



Project Code:	DRP0300869	Document type:	Deliverable
Project start date:	01.04.2025	Project end date:	31.03.2028

Skills4Life

Supporting the socio-economic integration of youth leaving child protection systems by developing their skills and capacities through more inclusive leaving care policies in the Danube region

D.1.1.6 Country Reports of youth inclusion policies

Due date of deliverable:	Actual submission date:

Document Control Sheet

Specific Objective number	Specific Objective 1
Specific Objective title	Innovative training programme for young people leaving the special child protection system
Activity number	Activity 1.1

Activity title	Establishment of the S4L working group for youth leaving the special child protection system
Deliverable number	D.1.1.6
Deliverable title	Country Reports of youth inclusion policies
Dissemination level	Public / Restricted / Confidential
Main author	EUDA
Contributors	EUDA
Quality Assurance	

Versions and Contribution History

Version	Date	Author / Editor / Reviewer	Contributors	Description / Comments
_v1	18.07.25	EUDA		
_v2				
_v3				
_final				

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Executive Summary

The Czech Republic is in the midst of a gradual transition from a child protection model historically reliant on institutional care toward one that places greater emphasis on family-based care, prevention, and community support. Recent reforms, international pressure, and EU policy frameworks have all contributed to this shift. At the same time, important structural weaknesses remain, especially in the coordination of responsibilities across ministries and in the continuity of support provided to young people leaving care. UNICEF and the Czech Supreme Audit Office both point to fragmentation as a defining weakness of the current system, while recent reforms continue to push toward a more unified and preventive model.

This report analyses the context of youth leaving child protection services in Czechia, the support measures currently in place, and the challenges these young people face in housing, employment, education, mental health, and social inclusion. The analysis combines desk research with survey data collected from three target groups in Czechia: care leavers, employers/HR professionals, and trainers/professionals. In line with the project brief, the survey results are used as qualitative evidence to complement the desk research and to identify priority areas for the Skills4Life training programme.

The desk research shows that Czechia has a reasonably developed legal and policy framework on paper. Key pillars include the Social and Legal Protection of Children Act, the Civil Code, the National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights 2021–2029, and the European Child Guarantee National Action Plan. Recent reforms in early childhood education and care also show movement toward reducing disadvantage earlier in the life course. However, policy ambition has not yet translated into a fully coherent support system for care leavers. The SAO found that child protection reform has been shaped by numerous uncoordinated strategic documents, while UNICEF continues to describe the system as fragmented across ministries.

The survey findings reinforce this picture. Care leavers described low preparedness for adulthood, especially in managing money, emotional stress, and practical independence. Many reported loneliness, difficulty asking for help, and a need for regular emotional support or counselling. Employers were generally open to hiring young people leaving care, but many lacked familiarity with the term “care leaver” and identified emotional challenges, unstable living situations, and the need for mentoring as key concerns. Trainers and professionals similarly pointed to persistent gaps in aftercare, housing support, practical life-skills preparation, and mental health support.

Overall, the Czech case is best understood as a system in transition: one that has important reform momentum and examples of good practice, but where support remains uneven, fragmented, and too often project based. **The main priorities that emerge from both the desk research and the surveys are stronger aftercare, better coordination across sectors, more accessible housing support, and a practical training offer focused on financial literacy, emotional resilience, job readiness, and mentoring.**

1. Introduction

The transition from child protection services to independent adulthood is widely recognised as **one of the most sensitive and risk-laden periods in a young person's life**. For most young people in the general population, the move into adulthood is gradual and supported by family networks that continue to provide emotional, practical, and often financial support well beyond the age of 18. For care leavers, however, this transition is often much more abrupt. Young people leaving residential care, foster care, or other forms of alternative care are frequently expected to manage housing, employment, education, personal finances, health, and social relationships with a level of independence that many of their peers are not yet expected to demonstrate. This creates a structural inequality at the point of transition: while one group is supported into adulthood, the other is often tested by it.

In the Czech Republic, this issue is particularly important because it sits within a broader period of reform in child protection policy. Over the last decade, Czechia has increasingly moved away from a system historically associated with institutional responses and toward one more closely aligned with child-rights standards, family-based care, and prevention-oriented services. This reform trajectory reflects both internal policy development and external influence, including European policy frameworks, international monitoring, and the work of organisations advocating for deinstitutionalisation and improved support for vulnerable children and youth. The draft report itself frames this moment as a turning point in the transformation of child protection and youth inclusion, and that framing is justified: the direction of change is clear, even if the pace and coherence of reform remain uneven.

At the same time, a reform agenda on paper does not automatically translate into better outcomes in practice. The experience of young people leaving care depends not only on the existence of laws and strategies, **but also on the availability, accessibility, and continuity of support across multiple systems**. Care leavers often move through a difficult intersection of child protection, housing policy, social services, education, labour-market integration, and mental health support. When these systems are not coordinated, the burden falls on the young person to navigate them alone. This is why the issue of leaving care should not be understood as a narrow sub-topic of child welfare, but as a broader question of youth inclusion, equal opportunity, and social justice.

The central argument of this report is that Czechia has made visible progress in the policy recognition of children's rights and in the gradual shift toward more family- and community-based models of support, but that **the transition from care to adulthood remains one of the weakest points in the overall system**. Young people leaving care continue to face overlapping risks related to housing instability, insufficient financial preparedness, low confidence, emotional stress, limited support networks, and uneven access to practical assistance. These difficulties are not simply personal problems; they are shaped by the way support systems are designed, coordinated, and delivered.

2. Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on a mixed-methods approach that combines desk research with survey-based qualitative analysis. This approach was selected because the topic of youth leaving care cannot be understood adequately through one type of evidence alone. Legal and policy documents are necessary for mapping the formal system, institutional responsibilities, and reform commitments. However, they often provide only a partial picture of how support actually functions in practice. Survey evidence, by contrast, can reveal how the system is experienced by young people and perceived by employers and professionals, even when the sample size is limited. Bringing these two strands together makes it possible to produce a more grounded and practically relevant assessment.

Desk research

The first methodological component is **desk research**. This involved reviewing the national legal, strategic, and institutional framework relevant to child protection, youth inclusion, and the transition from care to independent living in the Czech Republic. The draft report already identifies a broad range of source categories used for this purpose, including legislation, national strategies, audit and monitoring reports, international and comparative frameworks, and NGO or programme documentation.

