

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# Do individualised projects help integrate the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged people? Lessons from the Czech Republic

Ondřej Hora  | Tomáš Sirovátka 

Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, RILSA, Prague, Czech Republic

**Correspondence**

Tomáš Sirovátka, Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, RILSA, Prague, Czech Republic.

Email: [tomas.sirovatka@rilsa.cz](mailto:tomas.sirovatka@rilsa.cz); [sirovatk@fss.muni.cz](mailto:sirovatk@fss.muni.cz)

Ondřej Hora, Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, RILSA, Prague, Czech Republic.

Email: [ondrej.hora@rilsa.cz](mailto:ondrej.hora@rilsa.cz); [hora@fss.muni.cz](mailto:hora@fss.muni.cz)**Funding information**

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, Grant/Award Number: IP70712

**Abstract**

This article evaluates a national project for the integration of long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups of jobseekers implemented in the Czech Republic since 2019. It discusses how individual work and active labour market policy measures for these groups have changed, and what the outcomes were. We combined a quantitative evaluation of the targeting and outcomes of the measures with a qualitative evaluation of changes in the project implementation through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted at the Labour Office branches. The findings show the need to broaden the availability of hard measures such as private-sector placement subsidies for the most disadvantaged jobseekers, and to improve soft measures (counselling and training), especially if front-line workers do not have sufficient competences for individual work. We are cautious about generalising the findings, as the pandemic complicated the implementation of soft measures.

**KEYWORDS**

active labour market policy measures, Czech Republic, individual work, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups, targeted project

**INTRODUCTION**

The study addresses the issue of integrating the most disadvantaged groups of jobseekers into the labour market and discusses the factors that affect work with disadvantaged jobseekers. Groups of unemployed people who are difficult to employ due to serious and often multiple disadvantages are currently under pressure to (re)integrate into the labour market. The long-term unemployed (LTU)<sup>1</sup> are a specific group of such jobseekers since longer periods of unemployment entrench the disadvantages that they face by undermining their human

capital and levels of motivation and self-confidence and triggering the signalling effect.

An individual approach or individualisation in the provision of services such as counselling, active labour market policy (ALMP) measures and social services to these groups are believed to be a key prerequisite for their integration into the labour market. We have adopted a broad definition of individualisation in service provision as the tailoring of services to individual circumstances of service beneficiaries in the interest of increasing their effectiveness (van Berkel & Valkenburg, 2007, p. 3). Rice et al. (2018, p. 93–94) note that such an approach implies an adequate assessment of the jobseeker's needs and interventions that reflect the jobseeker's life circumstances and personal employment barriers.

<sup>1</sup>We have adopted a standard definition of LTU (OECD, ILO, and Eurostat) as jobseekers who have been unemployed for a period of 12 months or more.

Studies on the effectiveness of ALMP measures provide evidence that human capital/employability support measures, such as retraining and private-sector employment support, are most effective in improving the chances of the LTU in the medium and long term, while individualised job-search counselling is the most effective form of support for disadvantaged groups of the unemployed in the short term (e.g., Card et al., 2015, 2018; Kluge, 2014). How counselling targeted at the LTU and other disadvantaged groups is implemented and whether it leads to better access to ALMPs has not yet been the subject of detailed research. Frederiksson (2021) found evidence of synergies among active labour market policies showing that job-matching and counselling had indirect positive effects on other ALMP measures: increased spending on PES seemed to reinforce the long-term effects of training programmes.

The Czech Republic has gained experience with the individualised approach to jobseekers and introduced it particularly in connection with the implementation of ALMP measures supported by the European Social Fund (e.g., Sirovátka, 2011, 2018). More recently, this experience was used in the design and conduct of the project ‘*Support for long-term unemployed jobseekers*’ (PDU), implemented in the period 2019–2023. The project targeted LTU and other disadvantaged jobseekers with the aim to eliminate the barriers they were facing in accessing the labour market by providing them with intensive individualised counselling and support and facilitating their access to ALMPs.

The aim of this study is to assess the PDU project in terms of jobseekers’ integration into the labour market. We also take into account changes in the conditions for individualised approach to working with LTU and disadvantaged (difficult-to-employ) categories of jobseekers, and the delivery and targeting of counselling and ALMP interventions for these jobseekers.

The evaluation used a mixed method approach (integrated evaluation framework<sup>2</sup>). We relied on a quantitative evaluation of administrative data on participants of the PDU project. In addition, we conducted and analysed semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with representatives of selected branches of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic.

The contribution of the study lies in the evaluation of the benefits of the individualised approach in integrating long-term unemployed and disadvantaged jobseekers into

the labour market and in the analysis of the factors that influence the implementation of this approach.

The following text is structured as follows: “**Methodology**” presents the theoretical considerations and institutional background information and “**The PDU project implementation and contribution**” provides a discussion of the methodology. “**The PDU project outcomes**” presents the findings: the various contexts of the project implementation followed by a discussion of targeting and impacts of the project. The conclusions place the findings in a broader context and assess the contribution of the study to the theory and policymaking in the field of ALMP.

## INTEGRATION OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS INTO THE LABOUR MARKET

### The need for an individualised approach to labour market integration

LTU and disadvantaged groups are understood as heterogeneous categories of jobseekers who are difficult to place in the labour market due to serious and cumulative disadvantages. The increase in size and heterogeneity of these groups currently represents a significant challenge for active labour market policies. These groups were not exposed to such strong pressure to (re)integrate into the labour market in the past (Andersen et al., 2017, p. 336; van Berkel et al., 2018, p. 5). Andersen et al. (2017, p. 336) define this category as recipients of social assistance with a range of problems that prevent them from securing employment in the foreseeable future, including social problems and mental and physical limitations. The long-term unemployed occupy an important position in the list of difficult-to-employ groups (van Berkel, 2020) since, in addition to pre-existing disadvantages, longer periods of unemployment create additional disadvantages: loss of human capital (work skills and experience), demotivation due to the psychological costs associated with unsuccessful job-search, reduced self-confidence/self-efficacy and weakened incentives to work. Moreover, long-term unemployment leads to a signalling effect, i.e., the reluctance of employers to accept jobseekers as a result of distrust in their ability and motivation to work.

An individualised approach and tailored measures have traditionally been considered to be a prerequisite for a successful activation of the long-term unemployed and their (re)integration into the labour market (e.g., Pascual, 2007; van Berkel & Valkenburg, 2007). It is

<sup>2</sup>The integrated evaluation framework for assessing ALMPs combines experimental evaluation with programme theory evaluation and quantitative and qualitative data collection to examine what works, for whom and under what circumstances (Bredgaard, 2015, p. 436). This allows a distinction to be made between implementation failure and programme theory failure (ibid., p. 443).

also generally accepted that these measures must be accompanied by social services for these difficult-to-employ groups, preferably in the form of casework (Andersen et al., 2017; Nothdurfter, 2016; Schulte et al., 2018). This approach has the potential to overcome their disadvantages by identifying individual needs and problems and by supporting their self-confidence, motivation, orientation in the labour market and job-search skills. In addition, it allows for the provision of ALMP programmes that enhance employability and provide access to the labour market. Targeting programmes at beneficiaries individually significantly affects the effectiveness of these programmes since ALMP programmes have different impacts on specific groups of jobseekers (e.g., Card et al., 2015, 2018; Eichhorst & Rinne, 2016). For example, while actual and potential long-term unemployed individuals appear to benefit from these programmes, jobseekers who generally find employment relatively easily may be harmed by participation due to the negative signalling effect for employers (e.g., Gerfin et al., 2005). Targeted policies promote equity in terms of access to jobs for disadvantaged individuals: in particular, they reduce the creaming-off effect and trigger enhancing, transition and springboard effects (Brown, 2015; Brown & Koettl, 2015). The individualised approach helps to eliminate some of the barriers that disadvantaged groups of the unemployed face in accessing ALMP programmes, for example, self-selecting unemployed people who are better equipped with human and social capital. PES officials also tend to choose candidates who appear to be more employable and respect the final decision of employers regarding the selection of unemployed workers for job-creation schemes. Difficulties with recruiting long-term unemployed people and people with multiple problems for interventions may lead to their under-representation in ALMP programmes (Hora & Sirovátka, 2020; Nicaise et al., 1995).

