

Sharing of Best Practice in Individualization and Deinstitutionalization of Services for People with Learning Disabilities



Josef

“I come from Slaný“, he recently told the film-makers shooting his life story. Was he lying?

Josef comes from Čáslav. He has never really known his mother and father, his grandparents died, he was a poor student at the boarding school until somebody from social welfare declared him uneducable. At the age of 12 he was deported to a mental institution. This was back in 1973.

Together with a hundred other boys and men he reconciled himself to his fate. He got used to it. He had to. Soon he realized that protesting would only result in a beating or a handful of pills and nothing would change. After all, they looked after him well. Warm bed, food, clothes, sweets. He was never asked what he would like but they always guessed right. Unlike him, they knew his shoe number as well as his favourite tracksuit colour. And they took him to the seaside and to the mountains, they organized cultural events where he could meet girls. He really liked some of the them, it was a pity, though, that after two hours of dancing they had to go back to their institutions.

This lasted for 33 years.

Suddenly, when he was 45, they asked him if he wanted to change anything. No, he didn't – he was afraid. He realized he knew nothing about the life outside the institution walls. It took months before he dared to travel on the bus alone, walk in town, have an idea of time, speak to a shop-assistant and, above all, realize what kind of life he wants to live. He started work in a pizzeria, got a dog and decided to live in the town. He was one of the first inhabitants of sheltered living where he also met his life partner. They are now preparing to live on their own in a one-room flat. Ivana and his dog, Čert, have become his family.

Josef wasn't lying. Today he really comes from Slaný.

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