**“Need to help families with children to keep their housing”**

**Ms Z.**

**A peer consultant**

**IQ Roma Servis, Czech Republic**

Ms Z. used to live in a standard flat until the owner of the apartment wanted to pay two rentals at once. She lost her home three years ago. She moved out with adult children to a flat where the owner chooses inadequate rent, regularly turns off electricity, the heating works only two hours a day, and tenants are exposed to everyday chicane. The children of Ms. Z. moved away soon, and she gradually became an activist who, along with other tenants, struggle to keep the owner in compliance with the laws. This led her to work with IQ Roma Service, which is engaged in social work in the Rapid Re-Housing project in Brno.

Even though Ms. Z. did not solve her housing situation she became a peer consultant. In her work she uses the knowledge of the environment, in which families with children in housing distress live, knows their way of thinking, which is influenced by the lack of faith in the change and/or the lack of faith in the stability of change, hence increase the risk of losing the housing, if it is acquired. Mrs. Z. has got the experience of how the loss of housing negatively affects other aspects of life and could be a beginning of the chain of other problems. She feels her own need to help families with children in the RRH project to keep their housing. Ms. Z. works with clients both in direct interaction with a social worker and by agreement also separately. In two specific families where the social worker has been unable to make a long-term relationship with a family at risk of losing housing (due to not paying the rent), Ms. Z. has helped change the situation, and families have signed up to debt plans to pay the rent, even though they have had to significantly reduce their spending on other living needs. In other cases, thanks to the client's contact with Ms. Z, she managed to open topics that the clients did not, for various reasons, manage to deal with their social worker.

Ms. Z. participated, along with other members of the team, in training how to use method of motivational interviews (MI) with clients. At work, however, she is still using informal techniques based on her life experience and leaves the MI tools to a social worker.

She is currently attending a course, which is a prerequisite for funding her work from national donation tools for the provision of social services and is therefore necessary for long-term prospects of her work in this area. We assume that Ms. Z. will continue to use her experience at work and the formal training will help her to be effective. We now consider it is important for her to improve the work with her life story, to learn continual reflection of the development and progress of the interview with the client, and to use appropriate examples of her experience at the right time. It will show up whether formal education and the use of social work tools does not overlap the use of their own experience. Nevertheless, we believe that both competences should be mutually reinforcing.