Efforts to prevent long-term unemployment and the related development of diagnostic and counselling methods such as profiling and early assessment (e.g., OECD, 2019) have contributed to addressing the challenge of the expanding range of categories of workers affected by multiple disadvantages.

### **Factors influencing the integration of the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups into the labour market**

Studies on the effectiveness of ALMP interventions provide evidence that individualised approach and counselling are the most effective forms of support for those who are difficult to place in employment (e.g., Card et al., 2015, 2018; Kluge, 2014). Nevertheless, the mechanism via which the individualised approach to jobseekers affects the outcomes

of ALMP measures has not yet been extensively explored. The mechanisms may involve enhancing jobseekers' self-confidence and motivation, introducing support and/or incentives for a more effective job search and/or improving the targeting of ALMP interventions and coverage of disadvantaged jobseekers to improve their employability and/or provide opportunities to access the labour market.

A number of studies discuss the complexity of the factors that influence the effectiveness of ALMPs in terms of integrating difficult-to-employ jobseekers into the labour market (e.g., Rice, 2017; Schulte et al., 2018; van Berkel et al., 2018). van Berkel (2020) identified four broader, closely interrelated contexts that influence effectiveness in this regard: (1) the policy context, that is, the substance/content and quality of policies, (2) the governance context, that is, service provision models, (3) the organisational context, that is, management, working conditions and task descriptions, and (4) the occupational context, that is, the professionalisation of street-level workers, their dispositions and attitudes.

The policy context may include officially mandated caseworker discretion, guidelines for the selection of counselling or other types of support, approach to and methods of activation, a sufficiently low caseworker-to-client ratio, the range of available employment services and ALMP measures addressing a variety of barriers to work from which caseworkers may choose. In addition, referrals to social services providers should also be possible to address issues less directly related to work (Rice, 2017).

The governance context (delivery model) concerns the degree of decentralisation and the way in which procedural/bureaucratic, market-oriented, new public management and network modes of governance are applied in the delivery of services (Schulte et al., 2018; van Berkel, 2020). Available studies favoured the network rather than the market mode of governance, organisational adaptation to local needs/decentralisation and sufficient space for professional autonomy and initiative of front-line workers. They also emphasised the needs and autonomous agency of clients and stressed the need for barriers to profit extraction by service providers through strategies such as creaming and parking. Removal of inadequate performance targets such as the number of meetings with the unemployed is important in this context (e.g., Nothdurfter, 2016; Schulte et al., 2018; van Berkel, 2020; van Berkel et al., 2018).

The organisational context includes an emphasis on activation and individualised front-line work and human resources management, including the definition of work tasks, remuneration and work conditions (van Berkel, 2020).

The professional context concerns: (1) the expectations/requirements concerning the level and type of the initial

professional qualifications of PES staff and their further training, particularly in front-line work, (2) their status within the PES and their abilities and competencies in terms of informed decision-making on individual cases and affective capacity (Penz et al., 2017) and (3) their attitudes and normative dispositions (Nothdurfter, 2016; van Berkel & Knies, 2018; van Berkel & van der Aa, 2012).

### Labour market inclusion of long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups of unemployed in the Czech Republic

The Czech activation strategy draws heavily on the work-first approach, which promotes coercive practices in activation. This approach is part of a broad stream of neoliberal social policy reforms in the country (Sirovátka, 2014, 2016). The policy context is not particularly supportive of the labour market integration of disadvantaged groups: Rákoczyová et al. (2021) explained that the negative stereotype of the unmotivated, uncooperative client constructed by employment office staff is an important barrier to individualised work and clients' integration into the open labour market. Another problem is a lack of cooperation with other actors due to the separation of the legislative frameworks for employment services and social services and insufficient personnel capacity (Sirovátka & Rákoczyová, 2022). Finally, the scope and coverage of ALMP measures, as well as the staff resources of public employment services (PES), are modest compared to other EU countries (e.g., Sirovátka, 2018).

As regards the governance context, studies suggested that reforms to the governance of PES in the Czech Republic have led to increased centralisation and less room for adaptation of policies to local needs and for autonomous decision-making (Sirovátka, 2016, 2018). The centralised policy guidelines stress quantitative, simple objectives such as the number of face-to-face sessions and mediation and counselling interventions, cost containment and work efficiency (Rákoczyová et al., 2021). Centralisation reforms of 2011 and the Civil Service Act (2015) undermined the organisational and professional contexts: they led to cuts in personnel and to a rigorous application of lower qualification standards that cannot ensure adequate delivery of the individualised approach to working with difficult-to-employ clients (Sirovátka & Rákoczyová, 2022).

Trlifajová and Hurrell (2019) pointed out certain negative implications of the interaction of the occupational and organisational contexts with the labour market context. They argued that this explains why the work-first measures, implemented to make work pay in order to increase the financial incentive for benefit claimants, were ineffective. The point is that front-line PES staff do not consider the real situation of jobseekers and are unable to assess their

needs individually and provide them with adequate individualised support. This includes a lack of recognition of individual limitations in terms of access to employment, when only non-standard jobs or only public works may be available for these groups. PES workers also often fail to realise that jobseekers may have limited knowledge of their options to combine benefits with earnings and to retain certain benefit entitlements when working.

In spite of the above shortcomings, there is some evidence of the individualised approach to jobseekers being implemented. Experience was gained particularly through the introduction of ALMP measures supported by the Employment Operational Programme of the European Social Fund (e.g., Sirovátka, 2011, 2018). A study by Rákoczyová et al. (2021) identified examples of good practice with respect to the individualised approach. However, even in these cases, limitations related to the policy, governance and organisational contexts were mentioned; these were, above all, a lack of decision-making freedom, administrative complexity of the work process and excessive restrictions due to legislative and organisational rules, together with insufficient time capacity and inadequate technical and spatial facilities to provide individualised services. This was accompanied by limited availability of suitable ALMP measures to assist difficult-to-employ groups.

The gained experience was recently applied in the design and implementation of the national project 'Support for long-term unemployed jobseekers' launched in 2019 and planned to end in 2023. The project represents a potentially significant innovation in the employment policy of the Czech Republic due to targeting only at LTU and disadvantaged jobseekers and promising more intensive individual work with this group and access to ALMPs. This study evaluates the extent to which the PDU project has contributed to (1) changes in the policy, governance, organisational and professional contexts of individualised work with jobseekers and delivery of ALMP measures, (2) the delivery of counselling services and ALMP measures to LTU and disadvantaged groups of jobseekers, and (3) the outflow of project participants from the labour office registers.

## METHODOLOGY

The study applied the integrated framework approach to the evaluation of ALMP measures (e.g., Bredgaard, 2015): we combined a quantitative evaluation of the impacts of the PDU project and a qualitative evaluation of the project implementation and of the factors that influenced it.

