp3 format and listened to them at work.

During the course there wasn’t much that surprised him. *“I managed everything we learned. But what helped me was that I learned how to simplify the job. There are a few shortcuts that I didn’t know until then,”* describes Jiří, who also learned one more thing, perhaps even more important – knowing how to advise other people with visual disabilities. *“Some of my friends sometimes asked me how to do this or that. I knew it, but I just couldn’t explain it to them. That’s what I learned through the project. And, of course, I gained more confidence,”* he says with satisfaction about taking part in the course.

After completing the project, financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, Jiří Škrába was employed in the Mathilda Digital Library in Prague. He works as a book digitizer. He scans books, converts them into an acceptable format, and adjusts them to be clearly arranged and perfectly legible for the visually impaired. He prepares two books every month.

*“I have a job that I enjoy. The best part is that I do something that makes other people happy too. And it’s amazing that I get paid for that,”* smiles Jiří.

Area of support >



# Zdeněk Haida

## Pleased with his job before retirement



Fifty-six-year-old Zdeněk Haida from Ostrava trained to be a parquet layer, but due to health problems he couldn't pursue his profession. He tried various jobs, even seasonal ones, but he was unemployed for a long time. Approaching sixty, he was given an opportunity to work again. He joined the "Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise" project, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, and as a labourer he helps "rebuild" his hometown.

*"A year after completing my apprenticeship, I got water in one of my knees, so I had to quit, because laying parquet floors is all about kneeling,"* says the man who subsequently worked as a labourer. In the last ten years he had been unable to find work. *"When employers choose people, they always take the younger ones. But I did occasional jobs now and then,"* he adds.

When the first opportunity to start work again occurred, he snapped at it without hesitation. *"When the foreman from Kasea, s. r. o., appeared in the shelter, offering a job to some of us, I didn't hesitate and asked for it,"* he describes his beginnings in the social enterprise project.

*"I manage the work and I like it. I work as a labourer, and we often laugh more than we work,"* exaggerates the man who is already preparing for retirement. He has been living in the shelter for men in Ostrava-Přivoz for a year, but his dream is to move to his own quiet flat. *"There are three of us in the room, and one almost never sleeps here, so I can bear it. I really would like to live alone, but I know that I couldn't afford it, so I'm looking for a flatmate,"* describes the man who wouldn't refuse help. He personally would also recommend the project to anyone who, like him, has found themselves in such a difficult situation and adds: *"At least I didn't have to deal with my problems on my own. The people from the social enterprise helped me and I appreciate that. I don't know what I could do at my age."*

Type of project: Grant project 3.1

Project title: Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.1.06/30.00547

Recipient: Kasea, s. r. o.

The project was launched on 1 September 2013. It is implemented in the Moravian-Silesian region and its target group comprises people who have been unemployed for a long time and those who have been registered with the Labour Office of the Czech Republic for at least one year. The aim of the project is to employ, through an established social enterprise, people who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion and to help them achieve professional and civic integration, eliminating the barriers that make it difficult for them to be accepted by both the labour market and the environment they live in. As part of the project, three working positions for managers have been established, and jobs have also been created for the project's target group. In total, six members of the target group should be employed as construction workers.

The aim of the project and the enterprise established to implement it – Kasea CZ, s. r. o. – is to provide support in full work integration and to create the conditions in order for the social enterprise to be sustainable and to function efficiently in the future.

# Ludvík Jano

## He spent most of his life in prison, but he's managed to find a job



*"I wasn't just down and out, I fell even deeper,"* says forty-five-year-old Ludvík Jano. He struggled with the pitfalls of life since childhood. As an infant, his parents put him in an institution, he lived in children's homes, and he was put in prison for the first time when he was fifteen years old. *"When I was six, I started living in children's homes. At fifteen I committed my first crime with boys from the vocational school,"* recalls Ludvík Jano from Olomouc. He only had a taste of "normal" life when he reached a mature age, thanks to the "Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise" project supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Fifteen-year-old Ludvík broke into a pub and... *"I went to prison. And that's where I learned everything I didn't already know. From then until 2013 I spent almost all my life in jail,"* adds the father of two children.

