

## COACHING AND SUPPORTING

The **RYTMUS** DP from Prague was concerned with the development of Supported Employment in the Czech Republic. This was a process that created individual integration plans based on the skills and abilities that could be promoted through supported employment and helped people with disabilities to obtain and retain a job on the open labour market.

When Jane came to RYTMUS, she was 23 years old but she had been unemployed for 5 years and had a disability pension. While she wanted to work, she had no work experience and had never used any employment service. She also had learning difficulties and, as a result, she had problems with using academic and communication skills and simply in using the transport system to get around.

Jane had access to a job coach and the role of the job coach was to help her but not to take an action without her agreement. Initially, Jane was not used to solving her own problems and would have preferred them all to be solved by the job coach. However, there were a number of ways to help with Jane's empowerment and apart from selecting her own job coach, she was involved in:

- Choosing where to meet;
- Formulating her own needs;
- Taking part in the creation of her own plan for individualised support;
- Defining the method of solving her own difficulties;
- Discussing each step needed to find a job.

As a result, Jane gained her first long term job, and after the first six months of her employment, it was agreed that the support of job coach was no longer necessary. In Jane's own words, "I feel great about my job, even if I have a lot of work to do".

It is hoped that in the future, many more people than Jane will benefit from the DP's activities. RYTMUS was involved in preparing National Quality Standards and together with labour offices and central government it drafted a National Strategy for Supported Employment. The conclusions from the project's national meeting on empowerment were also presented to the Governmental Board for People with Disabilities.

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