



# **Trajectories of Job Seekers in Public Employment Services in Slovakia**

**Discussion paper**

**Zuzana Polačková**

Centre for Social and Psychological Sciences of  
the Slovak Academy of Sciences

This document was created within the framework of the CRIS project – Cooperate, Reach out, Integrate Services (CRIS).

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the EaSI program (contract number VS/2021/0243).

The CRIS project is implemented by a consortium of organizations from Germany, Hungary, and Slovakia, with the City of Offenbach as the project leader. In Slovakia, the project is carried out by Človek v ohrození, the Centre for Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (CSPS SAS), and the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family (COLSAF).

The project develops and tests tools and methodologies to strengthen the integration of services provided to people from vulnerable groups, aiming to support their inclusion in the labor market and society. The models are inspired by best practices from Germany. Additionally, a key objective of the project in Slovakia is to enhance the role of non-public employment service providers.



**Spolufinancovaný  
Európskou úniou**

The document has not undergone linguistic or graphic editing.

The document has not undergone the standard peer review process.

The document was created for the needs of the CRIS project consortium.

© Zuzana Polačková, Centre for Social and Psychological Sciences of  
the Slovak Academy of Sciences, January 2023

# Model of Public Employment Services in Slovakia – brief overview

In line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, every individual has the right to support in improving their employment prospects or self-employment opportunities, including job search assistance and vocational training (Council, 2017). A key role in fulfilling this right is undoubtedly played by the system of public employment services (hereinafter referred to as PES), the quality of their provision, and the availability of resources necessary for their implementation.

The models of PES provision and management vary across countries. One of the most frequently cited criteria illustrating these differences is the level of investment in PES as a share of a country's GDP. Additional attributes significantly shaping PES models include the degree of PES autonomy, the role of non-public employment service providers, and the adaptability of PES to emerging challenges (e.g., responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic) (OECD, 2021).

In Slovakia, the PES model is primarily regulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the Employment Services Act). The administration of PES falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of labour, Social Affairs, and Family and the organisation subordinate to the Ministry, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family (COLSAF), with its responsibilities and competencies, along with those of the 46 local labour offices (LSAF offices), defined by Act No. 453/2003 Coll. on State Administration Bodies in the Field of Social Affairs, Family, and Employment Services.

The COLSAF's competencies concerning PES focus primarily on active labour market policies (ALMPs), while passive labour market measures are managed by other institutions, notably the Social Insurance Agency. Despite the interconnectedness of active and passive labour market measures—particularly regarding unemployment benefits and income compensation—the following analysis concentrates solely on the active PES component, with emphasis on the trajectory of a registered jobseeker in the PES system in Slovakia.

National PES objectives are derived from strategic documents such as the National Employment Strategy and relevant operational programs with defined performance frameworks. The timeline for these objectives typically exceeds one year and is dictated by the nature of the respective policy document.

The methodology for defining PES objectives related to specific ALMP tools and measures under the Employment Services Act remains ambiguous. A prevailing impression is that these objectives are largely determined by the availability of financial resources rather than by strategic priorities.

An exception to this is ALMP measures implemented within projects co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), where project management standards mandate the definition of clear objectives. Between 2014 and 2020, the COLSAF implemented 48 large-scale projects funded under the Operational Programme Human Resources (OP HR), totaling €1.7948 billion. Each project was structured around measurable indicators contributing to OP HR objectives. Given the significant reliance on EU funding, the primary framework for defining and monitoring ALMP objectives in Slovakia has been shaped by the OP HR framework.

Despite the existence of 46 LSAF offices integrated under the COLSAF as a single legal entity, Slovakia's PES model remains highly centralized. Consequently, regional PES objectives rarely exceed those set at the national level. The integration of PES strategies with regional and local policy documents is minimal, despite employment and unemployment rates being common indicators in regional development strategies.

Under Section 13(1)(aa) of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, LSAF offices are mandated to prepare labour market analyses and forecasts, publish them on their websites, and submit them to the COLSAF. However, a review of LSAF websites indicates that only a handful of offices publicly share these analyses. Nonetheless, interviews with LSAF offices and COLSAF officials confirm that these analyses are regularly submitted to the COLSAF and serve as a key tool for setting ALMP objectives at the regional level. The goals are defined by LSAF offices, with COLSAF having the authority to review their feasibility and ambition. Achieving these goals is also part of the performance evaluation process for individual LSAF offices.