The legislative and regulatory review focuses on the instruments that shape the rights, placement conditions, and support environment of children and young people in alternative care. These include, among others, the Social and Legal Protection of Children Act, the Civil Code, the Social Services Act, and the Education Act. Together, these legal instruments form the backbone of the Czech child protection and youth-support framework. In addition, the report pays attention to more recent reforms affecting early childhood care and preventive services, since these developments are relevant to the broader direction of national policy.

The strategic-policy review includes the key frameworks that define reform goals and state commitments, such as the National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights 2021–2029 and the European Child Guarantee National Action Plan 2022–2030. These documents are especially important because they show how Czechia is positioning itself within current European and international approaches to child welfare, poverty reduction, social inclusion, and access to services. They also help identify the degree to which care leavers are explicitly recognised as a target group within broader national inclusion efforts.

Another important part of the desk research is the use of institutional monitoring and audit material. These sources are particularly valuable because they move beyond policy ambition and examine how the system performs in practice. Reviews by bodies such as the Supreme Audit Office and international actors such as UNICEF help identify structural problems that may not be visible in national strategies alone. In the Czech case, these materials are crucial for understanding recurring concerns about fragmentation, weak coordination, and uneven implementation across sectors and regions. The original draft correctly treated such material as central rather than supplementary, and that decision should be

retained. The desk research also includes selected documentation from non-governmental organisations and project-based initiatives working with care leavers and vulnerable youth. These sources are important for identifying good practices, service innovations, and support models that respond directly to the transition gap experienced by young people leaving care.

Survey-based qualitative analysis

The second methodological component is the integration of **survey results** produced within the Skills4Life project framework. As the draft report notes, this survey material was designed to capture the perspectives of different stakeholder groups relevant to the transition from care to adulthood. In the Czech case, the material covers three main respondent groups: care leavers themselves, employers or HR professionals, and trainers or professionals working with young people in transition.

The survey material is particularly valuable because it brings forward themes that are often underdeveloped in formal policy literature. For example, while national strategies may refer to inclusion, participation, or support pathways in broad terms, the survey responses make visible the everyday reality behind those concepts: uncertainty about housing, stress related to money management, loneliness, lack of confidence, employer hesitation, and the demand for regular mentoring or counselling. In other words, the survey evidence helps translate abstract policy objectives into concrete needs and training priorities.

Their function is threefold. First, they help test whether the formal policy environment corresponds to the experiences and concerns reported by relevant stakeholders. Second, they help identify recurring barriers and gaps across different respondent groups. Third, they provide a practical basis for shaping the content of the Skills4Life training programme, especially in relation to employability, life skills, emotional resilience, and social support. This methodological approach has several strengths. It allows the report to move beyond a purely top-down reading of the Czech system and to capture both structure and experience.

At the same time, the approach also has limitations, which should be acknowledged explicitly. Desk research depends on the availability, quality, and recency of published documentation. Not all aspects of leaving care are monitored consistently at national level, and some of the available evidence is stronger on institutional design than on long-term outcomes for care leavers. Survey findings, meanwhile, provide important qualitative insight but should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all care leavers, employers, or practitioners in Czechia. Their strength lies in revealing patterns, recurring concerns, and practical perceptions rather than in offering nationally generalisable data. Despite these limitations, the combination of desk research and stakeholder survey evidence provides a sufficiently robust basis for the analysis that follows

3. National Context

3.1. Institutional Framework

The institutional framework for child protection in the Czech Republic is characterised by divided responsibilities across several ministries and levels of administration. This has been repeatedly identified as one of the main structural weaknesses of the system.

Key institutional features include:

- shared responsibility across the Ministries of Labour, Education, and, historically, Health;
- a strong implementation role for OSPOD offices at local level;
- an important complementary role for NGOs and local service providers;
- uneven coordination between institutions involved in care, aftercare, and youth inclusion.

A more detailed understanding of the institutional framework requires distinguishing the roles of the main bodies involved. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) is the key authority for social and legal protection of children and oversees the broader policy area of family support, foster care, and social services. At the implementation level, an especially important role is played by OSPOD offices (Orgán sociálně-právní ochrany dětí), which operate within municipalities with extended powers and are often the first public bodies to assess children's situations, intervene in cases of risk, work with families, and coordinate protective measures. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports remains relevant because it is linked to educational institutions and parts of the residential care system, while the Ministry of Health has historically had responsibility in areas connected to care for very young children and health-related aspects of child welfare. Around this formal structure, regional authorities, municipalities, social service providers, and NGOs deliver counselling, housing assistance, mentoring, and other support relevant to young people leaving care. This means that the Czech system is not only multi-level but also multi-actor, which helps explain why coordination is so difficult.

In practice, **this fragmentation affects both the quality and continuity of support**. Children may move between services that are governed by different rules, financed through different mechanisms, and managed by different institutions. For young people leaving care, this can create particular difficulties because their needs rarely fit neatly within one sector alone. Housing, education, employment, mental health, social assistance, and aftercare all require some degree of coordination, yet the system often expects the young person to navigate these different domains with limited support.

These actors often fill gaps that are not fully addressed by the formal state system, especially for care leavers and vulnerable young adults. NGOs may provide transitional housing, mentoring, counselling, employment support, low-threshold services, and other forms of practical assistance. Their contribution is often essential, particularly where public systems provide limited aftercare or where support is not consistently available after a young person leaves residential or foster care. At the same time, reliance on NGO provision can also create inequality in access, since service availability may differ significantly between regions and organisations.

A further important aspect of the institutional context is the question of strategic coordination. Recent national reviews have pointed out that Czech child protection reform has been shaped by multiple strategies, concepts, and action plans without sufficient alignment between them. This weakens implementation and makes it more difficult to create a coherent and predictable support system. For young people leaving care, this matters because successful inclusion depends not only on individual services, but on whether the system as a whole operates in a connected way. Survey responses from care leavers and professionals also suggest that institutional support remains fragmented, with young people often experiencing unclear responsibilities and inconsistent follow-up after leaving care.

