

#paraplebook

This is **Paraple**

We help them find the way forward.

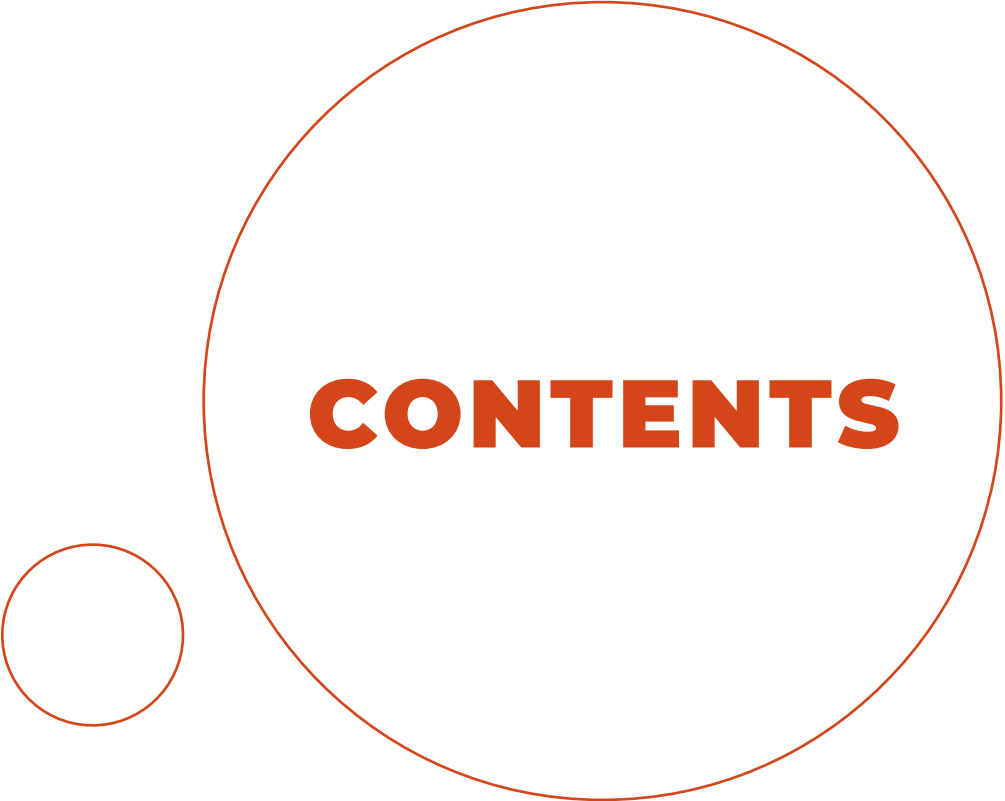


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Together with people affected by spinal cord injuries,
we help them live their best lives.

We help them find the way forward.



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What is Centrum Paraple

OUR MISSION. WHAT DO WE DO?

Together with people affected by spinal cord injuries, we help them live their best lives.

Reconnecting with the body, learning to move around both at home and outside, returning to work, caring for family, and experiencing relationships and intimacy – all of these are part of the journey. Accepting that life has taken an unexpected turn and finding a new place in it is a difficult process for people after a spinal cord injury. Each step forward requires significant effort and involves many setbacks.

For people whose lives have been fundamentally changed by spinal cord injury, we are here from the very beginning – as they first start to navigate their new reality – and at any point along the journey.

We support them in improving their physical and mental well-being and achieving as much independence as possible, regardless of the level of assistance they may need.

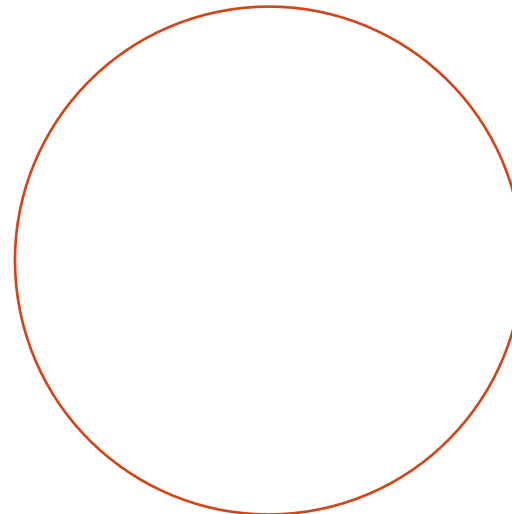
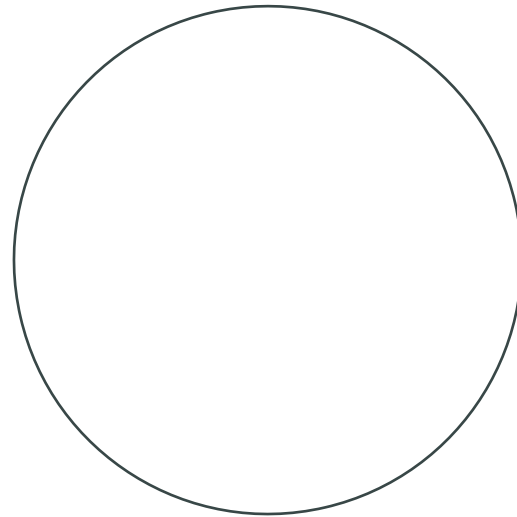
Our rehabilitation services combine health and social support. Through these services, people with spinal cord injuries learn to live and move with greater confidence and joy, while also reducing health risks and easing the transition to new circumstances. In addition to rehabilitation, we are committed to research, education, and advocacy to further improve the lives of people affected by spinal cord injuries.



„After the accident, I thought this was the end – that I had no more value, wouldn't have children, and could never do what I used to love. Thanks to Centrum Paraple, I stopped giving up and started **enjoying life again.**“

TOMÁŠ

OUR VISION.
WHAT IS OUR
GOAL?



**We want to be part of a society
in which people affected by spinal
cord injuries have many options
to choose their own path towards
the most fulfilling life possible,
and are regarded as respected
partners.**

OUR VALUES. HOW DO WE WORK, AND WHAT IS OUR APPROACH TO OURSELVES AND OTHERS?