Based on regional labour market forecasts, funding for specific ALMP measures is allocated to LSAF offices, typically within ESF large-scale projects that prioritize standardized, nationwide interventions.

Beyond standardized measures, LSAF offices advocate for the ability to design and implement localized projects tailored to regional needs. These so-called regional projects, conducted under Section 54 of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, were once a common practice but are now an exception. Between 2014 and 2020, 38 such projects were implemented, which is less than the total number of LSAF offices.

Many of these projects test pilot approaches to engaging job seekers, while others respond to urgent regional needs. Several align with Action Plans for the Development of the Least Developed Districts, which are governed by Act No. 336/2015 Coll. on Support for the Least Developed Districts. This legislation establishes temporary preferential conditions for districts with the highest unemployment rates relative to the national average. The action plans are binding documents monitored by the Slovak Government, with the reduction of registered unemployment being a primary objective. LSAF offices in these districts participate in regional development committees and support the goals set in these plans. Given their statutory obligation to prepare labour market forecasts, it is

reasonable to assume that the action plans are informed by LSAF projections in line with Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services.

## Methodology and sources of information

This analysis is based on an extensive desk review of documents related to public employment services in Slovakia and a structured questionnaire survey targeting senior managers responsible for employment services at local Offices of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family.

The questionnaire was distributed to 69 email addresses of LSAF offices across Slovakia. Within the designated deadline, 56 respondents completed and submitted the questionnaire.

The survey comprised 16 questions designed to assess the targeting of selected active labour market policy (ALMP) measures concerning various jobseeker target groups.

To enhance the reliability and depth of the findings, the survey data was triangulated with insights from 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders, including:

- Staff members of the LSAF offices and COLSAF,
- Representatives of non-profit organizations working with the long-term unemployed,
- Representatives of non-public employment service providers, and
- Jobseekers themselves.

The data collection process took place between August and November 2022.

## Job Seeker's Pathway within the Public Employment Services System in Slovakia

The model of public employment services in Slovakia is set up exclusively in favour of registered job seekers. Participation in the PES is conditional on registration and staying in the job seekers' register; citizens who are outside the labour market but are not in the job seekers' register do not have access to the PES.

## Registration in the register of jobseekers

According to the Act 5/2004 Coll., any individual may apply for registration as a job seeker. However, the applicant will not be included in the registration if<sup>1</sup> fulfils compulsory school attendance, if he/she is continuously preparing for a profession (i.e. is a full-time student), is temporarily incapacitated for work, is entitled to maternity allowance or has been granted an old-age pension, or if the applicant has been repeatedly excluded from the jobseekers registrar during the last three years due to taking up employment mediated by the LSAF office and has repeatedly terminated this employment within one month of its commencement<sup>2</sup>.

A citizen who has been removed from the register of job seekers due to placement on the labour market, starting a business, entering full-time education, or on his/her own request<sup>3</sup> may be re-admitted to the register of job seekers at the earliest after three months have elapsed from the date of removal from the register. In the case of citizens who have been removed from the register for non-cooperation or illegal work, reinstatement can only take place after a period of six months.

A citizen can apply for inclusion in the jobseekers registry in three ways: a.) in person; b.) electronically, via [www.slovensko.sk](http://www.slovensko.sk) using a qualified electronic signature; c.) electronically, without a qualified electronic signature. The application, together with the mandatory attachments, is submitted to the locally competent LSAF office according to the applicant's permanent residence. The list of attachments is specifically designed for particular groups of applicants; in the case of applicants who apply for inclusion in the jobseekers registry after graduation from school, it is different than in the case of applicants who apply for inclusion in the jobseekers registry after termination of employment.

In the case of an application without the use of a qualified electronic signature, upon receipt of the application by the LSAF office, a member of staff of the "Citizen Services Department" (Oddelenie služieb občanovi, hereinafter as OSO) contacts the applicant, and a date is arranged for the applicant to come and sign the application in person.