After his last sentence the probation officer told him about the possibility of living in an Ostrava shelter that cooperates with social services providers. *"When I got out of prison, I wanted to work legally. Nobody wanted to employ me and I was afraid that I would end up working illegally again. It got so bad that I even tried to commit suicide,"* says the trained chef.

After a stay in hospital he registered with a shelter for men in Ostrava-Přivoz. As he says, he "pulled himself together" and began to work full time, legally, for Kasea, a construction company whose basic idea is to repair social housing. *"I've run up debts in my life. Now I want to pay them off, and I'm doing well. I'm thankful that I met such friendly people who helped me and gave me a chance, for the first time in my life,"* describes Ludvík Jano tearfully. Yes, even a man who knows the rough conditions of Czech prisons can be moved to tears. *"I'm very happy that for the first time in my life someone helped me. It's incredible. I didn't believe that it would ever happen to me because of my past,"* he says again.

Type of project: Grant project 3.1

Project title: Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.1.06/30.00547

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# David Rakošan

He did business, ran up debts, and now is “returning” to life

Thirty-seven-year-old David Rakošan lived like an ordinary man. He worked in a mine and later started his own business in the construction industry. Non-paying customers, however, drove him into a difficult situation and the debt trap. Now he is trying to stand on his own two feet thanks to the “Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise” project, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

*“People didn’t pay invoices a couple of times, and that was it. Because of debts I had to move out of my rented flat with my partner and children, and we ended up in a shelter,”* describes the former businessman from Ostrava. However, he didn’t lose hope and tried to solve the situation as soon as possible. *“The accommodation at the shelter was terrible. We had no privacy, everything was broken, and I even had to fix a lot of things. And they wanted an awful lot of money for rent! We paid 14,000 crowns a month for two rooms,”* recalls David Rakošan.

He contacted “White Rhino”, a non-profit organization that was supposed to help him find suitable accommodation. *“I got a chance to participate in the Kasea project and I didn’t hesitate. I just snapped at the job. I’m grateful that the ‘Rhino’ recommended me and sent them my CV,”* he says with satisfaction.

What bothers him, however, is accommodation. *“I live in my parents’ cottage and they help me. But I don’t want to depend on them. I want to become independent and give my children security,”* says the father of three boys and one girl.

David Rakošan was the first participant of the “Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise” project, which he joined in October 2013. *“The management is really excellent. I have a secure job and some money too. I’m not thinking of working anywhere else. I want to stay here,”* concludes David Rakošan.

Type of project: Grant project 3.1

Project title: Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.1.06/30.00547

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# Štěpán Svoboda

He only knew prison – now he “lives” for the first time



From the age of six he lived in children’s homes, and when he came of age, he went straight to prison, where he spent ten years. Štěpán Svoboda from Brno is 28 years old. His life became even more complicated, he almost died, and he spent a long time in hospital. It wasn’t until the spring of 2014 that he joined the majority of the population for the first time. Thanks to the “Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise” project, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, he started working properly for the first time and also living somewhere other than in a prison cell.

*“Eventually I ran away from the children’s home. And that wasn’t the first time,” says the young man. As a trained chef, he started working in that profession and occasionally he helped on construction sites. Although he rented his first flat, he soon ended up in prison. “I don’t want to talk about why I was behind bars. I spent ten years in jail. But it also gave me something positive. I met a guy there who became a good friend,” says Štěpán Svoboda.*

After his release from prison, they decided to start over and went to Ostrava, where they joined the “Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise” project. *“We stayed with friends for a while and then we ended up in a shelter. I’m grateful that through the project I got a job that I like,”* he says.