Overall, the institutional framework in Czechia contains many relevant actors and mechanisms, but it still lacks the degree of coherence needed to provide consistently strong support to care leavers. The system is no longer defined only by traditional institutional approaches, and important reforms are underway, but the transition to a more integrated and preventive model is still incomplete. This broader structural context is essential for understanding why many care leavers continue to experience practical and emotional difficulties even where formal support measures exist.

3.2. Legal and Policy Framework

The Czech Republic has a substantial legal and policy framework relevant to children in alternative care and to the broader objective of youth inclusion. Several laws shape the rights, status, and support environment of children and young people in care, while strategic policy documents set out the direction of reform.

Key elements of the legal and policy framework include:

- the Social and Legal Protection of Children Act;
- the Civil Code and related family-law provisions;
- the Social Services Act and the Education Act;
- the National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights 2021–2029;
- the Czech National Action Plan under the European Child Guarantee.

The core of the legal framework is **Act No. 359/1999 Coll., on the Social and Legal Protection of Children**. This act defines the scope of social and legal protection and explicitly covers both the protection of children's rights and support for adults after the termination of foster care or institutional care. This is an important point for the report, because it shows that Czech law does not treat the end of care as legally irrelevant; rather, it already contains a basis for post-care support. The broader MPSV framework also presents social and legal protection as safeguarding the child's right to favourable development, family life, education, and protection from harm. In principle, then, the legislation reflects a rights-based understanding of child protection. The challenge lies less in whether the law recognises vulnerability and more in how consistently these obligations are translated into coordinated support in practice.

A second major pillar is the **Civil Code (Act No. 89/2012 Coll.)**, which governs parental responsibility, guardianship, substitute family care, and related family-law issues. Together with the child protection act, it helps shape the legal architecture of alternative care in Czechia. The broader policy direction over

the last decade has increasingly favoured family-based and community-based solutions over institutional approaches, and the legal framework has gradually moved in that same direction. This is significant for youth inclusion because the form of care a child experiences has long-term implications for later transition outcomes. A system that gives greater weight to family environments, stability, and participation creates a stronger foundation for inclusion than one built mainly around institutional placement. The legal framework therefore matters not only for placement decisions during childhood, but also for the conditions under which young people later leave care.

The **Social Services Act (Act No. 108/2006 Coll.)** is particularly relevant to the transition to adulthood. It regulates the provision of social services to people in adverse social situations and provides the legal basis for services that are directly relevant to care leavers, including halfway houses and certain low-threshold services. This matters because many of the forms of support that care leavers most need after leaving care — transitional accommodation, counselling, support with everyday life, and help navigating institutions — sit not only within child protection, but also within the broader system of social services. In other words, the legal framework for leaving care is cross-sectoral by nature. This creates opportunities for broader support, but it also increases the risk of fragmentation when services are not well coordinated.

At the strategic level, the **National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights 2021–2029** is one of the most important documents. It sets out the direction for Czech child protection reform and reflects a stronger emphasis on prevention, child rights, family support, and more coherent protection mechanisms. This strategy is important not only because it signals reform, but because it frames child protection as something broader than crisis intervention or placement management. It implies a more developmental understanding of children's needs and a stronger commitment to ensuring that children grow up in safe and supportive environments. For this report, the key point is that the strategy creates a policy basis for moving beyond reactive support and toward more preventive and continuity-based models.

UNICEF reported in January 2026 that the Czech child protection system remains fragmented across multiple ministries and that a new comprehensive child protection and family support law is being developed under the National Strategy framework in order to unify and modernise the system. This is a crucial development, because it confirms that the current legal architecture is still seen as insufficiently integrated even by the institutions working on reform. In other words, the policy direction is increasingly clear, but the legislative consolidation needed to support it is still underway.

The **European Child Guarantee National Action Plan** adds another important layer. Eurochild's overview of the Czech NAP shows that children in alternative care are included among the relevant target groups and that the plan links housing, health, education, and community-based services more clearly than older child-protection approaches often did. This is especially valuable for a report on youth inclusion, because it places care leavers within a broader social-inclusion framework rather than treating them only as a child-welfare category. The Child Guarantee perspective helps shift attention toward access to services, equal opportunities, and long-term outcomes. It also reinforces the idea that support for care leavers cannot be limited to the moment of leaving care, but must include housing, education, health, and participation in society more broadly.

However, one of the clearest conclusions from the Czech context is that there remains a persistent gap between **formal policy development and implementation in practice**. The 2024 Supreme Audit Office audit found that since 2015 at least 32 strategic and conceptual documents had addressed child protection, but that they were not properly coordinated. The same audit also concluded that the transformation of care for children at risk had not been completed, despite long-running reform efforts and major public expenditure. This matters for the legal and policy framework because it shows that the problem is not simply the absence of regulation. Rather, it is the lack of coherence between multiple laws, strategies, institutions, and implementation systems. **For care leavers, this translates into a support environment that may look developed on paper but remain uneven in real life.**

This weak implementation logic is especially important at the point of transition to adulthood. Much of Czech child-protection law is understandably focused on minors: safety, placement, family relations, and interventions while the young person is still legally a child. The transition out of care introduces a different set of risks, including unstable housing, low financial preparedness, weaker support networks, and difficulty entering employment. **These risks do not fit neatly within one ministry or one law.** That is why care leavers often experience a drop in continuity precisely at the moment when structured support is most needed. The survey findings in the project annex are consistent with this interpretation: respondents reported low preparedness for adult life, strong need for support in money management and mental health, and uneven access to trusted support networks.

Overall, the Czech legal and policy framework is best understood **as developing but not yet fully consolidated**. It contains important rights-based principles, increasingly strong reform language, and a growing recognition that support must extend beyond formal care itself. At the same time, the framework still does not provide a sufficiently stable and standardised national model of aftercare. This means that the legal basis for inclusion exists in broad terms, but the practical experience of inclusion still depends too heavily on local arrangements, institutional cooperation, and the availability of NGO-led support. For care leavers, the result is a system shaped by both progress and uncertainty: reform is real, but continuity is still fragile

4. Analysis of Youth Inclusion Policies

4.1. Good Practices and Innovations

In the Czech Republic, the most relevant good practices in youth inclusion are those that respond directly to the transition from care to independent adulthood. Rather than treating leaving care as a single administrative moment, these approaches recognise it as a process that requires continuity of support across housing, practical life skills, emotional wellbeing, and access to employment. This is particularly important in a system where reform is still ongoing and where support for care leavers often depends on local capacity and NGO involvement rather than on a fully coherent national framework.