The electronic submission of applications was introduced in June 2020 in response to the pandemic situation in the country; practice confirms that it is now a commonly used method. Electronic means have also increased during this period regarding the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a selection of reasons; a complete list of reasons for not being included in job seekers' registration is given in paragraph 14 of § 34 of Act 5/2004 Coll. on employment services.

<sup>2</sup> This ground does not apply to termination of employment for a reason for which the employee may immediately terminate employment.

<sup>3</sup> The list of reasons listed in the Employment Services Act is longer, but here are the most common reasons.

application for individual allowances and the payment of allowances. Electronic means were also tested in 2021 in the context of advisory and information services.

Survey respondents did not find the registration process difficult or problematic. However, several respondents point out that the application could be tailored to different groups of applicants, whether in terms of language versions (e.g., a Hungarian version) or simplifying the language and issuing an 'easy-to-read' version for applicants with low reading literacy.

On the other hand, several respondents acknowledged that registration can be done with assistance (e.g. with the help of field social workers) or with the help of the “OSO” worker where registration takes place.

A common occurrence in the registration process is failure to meet the seven-day limit from job loss/school completion to apply. Meeting the limit is not compulsory; it is possible to apply for registration at any time, but if the application is submitted within the seven-day limit, the applicant can be registered from the day after the end of the employment relationship, which in practice means that the jobseeker does not incur any obligations towards the compulsory health insurance. Otherwise, the person becomes a self-payer in terms of compulsory health insurance. Many applicants are unaware of this obligation or neglect it, resulting in debts to the health insurance company, which do not infrequently translate into foreclosures.

Registration in the jobseekers register is not compulsory, and the LSAF offices do not act proactively on this issue. In the context of ordinary jobseekers, this attitude can be assessed as correct. A different view can be taken about specific groups, such as young school drop-outs, where there is a risk that a large number of people will not enter the system and will fall through the safety net offered by the PES. Therefore, it would be advisable to consider strengthening the proactive approach in searching for applicants, registering them, and providing early intervention for selected groups of potential jobseekers. Cooperation with non-public providers could also be strengthened, emphasising NGO providers.

The citizen applies for inclusion in the registration of the jobseekers at the Citizen Services Department (OSO). The OSO agenda is structured so that the citizen can also deal with other agendas under the responsibility of the LSAF offices, particularly in connection with the receipt of state social benefits at these departments, i.e. in one place. In many cases, the OSO workers try to assist clients and identify the possibilities of receiving benefits, but this is not the rule and the worker's involvement is often also conditioned by sympathy/antipathy towards a particular client.

An application for inclusion in the jobseekers register from July 2020 is also considered an application for unemployment benefits paid by the Social Insurance Company. From that period onwards, the unemployment benefit no longer needs to be applied for by a

separate application to the Social Insurance Company; it can be applied for at the LSAF office with the application for inclusion in the Jobseekers Register. This change has simplified the registration process.

## Employment services for jobseekers six months after registration

A positive assessment of the application for inclusion in the jobseekers register makes the applicant “a registered jobseeker”. The jobseeker is obliged to actively look for a job and prove his/her active job search in person to the Office at the time and place determined by the Office.

The intensity of contact between jobseeker and the LSAF office varies significantly between different groups of jobseekers. Based on interviews with several research respondents, the practice is also differentiated regionally and conditioned by the capacities of the LSAF office.

During the state of emergency and the worsened pandemic, no face-to-face meetings were conducted, and the cooperation between the jobseekers and the LSAF office was only electronic. Some testimonies say that the contact between the jobseeker and the LSAF office did not occur even for several months (one testimony talked about four months, and most of the testimonies talk about 6-8 weeks). Even the jobseeker did not have to submit documents for an active job search. However, it should be re-emphasised that the reduced intensity of contact refers to an exceptional situation; in a regular period, contact occurs every month. However, based on the testimonies of several research respondents, it is not exceptional for contact to occur only by signing an attendance sheet. Failure to attend the contact without a medical excuse is often punished by exclusion from the jobseekers register.