The analysis of the context of the PDU project implementation was based on focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews conducted at selected labour offices in 2022. The interviews focused on issues related to the design

and implementation of the PDU project. A total of 13 semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions were held in 2022 at the General Directorate of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, at four regional branches of the Labour Office (of a total of 13 branches) and at eight contact offices (of a total of 65). Each of the focus groups included more than one participant (with a maximum of three participants). We interviewed mainly PDU project workers who carried out front-line work with clients. In most cases, the heads of the departments responsible for active labour market policies and for the overall management of the PDU project also participated in the interviews. The interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using the *Atlas.ti* programme employing axial and open coding.

Information from the interviews was supplemented by the collection of qualitative data in the form of an online survey (using the Delphi method). We used open-ended questions on key aspects of the PDU project implementation and reached out to experts (front-line workers and managers) from other branches of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic than the ones where we had conducted the interviews and focus groups. Thus, we ensured that all 14 regional branches of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic were included in the research. In total, we received online responses from 17 experts of a total of 25 who were contacted.

We also drew on a more general knowledge of the implementation of the main ALMP measures and the individualised approach to jobseekers during the pandemic in 2020–2021, as presented in a study by Hora et al. (2021). Hora's research was conducted in mid-2021 and involved semi-structured interviews with selected managers at regional branches and contact offices of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (17 interviews) and at its General Directorate (two interviews).

We assessed the project outcomes using the administrative database of jobseekers and ALMP programmes (OKPráce). We applied a quasi-experimental counterfactual approach based on coarsened exact matching (CEM) to establish a control group. This allowed us to assess the programme outcomes while controlling for intervening effects of jobseekers' observable characteristics and some labour market context variables. We controlled for both regional-level and individual-level variables. At the regional level, these included the region (NUTS2), the regional unemployment rate and the regional vacancy rate. At the individual level, these were gender, age, health status, education level, having children and the employment/unemployment/self-employment history of the jobseeker (details of the matching process are available on request). The analysis of the outcomes of the PDU project was presented primarily in the form of graphs showing participants' inclusion in the PES register following their enrolment in the project. Since the unemployment register is not linked

to social security data in the Czech Republic due to GDPR requirements, we were unable to monitor the employment status of the project participants and the control group after they had left the register. However, we performed an analysis of competing risks using the cumulative incidence function to assess cumulative incidence curves for each event type (reasons for applicants leaving the register) in the presence of other event types (Scrucca et al., 2007). We also assessed the targeting of the PDU project at the specific groups of the unemployed. To do this, we used the targeting index calculated as follows: (number of group members among project participants/total number of participants in the measure)/(total number of group members among the unemployed/total number of unemployed).

We included 3408 participants who enrolled in the PDU project in 2019. We assessed the effects of all the ALMP measures assigned to these PDU participants in 2019 and 2020. We also took into account any other measures these jobseekers took part in during these years (under other projects). We were able to monitor all these jobseekers in terms of outflows and inflows from and into the register for at least 900 days until mid-2022.

The data collection involved in the above case study was carried out in compliance with the guidelines set out in the Ethical Code of the research organisation involved and with personal data protection requirements (GDPR). In particular, the interviewees and respondents were fully informed of our strict compliance with the principles of confidentiality and pseudonymity. A pseudonymised database of jobseekers was provided for the purpose of the analysis by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as part of a broad research project assessing the impact of main ALMP instruments in the Czech Republic during 2019–2020.

## THE PDU PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTRIBUTION

### The overall context of the project implementation

The project was aimed at people who were long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment due to a combination of disadvantages, typically jobseekers in receipt of social assistance benefits. Enrolment in the project was voluntary; participants were recruited through several channels: general information resources for jobseekers and employers and group and individual meetings with selected jobseekers.

The project was launched in 2019 at a time when the Czech economy was growing, the number of unemployed people was decreasing and the supply of vacancies was

increasing. These factors enabled the PES to concentrate more on LTU and other disadvantaged jobseekers. At the same time, the range of ALMP measures was reduced in view of the decreasing unemployment rate: between 2018 and 2019, ALMP spending was reduced by 47% and the number of participants in ALMP measures decreased from 19.7% to 12.5% of the total number of the registered unemployed (own calculations based on MoLSA, 2022).

The project continued in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary transition to economic recession and a reduced number of job offers. However, the increase in unemployment in 2020 was relatively moderate mainly due to an extensive part-time work programme which served to protect existing jobs. According to the Labour Force Survey/LFS (CZSO, 2022; MoLSA, 2022), unemployment increased from 109.2 thousand (2% of the economically active population) at the end of 2019 to 161.7 thousand (3%) at the end of 2020. Registered unemployment was higher: 215.5 thousand at the end of 2019 (a 4% unemployment rate) and 292 thousand at the end of 2020 (a 5.4% unemployment rate).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the potential for removal from the unemployment register declined for the already long-term unemployed in 2020.

In 2020, despite all the measures adopted by the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, the pandemic made it difficult to work individually with jobseekers in general and with difficult-to-place jobseekers in particular, due to strict social distancing rules during the periods of emergency declarations and restrictions on the use of ALMP measures. Specifically, the number of participants in ALMP measures decreased to 7% of the registered unemployed in 2020 (Hora et al., 2021). In summary, the project implementation period was unfavourable in terms of the project's potential to make a significant difference.

## The project's contribution to the individualised approach and tailored active labour market policy measures

### Support provided to jobseekers and the project activities

The PDU project led to a number of concrete changes in the policy and organisational contexts.<sup>4</sup> The most

<sup>3</sup>Registered unemployment was higher than shown by the LFS since some of the registered unemployed did not meet the definition of unemployment used in the LFS: either they did not actively search for a job or they were not available to start work within the defined reference periods. This may have been due to the effect of their entitlement to unemployment and/or social assistance benefits and lack of motivation on their part.

<sup>4</sup>This section builds on interviews/focus group discussions and a survey via the Delphi method conducted at the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (see the section on [Methodology](#)).

significant policy context change was the creation of conditions to support more intensive and complex individualised work with jobseekers with multiple handicaps. This was mainly due to the establishment of the position of project worker for jobseekers and another one for communication with employers; the two workers worked closely together. The scope for individualised approach was expanded: the project worker for jobseekers worked continuously with a group of typically 20–30 jobseekers via intensive consultations, or with two groups of 10–15 (or slightly more) jobseekers. This allowed for two to three counselling sessions with each jobseeker per month, each session lasting one to 2 h or more, as required.

As part of mandatory counselling, either in groups or individually, jobseekers received advice on topics that were seen as important for effective orientation in the labour market and the job-search process: employment law and contracts, financial literacy, foreclosure and other debt-related issues, general communication skills and job-search skills (including CVs and self-presentation). The topics of financial literacy and foreclosure were seen as being particularly useful by Labour Office staff since a significant proportion of the jobseekers were already in foreclosure or at risk thereof.

In addition to the mandatory counselling activities, other group counselling (e.g., a job club, a motivational course) was provided, accompanied by inclusion in ALMP measures: retraining, subsidies for employment in the private sector, public works in the non-governmental sector, etc. Secondary measures selectively included reimbursement of travel expenses, provision of meals, childcare services and care for other dependent family members, and reimbursement of fees associated with pre-employment health assessment and with participation in ALMP interventions.