Dignity.

Everyone has the right to respect and a dignified life. We create an environment where people can recognise their own value.

Trust.

We believe in each person's potential and inner strength. We build equal, trusting relationships that support personal growth and mutual success.

Authenticity.

We believe that the ability to be oneself and to accept oneself is a fundamental human experience. We emphasise open communication and mutual understanding.

Respect.

We embrace differences, respect personal boundaries, and support everyone's right to shape their own life. We value the diversity and experiences of everyone around us.

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„I appreciate the **respect**, you receive here.
You arrive as ‘the disabled one,’ but you leave
as a person with great possibilities and an open future.“

LENKA



foto: Zdeněk Lhoták

KEY MOMENTS THAT SHAPED CENTRUM PARAPLE?

1990

The **Union of Paraplegics of the Czech Republic**, was founded as a self-help organisation of people paralysed after spinal cord injuries and their friends.

1993

The Union presented its plan to build a centre to support people with spinal cord injuries. Actor **Zdeněk Svěrák** became involved and suggested the name **Centrum Paraple**.

1994

Zdeněk Svěrák launched the **Charity Academy** programme with Czech Television, gaining public support. On **31 October 1994**, we opened Centrum Paraple to our first clients. Alena Kábrtová became the director, Zdeňka Faltýnková led physiotherapy and occupational therapy, and Bohumil Kábrt led the technical operations.

We began co-creating the **system of care for people after spinal cord injuries** in the Czech Republic.

1994–2000

We operated as an **outpatient counselling and rehabilitation facility**. We organised instructional and sports stays in rented spaces.



foto: Veronika Souralová

1998–2000

We **reconstructed a building** in Malešice, Prague, and **expanded our services** to include social rehabilitation stays directly in the centre, along with additional counselling to support independent living for people with spinal cord injuries.

2010

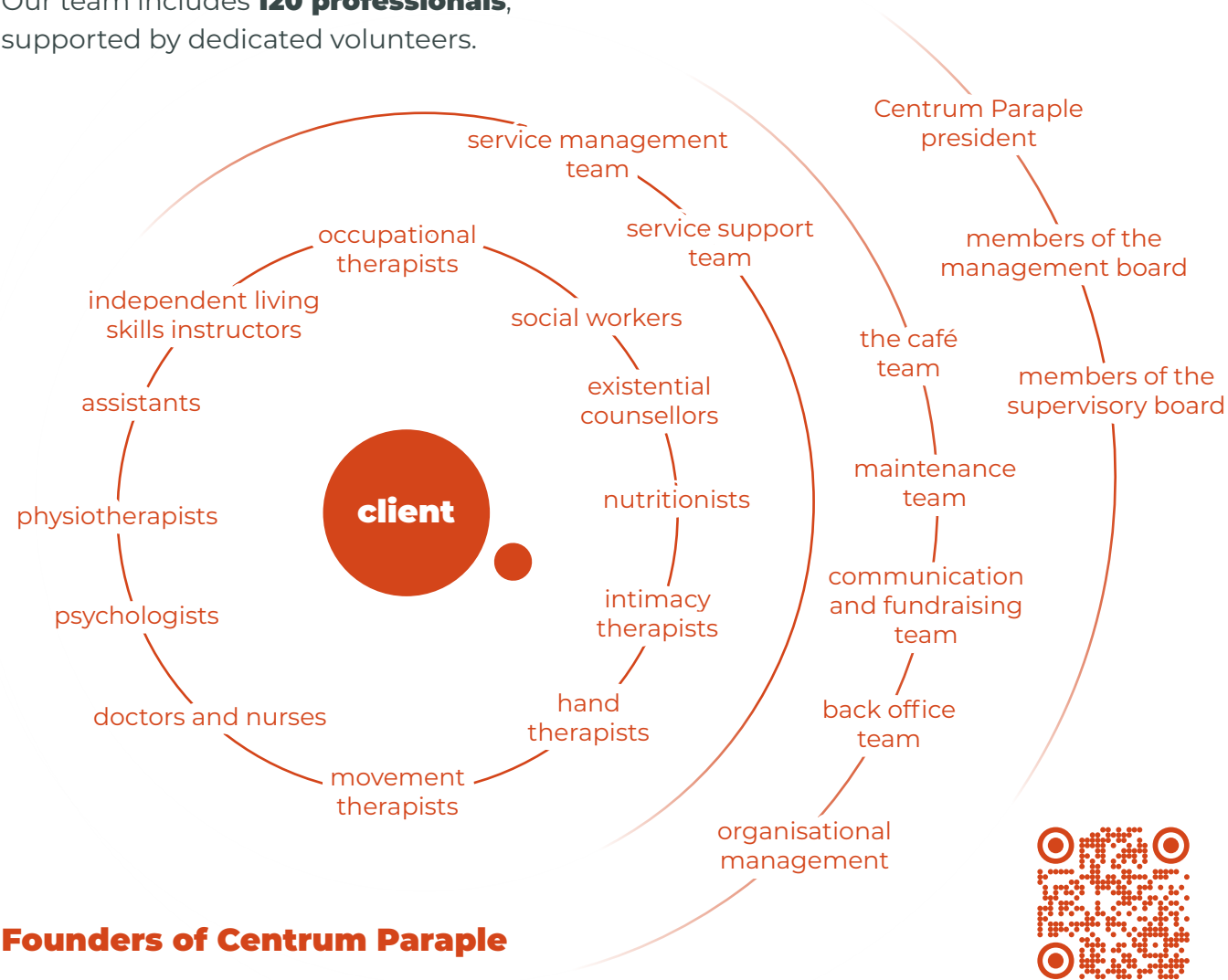
With the construction of a **new wing**, we increased accommodation capacity and added a large gym, a fitness room, and a workshop. We became independent as a **non-profit organisation**, Centrum Paraple. The Union of Paraplegics changed its name to the Czech Paraplegic Association – CZEPA (2011).

