

# In the Spotlight... Petra Hainzová

**In the spotlight... Petra Hainzová, project manager with the Prague 8 Municipal Office of the project for the revitalisation of Invalidovna Park and the Kaizlový Sady Gardens in Prague. This ERDF-funded project aimed to recreate an attractive green space that meets the needs of local residents.**

*What do you feel are positive aspects about Structural Funding in Prague?*

“The Invalidovna Park and Kaizlový Sady gardens were funded from the Operational Programme Prague Competitiveness (OPPK), which in turn is funded by the ERDF. OPPK received approximately € 235 million of EU funding, to work on four main targets: ICT and infrastructure, revitalisation of green space, brown fields and derelict areas (the strand we linked into with our parks), innovation and business and operational costs. The Operational Programme for the Environment is partly funded by the Cohesion Fund and Prague is eligible for three out of seven programme targets. We have also used funding from this source for the insulation of public buildings; but that is actually related to another project. In short, the EU-funding ensured that this coherent programme could be implemented.

Furthermore, the budget arrived in our accounts before the project started, rather than after it had been completed. In this sense project funding is made easier. With other projects we do not know for certain until after completion whether we will receive the full amount of funding or not. Prague 8 has considerable possibilities for pre-financing projects; this is however not the case for many other smaller towns or villages. Funding the entire project in advance means that loans have to be obtained from various finance institutions with no certainty of receiving the expected funding after the project has been completed. This can indeed cause difficulties to many, and may even lead to the abandonment of a project. By the use of ERDF and Cohesion funding this can be avoided.”

*Do you feel there were enough opportunities for Prague to set the priorities in this project?*

“Yes. Our aim was to create a modern and usable green space for the residents of Karlín, to revitalise the two parks after they both suffered considerable damage during the floods in 2002, and to provide the inhabitants of Karlín with leisure opportunities and cultivated green space. The target group is mainly children, mothers with children, senior citizens as well as other residents and dog owners. As a result of the project, the parks are both visibly more occupied and residents seem to enjoy them throughout the day, and some canine residents also at night when the automatic irrigation system becomes active.

We needed to make some changes to the plan so that it would be acceptable to the historical conservation authorities. The parks are both within a historically valuable area and therefore certain rules must be adhered to. As a result, the modern aspects and design incorporated in the original plan were changed into a design that really fits the surrounding area of late 19th and early 20th century housing. The architects were inspired by historical drawings and maps and redesigned the damaged parks accordingly. Both parks were fitted with historical replicas of lamps, benches and bins. Still though, the parks are fulfilling their intended role in the way we hoped they would!”

*What is your opinion on the level of local involvement?*

“We were responsible for the project from the beginning of the planning process to the end and for the provision of accounts to the OPPK administrators. Three partnerships with civic organisations were established prior to the implementation of the project – with a parenting and child-development centre and two nursery and primary schools from Karlín. The partners have experience with the target group (inhabitants of Karlín, mainly children) and co-operated with the Prague 8 municipal office in disseminating information about the proposed project, gathering possible suggestions from the target group and subsequent publicity and evaluation.

I do however believe that even more contact with local residents would have been beneficial. We have actually added a few features to the children’s playground only since the revitalisation was finished because we received feedback from local families, who did not think the playground included enough opportunities for very young children. I think the next time we plan a similar project, we should consider having a public debate with local residents in order to obtain their opinions and discover their requirements. After all, we intend to do things which are suitable and appropriate for them, not for pretty pictures in local magazines.”