The governance context of working with jobseekers also changed. The cooperation of the two project workers was essential whenever intensive work was required for a particular case, such as assessment of the suitability of employment offers for the jobseeker and support for him/her when negotiating with potential employers. In addition, stronger connections and cooperation were established between the mediation, counselling, labour market and social assistance departments. Cooperation with non-governmental organisations of various types working with target groups that face social disadvantage was further deepened at a number of Labour Office branches.

The project workers were required to fulfil a set of project indicators, such as the number of jobseekers covered with respect to the target groups, and various activity indicators, particularly concerning mandatory activities such as counselling. On the other hand,

they enjoyed more flexibility in implementing the individualised approach and were not bound by the usual performance indicators such as the number of counselling sessions provided.

The professional context of the project remained unchanged. There are no specific qualification requirements for the front-line staff of public employment services (job mediators, counselling specialists, and project workers) in terms of the ability to apply the individualised approach: a completed secondary level of education is required in all fields. As with other employees in the public administration sector, their training focuses on knowledge of the relevant legislation. Thus, although the project was implemented under the same conditions and following uniform guidelines across the Labour Office branches, significant differences were identified in the provision of individualised approach and tailored ALMP measures, depending on the qualifications and expertise of project workers and the approach adopted by the management (heads of ALMP departments and directors of regional and local/contact branches). There were a few Labour Office branches where the project workers placed less emphasis on the individualised approach to jobseekers than the staff of other branches due to a lack of competences for it. For example, when selecting jobseekers for participation in the project, the project workers waited for proposals from employers on placing applicants in public works and private-sector jobs and only then verified whether the applicant met the formal eligibility conditions.

We assessed the implementation and outcomes of the PDU project in its initial stage (2019–2020). Although the interviews were conducted in 2022, when the project was at a more advanced stage, they did not indicate any change in the differences among Labour Office branches in the provision of individualised approach.

## THE PDU PROJECT OUTCOMES

### Scope of the ALMP programmes provided

The PDU project made it possible to substantially increase the access of disadvantaged jobseekers to various forms of counselling support and ALMP measures. A comparison of the distribution of ALMP measures to PDU project participants with their distribution to other long-term and repeatedly unemployed persons revealed that, in general, the long-term and repeatedly unemployed benefitted from the various types of measures to a significantly lesser extent than PDU project participants. Only 1.4% of the long-term and repeatedly unemployed participated in retraining, only 0.6% in subsidised jobs in

the private-sector programme (SUPM), 2% in the public works programme (VPP) and 0.1% received the commuting allowance, see Table 1. In summary, as few as 4.1% participated in the main ALMP measures (not including counselling programmes). In comparison, PDU project participants participated in ALMP measures to a considerably greater extent: 3.9% took part in retraining, 8% in SUPM, 12.4% in the VPP programme and 0.5% received the commuting allowance, i.e., a total of 24.8% of project participants took part in the main ALMP measures, not including counselling, which equates to six times more than among those not included in the PDU project.<sup>5</sup> In addition to ALMP measures, 36.1% of PDU project participants benefited from counselling activities, compared with only 2.4% in the control group of other long-term and repeatedly unemployed.

A number of project participants took advantage of a combination of measures. Typically, the intention was to provide counselling support alongside participation in an ALMP measure. In total, 14.2% of project participants received a combination of services (including participation in other projects): the most common combination was counselling and public works (6.4%), followed by counselling and private-sector jobs (3.6%) and counselling and retraining (0.8%).

### Targeting of the project at disadvantaged categories of jobseekers

The PDU project was effectively targeted at disadvantaged groups of jobseekers (see Table A1); in accordance with the project plan, it primarily benefited long-term and/or repeatedly registered jobseekers<sup>6</sup>: 82% of participants (targeting index 1.49). In addition, it was largely targeted at jobseekers with a basic education (40.6%, targeting index 1.56), those over 50 years old (58.3%, targeting index 1.54 and higher) and those with health limitations or disabilities (66.5%, targeting index higher than 2). Overall, the targeting data is illustrative of the specific profile of PDU project participants. They were older, often with disabilities and lower levels of education and with substantial experience of unemployment. Thus,

<sup>5</sup>We compared participants in the PDU project with all jobseekers entered in the Labour Office register for at least 1 day during the year, that is, we included those who were listed in the register at the beginning of 2019 as well as all those who registered during the year (i.e., the stock and flow) since, hypothetically, all these applicants had a chance to benefit from some of the ALMP measures during 2019.

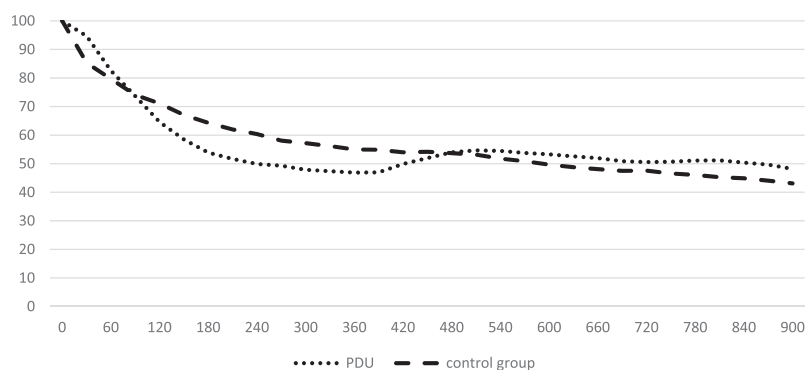
<sup>6</sup>In Table A1 we have created a new category, which we refer to as the cumulative unemployment duration, where long-term and repeatedly unemployed are summed together based on their cumulative unemployment record.

**TABLE 1** Use of ALMP measures for long-term and repeatedly unemployed people (non-project) compared to PDU project participants enrolled in 2019.

	Long-term unemployed		Repeatedly unemployed		Long-term and repeatedly unemployed		PDU project participants	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Elective retraining (by own choice)	680	0.8	2066	0.5	2285	0.6	54	1.6
Standard retraining (provided by Labour Office)	1401	1.6	2689	0.7	3065	0.8	79	2.3
Private-sector job subsidy	1452	1.7	1945	0.5	2339	0.6	271	8
Public works	1674	2	7750	2	7942	2	422	12.4
Commuting allowance	171	0.2	390	0.1	436	0.1	17	0.5
Other (job mediation and individual action plans)	27,061	31	79,200	20.8	86,034	21.3	n/a	n/a
Counselling	5900	6.9	8160	2.2	9602	2.4	1232	36.1
Total	85,290	100	380,078	100	404,566	100	3408	100

Source: OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

Note: Long-term unemployed—had been registered for at least one year in 2019. Repeatedly unemployed—at least three record entries into registers.



**FIGURE 1** Overall results for PDU participants (2019): presence in the PES register compared to the control group during 900 days from the beginning of the project. axis x—days from the beginning of the project, axis y—percentage of project participants and the control group (non-participants) who are registered as unemployed; The CEM method was used to create the control group (see [Methodology](#)).

Source: OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

the project was well targeted at those categories of the unemployed who were overrepresented among the LTU in the Czech Republic (see [Table A1](#) for details).

## Overall project impacts and differences among subgroups of jobseekers

Figure 1 compares the presence of the project participants and of jobseekers from the control group in the Labour Office register over a period of 900 days from the beginning of the project. Since these jobseekers are difficult to employ, around half of both groups remained in the register for relatively long periods of time. In the period from 3 months to 16 months following their inclusion in the project, the presence of PDU project participants stood at around 10 percentage points lower than

for those in the control group (50% and less vs. 60% and less, respectively), while more than 16 months after inclusion in the project the presence of the control group members in the register was slightly lower compared to the project participants. Over the short term, the results were affected by project participants' inclusion in subsidised employment (private-sector jobs, public works), which in the Czech Republic results in the removal of participants in these programmes from the register.