One of the most established examples is the **Dům na půl cesty** (halfway house) model. These services are specifically designed for young adults in difficult social situations, including those leaving institutional or substitute care, and combine temporary accommodation with social support aimed at independent living. The model is visible in several Czech settings. DOM – Dům otevřených možností presents its halfway houses as safe transitional environments intended to support a successful start to independent life, while the Czech Red Cross in Beroun operates an asylum house and halfway house with continuous service provision. These initiatives are important because they do not treat housing as an isolated issue; they link accommodation with guidance, routine, and practical support.

A second area of good practice is **the wider ecosystem of NGO-led transition support**. Organisations such as SOS Children's Villages in Czechia explicitly provide support for young adults aged 18–26 who grew up in children's homes or foster care, including accommodation and accompaniment into independent life. This kind of service is particularly valuable because it extends beyond basic crisis assistance and focuses on the practical and relational aspects of adulthood: managing money, maintaining housing, navigating institutions, and building confidence. These measures are not yet universal, but they represent strong practice examples because they respond to the real conditions in which care leavers enter adult life.

A third good-practice area is **the availability of low-threshold youth services**. The Czech Association of Streetwork describes low-threshold services for children and youth as support for young people aged roughly 6 to 26 who are in, or at risk of, an adverse social situation. Although these services are not specific only to care leavers, they are highly relevant to them, especially where young people experience loneliness, unstable housing, weak support networks, or reluctance to seek formal help. Their strength lies in accessibility: they offer support without high entry barriers and therefore help reach young people before crises deepen.

The Czech survey results reinforce the importance of these practical and relational models. Among care leavers, the strongest training interests were money and debt, self-confidence and mental health, housing, and daily life skills. Many respondents also identified managing money, handling stress and emotions, and taking full responsibility for everything as major difficulties after leaving care. Just as importantly, the most desired forms of emotional support were free counselling, regular contact with a mentor or buddy, and help with stress management. This suggests that the **most promising innovations are those that combine life-skills preparation with ongoing human support**, rather than offering one-off interventions.

The employer survey also points to a constructive opportunity. Most responding employers said they were currently hiring young people, and a large majority said they would be open to hiring a care leaver either directly or if the person were reasonably well prepared. At the same time, many employers said they would benefit from a clearer contact person, onboarding guidance, or external mentor support. This indicates that good practice in youth inclusion is not only about preparing care leavers, but **also about preparing employers and creating structured cooperation between both sides**. Taken together, these examples show that the Czech Republic already contains several promising models of support, particularly in the NGO and service-practice sphere.

Common strengths of these practices include:

- they combine practical and emotional support;
- they treat transition as a process rather than a one-time exit;
- they are flexible and often easier to access than formal systems;
- they create bridges between care, housing, everyday life, and employment.

4.2. Challenges and Barriers

Despite these positive developments, the Czech Republic continues to face serious structural and practical barriers that limit the social inclusion of young people leaving care.

The main barriers identified are:

- system fragmentation;
- weak transition readiness;
- housing insecurity;
- financial vulnerability;
- mental health and emotional strain;
- uneven labour-market inclusion.

The most significant of these is **system fragmentation**. Child protection responsibilities remain divided across several ministries and administrative levels, while reform efforts have not yet produced a sufficiently unified framework for supporting care leavers. This matters because the transition to adulthood does not happen within one policy field alone. Young people leaving care often need simultaneous support in housing, education, employment, mental health, and access to services. When these areas are poorly coordinated, **the system becomes difficult to navigate and support becomes inconsistent**.

The Czech survey findings strongly confirm this transition gap. None of the care-leaver respondents said they felt very prepared to manage adult life after leaving care, while most felt only somewhat prepared or not prepared at all. The most frequently identified difficulty was managing money, followed by finding a job, while housing, stress, and uncertainty about where to ask for help also emerged as important concerns. Many respondents also reported loneliness, and more than half said they found it difficult to ask for help when they needed it. These findings are important because they show that the barriers facing care leavers are not only institutional in nature, but also deeply practical and personal.

Housing insecurity remains one of the most immediate and visible barriers. Survey responses suggest that many young people leaving care are living in temporary accommodation, shared housing, or unstable arrangements rather than in secure independent housing. Housing also appeared as a key area of interest in training needs and as one of the strongest fears about the future. This indicates that housing is not simply one challenge among many, but one of the foundations on which all other aspects of inclusion depend. Without stable accommodation, it becomes much harder to maintain employment, continue education, manage wellbeing.

Another major barrier is the combination of **financial vulnerability and insufficient practical preparation**. Care leavers most frequently identified money management as the area where they needed the most help, and money-related topics were the most popular training interest overall. Several respondents also expressed the wish that someone had better prepared them for the real costs and delays involved in finding housing, covering bills, and building stability after leaving care. These findings suggest that many young people enter adulthood without adequate preparation in budgeting, planning, and everyday financial decision-making, even when they are motivated to succeed.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing also emerge as central barriers rather than secondary ones. A majority of care-leaver respondents reported at least some level of mental health struggle after leaving care, and the most valued forms of support were counselling, regular supportive contact, and help with managing stress. Trainers and professionals echoed this picture, highlighting mental health, loneliness, weak support networks, and lack of life skills as major ongoing challenges.

The labour-market transition presents a more mixed picture. On one hand, the employer survey shows that many employers are open to hiring care leavers, especially where some preparation and support are in place. On the other hand, employers also expressed concerns related to emotional or social difficulties, unstable living situations, low confidence, and the possible need for additional mentoring. A large share of respondents were not familiar with the term “care leaver” or had only limited awareness of what such a background might imply.

5. Recommendations

The analysis of the Czech child protection and youth transition system points to several priorities for policy and practice reform. These recommendations are aligned with the Skills4Life project and are based on both desk research and Czech survey findings. Together, they show the need for stronger system coordination, more reliable aftercare, better preparation for independent living, and more accessible emotional and practical support.