2016–present

We continue to **expand our team, services, and expertise** to meet the evolving needs of people with spinal cord injury. We established the **interdisciplinary research and education platform ParaLab** (2022) and continue to develop activities to share our knowledge and support access to quality services in the Czech Republic and abroad.

PEOPLE OF CENTRUM PARAPLE

Our team includes **120 professionals**, supported by dedicated volunteers.



Founders of Centrum Paraple

- Czech Association of Paraplegics – CZEPA
- Zdeněk Svěrák

 paraple.cz/nas-tym



“The most powerful experience was arriving and realising everyone on **the team knew who I was and exactly where I needed to be.** I didn’t understand it at first, but **I knew I was well cared for.**”

MICHAELA



How We Work and What We Offer

We provide all available services of Centrum Paraple to people aged fifteen and over who have experienced a sudden spinal cord injury, from all over the Czech Republic.

Our work builds on the care provided by spinal units and rehabilitation institutes, supporting clients in ways these facilities often cannot – by helping them return to everyday life and manage practical challenges.

A team of specialists from many fields take part in our services.

Our team includes professionals in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, movement therapy, psychology, hand therapy, intimate life therapy, social work, as well as assistants, self-sufficiency instructors, nurses, nutritionists, and others.

We work using a coordinated guidance approach known as case management.

People with spinal cord injuries come to us with a desire to improve specific areas of their lives. At Centrum Paraple, we design systematic, tailored support based on

each individual's needs. We combine the expertise of our entire team and, together with our clients, seek the most suitable ways to achieve their goals. We also involve people from clients' immediate circles – most often family members or carers – to support the process.

Our cooperation is based on respect.

We see each person as a unique individual with their own story and needs. We trust in their strength and their ability to take life into their own hands. We emphasise human dignity, an active approach, and personal responsibility.

Social rehabilitation

The social rehabilitation service helps people after spinal cord injuries cope with their new situation and adapt in the best possible way. Support can take many forms – from online consultations and home visits to three-week stays at Centrum Paraple.

In addition to supporting clients with a recent spinal cord injury, we also assist those who have been living with it for a longer time and are facing new challenges, such as declining health or independence, becoming a parent, or the loss of a carer.

Together, we address:

- Self-care and independence in movement and daily activities – hygiene, dressing, eating, shopping, dealing with authorities, travelling, and more
- Physical health care and prevention of complications
- Mental health care and psychological support
- Family, relationships, and intimacy
- Suitable housing
- Employment
- Leisure activities
- Planning for personal assistance
- Financial security and money management





Rehabilitation Stays at Centrum Paraple

The most intensive form of social rehabilitation is a **three-week stay** directly at Centrum Paraple, with full support from our professional team. We always design a personalised programme based on each client's needs and possibilities. The service is available 24/7.



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“At home, I needed help from two people just to move to the bed. I felt like a piece of meat that everyone had to care for. **I came to Centrum Paraple with a clear goal:** to learn to move independently from the wheelchair to the bed and back, to dress, and to position myself so that my husband and children wouldn't have to get up at night. When you learn to do it yourself, it's pure euphoria.”

MIROSLAVA



Off-Site Rehabilitation

In this form of social rehabilitation, clients work with us directly in their living environment. People use this service when they need to build a support network at home, adapt their surroundings, receive guidance on self-sufficiency exercises at home, or learn safer, more comfortable ways to get to work or school. We often involve family members or other close supporters in this process.

Sometimes this is a one-off consultation; other times, it becomes a longer-term cooperation – always depending on each person's individual needs and goals. We visit clients all across the Czech Republic and can also provide remote support by phone or online. Off-site rehabilitation can be combined with stays at Centrum Paraple.



“When Centrum Paraple offered to come to my home, I was surprised. It helped me clarify many things and ask questions. I was able to clearly define what I needed. In the end, we decided that a stay at the centre would be best for me. And I was happy that I wouldn't be going in completely unfamiliar – I already knew someone from the team.”

DANIEL



Health services

We provide people with spinal cord injuries a variety of **health services** – from counselling to intensive residential stays. In addition to addressing specific physical and mental health issues, we work together to strengthen healthy habits, improve physical fitness, and prevent further complications.



Health stays at Centrum Paraple

During two-week **health stays**, clients have access to our team of specialists and plenty of time to focus on their current needs, ask important questions, and gain new motivation to care for their health.



Typically, we work together to relieve pain, manage post-operative conditions and bowel management issues, heal skin defects, and support mental well-being. Health care during these stays is provided 24/7.

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“After four years of slacking off, you got me moving again. My pressure ulcers started to heal, I learned to move upright, and I solved my bowel management issues. **There is so much you have helped me with here.**”

LUKÁŠ



Outpatient services and specialised counselling centres

Clients who live nearby can access support and care from our physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, and movement therapists through **outpatient services** directly at Centrum Paraple.



In our **specialised counselling centres**, we work with people after spinal cord injuries to find very specific and practical solutions that help them achieve greater independence and comfort, build self-confidence, and prevent serious health complications. These services are available both as outpatient care at our centre and remotely. We offer, for example, outpatient physiotherapy, psychological counselling, and occupational therapy consultations.

An up-to-date overview of all outpatient services and counselling centres can be found on our website.



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“Everyone here is trying to help; I haven’t seen anyone get upset. I’m really glad that there are more experienced people here alongside the newcomers. Among those who walk, it’s hard to really understand what it’s like to be in a wheelchair. They don’t always see the challenges we face.”

JAN



Thematic stays

Sports and outdoor activities are often the greatest motivation and source of mental relief for people after a spinal cord injury. That's why we offer a wide range of options. We organise week-long thematic stays in various locations throughout the Czech Republic as well as at our centre. Participants are always accompanied by our specialists and assistants.