We detected certain differences across various categories of project participants compared to the control group, for example, in the case of project participants with only a basic level of education (maximum ISCED 2), the difference stood at around 10 percentage points (pp), whereas for participants with incomplete secondary education (ISCED 3), the difference increased to 15 pp compared to the control group (presence in the register over the period



TABLE 2 Reasons for leaving the register for PDU participants and control group members.

	Found a job	Personal and family reasons	Removed (sanctioned)	Not specified/left at own request	Placed in a subsidised position	Remained on file	Total
Ongoing unemployment spell							
PDU	16.2	1.6	9.1	15.8	32.4	23.1	2409
Control group	20.7	3.2	15	29.8	2.8	28.4	2409
Follow-up unemployment spell (after ongoing spell was terminated)							
PDU	21.6	1.5	7.7	10.2	25.9	33.1	958
Control group	29.4	1.7	11.8	9.2	6.5	41.4	459

Source: OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

Note: The CEM method was used to create the control group (see [Methodology](#)).

of 3–16 months decreased to 40%); in the case of participants with higher education levels, the difference was negligible (the deadweight effect is significant).

The figure that shows presence in the register was supplemented with an analysis of the reasons for removal from the register (see Table 2 and Figure A1 and Figure A2). We primarily monitored the reason for the first removal of project participants from the register after joining the PDU project and analysed the records of the members of the control group. Regarding the control group, almost 30% of jobseekers remained in the register for the entire period of 900 days from the beginning of the project, 15% were removed due to a sanction and a further 30% left the register at their own request (for an unspecified reason), see Table 2. Past research indicated that the main reason for removal at one's own request concerns persons of pre-retirement age and is connected with their retirement. Around 20% of the control group entered some form of employment or self-employment. In comparison, 16.2% of PDU project participants entered employment (i.e., slightly less than in the control group) and a further 32.4% were placed in subsidised jobs. The proportion of removals at one's own request was roughly half that in the control group (15.8%) and the proportion of persons who remained in the register was also slightly lower (23.1%). The number of removals from the register due to misconduct (sanctioning) was higher for the control group, that is, 15% compared to 9.1% of the project participants. Overall, almost half of the project participants entered employment compared to around 23% of the control group members (16.2% of the participants found a job and 32.4% gained a subsidised job, compared with 20.7% and 2.8% for the control group).

However, 40% of PDU project participants who had left the register returned to it during the monitoring period (i.e., 958 out of 2409). This is around twice as many as seen in the control group (459 out of 2409).

Around two thirds (66.9%) of those PDU project participants who returned subsequently left the register again, with 47.5% of them being placed in employment. To compare, of those members of the control group who returned to the register, 58% subsequently left, with 36% being placed in employment (i.e., less than in the case of the project participants); see Table 2.

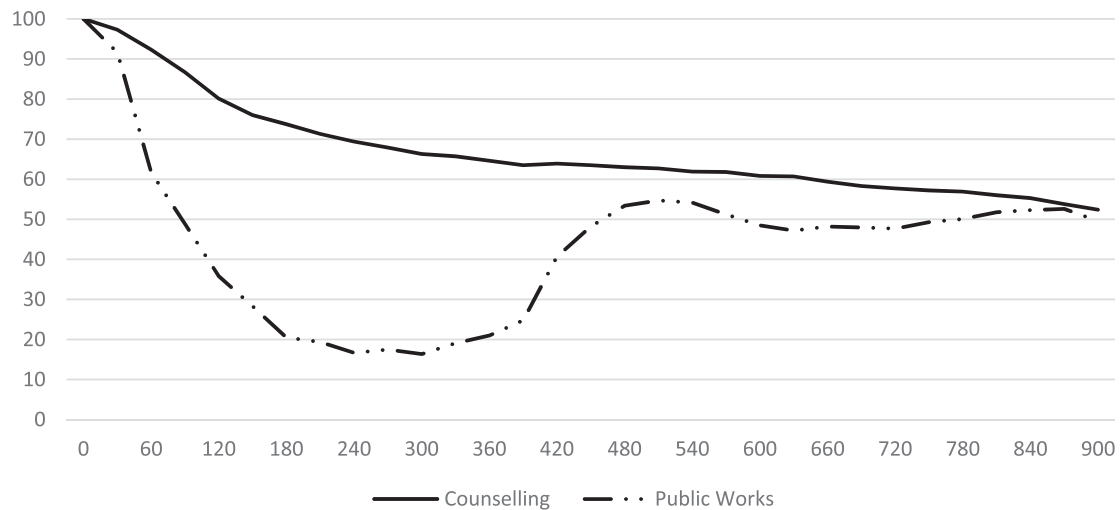
In summary, when the reasons for leaving the register were taken into account, the impacts of the PDU project were more favourable compared with the control group than the presence in the unemployment register alone would suggest.<sup>7</sup>

## Impacts of the programme components

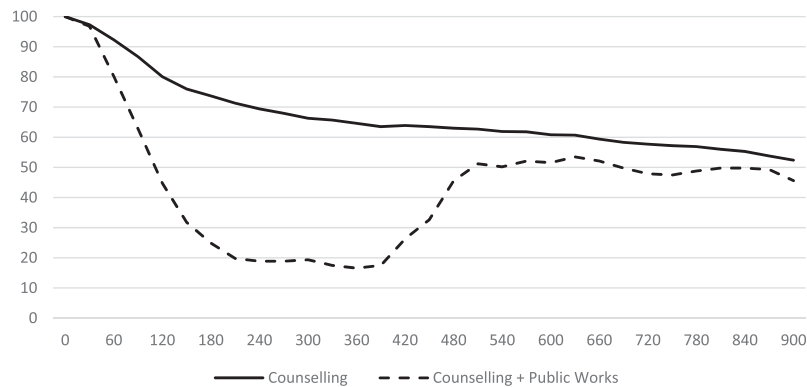
The effects of the project varied significantly by programme component. We evaluated those components where the absolute number of participants allowed for an effective comparison. This approach intentionally included only PDU project participants, that is, it did not include the control group (see Figures 2–6).

The findings show that counselling alone did not permanently remove most of PDU project participants from the register: 1 year after joining the project, over 60% of the participants remained in the register. Furthermore, PDU project participants who were assigned to public works and public works combined with counselling mostly left the register only temporarily. After 6 months of enrolment in the project, only around 20% of these participants featured in the register; however, after

<sup>7</sup>Note that the numbers of those who are registered as unemployed in Figure 1 do not correspond to the numbers of the registered jobseekers in Table 2 because the numbers in Figure 1 include repeated registration of people who left the register (in some cases several times) during the 900-day period.



**FIGURE 2** Comparison of the results for the individual components in terms of presence in the PES register—counselling versus public works. axis x—days from the beginning of the project, axis y—percentage of project participants provided with counselling and those who participated in public works. *Source:* OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).



**FIGURE 3** Comparison of the results for the individual components in terms of presence in the PES register—counselling versus counselling and public works. axis x—days from the beginning of the project, axis y—percentage of project participants provided with counselling and those were provided with counselling plus participated in public works. *Source:* OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

11 months the rate of return accelerated substantially and, after 15 months more than 50% were registered again; see Figure 2.

