

# streetwork



# good practice 2018

Czech and foreign experiences from work in low threshold social services

# STREETWORK GOOD PRACTICE 2018

The following text was created by the Czech Streetwork Association and summarizes the experience and insights of streetworkers who participated in the project „Exchange of Good Practice between Professional Youth Streetworkers in the EU“, no. 2016-3-CZ01-KA205-034282. The project activities took place in 2017 to 2019 thanks to the support of the European Union programme Erasmus+ and its Czech National Agency – the House of Foreign Co-operation. This publication is intended as a source of information for all youth workers, especially for outreach social workers who are described abroad for instance as streetworkers, outreach workers or social educators.

The publication brings information about good practice in the Czech Republic viewed by the eyes of colleagues from Germany, Austria, Spain and the Netherlands and you would be acquainted with the experience of streetworkers from the Czech Republic gained in these European countries.

This electronic publication builds on the previous activities of the Czech Streetwork Association in the area of international co-operation.

We would like to thank all those who participated in the development of this electronic publication, especially our foreign partners [Gangway](#), [Jukus](#), [BVjong](#) and [ANNE](#).

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# Central Bohemia & Prague



## Report of the Good Practice Study Visit [Prague](#), Kolín, Kutná Hora, the Czech Republic

May 2018

By Idoia Martinez de Lahidalga, Andrea Salinas, Deiene Totoricagüena, Pilar Callen, Oihana Itoiz



# INTRODUCTION

We are a group of five street educators from different territories of Spain, Vitoria-Gasteiz (Álava), Hondarribia (Gipúzkoa), Huarte-Uharte (Navarra) and Huesca (Aragón), who during May 2018 visited the Czech Republic to share street educational practices with peers from other organizations that work in the country.

After a fantastic welcome, the Czech educators accompanied us to their jobs, told us about their achievements and their difficulties on a day-to-day basis, opened up about their fears, showed us their work, sharing with us their emotions and dreams.

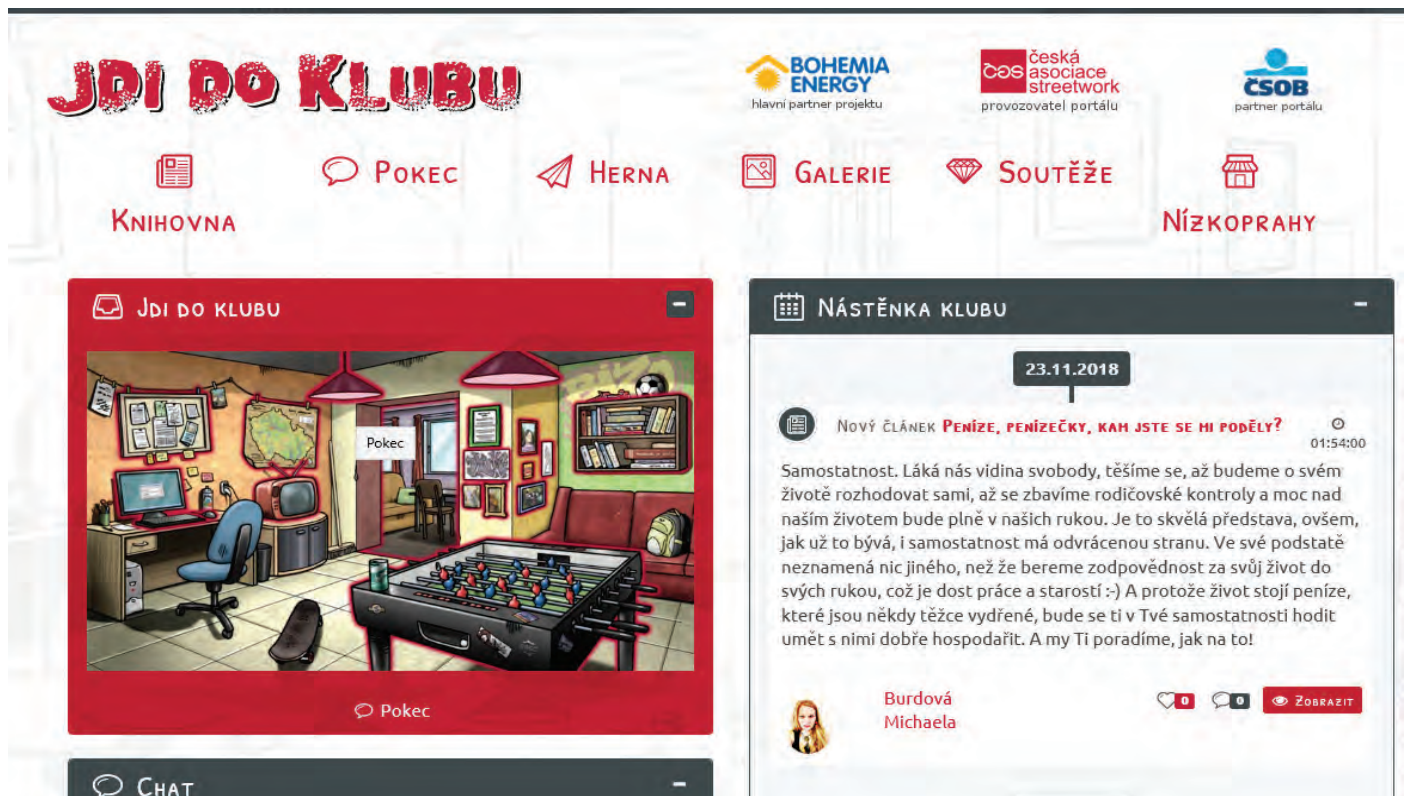
Language was not a problem. We perfectly understood each other because “the language of the street” is the same in all parts of the world. The language through which we communicate with a look, with a caress, with a gesture... with those who are most vulnerable.