- Skiing
- Cycling
- Kayaking
- General sports programme
- Excursions around Prague and the surrounding areas

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**“Going on a trip gave me this amazing, long-forgotten feeling:
I can go whenever I want and wherever I want. I’m so happy!”**

LENKA



Other services

- Mobility aids and sports gear rental
- Medical products and aids for sale
- Wheelchair and aids maintenance and repair
- Massages
- Gym
- Café



In figures¹

268 clients in residential services

11 social rehabilitation stays

14 health stays

6 thematic stays

Facility capacity: **12** rooms and **24** beds

¹ In 2025



“At Centrum Paraple, working with a physiotherapist really helped me a lot. They shared stories from others like me who can walk. **I didn’t want to live with false hopes – I just wanted to understand what’s actually possible for me.**”

MICHAELA

“I got my priorities straight. I want to be independent. It’s time to look ahead – things won’t always be like they are now. I’ve still got a long way to go.”

PETR

“It felt like I’d just come back from a full service check-up. My back, neck, and hands all got the attention they needed. I learned that if I’m away from home for three weeks, the world keeps turning. **Now I might be able to cut back on some things and manage my time better.**”

MARCELA



“I practiced getting in and out of the car and worked on its modifications. Zuzka, my physiotherapist, took such good care of my scars. I even tried out a bunch of different sports and started **setting new goals for myself.**”

JAROSLAV

“Honestly, after seventeen years in a wheelchair, I figured nothing could surprise me anymore. I was wrong. **I started a few really important things here, and it made a huge difference.** I just feel completely different inside now.”

PETR

“The people at Centrum Paraple got me back on track. They helped me build up both physically and mentally, and I know if I ever need help again, they’ll be there for me.”

DOMINIKA



Our Expertise in Research

We aim to further develop and share the extensive professional expertise we use when working with people after spinal cord injuries. To support this, we have established the interdisciplinary research and education platform ParaLab, collaborate with other organisations, and actively participate in educating a new generation of professionals in this field.

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ParaLab interdisciplinary research and education platform

At ParaLab, our specialists focus deeply on professional topics related to spinal cord injuries, drawing from their extensive direct experience. Thanks to ParaLab's activities, we continue to advance care in many areas, including:

- Assistive technology
- Pain management
- Pressure ulcers
- Respiratory issues
- Intimate life
- Hand therapy
- Verticalisation and locomotion
- Virtual reality
- Sleep
- Bowel management
- Healthy lifestyle





Paraple AcadeMY educational activities

We have long cooperated with schools across the Czech Republic, providing internships and placements for students of medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and related fields. We also organise excursions for professionals and secondary school students. Additionally, we deliver professional lectures at selected universities and support their research activities, all with the shared goal of improving future care and accessibility for people with spinal cord injuries. Each year, these activities reach hundreds of young people. Moreover, we offer accredited and certified courses for professionals (such as Physiotherapy for Patients with Spinal Cord Lesions or Course for Personal Assistants).

We regularly participate in conferences in the Czech Republic and abroad, as well as seminars and other expert meetings in related fields.

We are active members of the following professional organisations:

ČLS JEP Česká lékařská společnost JEP a její sekce:

- ČSL JEP – Jan Evangelista Purkyně Czech Medical Association and its sections:
- ČSML – Czech Society for Spinal Cord Lesions
- ČSTR – Czech Society for Hand Therapy
- UNIFY – Union of Physiotherapists of the Czech Republic
- ČAE – Czech Association of Occupational Therapists
- ČAAPA – Czech Association of Adapted Physical Activities
- ISCOS – International Spinal Cord Society
- PKSP – Professional Chamber of Social Workers
- APSS – Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic
- AVPO – Association of Public Benefit Organisations of the Czech Republic
- AIP – Alliance for Individualised Support



Our Publications

Máma, táta na vozíku? NO PROBLEM! HRADILOVÁ, Iva. Supplement of Paraple Magazine, 08/2022.

Ano, můžeme! Kámasútra pro vozíčkáře. LUKEŠ, David; FALTÝNKOVÁ, Zdeňka; HRADILOVÁ, Iva; DRÁBEK, Tomáš; HAMERNÍKOVÁ, Petra et al. Prague: Centrum Paraple, 2020.

Život bez bariér HONZÁTKOVÁ, Lenka; LUKEŠ, David et al. Ústí nad Labem: Centrum Paraple, Ústecký kraj, 2019.

Život je jízda – Sborník příběhů z Životní cesty. Prague: Centrum Paraple, 2018.

Magazín Paraple – časopis pro klienty a přátele Centra Paraple. Prague: Centrum Paraple, 2016. Available online at <https://www.paraple.cz/magazin/>

Cesta k nezávislosti po poškození míchy. FALTÝNKOVÁ, Zdeňka; KÁBRTOVÁ, Alena; KŘÍŽ, Jiří. Prague: Svaz paraplegiků (Czech Union pf Paraplegics), Centrum Paraple, 2004.

Poranění míchy pohledem sexuologa. ŠRÁMKOVÁ, Taťána. Prague: Svaz paraplegiků (Czech Union pf Paraplegics), Centrum Paraple, 1998.

Paraplegie, tetraplegie. FALTÝNKOVÁ, Zdeňka et al. Prague: Svaz paraplegiků (Czech Union pf Paraplegics), Centrum Paraple, 1997.

Paraplegie, tetraplegie, mezinárodní semináře 1995–1996. Prague: Svaz paraplegiků (Czech Union pf Paraplegics), Centrum Paraple, 1997.



Other projects

Terapie ruky. VYSKOTOVÁ, Jana; KREJČÍ, Ivana; MACHÁČKOVÁ, Kateřina.
Olomouc: Palacký University Olomouc, 2021.

Poranění míchy: Příčiny, důsledky, organizace péče. KŘÍŽ, Jiří et al.
Prague: Galén, 2019.

More resources for inspiration

[Commonplace – Stories of people after spinal cord injuries](#)

[Humans of Paraple – The world through the eyes of our clients and their loved ones](#)

[Centrum Paraple YouTube channel](#)



Our Charity Events

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Throughout the year, we organise sports, cultural and social events that help strengthen relationships within the Paraple community and foster connections with the public and our partners. These events provide opportunities to meet our supporters, share our mission with a wider audience, and raise essential funds. The money raised supports services delivered by qualified professionals, promotes ongoing professional development, and enables the modernization of our building and essential equipment – all crucial for providing the necessary support to people with spinal cord injuries.