A first priority is **stronger coordination and gradual unification of the child protection system**. The evidence shows that fragmentation across ministries remains one of the main structural weaknesses in Czechia. UNICEF describes the system as divided across several ministries, and the 2024 Supreme Audit Office audit found that reform efforts have been weakened by limited coordination between strategies and institutions. Continued progress toward a more unified legal and institutional framework is therefore needed, with clearer responsibilities, stronger inter-institutional cooperation, and more consistent transition pathways for young people leaving care. Better coordination would improve governance and reduce the risk of care leavers falling between sectors.

A second priority is **the introduction of a functioning shared information and case-management system**. The Supreme Audit Office identified the lack of a unified information system as a major barrier to effective coordination. In practice, this increases administrative burdens and weakens continuity across services. An interoperable system used by the main responsible authorities would improve case

tracking, transition planning, and follow-up support. Over time, better data would also support more evidence-based policymaking in an area where long-term outcomes are still insufficiently monitored.

A third priority is **the expansion of housing and transition support for care leavers**. The Czech survey findings show that housing insecurity, affordability, and fear of homelessness are among the most immediate concerns after leaving care. Housing also emerged as a key training interest and one of the strongest anxieties about the future. This suggests that stable accommodation is a foundation for successful inclusion. Policy should therefore place greater emphasis on transitional housing, supported accommodation, and targeted assistance during the first years of independent living, combined with practical guidance on tenancy, budgeting, household management, and access to benefits.

A fourth priority is **to strengthen preparation for independent living before young people leave care**. Survey results show that many care leavers did not feel well prepared for adult life and identified money management, job search, emotional stress, and everyday responsibilities as major challenges. Preparation should therefore begin well before the formal end of care and include structured support in financial literacy, housing readiness, communication, decision-making, and access to services. It should be embedded in individual care planning rather than treated as a one-off step at the point of exit. This is also an area where the Skills4Life training programme can make a direct contribution.

A fifth priority is **the institutionalisation of mentoring and longer-term relational support**. One of the clearest findings from the Czech survey is that care leavers need not only information, but also a trusted person they can rely on over time. Free counselling, stress support, and regular contact with a mentor or supportive adult were among the most preferred forms of help. Employers also highlighted the value of mentoring or buddy systems for labour-market inclusion. Mentoring should therefore be treated as a core element of transition support rather than an optional measure. Whether provided through public services, schools, employment programmes, or NGOs, regular mentoring can reduce isolation and strengthen confidence and stability.

A sixth priority is **stronger cooperation with employers and better supported pathways into work**. The employer survey suggests that many employers are open to hiring care leavers, especially in entry-level roles or internships, but also have concerns about emotional strain, unstable living conditions, and the need for additional guidance. This means that employment inclusion should focus not only on preparing young people, but also on preparing workplaces. Relevant measures include employer guidance materials, supported internships, designated contact persons, onboarding support, and closer cooperation between employers and youth-support professionals.

A seventh priority is **stronger participation of young people with care experience in policy and service design**. A more inclusive system should be built not only for care leavers, but also with them. Their experience is essential for understanding which support measures are effective, where systems fail in practice, and how transition planning can be improved. The Czech context would benefit from more regular and structured consultation with care-experienced young people at both national and local levels, especially in the areas of leaving-care support, housing, employment, and service accessibility. Participation should be understood as a practical part of better policy design, not only as symbolic consultation.

6. Conclusion

The Czech Republic's approach to child protection and youth inclusion reflects a system in clear but incomplete transition. The legislative and policy framework is moving closer to international and European standards, and the growing presence of NGO-led and community-based initiatives shows that more person-centered support for care leavers is both possible and already visible in practice. At the same time, the gap between policy ambition and lived experience remains substantial. For young people leaving care without stable housing, strong support networks, practical preparation, or reliable emotional support, this gap is not abstract.

The most important conclusion of this report is structural: fragmentation continues to define the Czech child protection system and weakens progress in almost every other area. When responsibilities are divided across several ministries, when strategic development is spread across numerous documents without sufficient coordination, and when continuity between care, housing, employment, and social support remains weak, the system struggles to provide a stable transition pathway for care leavers. Instead of experiencing support as a connected process, many young people encounter it as a set of separate institutions with different rules, priorities, and limits.




A second conclusion concerns the relationship between resources and outcomes. The Czech system is not defined simply by a lack of policy activity or public spending, but by the way support is organised and directed. The evidence reviewed in this report suggests that progress depends less on isolated measures and more on whether resources are used to strengthen prevention, family- and community-based services, and consistent aftercare. Where support remains concentrated in fragmented structures or uneven local arrangements, young people continue to face avoidable barriers in housing, education, employment, and emotional wellbeing.

A third conclusion is that timing and continuity are crucial. The Czech survey findings show that many care leavers do not feel fully prepared for adult life when leaving care and continue to struggle afterward with money management, housing insecurity, stress, loneliness, and uncertainty about where to seek

help. Employers and professionals point to similar concerns, particularly the need for stronger mentoring, practical life-skills preparation, and support during the first stages of labour-market integration. A more effective approach would begin preparation earlier, continue support beyond the formal end of care, and combine practical assistance with relational and emotional support.

Finally, this report ends on a note of realistic possibility. The Czech context already offers examples of promising practice, including halfway houses, low-threshold youth services, mentoring-based support, and training approaches that focus on real-life skills and transition readiness. These initiatives show that positive outcomes are achievable when young people receive the right support at the right time and in the right form. This means [strengthening coordination](#), [expanding aftercare](#), [investing in practical and emotional support](#), and [ensuring that the voices of care leavers themselves are included more directly in future policy and service development](#).