In May 2014 he became independent and moved with his roommate to a rented flat. In the future he wants to keep his job and pay off his debts. *“I owe so much that I don’t even know how much it is,”* says the former amateur athlete and footballer.

Type of project: Grant project 3.1

Project title: Kasea – Construction Social Enterprise

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.1.06/30.00547

Recipient: Kasea, s. r. o.

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# Martina Černíková

Thanks to MoLSA, the standards of the social-legal protection of children are met



With the financial support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, the Social Affairs and Health Department of the town of Polička in the Pardubice region can create conditions for systematic social work by the authorities for social-legal protection of children (ASLPC). The “Promoting ASLPC Standardization of the Town of Polička” project aims to set new standards of high-quality social-legal protection of children.

The intention is to protect children’s rights to positive development and proper upbringing as well as children’s legitimate interests, including their property, to restore the functioning of disrupted families and to provide a substitute family environment for children who cannot be cared for in their own family. *“The ‘Promoting ASLPC Standardization of the Town of Polička’ project has made it possible to achieve a significant improvement in the quality, scope and accessibility of the services provided, and to increase general awareness of the help and support that we are able to provide to children and their families,”* says Bc. Martina Černíková, head of Polička’s ASLPC, adding: *“The point is to make sure that the service is available both locally and in time for the entire administrative district of the town of Polička.”*

Another of the project’s goals is to make the services offered more efficient, transparent and accessible. *“What is beneficial is mainly that we work with other authorities for social-legal protection of children in the region and open up many interesting topics. We try to understand the practice in other towns, what has worked and what has not worked,”* explains Martina Černíková. Within the project, another social worker has joined Polička’s ASLPC team and other ASLPC staff have expanded and improved their professional competence at accredited professional seminars and on training courses. They can also continue to receive the necessary information from the professional literature bought as part of the project.

Thanks to the project, pleasantly furnished premises have been developed that contribute to the psychological well-being of both children and their parents. *“We’ll also furnish the room with children’s playing equipment which will help us provide a suitable environment and the appropriate conditions for working with families and children,”* concludes Martina Černíková. With the establishment of a special section on Polička’s website, the standard of providing information on the performance of social-legal protection of children has been met.

Type of project: Grant project 3.1

Project title: Promoting ASLPC Standardization of the Town of Polička

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.1.03/C2.00064

Recipient: Town of Polička

The main aim of the project is to improve the quality of social-legal protection of children (SLPC) performed by the Authority for Social-Legal Protection of Children (ASLPC) in the Town of Polička. Through its key activities, it supports the implementation and fulfilment of the SLPC quality standards. The content of the project consists of a comprehensive group of key activities. Partial objectives of the project include fulfilment of the minimum ASLPC staffing standard, an increase in the knowledge, quality and effectiveness of the work performed by the ASLPC staff, improvement of the conditions for the ASLPC staff, the creation of adequate conditions for work with clients, and raising awareness of the ASLPC’s activities. Within the project, a new ASLPC worker has been hired, appropriate facilities and material equipment for communication with endangered children and families have been provided, and information about SLPC has been put on the town’s website.

Area of support >

Support of Social  
Integration of Members  
of Roma Localities



# Jana Zimová

She was kicked out of the house by her mother, she left her father, but she didn't give up



Type of project: Grant project 3.2

Project title:  
Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.2.01/19.00269

Recipient: IQ Roma servis, o. s.

The project provides services to people living in socially excluded localities in Brno. It primarily seeks to improve their knowledge and skills in the labour market.

The project is based on the principle of comprehensive work with families: the key workers linked to individual families plan an individual strategy together with the family members to improve the current situation and, based on an agreed contract, they involve other family members and experts in its solution. The project aims to support families, stabilize their social and economic situation, and support the development of their children. The participants are offered services specifically addressing individual risk situations faced by them and their families. The set of services offered is based on clients' demands, and its content is directly linked to the activities of the joint project "Field Programmes for Brno", implemented in the past by the participating organizations, as well as to projects implemented by IQ Roma servis, especially the "Time to Try it Differently" project.