Run for Paraple

Theatre performance



Auction for Paraple



Golf for Paraple



Garden Party



StarDance for Paraple





How We Manage Our Funds

Being able to button your jacket yourself, raise your hand to your mouth to drink, handle errands at the post office, look forward, and plan for the future – these are things that are hard put a price on. Yet achieving them requires tremendous time and effort, both from people with spinal cord injuries and from all of us at Centrum Paraple. Money, therefore, is a topic that touches our work every day, and we believe it is important to talk about it openly.

A three-week stay, during which an entire team of experts provides intensive, comprehensive support aimed at helping a person return to life, costs more than CZK 280,000. Our annual budget reaches CZK 93.5 million, half of which we must secure through donations from individuals and companies.

As a non-profit organisation, every crown we receive goes directly into our services – to ensure fair compensation for our staff, purchase and modernise necessary equipment, maintain our building, and develop our services. We do not distribute money directly to individuals with spinal cord injuries.

² In 2025

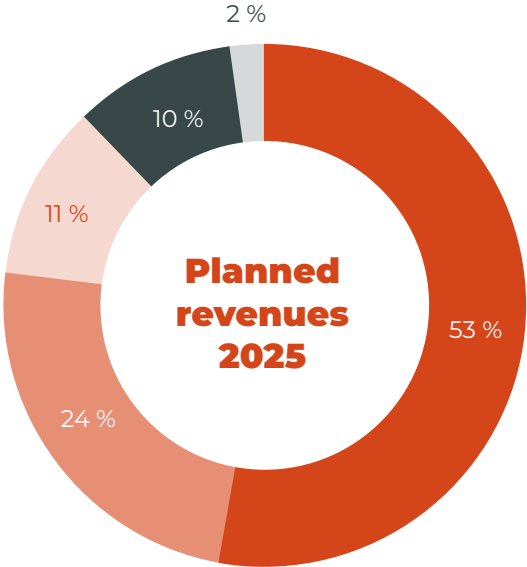
³ In 2025

In line with our strategic goals, we prepare a detailed financial plan that we are able to fulfil thanks to the support of generous donors, whom we deeply value.

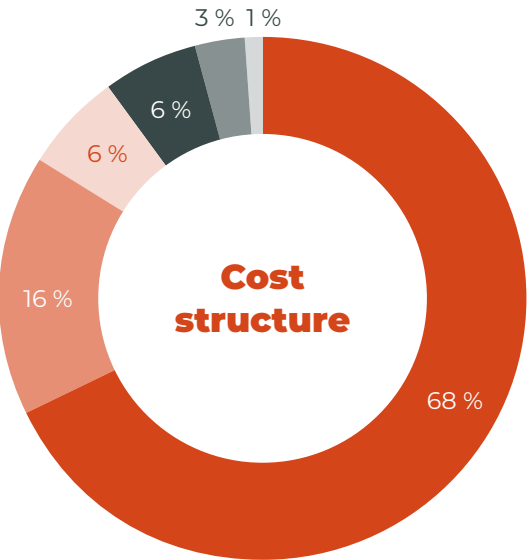
Every year, Centrum Paraple undergoes an external financial audit, which it consistently passes with a positive evaluation.

Where we get the money for our work

- Reimbursements from insurance companies – for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychological, and health care services
- Subsidies from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – support for social services
- Subsidies from the Ministry of Health – support for health service
- Projects subsidies from the Prague City Hall and the Prague 10 District – project support
- Client contributions – for accommodation, meals, and care services (rates regulated by the Social Services Act)
- Additional activities – café income, advertising and rental income, sales of promotional items
- Donations from individual donors and companies – make up about 50% of the budget



Fundraising – donors/sponsors	53 %
Subsidies and grants	24 %
Health insurance companies	11 %
Income from own activities	10 %
Other income	2 %



Labor costs	68 %
Other services	16 %
Material costs	6 %
Other costs	6 %
Energy	3 %
Repair and maintenance	1 %



Important Facts About Spinal Cord Injury

1) **The spinal cord is the body's main "highway."** – It transmits signals between the brain and the rest of the body. A spinal cord injury interrupts this communication, affecting movement, sensation, and the function of internal organs.

2) **Spinal cord injury is irreversible** – The spinal cord cannot regenerate, and medicine is not yet able to repair it, despite the latest research and treatments. As a result, care focuses on rehabilitation, compensating for lost functions, and supporting recovery wherever possible.

3) **Life changes in an instant** – While spinal cord injuries have been traditionally caused by traffic accidents, falls, or sports injuries, today the leading causes are different. More people over age 50 now use wheelchairs due to spinal cord injuries caused by diseases such as inflammation, tumours, or degenerative changes rather than trauma.

4) **The consequences extend far beyond movement** – People with spinal cord injuries do not only face paralysis. They must relearn how to move, manage bowel function, eat, dress, drive, and more. This requires significant effort and persistence. Additionally, they often face complications such as respiratory problems, circulatory issues, difficulties with temperature regulation, spasms, pain, and changes in sexual function.

5) **Injuries vary greatly – from the neck, chest, or waist down** – The impact of a spinal cord injury depends on its level and severity. High and low spinal cord lesions affect different parts of the body and therefore influence independence and abilities. Each person starts from a unique place and has individual goals.

6) **The challenge begins at home** – After health stabilization, people in the Czech Republic typically enter a specialised spi-

nal programme. A stay in a spinal unit followed by rehabilitation usually lasts up to a year. Then, they return home and must adapt to their own environment. This is when Centrum Paraple steps in, focusing on the practical aspects of everyday life to help people manage as independently as possible.

7) **Self-care becomes a lifelong commitment** – A responsible approach, ongoing support, and prevention greatly influence self-sufficiency and long-term health. Without proper care, there is a risk of serious complications such as pressure ulcers (bedsores caused by prolonged sitting), respiratory issues, urinary tract infections, pain, autonomic dysreflexia, osteoporosis, and more.

8) **Spinal cord injury affects body and mind** – Everyone responds differently to their situation, but the psychological impact is always significant. Psychologi-

cal support – including help in processing emotions and fears, as well as sharing experiences with others – plays an essential role in adaptation.