In a standard situation, the OSO worker should offer the jobseeker the opportunity to participate in information and counselling services as soon as possible after registration. These can be carried out either individually or in group form. Here again, the practice of individual offices varies considerably. In some offices, group information and counselling activities are implemented regularly, and participation in such an event is offered to jobseeker within a month of registration. However, other offices do not implement such activities at all. The content of the information and counselling activities mainly concerns information on jobseekers' obligations, the services offered to jobseekers by a particular LSAF office, job vacancies, and existing ALMP measures.

The portfolio of ALMP measures intended for jobseekers kept in the jobseeker register for less than 6 months is, during the standard situations, quite broad. The criteria for participation in ALMP measures are determined, among other things, by the period of stay in the jobseekers registry. In the case of a relatively wide range of ALMP measures, the minimum duration is set at three months. In the case of several measures for young

people, the minimum duration of registration is set at one month (e.g. graduate apprenticeship or several instruments implemented within the framework of §54 of the Employment Services Act), as well as in the case of persons with disabilities who are interested in setting up a sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace.

The jobseekers may request participation in a specific ALMP measure on his/her own or be recommended to participate by a LSAF worker. However, the real availability of measures is limited by the financial resources allocated for the implementation of individual ALMP measures.

Several respondents gave examples where the main reason for registration in the jobseeker register was the possibility of participation in a specific measure or where the jobseeker itself informed the potential employer about the possibility of receiving an employment allowance. The situation where the jobseekers argues for the possibility of receiving a contribution when looking for a job is not exceptional; it can even be argued that it is quite common in the case of the so-called graduate practice.

The application practice also includes examples of purposeful registration, where the employer requires the potential employee to remain in the jobseekers register for a specified period of time to fulfil the eligibility requirement for a job creation allowance.

Expert discussion often highlights the need to intensify professional advisory services in providing PES. Several respondents also pointed out the need to strengthen the activities of professional counselling services, who often perceive counselling as an essential tool of PES, where individual and regular contact of jobseekers with a professional counsellor is a condition for quality and individualised employment services. However, participation in professional counselling activities is relatively rare in the case of jobseekers who have been registered as jobseekers for less than 6 months and are not under 29 years of age.

In the case of jobseeker, who has been kept in the jobseekers register for less than 6 months, professional advisors come into contact with jobseekers, especially in connection with their possible participation in instruments aimed at training and retraining. The task of the counsellors is to assess the possible impact of participation in the training programme on employment prospects and to recommend or not to recommend the participation of the jobseeker in a specific programme. The decision is not made arbitrarily; the counsellors are bound by an internal standard based on which the jobseeker is scored about possible participation in the activity. If the minimum score threshold is not reached, participation in the educational/training activity is not approved. The number of points increases with the degree of disadvantage. In the category of jobseekers registered for less than 6 months, priority is given to disadvantaged jobseekers, emphasising low-skilled jobseekers or those aged under 29.

Several interviewed workers of the COLSAF and LSAF offices pointed to the limitations of this model, as jobseekers with higher education are often disadvantaged, and their

chances for quick participation in the training programme are relatively low. Interviewees gave examples of graduates who, although they had completed the first or second level of higher education, had received their education at low-quality schools or in fields that were not in demand in the labour market. These jobseekers are often willing and ready to work, but retraining in the desired professions would significantly accelerate their entry into the labour market. Due to their educational attainment, they are often not eligible to participate in training programmes and have to wait for their registration period to be extended, which, under the points-based system, will result in a higher score and increase their chances of participating in the course.

There is also a problem with access to training and retraining programmes. Although jobseekers can participate in courses implemented in other regions, the capacity of disadvantaged applicants to travel to the courses is limited. The interviewed staff of the labour offices often gave examples of jobseekers who were interested in training and retraining; there was also a realistic prospect of a job. However, they could not take the course in a region other than their own, despite the fact that the PES office staff helped them arrange accommodation and find travel connections. Both financial and personal constraints are an obstacle. The LSAF office can pre-finance part of the trainee's training programme costs. However, the expenditure is only considered eligible if the programme is completed. In cases where LSAF staff identify an increased risk that the jobseeker will not complete the course or where the amount involved is higher, LSAF offices are very cautious in providing advance payments. Practice suggests that jobseeker who lack experience and confidence tend to complete courses early and fear travelling and staying overnight in strange places.