They were definitely five very intense days, where we learned and shared ways of working, knowledge and thoughts about street work. Five days that have helped us to get excited again about our work.

In writing these lines we want to tell you about the different associations and projects that we had the opportunity to visit and gather some reflections after this experience.

We hope that this document serves and helps to make a small contribution in the exchange of good practices and to generate new learning that can help to improve our street work and that of others.

# GOOD PRACTICES



## STREETWORK ONLINE

We visited the Youth Club Online in [Prague](#) with Misa. This project was born in 2012 and is conducted by 2 social educators in the field of the Internet.

They work on the basis of a monthly coordination meeting, with a database and by phone and email.

This [virtual club](#) is offered as a safe space where young people (from 12 to 17 years old) can spend their free time, play, read articles of interest, make a movie, chat, watch videos, and write. In addition, the club offers a wide variety of advisory services. Young people know that the educators are there for them. The virtual Club is open 5 hours a day. It is also on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This is an interactive project, and chat is one of the most important proposals. The profile can be anonymous, or you can register. You can access this virtual club through any youth centre in the Czech Republic.

As a doctor helps a person with their physical health and a psychologist with mental health,

so a social educator helps a person with their “social health”. In the same way that everyone can experience the flu (and go to a doctor) or perhaps depression (and go to a psychologist), anyone can experience a difficult life situation and use the help or advice of a social educator.

What can you talk about with a professional in the Club?

- About relationships: family, partners, friends, neighbours
- About issues related to school or employment
- About any injustice that you are suffering: bullying, domestic violence About problems with the law: in cases where you have committed an offence, an infringement or something punishable and in cases where justice is on your side.
- About any other subject...

Funding for the project is provided through the private sector.

The platform is boosted by real-life activities. For example, last year they organized a 4-day meeting with young people in which different professionals taught them how to shoot videos for Youtube. They also organized competitions such as: What bothers you in your surroundings? The winner got the prize of being able to fix some of the things in the neighbourhood that they wanted to improve.

They are currently evaluating the online platform.

# LAXUS

[Laxus](#) z.u. is an organization created in 1995, targeting mainly the population with addictive behaviours and focusing on prevention from a global perspective (person, family and surroundings). The financing of the organization is public (depending on the Department of Health, Social Welfare and Justice).