9) **Family, relationships, and social circles matter** – Adaptation is rarely an individual journey. Support, education, and counselling for family members and close contacts are just as important as rehabilitation itself.

10) **A return to active life is possible** – People with spinal cord injuries can manage daily activities even with limited bodily control. They can build families, travel, pursue hobbies, and work. Centrum Paraple helps create programmes to support these goals.



In figures⁴

On average, **280** people sustain a spinal cord injury each year in the Czech Republic, i.e. approximately **5** people a week.

170 people remain permanently in wheelchairs.

The average age of a person who begins using a wheelchair is **57** years.

About **70%** of people with spinal cord injuries are men, and **30%** are women.

In the Czech Republic, approximately **15,000** people live with a spinal cord injury.

⁴ Source: ČSML (Czech Society for Spinal Cord Lesions) statistics for 2023.

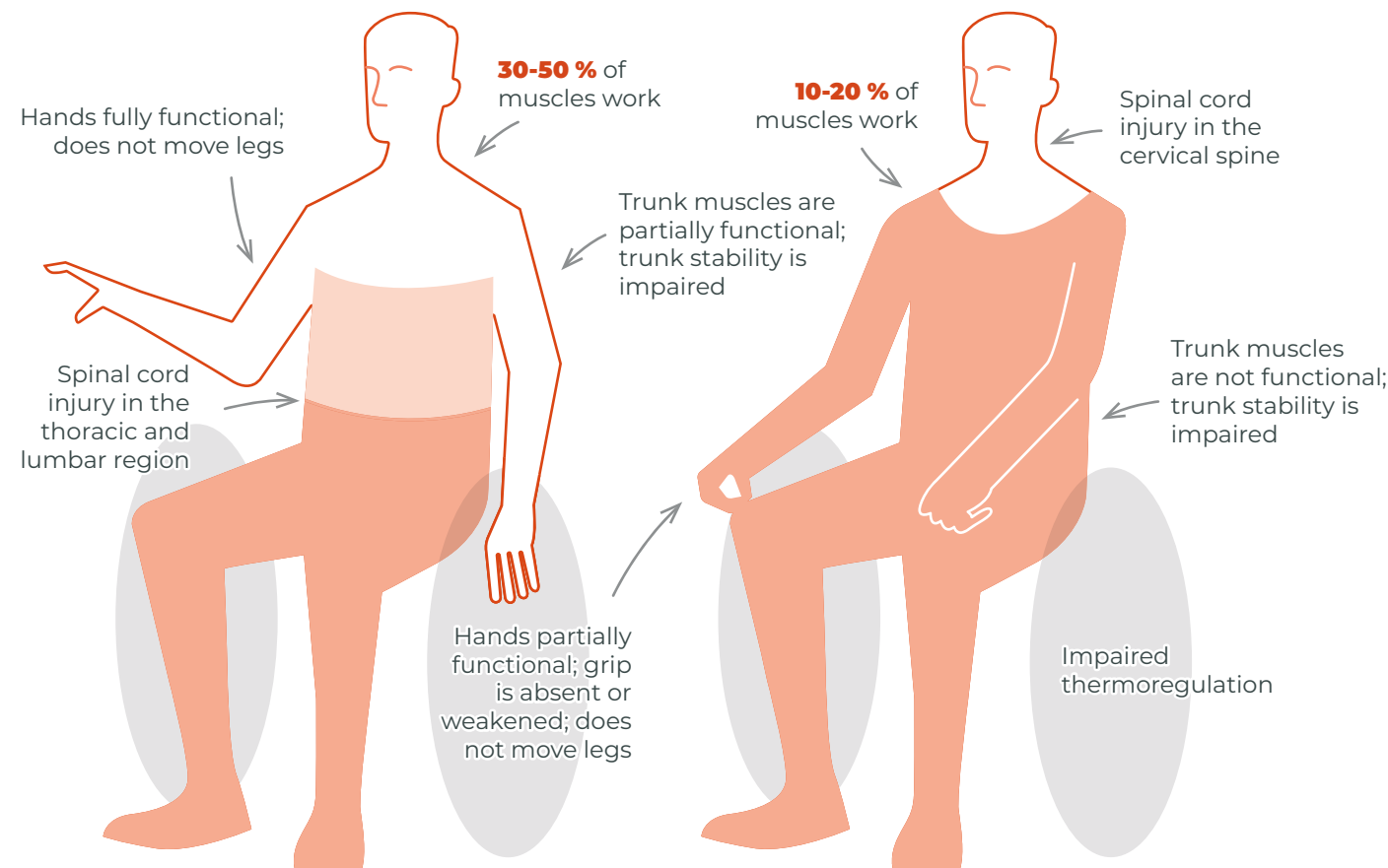
Paraplegic



Tetraplegic*

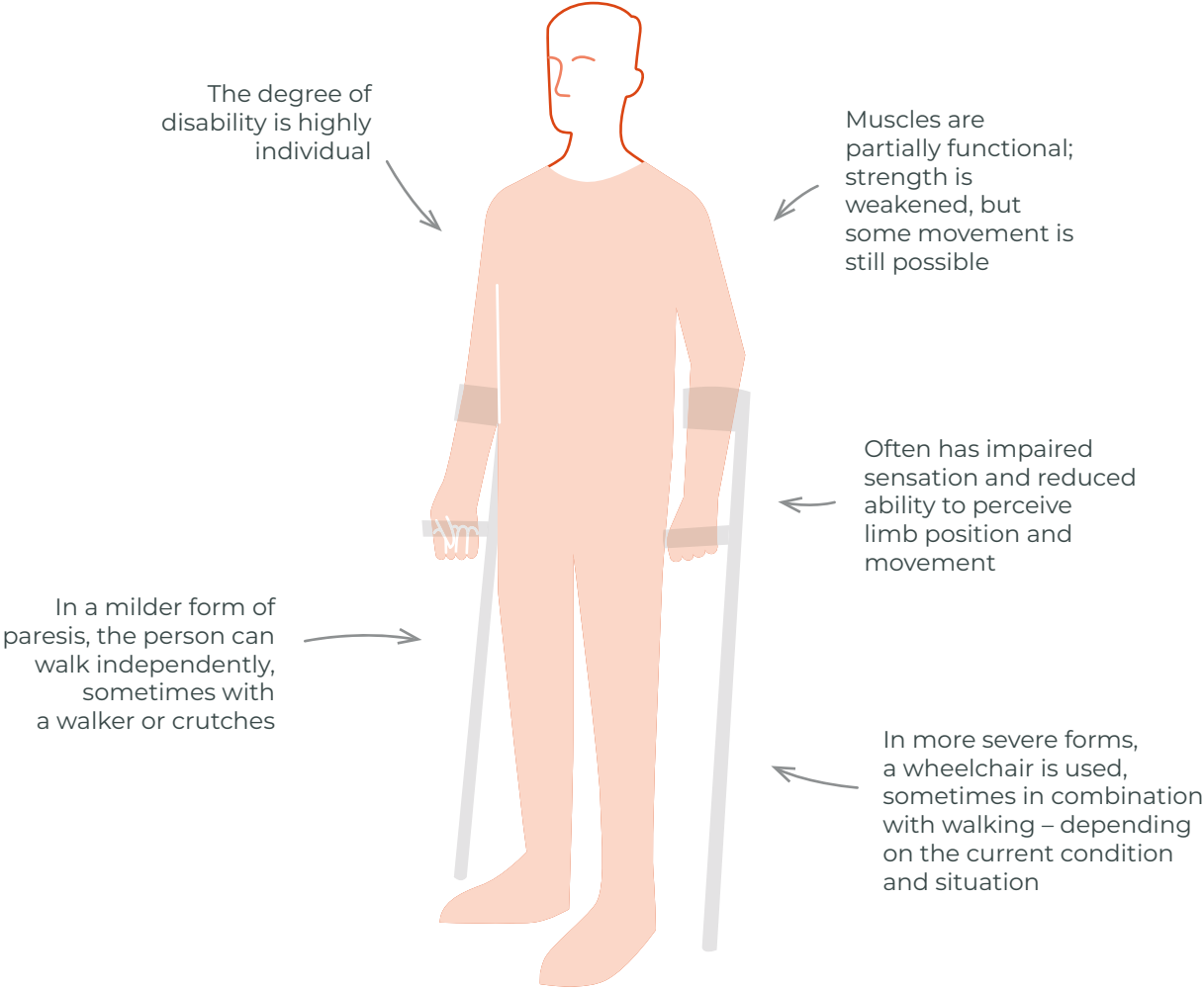


Paretic



- Body part without restrictions
- Upper paraplegia: areas with impaired sensation (distorted feeling or inability to sense heat) above a certain level
- Lower paraplegia: areas with impaired sensation (distorted feeling or inability to sense heat) below a certain level

*Tetraplegic, from the Greek tetra (meaning four, referring to the number of affected limbs) and plegia (paralysis). The term quadriplegic is also used, with quadri- deriving from the Latin quattuor (four).



