

Case Study 4: OPE+ in the LAG Podbrněnsko Region – Start Again – Return of the Unemployed to the Labor Market

Abstract

The case study is focused on the employment program of the OPE+ project activity in LAG Podbrněnsko, specifically on the key activity 4 and the program *Start Again – Return of the Unemployed to the Labor Market*. The motivation for this intervention came from the needs of the area and from previous activities carried out by the involved municipality. The project activity addresses the need for individual work with long-term unemployed people who are difficult to place on the free labour market. The project activity enabled the creation of the position of work coordinator and multidisciplinary team, thanks to which there is individualized and comprehensive support for people, for example through returning to the labor market, securing housing and solving accompanying problems (e.g. debt, addiction).

Case Study Subject

The main vision of the activity was to support long-term unemployed people with an accumulation of social problems. The selected activity aims to increase the success of the long-term unemployed in the labour market (through the creation of training jobs), build work habits and gradually return to the labour market. The project activity includes support from a work coordinator who provides individual counselling and contributes to increasing competences and integrating people into society.

LAG Podbrněnsko and partner of key activities

The Podbrněnsko local action group (LAG) operates on the territory of four municipalities with extended power, which include a total of 35 municipalities. As part of the selected key activity of the project activity, the partner was **the town of Židlochovice**, which implements the Start Again project activity. The town of Židlochovice has extensive experience in working with the target group of the activity of the project, has human resources and knowledge in this area. A significant advantage is the proactivity and motivation of the municipal authorities, which is also involved in the project activity.

The target group of the key activity of the project activity focused on employment programs consists of **long-term unemployed and difficult to employ people**, including people with an accumulation of disabilities and a tendency to risk behavior. Thanks to the project activity, **individualized jobs** were created corresponding to the skills and possibilities of the people involved. The participants were provided **with housing**. Psychological and social counselling was also part of the care for the target group, which enabled the solution of a wide range of problems, such as debt relief, social benefits or disability pension. According to the representatives of the project activity and the target group, **there has been a significant positive shift in the living situation**. Participants have become integrated into society and are now part of community life. An important change is also the feeling of belonging and added value for society. The benefits for the target group are also summarized in the diagram below.





Integration into the labour market through job creation and the support of a work coordinator.



Stabilization of the people involved through solving related problems (e.g. debt, addiction) and securing housing.



Integration into society by improving the perception of the target group of companies and increasing one's own sense of belonging.



Example of good practice – use of case management

Due to the difficult situation of the selected target group, the benefit of the project activity is **a comprehensive and individualized approach**. A multidisciplinary team consisting of a social worker, a work coordinator, a curator, a psychologist and a community centre worker is a powerful tool for effective work with the target group. The team works on the principle of case management, approaching each person involved individually and taking into account their specific needs. The involvement of a psychologist allows social workers to work better with the motivation of the supported persons. The work coordinator supervises and helps the people involved to solve problems, checks their performance of tasks, and stimulates their motivation. An important role is also played by the personal involvement of the municipality leadership, which actively supports the project activity and strengthens its anchoring in the local structure.



"For me, the icing on the cake in terms of the project was that when they talked to the first client, she told our worker that she used to go to church to beg and now to thank them. And that was a demonstration for people that it can be done and that it can work. Everyone saw her on the street and then she started working. I think an important part of the project is that we tried to do the work in such a way that people would be able to do it."

- Representative of the project activity implementer

THE ADDED VALUE OF CLLD

- ▶ **Connecting actors from different sectors and supporting the networking of actors**, for example through community planning of social services, the implementation of a social services exchange, or support for local food through the connection of local producers with school canteens.
- ▶ **Supporting community life in the LAG territory** by guiding the target group to turn passive recipients of services into active participants, organisers and creators. The LAG supports the activation of local communities and the expansion of social capital through the implementation of community actions, networking of local citizens and involvement in the development of the local region.
- ▶ **Support for the development of local governance** by increasing the competences of local actors and involving them in defining the needs of the territory. The LAG also supports local actors through free advice and partnerships to address specific problems and needs. The added value is the overlap (within themes, territories), expertise (coverage of different thematic areas within the LAG office) and knowledge of local actors and context.



Co-funded by
the European Union



- An important factor in the success of the implemented activity is **the involvement of the municipal authorities and the involvement of a wide range of actors**.
- The individual motivation of each person **is also important**, where in many cases they are people with long-term repeated problems. These people are struggling with the accumulation of problems, but also with resignation to changing their situation. The success of the project activity was given, for example, by the support of the coordinator and other actors, but also by the possibility of securing one's own housing.
- x On the other hand, **project activity financing and the absence of continuous financial support** are a long-term problem for the support of the long-term unemployed. According to the project activity representatives, it is necessary to work with the target group in the long term, otherwise they will decline. However, the current system is not set up in such a way that support can be ensured. The first harbinger of change is integration jobs or integration social enterprises. However, there is a lack of tools for long-term stabilization of people who are difficult to place or even impossible to place on the open labor market.