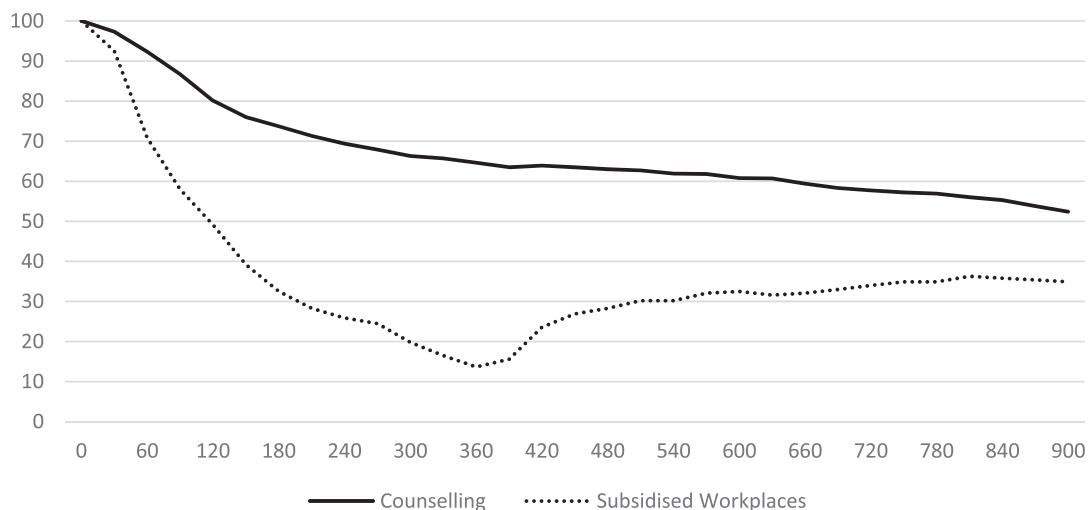
Concerning those in public works combined with counselling, the outflow from the register was slightly slower and the period off the register lasted up to 13 months. However, after 15–16 months, their situation was similar to that of those who had been assigned to public works without counselling, which was nevertheless still slightly more favourable than for jobseekers who received counselling only; see Figure 3.

The most favourable results over the short term concerned participants who were placed in private-sector jobs. This may have been related to the fact that these participants were the most promising PDU project participants with respect to overcoming barriers to entering the

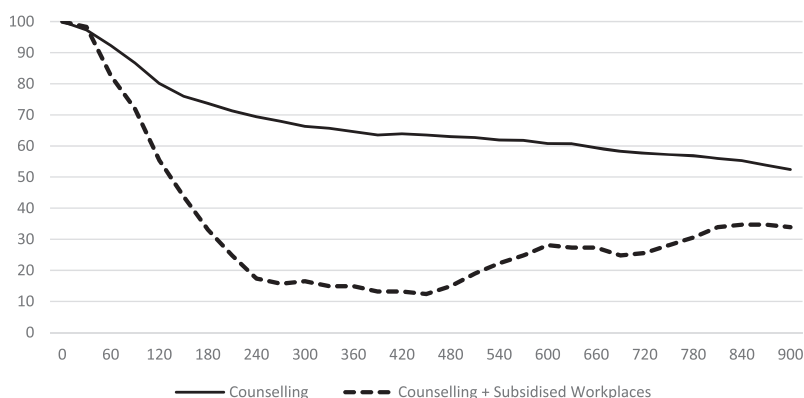
labour market (see the differences in targeting of the project components according to education). Specifically, 6 months after inclusion in the project, around 30% of project participants remained in the register, after 12 months this figure dropped to just over 10% and after two-and-a-half years (30 months), which is the maximum possible period of our observation, it stood at around 30% only; see Figure 4.

After 2 years, the proportion of participants who received counselling in addition to wage subsidies in the private sector in the unemployment register was several percentage points lower than for those who were placed in the private sector without counselling; see Figure 5.

The fact that more than 50% of the group of project participants who received only counselling or retraining



**FIGURE 4** Comparison of the results for the individual components in terms of presence in the PES register—counselling versus subsidised work positions. axis x—days from the beginning of the project, axis y—percentage of project participants provided with counselling and those provided with subsidised workplaces. *Source:* OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).



**FIGURE 5** Comparison of the results for the individual components in terms of presence in the PES register—counselling versus counselling and subsidised work positions. axis x—days from the beginning of the project, axis y—percentage of project participants provided with counselling and those provided with counselling and with subsidised workplaces. *Source:* OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

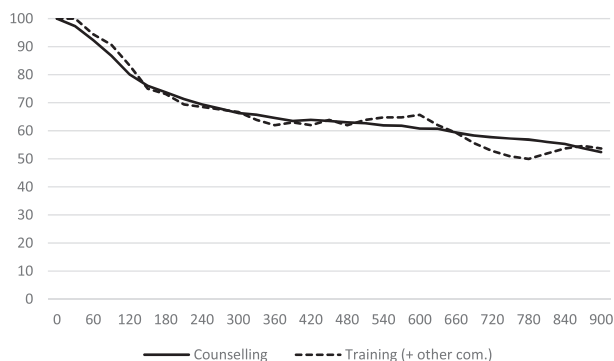
remained in the register after 900 days suggests that counselling and mediation activities, in a similar way to retraining (without placement in a subsidised position), result in securing employment only with great difficulty; see Figure 6. The outcomes of hard ALMP measures for the LTU and disadvantaged jobseekers that participated in the project thus appeared to be significantly better compared with soft<sup>8</sup> ALMP measures.

<sup>8</sup>For the distinction between hard and soft ALMP measures see Haapanala (2021, p. 4): in our case, hard measures are those that place jobseekers directly at the workplace with the objective of minimising the duration of unemployment, while soft measures focus on building the capacities of jobseekers to improve their chances of employment.

## DISCUSSION

The PDU project resulted in positive changes to the provision of individualised approach and tailored ALMP interventions, particularly in the policy and organisational contexts and, to a lesser extent, in the governance context. However, the potential of the individualised approach and use of ALMP measures was weakened due to a reduction in funding for ALMP in 2019 and 2020.

Despite funding constraints, the PDU project improved access to ALMP measures by approximately six times compared to other jobseekers with similar disadvantages in the labour market (24.8% against 4.1%). Although a quarter of the project participants took part in the ALMP measures, only 12% participated



**FIGURE 6** Comparison of the results for the individual components in terms of presence in the PES register—counselling versus training (and other components). axis x—days from the beginning of the project, axis y—percentage of project participants provided with counselling and those who participated in training (plus possibly other project components). *Source:* OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

in retraining programmes or received support for employment in the private sector. Only 14.2% of the project participants received a combination of activities. The combination of counselling and measures to increase private-sector employment was the least frequent intervention, with counselling and job creation provided to 3.6% of project participants and counselling and retraining to only 0.8% of participants.

The professional context of the project remained unchanged. The key problem concerns the lack of specific qualification requirements for front-line PES staff in relation to the application of individualised approach. At some Labour Office branches, the project workers thus placed a low emphasis on using the individualised approach to jobseekers, mainly due to their own lack of experience and qualifications for applying this approach.

The positive net effects on the presence of PDU project participants in the PES register were not significant. In the period from 3 months to 16 months following inclusion in the project, project participants' presence in the register was around 10 percentage points lower than that of the control group. When controlling for reasons for leaving the register, the impacts of the PDU project compared more favourably with the control group than would appear based on the presence in the unemployment register alone. Compared to the control group, leaving the register to enter subsidised or unsubsidised employment was significantly more frequent than leaving the register for any other reason.