Annex I – Aggregated Surveys Results (D1.1.4 – Assessment of the actual needs and challenges of the target group)

  Co-funded by the European Union												
												
D1.1.4 – Assessment of the actual needs and challenges of the target group												
<i>[Czech] Responses of the Care Leavers Survey</i>												
Insert Google Form link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1nyM6OE2rQ8t9ExqgX97-f8BjqYRDngP3JzuYuoqXTII/edit#responses										INSERT Total number of respondents to the survey		15
Section 1: About You												
Survey questions		Answers to the survey										
1. What country are you from?	Austria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Romania	Serbia	Slovenia	Ukraine			15
	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0			
2. How old are you?	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25-29		Total number of answers collected
	0	0	2	1	3	2	2	0	0	5		15
3. Where do you live now?	In temporary housing (hostel, shelter, supported accommodation)	Shared flat/house with friends	With my parents or relatives	With a partner	In my own flat/house							Total number of answers collected
	4	6	0	5	0							15
4. Are you currently working?	No, but looking for work	Yes, full-time	Yes, part-time	No, and not looking for work right now. Why?								Total number of answers collected
	2	7	2	4								15
5. Are you currently studying or in training?	Yes, part-time	Yes, full-time	No									Total number of answers collected
	2	4	9									15
6. Do you feel financially secure right now?	Yes, I manage well	It's difficult, but I get by	No, I'm struggling a lot									Total number of answers collected
	6	4	5									15
Section 2: Your Experiences After Leaving Care												



7. When you left care at 18, how ready did you feel to handle adult life, like finding a place to live, working, or taking care of yourself?	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not prepared at all							Total number of answers collected		
	0	9	6							15		
8. What was the hardest part about leaving care? (select up to 3)	Finding a place to live	Finding a job	Managing money	Being alone / feeling lonely	Handling stress and emotions	Knowing who to ask for help	Cooking, cleaning, and taking care of myself	Having to take full responsibility for everything	Something else	Total number of answers collected		
	3	8	12	1	4	4	5	5	1	15		
9. Who supports you now when you need help or advice?	Friends	Former carers/social workers	Family (biological or foster)	No one	Other	coworkers, chat gpt, foundation dejme dětem šanci				Total number of answers collected		
	6	2	0	4	3					15		
10. How often do you feel lonely?	Almost every day	Sometimes	Rarely	Never						Total number of answers collected		
	2	9	3	1						15		
11. Do you feel confident asking for help when you need it?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, I find it very hard							Total number of answers collected		
	1	6	8							15		
Section 3: Your Skills & Training Needs												
12. Which skills do you feel confident about? (select all that apply)	Writing a CV and applying for jobs	Preparing for job interviews	Managing my money (budgeting, saving, paying bills)	Cooking and planning meals	Managing my emotions and stress	Building good relationships (friends, colleagues, partners)	Something else				Total number of answers collected	
	11	7	4	9	1	8	1				15	
13. Which skills do you feel you need the most help with? (select up to 3)	Writing a CV and applying for jobs	Preparing for job interviews	Managing my money (budgeting, saving, paying bills)	Cooking and planning meals	Managing my emotions and stress	Building good relationships (friends, colleagues, partners)	Something else				Total number of answers collected	
	1	4	8	2	8	2	1				15	
14. What training topics would interest you the most? (select all that apply)	Job search & applications	Money & debt	Self-confidence & mental health	Finding and keeping housing	Cooking & managing daily life	Digital skills	Other				Total number of answers collected	
	4	9	8	5	6	3	0				15	
15. If we created free training for care leavers, would you join?	Yes, definitely	Maybe, if the topics are useful for me	Probably not							Total number of answers collected		
	4	10	1							15		
16. How would you like to do the following?	Online (on my phone/laptop)	In person (with other care leavers)	Both are fine	Not sure						Total number of answers collected		
											15	
Section 4: Emotional & Mental Health Support												
17. Since leaving care, have you struggled with mental health?	Yes, often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never						Total number of answers collected		
	3	3	6	3						15		
18. What kind of emotional support would help you most right now? (select up to 2)	Having someone to talk to regularly (mentor or buddy)	Joining a group of care leavers to share experiences	Free counseling/the rapy	Learning how to manage stress and emotions	I don't need support right now	Something else					Total number of answers collected	
	9	5	10	8	7	2					15	
Section 5: Future Hopes & Fears												
19. What do you hope to achieve in the next 5 years? (Select up to 3)	Get a stable job	Finish school or vocational training	Have my own apartment or house	Feel emotionally stable and confident	Start a family or have a healthy relationship	Start my own business or become self-employed	Learn how to manage my money better	Improve my mental health and wellbeing	Build a strong group of friends or support network	Volunteer or give back to the community	Something else	Total number of answers collected
	9	4	3	6	8	5	5	3	0	1	0	15
20. What is your biggest fear for the future?	Not finding a stable job	Ending up homeless	Struggling with mental health	Not being able to afford basic things (like food, rent, bills)	Being judged because of my background or care experience	Not having anyone to support me	Not having my own family	Not knowing what to do with my life	Something else			Total number of answers collected
	1	3	1	3	1	0	3	3	0			15
21. What's one thing you wish someone had told you before you left care?	How to manage money and pay bills	Finding a job or housing takes time	That I should plan more before leaving	Something else							Total number of answers collected	
	3	4	6	2							15	
Section 6: Staying in Touch (Optional)												

22. Would you like to receive more information about our care leaver support project?	Yes	No	Total number of answers collected
	9	6	
20. If yes, please leave your contact details:	...		emamartincova@icloud.com 792654236 terinn_kka
Total number of answers collected			