During the first six months, the jobseeker is offered registration on the ISTP portal (Labour Market Information System Portal). Registration is recommended for some groups of jobseekers, such as young people up to the age of 29. If the jobseeker is included in a specific large-scale ESF-funded project, registration is even mandatory.

The principle based on which jobseekers are assigned to specific projects, making the performance of certain activities compulsory in their case, has not been identified. The findings suggest significant differences between the different LSAF offices, which can be found, inter alia, in the structure of the LSAF office's jobseeker and the setting of outcome indicators. For example, suppose a particular office keeps 20 jobseekers in the jobseeker register, which meets the specified criteria, and the result indicator is set at 20. In that case, all jobseekers in that category are included in the programme without exception. The situation is different in the case of another LSAF office with 100 jobseekers on its register, meeting the criteria at the project implementation time. At the same time, the indicator is also set at 20, so only every fifth jobseeker meeting the criteria will be included in the programme. In cases where the number of possible participants in the programme exceeds the set value of the indicator, the selection of participants is carried out by the staff of OSO or by the staff of the counselling offices; based on the findings, it can be

concluded that the main criterion is the experience and personal opinion of the staff who make the selection.

One of the interviewed LSAF staff gave an example of a jobseeker included in a project where individual, regularly provided counselling was obligatory. This highly qualified participant had returned from abroad and was planning to set up her own business and start her own enterprise. She applied for registration in the jobseekers register mainly because of the compulsory health insurance covered by the state in the case of registered jobseeker and because of the possibility of applying for a start-up allowance. The interviewed LSAF office worker, a vocational counsellor, stated that initially, it was unclear what added value he could offer to this jobseeker. However, the jobseeker rated the opportunity to regularly participate in counselling as highly useful, as together with the counsellor, she always set goals and milestones leading to the launch of her business plan, which she fulfilled by the next meeting, which significantly accelerated the implementation of her plan. The jobseeker even abandoned her original intention to apply for the business start-up allowance paid under Section 49 of the Employment Services Act, as applying for and receiving the allowance would have slowed down the set pace. Thus, the main task of the cooperation between the jobseeker and the counsellor, in this case, was not to identify the capacities and interests of the jobseeker or to help the jobseeker overcome the barriers preventing the jobseeker from entering the labour market. The content of the meetings was a follow-up of the individual tasks leading to starting a business and maintaining a high level of motivation for the jobseeker.

Based on the above example, properly provided professional counselling services can reduce the period of stay of jobseeker in the jobseekers register and may even positively impact saving public resources. In this case, by providing a relatively cheap ALMP instrument, namely vocational guidance, the savings were allocated to a measure supporting business start-ups, considered one of the most expensive ALMP measures in terms of cost.

The LSAF offices often offer activities to jobseeker who have been registered as jobseeker for less than 6 months, including participation in selection procedures carried out by the LSAF offices for the benefit of specific employers.

According to the statements of the LSAF office staff, a relatively large proportion of jobseekers in this group are actively seeking employment and are open to cooperation with the LSAF office. It is also evident that a part of jobseekers, although aiming to enter the labour market, applied for registration because of the possibility of participating in a specific measure. If they do not get it, they leave the registration or a part of jobseekers use the period of registered unemployment as a part of the rest, kind of sabbatical. After the end of receiving unemployment benefits, the maximum duration of which is six

months<sup>4</sup>[5], they leave for the labour market without serious problems. In the case of the other groups of jobseeker, the applicants are not very interested in the services offered by the LSAF offices.

Based on statistical data from the Office of Labour Market Statistics, the outflows of jobseeker in six months from registration in the jobseekers register reached 60%. Based on anecdotal findings, it can be assumed that a large part of this group leaves for the labour market without the help of the ALMP tools and measures.

## Employment services for jobseekers between six and twelve months after registration

In terms of the legal definition or obligations towards the PES system, the status of a jobseeker whose stay in the jobseekers registration has exceeded six months but has not exceeded twelve months does not change<sup>5</sup>.

However, the longer the period of staying in the jobseekers registration, the motivation of the jobseeker and the chances of successful entry into the labour market decrease proportionally. According to many, six months can be considered a threshold period, after which the jobseeker starts to lose motivation and work habits.