[Laxus](#) has several projects, including a street education program.





This program tries to contact drugs users to perform tertiary prevention and public health tasks.

Among the risk reduction actions carried out are the distribution of the necessary elements for the hygienic consumption of drugs such as syringes, bottled water, wipes, cups and other elements distributed as part of the program are also important. Also, a self-diagnosis test for HIV and HCV is provided.

While these materials are delivered, educators inform and guide users to reduce the risks of consumption.

The street education program has four and a half working days and soon will have one more day. Even so, they still think that it is not enough in order to cover all the towns where the program is implemented.

In the following lines, Idoia and Deiene tells a bit more about their experience visiting [Laxus](#) projects:

“[Laxus](#) visits 13 towns. Educators worked in pairs and every day they have to travel long distances in order to do their work. The difficulty is that it is impossible for them to reach all the villages every week due to a shortage of personnel. “We need more educators to reach all vill-

ages and provide appropriate and quality assistance”.

During the drive from [Pardubice](#),

where the [Laxus](#) street educational

team office is located, to Vysoke Myto

and [Lanskroun](#) we have time to talk

about the program, their expectations,

needs and ways of



*Streetworker´s bag (Harm reduction)*

doing things. “There are days when you do not meet anyone, or they do not want to meet you, so you go back to the office with your rucksack full”.

A rucksack and a bag of black and yellow are important elements for users to identify them. In an outing with Tomas I had the opportunity to meet a user who was very grateful for the work developed by members of the organization.

Furthermore, this person is responsible for distributing among other users the necessary elements for the hygienic consumption of parenteral drugs.

This young man is a preventive agent and from his position, interacts and raises awareness about drugs related issues and risks in his immediate environment.

We are on the road, back to the office when the phone rings. “It’s Clara” Tomas says.

“They are about to enter a user’s home, it is a safety call”.

He explains that they have established safety guidelines when they make home visits, one of these, among others, is to call a partner before and after a visit. After half an hour, the colleague has to call to inform how she/he is doing. Otherwise, the partner who has received the first call has to contact his colleague back and if she/he does not answer or call back immediately, they call the police.

The following day, I accompany Peter. He is said to be a magnet for attracting young people... and it is true! With him I visited the Czech town of [Ceska Trebova](#), strolling along the narrow sidewalks we approached some young people to give them information about the program. We also visit a neighbourhood on the outskirts where an important Roma community lives and many people approached us, some of them out of interest and others out of curiosity. Young people, the most curious ones, came to ask questions with the need to resolve their doubts about drugs and / or sexuality.

In the same way, several exchanges of material are made in this community, always in discrete spaces, where the neighbours do not usually walk, in order to create a friendly atmosphere with the possibility of chatting.

I am pleased and at the same time surprised to meet so many children playing in the streets.”

(by Idoia)

,”On my first day, I accompany Clara who, as she says, is a “land worker”, and with good rea-

son, as they reach 13 villages. We travel a distance of 170km in just one afternoon. Usually they travel in pairs, so one drives first and the other one takes the car back. After a long drive we arrive at the first destination. It is a small place, we do the route that the educators usually do in this town. We do not contact anyone, but we meet some users of the service. They smile but do not stop to talk to us.

Clara explains to me how educators wait for users to approach. If they don't do that, it means that they do not need anything and simply cross paths. Respect for the privacy and personal space of users is maximum. The use of the yellow bag is key to their work. They put in this bag all the necessary material for risk reduction. And in addition it has a dual role as it is a subtle way of showing what the service is that they offer on the street. This can be seen during our walk. Clara puts on her bag in different ways depending on where we are walking.

We return to the car, and after several kilometers we stop in another town. We make a personal contact with a user in the park and after verifying that it is a safe space for the exchange of materials, they have a talk.

Clara explains that after each exchange they usually collect the information to keep track of everything, all in a confidential manner. During all this time Clara has been checking her mobile and facebook page, since users use private messages from this social network to contact them.