When her mother threw her out of the house, Jana Zimová wasn't even eighteen years old. She also had problems at school and faced a difficult life situation. The "Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno" project, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, gave her another chance. She now has a place to stay, living in a safe environment, finishing secondary school and even thinking about going to university.

Without the help of the IQ Roma servis organization, which implements the project, Jana would have probably left secondary school at the very beginning. She didn't give up, and now she is in the middle of banking studies. "It was very bad with my studies because of the problems that occurred. But now it looks like I'm on track to finish school," says the girl.

The educational specialist Josef Přehnal, who works with Jana, arranged a place for her in a dormitory, where she found refuge and a new home. The money from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs made it possible for her to receive the help she needed for her studies and her independence. "In my opinion, the most important thing is that she should study and know how to take care of herself independently, without the help of the organization," explains Mr. Přehnal.

It captured his attention at the very beginning of their relationship how capable the girl was. "When I met her, she was just trembling. Yet she was able to get the necessary support from the authorities, despite the claims of some advisory bureaus that it wouldn't be possible to pay for her living in a dormitory like that," says Mr. Přehnal.

Jana explained the situation in a more straightforward way. "They just helped me with some exceptions when I told them that my mother had kicked me out of the house," she describes her communication with the authorities, adding: "I wish that everyone in a similar situation could get the same help, assistance and support from school that I am still getting. My life has improved greatly and I'm happy now." That is why Jana is also boldly planning her future life. "My dream is to get to university and also raise my children well," says the student who would like to work in a bank one day.

# Marcela Žigová

Finally an end to slogging around shelters with five children



Type of project: Grant project 3.2

Project title:  
Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.2.01/19.00269

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Five children. Alone without a partner. Life in a shelter with a lot of debts. That was the situation in which thirty-four-year-old Marcela Žigová found herself in 2006. Scraping along and uncertainty was finally ended by the "Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno" project. With the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, this woman and her children now have decent accommodation.

However, the journey to achieve it has been difficult. "I was applying for a flat in Židenice for eight years. I fought for it, regularly going to the office, but without success. I lived with my kids in shelters for five years," she recalls.

Her suffering ended when she met Jana Balážová, a field social worker specializing in comprehensive family work from the IQ Roma servis organization, which implements the project (to support people in socially excluded localities). "At first, I encountered rejection. But this ended after a meeting with the chairwoman of the housing committee. She helped us and, in my opinion, it was mainly because of her that our client finally received the flat she wanted so much," says Jana Balážová.

She also began to work with the mother of five children on her problems with debt. "We offered the creditors repayment schedules so I can now pay off at least some amounts of my debts," explains Marcela Žigová.

In order to solve the financial situation even better, she would like to find a permanent job, not just extra income. "In the past I worked for technical services. When I'm looking for a job, I'm always told that they don't have any vacancies," says the woman who, in her words, encounters discrimination in the labour market because of her Roma origin.

Through Jana Balážová's coordination, the project helps her even with this problem. "Some people have bad experience, so they've lost self-confidence. It's necessary to break down these barriers and teach people how to communicate with the authorities and how not to be shy at interviews," the social worker says. Marcela Žigová agrees. "I'm not scared any more. And that increases my chances of getting a job," she concludes.



# David Horváth

He struggled with school and now he even dreams of university

I would recommend it to anyone who wants to achieve something. This is what nineteen-year-old David Horváth said about the “Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno” project. Thanks to the help and money from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, he can now study.

In fact, this young man from Brno struggled with school in the past. *“I went to a lot of schools. But because of problems in the family I didn’t even manage to complete the second stage. I finally completed my basic education through courses provided by the primary school,”* says David. His life, as well as the lives of his five siblings, were complicated by their parents’ breakup. His first secondary school studies lasted half a year.