- Body part without restrictions
- Part of the body with sensory impairment (distorted feeling or inability to sense heat)

Tetraparesis: partial paralysis of all four limbs (as shown in the picture)
Paraparesis: partial paralysis of the lower limbs

Classification of spinal cord injuries according to preserved mobility and sensitivity

Complete / Incomplete

If a person has completely lost sensation or voluntary movement below the site of the injury, the lesion is classified as complete. If some sensation or voluntary movement is preserved, the lesion is considered incomplete (also called partial, or paresis).

Paraplegia

A person with low paraplegia (Th 10/L) experiences complete or partial loss of mobility in the lower limbs. Sensation is preserved from the abdomen upward and is partially felt in the lower limbs.

In high paraplegia (Th 1/6), where the injury affects the upper thoracic spine, the loss of mobility in the lower limbs is always complete. Additionally, there is partial loss of trunk mobility. This type of injury can also partially limit breathing and coughing. Sensation is maintained only from the chest upwards.

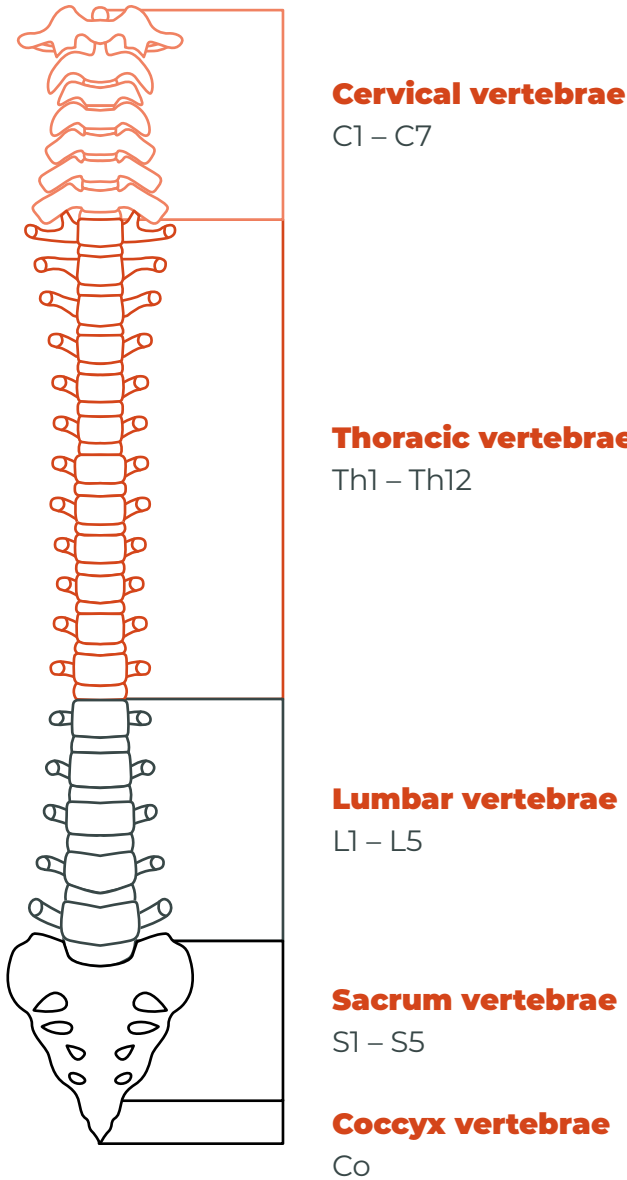
Tetraplegia (also called quadriplegia)

A person with low tetraplegia (C6/8), a tetraplegic, is able to bear weight with their own hand and raise their arm to shoulder level. Full strength is retained in the shoulder joints, elbow flexors, and the radial wrist extensors. A compensatory type of hand grip can be practised.