Lastly, we get ready to do a visit to a private home. She explains that the reason is to respect the privacy of users, although it is not usual. For this, they activate the safety protocol. In the house they treat us with kindness, they even offer us a drink. At the kitchen table we distribute the material and we talk about its use.

After that, I accompany Daniel. The first destination of the day is the Hospital. They usually go to the hospital two or three times a week with all the material they have exchanged to be burned in the incinerator.

Firstly, we make a technical stop in the day centre that [Laxus](#) has in [Pardubice](#). Here we collect more material and they explain to me how the centre works. Users can spend one hour a day at the club where they can drink coffee, wash up or chat with educators.

When I arrive at the hospital I can see that they have an exhaustive control of all the material that is delivered. After this first technical stop, we take the car and go to the outskirts of a

town to some garages in which Dan exchanges 200 syringes.

He usually goes to this garage weekly at the same time each day, so they were waiting for us. After the exchange two of the men leave, but a woman stays to talk to us. She is very pleased and grateful to talk to us. She tells me in English that Dan is her friend. After twenty minutes of talk we have to say goodbye because we are late and the time we have available is very tight when it is necessary to travel such a long distance from one point to another.

We take the car and go to another town, to a park in the suburbs. When we arrive, we see that the park is full of people and this represents a problem since the exchange could be too visible. Therefore, we try to move the car and to change the location to try and find a place as discreet as possible. As I noticed yesterday and today, discretion and safe spaces for users are essential in their work. Users, beyond the exchange, have a chat and are grateful for the moment.

The feeling that I am left with after these two days is that with all the work that is done, it is still not enough, the time they have available is very tight and the need to cover so many towns means that the contact with users is sometimes weekly, biweekly or monthly.



Youth club rules (e.g. Respect rights and responsibilities

Therefore, even if enough material is distributed or its use is ruled, follow-up is scarce and not enough. On more than one occasion, educators say that they would prefer to do the distribution of material and make contacts in another way, but the available resources do not allow it. Many of the users are grateful to have the possibility to talk and to share their situation.” (by Deiene)

# NEPOSEDA

[Neposedá](#) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that works in the eastern part of [Prague](#) and has several programs: [Krizovatka](#) for adults in a situation of exclusion, the [Hopo](#)



*Skatepark in Prague suburbs*

and [Autobus](#) clubs for children and adolescents, a centre for families and the preventive program Teen Hero's road (inspired by Bret Stephenson).

The [Autobus](#) preventive program that we had the opportunity to visit is a Youth Club that offers a safe leisure space in the districts of [Prague](#) 14 and 21.

The Club is aimed at young people between nine and sixteen years old, some of them at risk. Although the Club only caters for teenagers up to the age of sixteen, educators cater for young people over this age through outdoor education. There are four professionals who usually take turns so that everyone works in the club or outdoor on a rotating basis.

[Neposedá](#) works with a community approach.

Currently, the Club has to stop its activity during winter time because the space where it is normally held is placed in a precarious conditions as a result of construction works.

Idoia: "During our meeting with the street education team of the [Autobus](#) project of the [Neposedá](#) organization in [Prague](#), I found similarities with our work; the tours around the area to detect youths and to intervene individually with them, community action supporting

groups of young people to carry out projects of their own interest such as a bike park, promoting community participation and development and autonomy.

One of the differences I notice from how we work is that they do not create support networks with other agents and associative movements of their neighbourhood (schools, sports clubs, leisure and free time clubs, etc.) Also, the way to contact the users is different. Until educators are greeted by users they do not approach them, to provide confidentiality.

In my organization we always greet the children and teenagers with whom we work and to contact new people we go to their areas. We introduce ourselves and we start having a conversation.

In addition we maintain contact with family members to provide an interdisciplinary approach (social services - school - street education- other agents of social neighbourhood initiatives aimed at children and families) with the purpose of carrying out a joint intervention plan with objectives, strategies and actions known by all actors involved that leads to the improvement of the situation of the family and the minor.”