D1.1.4 – Assessment of the actual needs and challenges of the target group															
Special Responses of the Employers and HR Professionals Survey															
Insert Google Form link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1t8P1a45HfEgbe5/DAN1Y4R0WJF8C9JL4Ue4/edit#responses											INSERT Total number of respondents to the survey		21		
Section 1: About Your Company															
Survey questions															
Answers to the survey															
1. What country are you from?	Austria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Romania	Serbia	Slovenia	Ukraine					Total number of answers collected	
	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	0	0					21	
2. What type of business or organization do you represent?	Private company	Public institution or government body	Non-profit organization / NGO	Social enterprise	Employment or recruitment agency	Vocational training provider	Chamber of commerce / business network	Self-employed / freelancer	Other					Total number of answers collected	
	11	5	3	1	0	0	0	1	0					21	
3. How many employees does your organization have?	1-10	11-50	51-250	More than 250							Total number of answers collected				
	7	8	1	5							21				
4. What sector do you operate in?	Health and social care	Education and training	Hospitality and tourism	Retail and sales	Manufacturing and production	Construction and skilled trades	IT and digital services	Finance and administration	Transport and logistics	Agriculture and environment	Creative industries / media	Public administration	Other	Total number of answers collected	
	1	3	1	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	6	1	3	21	
5. Are you currently hiring young people (aged 18-29)?	Yes	Not at the moment, but in the future	No	Not sure							Total number of answers collected				
	18	0	3	0							21				
Section 2: Awareness & Attitudes															
6. Have you ever heard the term "care leaver" before?	Yes, I'm familiar with it	I've heard it, but don't know much about it	No, I haven't heard of it							Total number of answers collected					
	7	5	9							21					
7. Have you ever knowingly hired a young care leaver?	Yes	No	Not sure							Total number of answers collected					
	1	17	3							21					
8. Would you be open to hiring a care leaver?	Yes, absolutely	Possibly, if well-prepared	I'm not sure	No							Total number of answers collected				
	7	12	2	0							21				
9. What concerns (if any) might you have about hiring a care leaver?	Lack of job experience	Emotional or social challenges	Low self-confidence or motivation	Unstable living situation	Need for extra support or mentoring	Workplace fit/team dynamics	Gaps in formal education or work skills	No concerns	Other					Total number of answers collected	
	3	9	6	7	4	1	2	6	0					21	
Section 3: Skills & Preparation															
10. What soft skills are most important for entry-level employees in your organization?	Punctuality and reliability	Communication	Teamwork	Adaptability	Initiative	Problem-solving	Professional attitude	Willingness to learn	Time management	Resilience	Other			Total number of answers collected	
	14	14	5	2	2	9	1	10	2	1	1			21	
11. What hard skills do you look for in young applicants?	Basic computer skills (eg. Word, Excel, email)	Customer service skills	Manual/technical skills (e.g. using tools, machines)	Language or communication skills	Sales or retail experience	Industry-specific technical knowledge	Ability to follow procedures and safety rules	Other // confidence to make a decisions							Total number of answers collected
	16	5	4	13	1	4	7	1							21
12. How do you usually assess a young person's readiness for the workplace?	CV / Application	Interview	Trial day or internship	References	Formal qualifications	Informal impression / attitude	Other							Total number of answers collected	
	13	20	6	10	3	11	2							21	
13. What qualities would make a young person with a difficult background (like care) more attractive as a candidate?	Motivation to learn and grow	Personal resilience and strength	Life experience and maturity	Openness to feedback and learning	A positive attitude	Being proactive and showing initiative	Willingness to accept guidance or mentoring	Other						Total number of answers collected	
	15	7	4	14	11	15	7	2						21	
14. Would you consider offering any of the following to care-leavers?	Internship	Apprenticeship	Entry-level job	Mentoring or buddy system	Shadowing days	CV/interview preparation workshops	Not sure	Other						Total number of answers collected	
	14	1	10	6	6	5	1	1						21	

Section 4: Support & Cooperation										
15. What kind of support would help you as an employer when hiring or mentoring a care leaver?	Onboarding guidelines or toolkits	External mentor or job coach support	Contact person from a youth service	Training on inclusive hiring	Better awareness about the care system	Financial incentives/sup port	We feel confident managing this without extra support	Other		Total number of answers collected
	6	7	5	6	6	4	4	2		21
16. Would your company be interested in cooperating with a care leaver support project?	Yes, definitely	Maybe	No	I need more information						Total number of answers collected
	1	14	1	5						21
17. What would encourage you to get involved in such a project?	Having a clear contact person/project coordinator	Knowing that ongoing support for the young person is provided	Seeing success stories or testimonials from other employers	Receiving recognition or certificate for participation	Being able to co-design activities that match our workplace	Having a trial period or low-risk entry option	Understanding the positive impact on the community	Getting access to a talent pool of motivated young people	Other	Total number of answers collected
	10	7	5	2	2	6	2	6	3	21
18. Do you believe young care leavers could thrive in your workplace if given the right support?	Yes	Maybe	No	Not sure						Total number of answers collected
	11	7	0	3						21

Section 5: Follow-up (Optional)				
19. Would you like to receive more information about our care leaver support project?	Yes	No	I understand the intention, but I am not sure that its implementation will have an impact. From the beginning, these people have been labeled with just this label, so they are discriminated against in principle. The questionnaire is based on the premise that discrimination exists, and therefore offers options for mitigating it. But what if real discrimination does not exist and everything is only in the heads of these graduates, that they are somehow disadvantaged (because perhaps this system dictates it to them - I don't know)? For example, I have never asked anyone about their family background. How would I know then that I am talking to a person from a specific background? If this is reflected in the person's specific skills, e.g. communication skills, problem-solving, then I would work on these skills. There are a whole range of tools. However, a priori I would not put out a fire where there is none. As far as I know, asking about family background in interviews is illegal. I personally will be leaving the company in some time, but I am convinced that it could be a match - we focus on impact activities and at the same time hire a lot of young people as temporary workers.	Total number of answers collected
	13	8		21
20. If yes, please leave your contact details:	...			Total number of answers collected
				18

 										
D1.1.4 – Assessment of the actual needs and challenges of the target group										
<i>[Czech Republic] Responses of the Trainers and Professionals Survey</i>										
Insert Google Form link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SsM61V7QyH90BdFh8PHF91rAvOdWdJcScq_NkwF3zAI/edit								INSERT Total number of respondents to the survey		22

Section 1: About Your Company											
Survey questions	Answers to the survey										
1. What country are you from?	Austria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Romania	Serbia	Slovenia	Ukraine		Total number of answers collected
	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	0		22
2. What is your current role?	Social worker	Youth worker	Psychologist / counselor	Vocational trainer	Job coach / career advisor	Educator / teacher	Project manager / coordinator	Volunteer	Other		Total number of answers collected
	4	1	0	1	0	6	3	0	7		22
3. What type of organization do you work for?	Public social services	Non-profit / NGO	Residential care home	Vocational education and training center	Employment service	Mental health service	Other				Total number of answers collected
	1	9	1	4	1	0	6				22
4. How many years have you worked with care leavers or young people in transition?	Less than 1 year	1–3 years	4–7 years	More than 7 years							Total number of answers collected
	2	6	4	10							22
5. How often do you currently work directly with care leavers?	Daily	Weekly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never						Total number of answers collected
	6	8	7	0	1						22