According to the internal manuals, OSO staff are recommended to continue the activities that were implemented in the previous period (i.e. in particular, registration in the ISTP and updating the profile in the ISTP, participation in selection procedures, checking the proactive approach in the search for possible employment, participation in information and counselling activities, possible participation in ALMP measures or counselling). In addition, an individualised, collaborative approach can be strengthened to consider a possible change of profession and participation in retraining courses. In the framework of vocational guidance services, a competency assessment can be carried out, and, in the case of candidates aged 50+, the development of an individual action plan is also proposed. However, the above proposals are only recommendatory. The availability of individual services, as in the case of jobseeker registered for less than six months, is mainly conditional on the availability of resources (financial or human). The findings also suggest that, as in the case of applicants registered for less than six months, practice varies considerably from one Office to another.

---

<sup>4</sup> During the state of emergency resulting from the pandemic situation, the period of payment of unemployment benefits was temporarily extended to eight months

<sup>5</sup> Six months from the registration in the Jobseekers Register is the limited period of possible receipt of unemployment benefits. However, the benefit is paid only to jobseekers who, within the meaning of Act 461/2003 Coll. on social insurance, have contributed to the social insurance system for at least 24 months in the last four years, which automatically excludes a large group of jobseekers.

However, several respondents confirmed that a more extended registration period increases the realistic chances of being included in one of the ALMP measures and increases the likelihood of participating in professional counselling services. In the case of jobseekers under 29 or 50+, the emphasis on preventing long-term unemployment is higher than in other groups. In the pre-pandemic period, this was mainly driven by several national projects targeted at the 50+ and under-29 age groups due to commitments to the Youth Guarantee programme in the Slovak Republic.

## Employment services for long-term unemployed jobseekers

By crossing the threshold of twelve months of staying in the jobseekers registry, a jobseeker automatically becomes a long-term unemployed jobseeker, which changes the level of emphasis on applying ALMP instruments and measures in the case of such jobseeker.

A long-term unemployed jobseeker (hereinafter referred to as LTjobseeker) is automatically included in the category of disadvantaged jobseekers. Access to ALMP measures and instruments is extended to those specifically designed for the group of LTjobseeker.

The availability of professional counselling services is fundamentally higher in the case of LTjobseeker compared to other groups of jobseekers. Many LTjobseekers are the first to contact this type of service during the unemployment trajectory when participating in professional counselling services. The interviewed counsellors unanimously state that starting counselling only after reaching long-term unemployment is exceptionally late. Many LTjobseeker are already demotivated and uninterested in counselling, and counsellors find it challenging to gain their trust.

Several of the LSAF office staff interviewed said that many of the people who had fallen into long-term unemployment had not had access to adequate support in the earlier stages of their unemployment; the support they received from the PES was rather formal and focused on fulfilling formal obligations to the PES office (regular visits and submission of certificates of completed interviews, many of which were fictitious), these people, therefore, do not understand the reasons why they should participate in vocational guidance activities.

The respondents' above statement is by no means a questioning of the importance of vocational counselling provided to LTjobseeker; on the contrary, it is a call for a substantial increase in the availability of vocational counselling services even in the earlier stages of unemployment.

According to several research respondents, long-term unemployment is often caused by the complex personal and family situation of a particular LTjobseeker. In many

families/households, there are several jobseeker simultaneously, several of whom are long-term unemployed. Professional counsellors try to conduct group counselling sessions for one specific family/household. However, such cases are relatively isolated, and their preparation requires the commitment of the vocational counsellor and the committed cooperation of the OSO staff who help prepare for such meetings.

Language barriers are also often present in the services provided to the long-term unemployed. The ability to communicate in Slovak is often limited, and there is a lack of staff at the offices who can communicate, especially in the Roma language. The language barrier problem does not arise when crossing the long-term unemployment threshold; however, in the case of LTjobseeker, it is more intense since, as mentioned above, the services provided to LTjobseeker in the earlier stages of unemployment are often formal. The applicants can manage them even with limited language skills. The problem of the language barrier is, therefore, more present in the case of counselling services and training programmes, which are more accessible to LTjobseeker.