Deiene: “While we are in the club, boys and girls between ten and twelve years old approach who are more interested in talking to educators than in playing or doing any activities. Once again, I am surprised by the concept of confidentiality and safe space. In the Club, each young person has individual fact sheets. They know that these fact sheets exist and have the right to request them at all times.

Another point that draws my attention is that they make a differentiation by ages. They give us the example that, if a parent called to ask about a child that is less than 15 years old, they could tell them if he/she is in the center or not, but not with whom he/she is or any other information. If the youngster is older than 16 years old, they would not give out that kind of information because they respect the adolescent’s privacy.

[Neposeda](#) educators support young people to be agents of change in the community by creating projects with them to generate meeting spaces and guiding them so they can participate in social volunteering, even if it cannot be in their own organization.

This strategy shows a community approach based mainly on the fact that young people are the agents of change and less on creating networks with other social agents already existing in the neighbourhood.

After visiting the Club, we moved to another district to focus on working outdoors. We approach a skate park and a park, although for its characteristics we would rather call it a forest. In it we can see constructions made by the young people themselves in which you can see remains of cigarette butts and garbage.

At this point, the educators show us the risk reduction material that they normally distribute (information, filters, condoms).

As we walk through the park, educators tell us about “Dirty” a space created by young bikers next to the train tracks. It was the young people themselves who saw the need to have a space dedicated to this sport. Youngsters and the [Neposeda](#) educators together created a project that was approved by the City Council.

Upon arriving there, we found a space with tall buildings with ramps and even booths created by the young people themselves based on the needs they had previously observed.

In “Dirty” they mention again that they do not usually approach the safe areas in which young people meet unless the young people themselves approach them, a totally different work methodology from what I am used to.”

# PROXIMA SOCIALE

[Proxima Sociale](#) is a non-governmental organization of 70 workers founded in 1993 that offers services for the community in the city of [Prague](#). It is divided into 3 intervention areas:

## 1. Childhood and adolescence programme:

- Social Street Education (8-26 years)

Divided into 5 districts of [Prague](#) the programme employs 32 people. Most of them receive public financing grants from institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Social Policies, also from the Local Government and occasionally from European funds.

Between September and November, they devote time to drawing up projects in order to apply for these grants.

Their working day begins at 9:00 a.m. and the morning is mainly devoted to administrative tasks. On Friday the work is from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The rest of the week, they are only open in the afternoon. At weekends they do not usually work.

Each area has a Youth Club for children between 12 and 19 years old. They offer safe meeting places, individual intervention and leisure activities, sports and cultural events.

In the club, booklets are available with information on different topics such as good behaviour, sexual relations, alcohol consumption or reckless driving.

There are an average of 3 workers running each club. They generally work in pairs.

In the afternoon, social street education teams are deployed (in summer the routes can sometimes last until midnight; usually once a month). With this service they offer anonymity to young people who approach them, free advice and help in difficult situations.

In each neighbourhood an end-of-year party is organized with workshops and activities in which they show the work done during the year.

During the summer day camps are organized. Occasionally, they also organize trips with overnight stays outside the city.

•

### *End of school year - Community event in Prague 1316*

Programmes aimed at minor offenders (15-18 years):

This is a small programme. About 15 people attend on average per year, mainly young men. In the last year, for the first time in 6 years, they carried out an intervention with women.

This programme is an alternative to entry into a juvenile detention centre. It is usually a difficult process and when they turn 18, they usually end up in prison.

The intervention occurs at an individual and group level. They make a first trip of 5 days for



coexistence in a community and a second one of 2 days for being in contact with nature.

- International cooperation



*Promixa Sociale - Youth club Krok*

[Proxima Sociale](#) promotes exchanges between young people and professionals. [Proxima Sociale](#) has an annual exchange with a Youth Club from Hamburg (Jugendclub Burgwedel): 10 young people from the Czech Republic go to Germany one year and next year the trip is repeated in the other direction. This helps to break down myths and stereotypes of the neighbouring country.

In addition, it provides an opportunity to discover other realities. For example, the reality of refugees with which they work in Germany but not in the Czech Republic.