Significant differences were observed in the outcomes of the various programme components. PDU project participants assigned to public works and public works combined with counselling temporarily left the register but then returned to it relatively quickly; after 15 months,

more than 50% returned to the register. The most favourable short-term outcome was achieved by participants in the private-sector job placement category. Between 6 months and two and a half years following inclusion in the programme, only around 30% returned to the register, slightly less in cases where private-sector placement was combined with counselling. The outcomes for counselling activities and retraining appear to be somewhat limited; after 22 months, approximately 60% of these participants were still in the register.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that soft measures (counselling, retraining) without placement in a subsidised job rarely lead to a permanent exit from the PES register for the most disadvantaged categories of jobseekers. Thus, the impact of hard ALMP measures, in particular subsidies for private-sector jobs, appears to be more significant than that of soft ALMP measures for the severely disadvantaged categories of jobseekers that participated in the project, albeit only temporarily in the case of those placed in public works jobs. The findings are largely in agreement with the conclusions of meta-evaluations performed by Card et al. (2015, 2018) who found a minor and temporary effect of job-matching for the long-term unemployed, as opposed to a more significant and permanent impact of measures such as job creation in the private sector and retraining. In contrast to these conclusions, retraining had a relatively small effect on disadvantaged PDU participants in our analysis.

However, these conclusions need to be viewed with caution with respect to some methodological limitations. First, subsidised jobs automatically lead to the removal of jobseekers from the register. Thus, we observed that typically after 360 days, when subsidies often expire, the number of re-entries to the register increased. Second, in some cases, subsidies were granted (and jobseekers enrolled) after employers had approached the labour office to claim subsidies for jobseekers that they already wanted; this indicates a deadweight loss. Despite these limitations, the positive effect of job subsidies on employment, compared to counselling, observed after 2 years, and again after two and a half years (900 days) when the subsidies eventually expired, was maintained in all cases: this finding is consistent with our overall conclusions. Lastly, we are cautious about generalising the findings on the effects of the programme components, as the pandemic complicated the implementation of soft measures such as counselling and retraining programmes; their outcomes may thus be worse than they would normally be compared to job subsidies.

Overall, the PDU project resulted in a number of positive but limited impacts. Although certain improvements were made thanks to the project in relation to the individualised approach and tailored ALMP measures, mainly in the policy context, some limitations have been recognised. These primarily included a limited range of hard measures available, especially those that facilitate access to the open labour market, and persistent limitations in the professional context, including significant variations in the level of competences to apply the individualised approach at Labour Office branches.

This case study indicates that partial changes to the policy context, such as increasing the personnel capacity for individualised approach and creating opportunities to participate in ALMP measures, may not be sufficient to place the most disadvantaged jobseekers in the labour market. It appears to be necessary to comprehensively professionalise the application of the individualised approach and to ensure wider availability of hard measures, especially private-sector placement subsidies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article has greatly benefitted from the research project supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic *Effectiveness of active labour market policies in the boom and COVID crisis, with focus on the long-term unemployed*, no. IP70712.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## ORCID

Ondřej Hora  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2218-0244>

Tomáš Sirovátka  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6891-2258>

## REFERENCES

- Andersen, N. A., Caswell, D., & Larsen, F. (2017). A new approach to helping the hard-to-place unemployed: The promise of developing new knowledge in an interactive and collaborative process. *European Journal of Social Security*, 19(4), 335–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1388262717745193>
- Bredgaard, T. (2015). Evaluating what works for whom in active labour market policies. *European Journal of Social Security*, 17(4), 436–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/138826271501700403>
- Brown, A. J. G. (2015). Can hiring subsidies benefit the unemployed? *IZA World of Labor*, 163, 4–5. <https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.163>
- Brown, A. J. G., & Koettl, J. (2015). Active labour market programmes: Employment gain or fiscal drain? *The Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA)*, 4(1), 11–15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40172-015-0025-5>
- Card, D., Kluge, J., & Weber, A. (2015). What works? A meta analysis of recent active labor market Jobseeker Evaluations. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 16(3), 894–931. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvx028>
- Card, D., Kluge, J., & Weber, A. (2018). What works? A meta analysis of recent active labor market Jobseeker Evaluations. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 16, 894–931.
- CZSO (Czech Statistical Office). (2022). Labour force survey data. Retrieved at: Zaměstnanost, nezaměstnanost | ČSÚ ([https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/zamestnanost\\_nezamestnanost\\_prace](https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/zamestnanost_nezamestnanost_prace))
- Eichhorst, W., & Rinne, U. (2016). Promoting youth employment in Europe: Evidence-based policy lessons. In M. Malo & A. Moreno (Eds.), *European youth labour markets*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68222-8\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68222-8_13)
- Frederiksson, D. (2021). Reducing unemployment? Examining the interplay between active labour market policies. *Social Policy & Administration*, 55(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12606>
- Gerfin, M., Lechner, M., & Steiger, H. (2005). Does temporary employment get the unemployed back to work? An econometric analysis of two different schemes. *Labour Economics*, 12(6), 807–835.
- Haapanala, H. (2021). Carrots or sticks? A multilevel analysis of active labour market policies and non-standard employment in Europe policies and non-standard employment in Europe. *Social Policy & Administration*, 56(3), 360–377. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12770>
- Hora, O., Horáková, M., Rákoczyová, M., Sirovátka, T., Suchanec, M., & Trbala, R. (2021). *Vyhodnocení nástrojů aktivní politiky zaměstnanosti v letech 2019 a 2020 se zřetelem na dlouhodobě nezaměstnané. [Evaluation of active labour market policy instruments in 2019 and 2020 with regard to long-term unemployed]*. RILSA. [https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz\\_499.pdf](https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz_499.pdf)
- Hora, O., & Sirovátka, T. (2020). Why targeting matters: The apprenticeship program for youth in The Czech Republic. *Social Policy & Administration*, 54(7), 1198–1214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12598>
- Kluge, J. (2014). *Active labour market policies with a focus on youth*. European Training Foundation.
- MPSV/MoLSA (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs). (2022). Monthly statistics on unemployment. <https://www.mpsv.cz/web/cz/mesicni>
- Nicaise, I., Bollens, J., Dawes, L., Laghaei, S., Thaulow, I., Verdié, M., & Wagner, A. (1995). Labour market Programmes for the poor in Europe. Pitfalls, dilemmas and how to avoid them. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 5(3), 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/095892879500500302>
- Nothdurfter, U. (2016). The street-level delivery of activation practices: Constraints and possibilities for a practice of citizenship. *European Journal of Social Work*, 19(3–4), 420–440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2015.1137869>
- OECD. (2019). *Statistical profiling in public employment services: An international comparison*. OECD. b5e5f16e-en.pdf (<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/>)
- Pascual, A. S. (2007). Reshaping welfare states: Activation regimes in Europe. In A. S. Pascual & L. Magnusson (Eds.), *Reshaping*