The findings suggest that several LSAF offices deal with this problem pragmatically and omit LTjobseeker in individualised vocational guidance activities. The number of vocational counsellors in individual LSAF offices has long been undersized; the understaffing of vocational staff can legitimise the non-inclusion of LTjobseeker in individualised programmes.

In the case of LTjobseeker, emphasis is placed on the development of an Individual Action Plan (IAP). The Individual Action Plan is a written document specifying the measures, the procedure and the timetable for implementing individual measures leading to the employment of jobseeker in the labour market. In the past, preparing an IAP was obligatory in the case of LTjobseeker. The current legislation has abandoned this obligation. However, the non-fulfilment of the measures specified in the IAP by the LTjobseeker can still be a reason for removing the jobseeker from the registration due to non-cooperation.

Despite the tough sanction mechanisms that can be applied in case of violation of the IAP by the jobseeker, the research respondents (including the group of LSAF workers) are sceptical about the quality and importance of the IAP and claim that the document is often formally drafted. The obligation to draw up an IAP often results from the inclusion of a LTjobseeker in a specific national project; in the case of LTjobseeker who have not been included in a project in which the number of IAPs is listed among the project indicators, IAPs are usually not drawn up. However, the absence of an IAP does not mean that no targets are set for cooperation between the vocational counsellor and the LTjobseeker.

Many workers of LSAF offices negatively evaluate LTjobseeker's favouritism at educational events in relation to other groups of jobseeker. According to LSAF office workers, LTjobseeker's participation at various educational events is only formal, often

undertaken only in an attempt to avoid possible exclusion from the jobseeker registration due to non-cooperation.

Unemployed persons with low educational attainment are often included in the activation work programme. In Slovakia, activation work is often perceived as synonymous with the performance of small-scale municipal services, and several evaluations suggest (e.g. Mýtna-Kureková et al., 2013) that its impact on increasing employment is minimal. The forms of activation defined by Act 417/2013 Coll. However, participation in training programmes within the defined minimum scope is also included. There are many examples of good practice where participants were trained within the framework of activation work, and subsequently, jobs were created for them in the municipality. An example is the municipality of Rejdová, which organised an embroidery course for the women involved in activation work and subsequently employed the most skilled women in a municipal social enterprise involved in the production of traditional costumes. The above example proves that implementing meaningful training programmes can have significant impacts even in the case of LTjobseeker.

Even though there are regional specificities in this case, the work with LTjobseeker is often implemented in cooperation with the municipality. The conducted researches indicate (e.g. PIN, 2020) that the most frequent employer of LTjobseekers is the local municipality office, which can receive a contribution for creating a job through several ALMP measures. The problem of employment by local municipality office is the low rate of job sustainability, and a large proportion of participants return to the jobseeker register once the job sustainability period is over.

However, the findings suggest that local municipality offices play an important role in the employment of LTjobseeker, therefore their role in the integration processes should be further explored.

## References

- Act on Employment Services 5/2004 Coll. as amended, Available at: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/ezbierky/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2004/5/>
- Council of the EU (2016): Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market (2016/C 67/01), Brussels. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220\(01\)&from=DE](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220(01)&from=DE)
- Mýtna-Kureková, L., Salner, A., & Farenzenová, M. (2013): Implementation of activation works in Slovakia: Evaluation and recommendations for public policy, Institute for a Well-Governed Society, Bratislava. Available at: <http://stary->

[web.governance.sk/assets/files/publikacie/AKTIVACNE\\_PRACE\\_SGI\\_SK\\_ZHRNUTIE.pdf](http://web.governance.sk/assets/files/publikacie/AKTIVACNE_PRACE_SGI_SK_ZHRNUTIE.pdf)

- OECD (2021): "Labour market programmes: expenditure and participants," OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00312-en> (accessed on 22 November 2021).
- PIN (2020): Analysis of the impacts of measures implemented under Section 54 of Act No. 5/2004 on Employment Services on increasing employment among people from marginalized Roma communities, People in Need, Bratislava. Available at: <https://clovekvochrozeni.sk/co-robime/programy-socialnej-integracie/lepsie-verejne-politiky-pre-marginalizovane-romske-komunity/>