## **2. Residential programmes:**

- Foster home: This is located in the 12th district. It has capacity for 4 mothers with their children for stays of half a year maximum.
- Assistance in case of emergency: There is the possibility of welcoming any person seeking help during a week. They are supported to find other options.
- Civic counselling centre: They offer free advice on legal aspects.

- Improvement of family life: Designed for families at risk of exclusion to support them in their parental skills. Also, for host families.

### **3. Educational programs for schools:**

Primary prevention programmes for risky behaviours in schools, from nursery school to high school. They also offer teacher training and other types of programmes within the school to support the adaptation of the first days of school. In summer, camps are organized.

Andrea: “One of the afternoons and accompanied by Petra, a social street educator in [Prague](#), we have the opportunity to visit the offices of the 12th District, where the Youth Club is located. We make a route around the area up to the Garáž club. This place is used in the winter months, from November to March, as a meeting point for young people when the weather is bad. Inside the Garáž club they have a Skate park that young people themselves have helped to set up, a computer, a foosball and a table to sit and gather around. On the way to Garáž we meet several groups of teenagers, boys and girls, with whom Petra talks and interacts. We commented on our route that, as happens in our city, one of the main points of encounter among young people are currently the malls, which is why they have become part of our usual routes.

Petra draws my attention the fact that, among the requirements to participate in the street work program, being a teenager is already considered a risk factor and enough to be included in the target population. Petra explains that practically all the people they work with belong to that age group (12 to 22 years). In our service, in addition to the age requirement, it is necessary to present a set of risk indicators or to combine social, family and / or personal factors that put their full development in difficulty or danger. Again, we are able to compare different approaches in our ways of working in the community.

Another afternoon, guided by Jarka, coordinator of the programmes for children and adolescents, we had the opportunity to attend the end-of-course event in the 13th district, visit their Youth Club and find out about the activities that have been carried out with the young people throughout the entire course: graffiti workshop, face painting, hairdressing, parkour exhibition, skate, foosball competition and various rap and hip-hop performances.

During the activities we see more young boys than girls. The coordinator told us that tends to be cyclical, but currently the number of young boys who attend is higher.

My conversations with Jarka revealed great similarities in the identification of the abusive use of technologies. They are having problems with several young people who are increasingly isolated.

The educators use facebook and other internet resources for communicating with youngsters and shared photos, videos, etc.

Another difference detected between our programs is the gender representation in the working teams. Only 4 out of 32 people who work in the youth programs are men. In our program in Spain we work in each neighbourhood normally in pairs, ensuring that there is always a minimum of one man and one woman in each area.”

## PROSTOR PLUS

[Prostor Plus](#) is an association with 14 years of experience. They offer social, educational and developmental services.

It employs approximately 70 people. The headquarters are located in Kolín, a city of 31,000 inhabitants which is located east of [Prague](#) and is well connected to it by train. The association provides different services.

The educational area includes the management of three nursery schools and primary prevention services in schools, focusing mainly on the risks of drug and alcohol use (although bullying, sexuality, violent behaviour, etc. are also addressed).

In the area of development, they have a program called ‘Better Place’ in which young people send pictures of places they would like to improve, clean, etc. and they act as a bridge between them and the competent authorities that can solve the problems. They also have a socio-labour insertion program. In addition, the association helps Czech organizations working in third countries to perform bureaucratic tasks.

In the area of Social Services they offer a help service to drug addicts. They have a [centre](#) in which they offer information to users, likewise, they have a clinic and a refuge for crisis

situations. The purpose of the service is to provide support and information to minimize the risks associated with addictive behaviour and help improve the situation of drugs users. It is in this area where the youth centres and the social street education program that we visit are included.

Within the projects for young people they have three centres in three different localities. The centre we visited is located in the same city as the office, in [Kolín](#).

It is managed by three workers and is open from Monday to Thursday from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. It is directed towards young people between 13 and 20 years old, but they also have a social consultation service open to young people up to 26 years of age.

