

## Improving job prospects for Roma and promoting positive role models

BY: IQ ROMA SERVIS

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### What was the issue?

'Roma don't work! They don't want to work. Help them a little and they will ruin you completely.' Prejudices and stereotypes such as these are common place in the Czech Republic, and help spin the vicious spiral preventing many Roma from finding work.

At the start of the spiral is the determination of employers not to take on Roma workers, based on ingrained prejudice and negative experience, most of it second or third hand. At the end of the spiral is the social exclusion, poverty and desperation of many Roma.

The campaign, 'We work!', aims to break this spiral apart and persuade employers that Roma workers can be a benefit to their businesses, and that by supporting members of this community, the whole of Czech society can improve.

### What did we do?

The aim of the 'We work!' campaign was to challenge the commonly held stereotype of the Roma as 'maladjusted, anti-social welfare recipients', by showing the huge number of Roma community members who are in work.

We also wanted to demonstrate the number of employers who happily recruit Roma workers, because they know that they will be good workers. We wanted to send a message to employers across the Czech Republic, especially job-recruitment agencies with vacancies for less-qualified workers, that the Roma are ready and willing to work. As a measurable outcome of the campaign we wanted to secure jobs for at least 10 unemployed Roma people.

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*"There is a wide-spread belief that Roma do not want to work, and are happy to live on hand-outs." (Czech employer)*

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*“I didn’t employ Diana to make a point about social inclusion. I employed her because I needed someone reliable to work in our kitchen, to be a part of the team. I wish it was not necessary to show examples like this – we are all equal.” (Dzestr, café owner)*

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In June 2014 we published a poster appealing for employers to recruit Roma workers in the magazine Zluty, which has a print-run of 50,000 and is distributed on the student bus network. We also placed over 20 articles in other print media about the campaign.

In August 2014 we launched the ‘We work!’ website ([www.mypracujeme.cz](http://www.mypracujeme.cz)), with positive stories from both employers and employees. The website allows job seekers to upload their CVs for employers to read. Employers are also able to contact IQ Roma Servis through the website to search our database for other potential candidates. We promoted the service to employers through direct emails, articles in HR magazines and pay per click adverts on social media. We also aired six short films on national broadcast networks, including TV Barrandov, TV Slagr and radio Krokodýl, featuring positive experiences of employing Roma workers.

We targeted the Roma community in a series of six 30-minute radio programmes on Radio R, about the positive experience of Roma people finding jobs.

## What difference did we make?

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*“Knowing the employer had got in touch because of the campaign encouraged me. I went to the interview feeling confident I wouldn’t be turned away the minute they saw I was Roma.” (Mrs B.H, supermarket cleaner)*

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The main impact of the campaign was the number of employers who have contacted us. An average of 3 new employers each week have contacted us, looking for workers. In addition, 90 Roma job-seekers have uploaded their profiles, presenting themselves to employers.

The ‘We work!’ website was visited by 44,684 users between August 2014 and February 2015. Our films were viewed 81,925 times on Youtube, 93,254 on Facebook and Twitter. The ‘We work!’ Facebook profile was liked 300 times, and reached over 80,000 users. We only received one negative email, although some below the line comments were anti-Roma, as we had anticipated.



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*“I wasn’t confident uploading my profile to the website, but the IQ Roma worker helped me. It all worked out very well, because my boss saw my advert and now I have a new job in a pizzeria.” Mrs J.I, website user*

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## What did we learn?

**1: This was a complex campaign, with many different partners and agencies. Advance planning, especially in the gathering of positive stories, was essential in making it a success.**

**2: Clear communication with all partners is critical in a campaign like this.**

**3: Direct contact with co-workers in the Roma community meant stories could be gathered more efficiently.**

**4: Fostering good relationships with individual journalists who have known interest in Roma issues meant excellent media coverage could be secured.**

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