Everything changed when he was given the opportunity to participate in the “Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno” project, implemented by the IQ Roma servis organization from Brno. He found motivation and began a new phase of life at secondary school. Thanks to the project he has a laptop, which he can use to write papers for school, and a quarterly prepaid ticket for public transport. *“I’m doing well and I can also help my classmates. We all get on really well at school,”* adds the young man.

He greatly appreciates the fact that he can go to school without having to worry whether he will have the money for commuting. *“The project helps me to prove it. To meet my goal, to have a decent family, work, I want to be just like everyone else,”* David imagines his future.

He would recommend participation in the project to anyone who was in a similar situation as him. The project could even lead to the fulfilment of his greatest dream. *“I want the Roma to integrate as a community,”* says the young man. The project might even allow him to study at university in the future. Maybe there David will meet his girlfriend, brother-in-law and cousins, who accepted the same help as him.

Type of project: Grant project 3.2

Project title:  
Comprehensive Work in Socially Excluded Localities of Brno

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.2.01/19.00269

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Area of support >

A stylized illustration of a park scene. On the left, a wooden bench sits on a path, with a tall black lamp post and a large green tree behind it. In the center, a wooden signpost holds a red sign with white text. To the right, another tall black lamp post and a large green tree are visible. The background features a bright sun, a blue sky with white clouds, and a green lawn. Small blue birds are scattered on the path in the foreground.

Integration of Socially Excluded Groups in the Labour Market



# Hana Ježová

Thanks to MoLSA, she can do what she enjoys doing: taking care of children

Hana Ježová has been a foster mother for nine years, looking after four children. She found her dream job thanks to the “Even Foster Parents Need Help” project, which is financially supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

She has worked with children since she was fifteen. “Back then, I was already thinking about becoming a foster mother,” says Hana, thirty-nine years old, who used to work as a nursery teacher and later with mentally handicapped children. She also helped with programmes for foster parents. Thanks to their experience, she and her partner were allowed to take care of six-month-old twins. Later, they took in a boy and a girl. Hana Ježová spent nine years with the children at home, but then she wanted to return to work. It wasn’t easy after such a long time, but only until she encountered Aktivně životem (Active Approach to Life), a public benefit corporation implementing the “Even Foster Parents Need Help” project, whose aim is to strengthen labour integration by helping foster parents to find their way in today’s labour market, by increasing their computer skills and extending their qualifications or even by finding a job for them.

The project had three basic parts. The first dealt with the labour market. The second was about self-knowledge, helping the participants to understand better what they would like to do and where their talents lie. The third focused on computer skills.

“The biggest benefit of the course was the self-knowledge part, which gave me confidence,” says Hana. With the help of the project, she managed to open a branch of the Foster Family Association (a detached establishment) in Bystřice pod Hostýnem, where she serves as a social worker. “My job is to visit families and to assist them with disabled children, material aspects, administration and communication with the Social Security Administration or courts, and with anything that needs to be done,” says Hana, giving examples: “In families with more children we also help with the running of the household. We try to make life easier for the families in the service they’re doing.”

Type of project: Grant project 3.3

Project title: Even Foster Parents Need Help

Project number: CZ.1.04/3.3.05/75.00223

Recipient: Aktivně životem, o. p. s.

The aim of the project was to strengthen labour integration of the target group – i.e. foster parents who have provided long-term full-time foster care. After they stop providing long-term foster care, they are disadvantaged in the labour market and they find it very difficult to return to working life after so many years. The course participants completed training to enhance their employability in the labour market. This included motivational courses that increased their self-confidence, which had gone down as a result of providing foster care to children for a long period. Furthermore, they completed activation courses to increase their knowledge of the current labour market. The computer courses expanded their computer skills. Several people who completed the training also attended retraining. Four of them accepted newly created jobs for six months and gained much needed experience to be able to apply for a job with potential employers.

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