6. In your experience, what are the biggest challenges care leavers face?	Finding safe and affordable housing	Finding employment	Managing money and personal finances	Mental health and emotional well-being	Loneliness and lack of a support network	Lack of life skills (e.g. cooking, cleaning, self-care)	Navigating bureaucracy (e.g. benefits, healthcare)	Other		Total number of answers collected
	12	7	14	12	7	4	8	0		22
7. Which of the following support areas do you think are most urgent for care leavers?	Mental health support	Mentoring / having a trusted adult	Job readiness training	Financial literacy	Legal and administrative help	Peer support / community building	Housing assistance	Digital skills	Other	Total number of answers collected
	9	13	5	13	5	5	12	0	0	22
8. From your perspective, what are the key strengths of care leavers?	Resilience and perseverance	Independence and self-reliance	Adaptability	Life experience / maturity	Motivation to improve their situation	Problem-solving skills	Creativity	Other		Total number of answers collected
	16	6	10	5	19	15	2	6		22
9. What skills or qualities are often missing in care-leavers when they transition to independence?	Self-confidence	Emotional regulation	Time management	Job-seeking skills	Communication and teamwork	Problem solving	Financial planning	Motivation and goal-setting	Other	Total number of answers collected
	9	7	4	5	1	9	15	11	4	22
10. What kind of support do you think care leavers respond to best?	One-on-one mentoring	Group training or workshops	Peer-led support	Digital/online support	Other					Total number of answers collected
	16	0	2	1	3					22
Section 3: Your Own Experience & Training Needs										
11. How confident do you feel when supporting care leavers with emotional or psychological needs?	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not very confident	Not confident at all						Total number of answers collected
	3	11	7	1						22
12. Have you received specific training related to care leavers?	Yes, in the past year	Yes, but more than a year ago	No, but I would like to	No, and I don't feel I need it						Total number of answers collected
	4	12	5	1						22
13. What types of training or resources would help you work more effectively with care leavers?	Trauma-informed care	Mental health first aid	Conflict management	Career guidance / job coaching skills	Working with NEET youth (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training)	Intercultural or diversity training	Legal rights and administrative processes	Motivational techniques	Other	Total number of answers collected
	13	14	9	7	9	3	8	15	3	22
14. What are your biggest challenges in working with care leavers?	Building trust and long-term relationships	Addressing mental health issues	Lack of consistent support services	Time and resource limitations	Low motivation or engagement from participants	Bureaucratic hurdles / funding constraints	Insufficient training for specific needs	Other		Total number of answers collected
	10	6	14	6	7	5	3	3		22
Section 4: Reflections on Support Systems										
15. How would you rate the current support system for care leavers in your region?	Very good.	Good.	Adequate.	Poor.	I don't know.					Total number of answers collected
	0	0	4	17	1					22
16. What is missing in the support system for care leavers?	Consistent aftercare or follow-up services	Holistic and trauma-informed approaches	Access to affordable housing	Job opportunities or internships	Coordination between services and sectors	Financial and legal guidance	Peer networks or mentoring	Public awareness and policy support	Other	Total number of answers collected
	17	7	13	4	4	5	2	9	2	22
17. Do you believe digital tools (e.g. platforms, apps) can improve support for care leavers?	Yes, definitely.	Maybe, depending on the tool.	No	Not sure.						Total number of answers collected
	2	16	2	2						22

18. If yes/maybe: What should a digital tool offer to be helpful for you as a professional?	Information on rights, housing, and support options	E-learning for care leavers	Templates and guides (e.g. budgeting, CVs)	Chat or mentoring functions	Calendar & planning tools	Resources for trainers and professionals	Case documentation or follow-up tools	Other	Total number of answers collected	
	14	2	8	8	1	5	5	3	22	
19. If there were one thing you could change in the support system for care leavers, what would it be?	...			<p>trauma-oriented approach and from childhood, according to age, possibilities and individual needs, work is done to prepare this person for leaving for independent adult life. Without this, no matter how hard we try, we have limited options and young adults very often fail and their life situation after leaving the institutional facility worsens greatly.</p> <p>more qualified persons who will work intensively and individually with a specific child for a long time and these persons will then be able to decide on the children and subsequent measures</p> <p>CONCEPTUALITY</p> <p>Preparation of children from the age of 15 still in children's homes - practicing everyday self-service activities, including money management (e.g. food shopping), motivation to make decisions, strengthening the strengths of individuals, positive motivation and leadership to responsibility</p> <p>legislative anchoring of host care and escort services</p> <p>More mentors for people leaving in the following period</p> <p>Availability of housing</p> <p>Affordable housing</p> <p>Support in obtaining independent housing</p> <p>Possibility of mentoring and material assistance from children's home employees for at least another 3 years after the child leaves</p> <p>Increase the number of available mentors</p> <p>Availability of housing</p> <p>Fundamentally improve the efficiency of institutional care in the republic</p>					Total number of answers collected	22
Section 5: Final Thoughts										
20. Would you be interested in joining a professional network to exchange ideas and good practices about supporting care leavers?	Yes	No							Total number of answers collected	
	20	2							22	
21. Would you like to be contacted for follow-up or invitations to events/trainings?	Yes	No							Total number of answers collected	
	15	7							22	
22. If yes, please share your email (optional):	...			<p>cyni.malinak@sos-vesnický.cz michaela@dejmedetemsanci.cz sarka@spoluzivot.cz karolina.jelinkova@sos-vesnický.cz nikola@dejmedetemsanci.cz</p> <p>hondrackova@seznam.cz dana.lpova@opsirius.cz zuzananechanicka@seznam.cz socialni@detskydomov.com</p> <p>langrova.tereza@ddcrrma.cz brzobohata.i@ddck</p>					Total number of answers collected	11
23. Any final comments, suggestions, or insights you'd like to share?	...			<p>As I mentioned above, the shortcomings in the area of independence of young people leaving institutional care originate from dysfunctional institutional care in our country. Therefore, any partial changes leading to the elimination of shortcomings in independence will never lead to the elimination of the problem. The problem is the setting of the institutional care in our country and this will only become apparent when the youth leave.</p> <p>it is necessary to base ourselves on practice, on the opinions of real experts who have worked with children for many years and not those who make decisions about children "from the table"</p>					Total number of answers collected	5

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