In high tetraplegia (C4, C/5), the spinal cord is injured in the cervical segment. Sensation in the upper limbs is impaired, and mobility in the trunk and lower limbs is completely lost. Breathing and coughing are significantly affected. Sensation may remain partially in the cheeks, neck, shoulders, and hands, while the rest of the body and legs are completely numb..

Pentaplegia

Pentaplegia (C1/3) involves paralysis of all limbs, the diaphragm, trunk, and abdominal muscles. People with pentaplegia must use artificial lung ventilation.



Other important terms

Decubitus

Also called a pressure ulcer or bedsore. This is an injury to the skin and underlying soft tissues caused by lying or sitting in the same position for too long without moving. People with spinal cord injuries are at high risk because they often cannot feel discomfort at the site where the ulcer is developing. Treatment can take months, and if not properly managed, a pressure ulcer can even be life-threatening.

Spasms

Spasms occur when the nerves below the site of injury remain intact. Because of the spinal cord injury, nerve impulses do not reach the brain but instead are instead sent directly back from the spinal cord to the muscles, causing twitching, trembling, or convulsions. These are reflex movements and are common after a spinal cord injury.

Autonomic dysreflexia

This condition can develop in people with tetraplegia or high-level paraplegia. It is characterised by severe headaches, high blood pressure, sweating, shivering, facial redness, and a slowed pulse. It is a dangerous, potentially life-threatening situation that requires immediate action to remove the cause. Common triggers include a full bladder, urinary tract infections, or constipation. Other possible causes are kidney disease, urinary stones, pressure ulcers, ingrown nails, menstruation, and pregnancy or childbirth in women.

Ossification

Also known as heterotopic ossification or calcification. This refers to abnormal bone formation in the muscles around large joints, most often the hips and knees, after a spinal cord injury. As a result, joints can lose their range of motion and may be-

come completely stiff. This makes transfers to a wheelchair, dressing, and proper wheelchair sitting more difficult, increasing the risk of pressure ulcers. The first symptom is usually restricted movement in the affected joint.

Tendon transfer

A surgical procedure to restore upper limb function. For people with spinal cord injuries (especially those with tetraplegia), tendon transfer can significantly improve quality of life, self-sufficiency, and independence.



How We Talk To and About People with Spinal Cord Injuries

The way we speak and write at Centrum Paraple is guided by our mission, vision, and the values on which we build our cooperation with people.

Not everyone interacting with people with disabilities feels confident about how to express themselves respectfully. Some phrases can feel undignified, and others may even be hurtful. It is important to recognise the power that words hold.

We don't have a universal manual for this. At Centrum Paraple, we have found that it works best to speak and write with respect, empathy, and openness. We listen. If you are unsure how to talk to or about people with spinal cord injuries, we encourage you to ask them directly. You might say, for example: "Is it okay for you if I say, 'wheelchair user'? Do you mind certain terms used to describe people with spinal cord injuries?"

Words Matter

✓ This is OK

- people with a spinal cord injury
- people paralyzed after a spinal cord injury
- people who use wheelchairs
- a person with a disability

wheelchair

- they use a wheelchair
- they move around using a wheelchair

- they need support
- they need assistance.

✗ This is not OK

- invalid, disabled – Reduces the person to their limitations.
- ended up in a wheelchair – Suggests life “ends” in a wheelchair; life continues.
- a fighter, a hero – Many people don't identify with these labels.
- ill – A spinal cord injury is not an illness but a condition.
- normal (people) – Insensitive; implies that people with disabilities are not normal and creates a harmful divide.

vozíček – zdrobnělina, infantilizuje

confined to a wheelchair – Implies helplessness.

- they are dependent on help/support – Evokes a sense of helplessness.
- they suffer – Suggests that all people in wheelchairs must suffer.
- accident victim – Stigmatises and reduces a person to the moment of their injury.



What to watch out for?

Client, patient – Use these terms thoughtfully. Whenever possible, refer to individuals as “a person with a spinal cord injury.” In specific contexts, always use the person’s name.

Wheelchair user – This term is becoming less preferred; we recommend using “a person with a spinal cord injury” instead.

Handicap – Too generalising; we prefer “spinal cord injury” or “needs.”



TIP: Do you work in the media? Are you filming or writing a story about people with spinal cord injuries? Please read the recommendations of the Czech Public Defender of Rights, which we also follow. If you have any doubts, feel free to call us – we will be happy to discuss how to speak about people with spinal cord injuries with dignity and respect. → https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/CRPD/Doporuceni/6-2020_doporuceni_media.pdf



TIP: What is our official name?

Our official name is **Centrum Paraple**, o. p. s. (a public benefit organisation).



Contact Us

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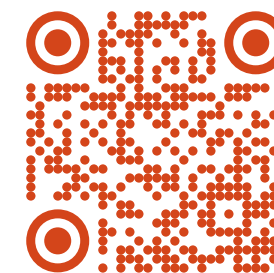
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Support Us

Want to help us support people rebuilding their lives after a spinal cord injury? Discover how you can contribute to our work. Thank you!



paraple.cz/podporte-nas/

#paraplebook



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted red lines.



The photographs for Centrum Paraple, o. p. s., were taken by
Petr Hricko, Lukáš Klíngora, Tomáš Lisý.

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We help find the way forward.

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