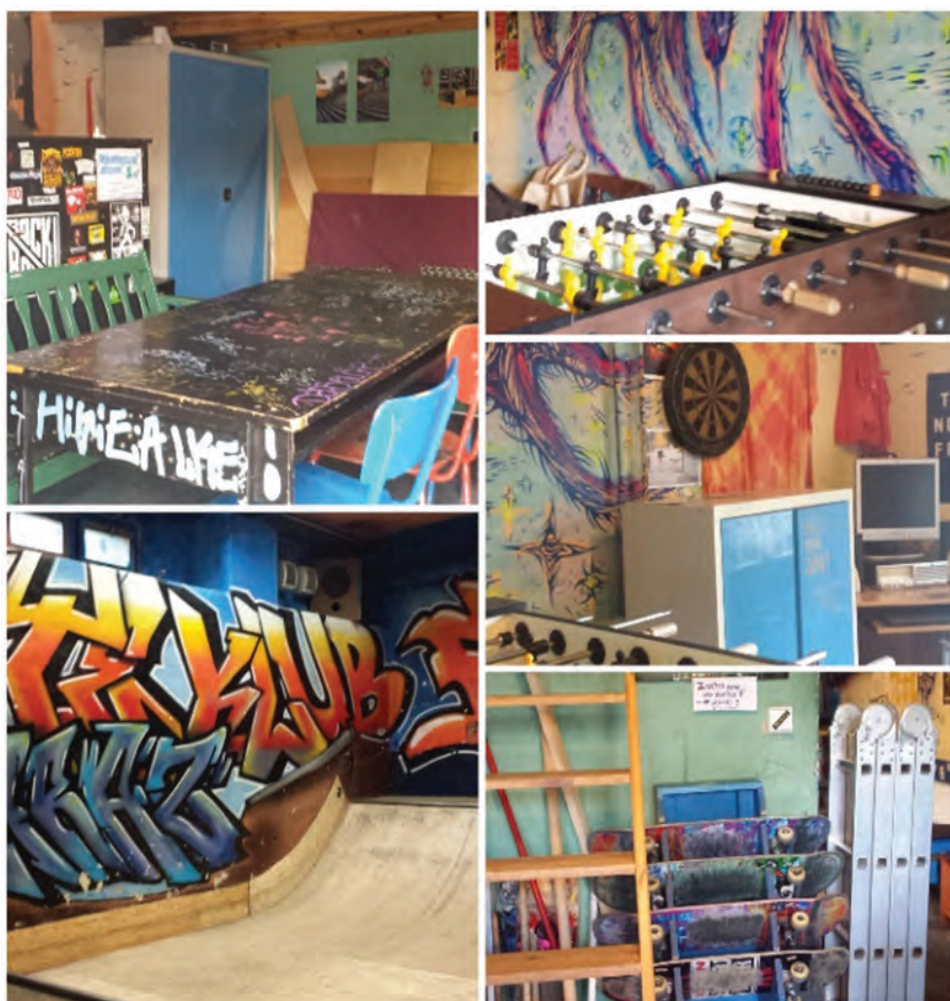
The centre has a music room with many instruments and a gym. In both it is necessary to pay a minimum price for the use of the room, thus raising awareness of the value of these resources. The centre also has a large room where there are sofas, foosball and a bar to order drinks. The service, beyond being a leisure centre, is aimed at people who have some kind of social de-

mand or specific problem.

The social street education program is performed on a bus that visits two places each day.

From Monday to Thursday they spend two hours in each place. At present, the population to which the service is directed are young people and children of the Roma community in nearby [Kutna Hora](#).

Regarding the finan-



*Youth club Kolárka*

cing of the organization, there is a team who work exclusively to obtain funding. They mainly apply for aid from public institutions such as municipalities, the Czech Government and the European Union.

Most staff members are social workers or social educators. In the services that we have had the opportunity to visit, the workers are mostly women and young people. From what they have told us, this type of social work is not recognized as it should be.

## **YOUTH KLUB**

Pilar: “Guided by Marie, we participate during a day at the [Kolin](#) Youth Klub. We had the opportunity to learn more about how the centre works and we could have a chat with some of the boys and girls.