- welfare states and activation regimes in Europe (pp. 11–34). P. I. E. Peter Lang.
- Penz, O., Sauer, B., Hofbauer, J., & Glinsner, B. (2017). Post-bureaucratic encounters: Affective labour in public employment services. *Critical Social Policy*, 37(4), 540–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018316681286>
- Rákoczyová, M., Sirovátka, T., & Trbola, R. (2021). Individuální práce s obtížně umístitelnými uchazeči o zaměstnání. Případová studie na vybraném pracovišti Úřadu práce ČR. [Individual work with difficult-to-place jobseekers. A case study at a selected branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic] Praha: VÚPSV, v. v. i.—Výzkumné centrum Brno. Dostupné z. [https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz\\_492.pdf](https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz_492.pdf)
- Rice, D. (2017). How governance conditions affect the individualization of active labour market services: An exploratory vignette study. *Public Administration*, 95(2), 468–481.
- Rice, D., Fuertes, V., & Monticelli, L. (2018). Does individualized employment support deliver what is promised? Findings from three European cities. *International Social Security Review*, 71(4), 91–109.
- Schulte, L., Greer, I., Umney, C., Symon, G., & Iankova, K. (2018). Insertion as an alternative to workfare: Active labour-market schemes in the Parisian suburbs. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 28(4), 326–341. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928717739237>
- Scrucca, L., Santucci, A., & Aversa, F. (2007). Competing risk analysis using R: An easy guide for clinicians. *Bone Marrow Transplantation*, 40, 381–387. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bmt.1705727>
- Sirovátka, T. (2011). The EU and Czech instrumentalism in employment and social inclusion strategy. In P. Graziano, S. Jacquot, & B. Palier (Eds.), *The EU and the domestic politics of welfare state reforms* (pp. 201–229). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sirovátka, T. (2014). From protection towards activation: Reform of social assistance in The Czech Republic. In I. Lodemel & A. Moreira (Eds.), *Activation or workfare? Governance and neoliberal convergence* (pp. 256–288). Oxford University Press.
- Sirovátka, T. (2016). When workfare fails. Post-crisis activation reforms in The Czech Republic. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 36(1/2), 86–101. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-01-2015-0001>
- Sirovátka, T. (2018). Czechia: Political experimentation or incremental reforms? In S. Theodoropoulou (Ed.), *Labour market policies in the era of pervasive austerity: A European perspective* (pp. 253–276). Policy Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21216s2.16>
- Sirovátka, T., & Rákoczyová, M. (2022). Front-line work in activation and targeting of re-qualification programmes: Lessons from The Czech Republic. *European Journal of Social Work*, 25(1), 162–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.184341>
- Trlifajová, L., & Hurrle, J. (2019). Work must pay: Does it? Precarious employment and employment motivation for low-income households. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 29(3), 376–395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928718805870>
- van Berkel, R. (2020). Making welfare conditional: A street-level perspective. *Social Policy & Administration*, 54, 191–204. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12564>
- van Berkel, R., & Knies, E. (2018). The front-line delivery of activation: Workers' preferences and antecedents. *European Journal of Social Work*, 21(4), 602–615. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2017.1297774>
- van Berkel, R., Larsen, F., & Caswell, D. (2018). Introduction: Frontline delivery of welfare-to-work in different European contexts. *International Social Security Review*, 71(4), 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/issr.12186>
- van Berkel, R., & Valkenburg, B. (Eds.). (2007). Making it personal. Individualising Activation Services in the EU. Bristol: Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qgz1t>
- van Berkel, R., & van der Aa, P. (2012). Activation work: Policy programme administration or professional service provision? *Journal of Social Policy*, 41(3), 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279412000062>

**How to cite this article:** Hora, O., & Sirovátka, T. (2023). Do individualised projects help integrate the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged people? Lessons from the Czech Republic. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12635>

## APPENDIX

TABLE A1 Structure of the PDU participants in 2019 and the targeting of measures.

	PDU part (a)	Share unem. (b)	Share LTU (c)	TI* (d)		PDU part (a)	Share unem. (b)	Share LTU (c)	TI* (d)	
Sex					Age					
Female	56.5	50.4	54.9	1.12	15–19 years	0.6	4	1.2	0.15	
Male	43.5	49.6	45.1	0.88	20–24 years	1.2	11.3	2.2	0.11	
Education					25–29 years	3.3	12.8	4.2	0.26	
Basic/primary	40.6	26.1	33.8	1.56	30–34 years	5.7	11	6	0.52	
Incomplete secondary (ISCED 3)	38.8	36.4	40.3	1.06	35–39 years	7.7	10.7	7.7	0.72	
Secondary	15.8	26	19	0.61	40–44 years	10.5	11.6	10.4	0.91	
Tertiary	4.8	11.5	7	0.42	45–49 years	12.3	10.3	11.5	1.19	
HEALTH STATUS					50–54 years	14.6	9.5	13.5	1.54	
Good	33.4	71.3	35.5	0.47	55–59 years	26.7	10.5	20.4	2.54	
Limited	42.4	15.4	33.4	2.75	60+ years	17.4	8.4	22.7	2.07	
Partly disabled (I degree)	15.4	7.4	18.9	2.08	Cumulative unemployment duration (the sum of previous unemployment periods, LTU and repeatedly unemployed)					
Fully disabled (II and III degrees)	8.7	3.9	11.3	2.23	None	7.7	19.9	15	0.39	
Not specified	0.2	2	0.9	0.1	Short-term unemployment (up to 3 months)	2.8	7.7	4	0.36	
The targeting index was computed as follows: (number of members of the group among programme participants/total measure participants)/(total number of members of the group among the unemployed/total number of unemployed)						Medium-term unemployment (3–12 months)	7.4	17.2	10.7	0.43
						Long-term unemployment (12+ months)	82.2	55.2	70.4	1.49
Total (No.)	3408	575, 815	85, 290	–	Total (No.)	3408	575, 815	85, 290	–	

Source: OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

Note: data in column (a), (b), and (c) in percent.

\*TI = targeting index (d): (a)/(b).

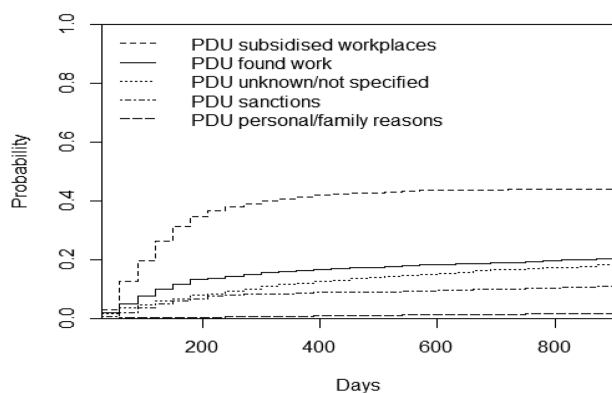


FIGURE A1 Competing risk analysis of the reasons for leaving the PES register for PDU participants during 900 days after the beginning of the project. Source: OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)).

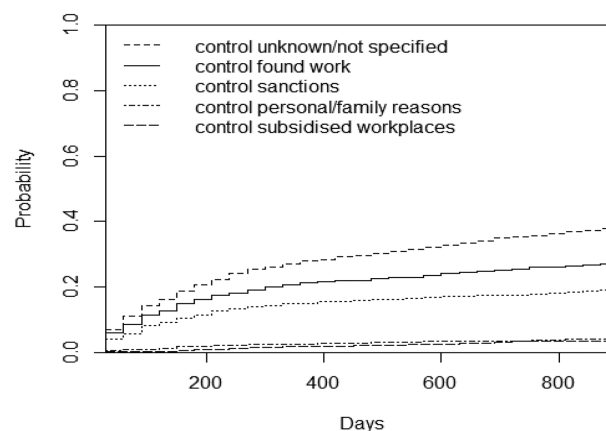


FIGURE A2 Competing risk analysis of the reasons for leaving the PES register for persons in the control group during 900 days after the beginning of the project. Source: OK-system administrative database, adapted (see [Methodology](#)); the CEM method was used to create the control group (see [Methodology](#)).