The Klub is a little way away from the centre of the city, at the Organization’s Headquarters, near a large mall. It is very well furnished, it has a small court for sports and many resources (bicycles, skates, audio-visual equipment, etc.).

The Klub is attended by 4 female workers. In my organization, any educational program takes into account the male-female educational pair.

There is a poster with rules and sanctions and, as in any educational program, there are almost always problems with sanctions. They do not have much contact with Social Services or with families.

Sometimes they go to the city to offer information about the activities that take place there. We had the opportunity to try their mono-bikes and take a walk around the area.

In the Klub they manage a register system in which they daily record name, time spent in the klub, activities undertaken etc. This data is available to the boys and girls and, at any time, they can request it and it is printed out and provided to them. That seems very interesting to me.

We talked about this new profile of youngsters who live in deep isolation. We also had a conversation about the Vietnamese community, which is very numerous in the Czech Republic. This community does not cause outward problems, although we can sense intuitively that there are difficulties.”

## PROGRAM KLUBUS

Oihana: “This mobility of professionals allows me to experience the social street education program [Klubus](#). The service, which has been under way since 2014, is carried out with a bus with which they visit two excluded areas of [Kutna Hora](#). The bus has computers with internet access, many games, sports equipment, juggling, guitars, tables and chairs, etc. The objective is to reach the underage population at risk of exclusion and offer help, support and a safe space for girls and boys and young people from 6 to 26 years old.

They are currently working with children and young people from the Roma community, and although there have been some older people, most of them are around 7-14 years old. The service is based on a municipal assignment. In principle, they do not work with families or with the community in general, even though, as sometimes happens, they also interact with families.

In the Czech Republic there is a large Roma population, and currently they emigrate from nearby countries, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania. Although there are other organizations that work in integration, these children and young people do not usually have access to other resources.

The team consists of three educators, and they make outings four afternoons a week for two hours in each territory. When new people arrive, during their first interpersonal interaction, they sign a contract in which the service is explained to them along with the rules, and they have a first chat to describe a little about their situation.

Their socio-educational work is based on the needs of the person who approaches them. During the interaction they firstly provide school support and later all kinds of games, sports, juggling, music, etc.

Milos tells us that he prefers to talk about personal issues through games and dynamics, although they have a place on the bus that is dedicated to doing this type of work.

During our visit we have shared two pleasant afternoons and have had the opportunity to get to know the project in situ.

The work in establishing contacts is similar to what we do in our association. The method of approach and the activities they do are quite similar: soccer, juggling, music, etc.

I think that the interests of the participants should be similar everywhere and a lack of

knowledge of the language is not a problem for interaction.

A difference that I have found is that, in our case, we are quite coordinated with the municipal and associative resources of several towns and we act as a bridge between their different resources.

This experience has been very useful both personally and professionally.

I have brought many ideas to develop in my territory and the experience has led me to rethink and change some practices of the social street education service that we offer.” (Oihana)

## COOKS WITHOUT HOMES

On our last day in the Czech Republic we visited a canteen managed by homeless women accompanied by social educators. A year ago, the [canteen](#) opened its doors to the public. The project is financed with funds from the European Union.

The canteen is a bar where they serve meals and it also offers a catering service. The women have prepared and decorated the place, which has a lot of charm, and they attend to the public.

The life of these women is quite hard, and this project helps them to have a roof, although not yet in the best conditions. As is explained to us, many times people with fewer resources have debts with the state and with private entities. For example, to access the health system you need to h

ave a job, and if you are not working, you contract debts that you have to repay with interest, which makes it very difficult to get out of a precarious situation.

About the project, the educators explain the difficulty in moving the business forward. But we believe that it is a good project that helps the participants to develop skills that will allow them to have more opportunities to build a better future.

# CONCLUSIONS

Xenophobic statements about refugees and migrants by government officials are unfortunately quite frequent, so it is not surprising that part of the Czech society itself also assumes that people who come from outside its borders are dangerous.

However, the curious fact is that the total number of foreigners does not exceed 5% of the population. Xenophobia also reaches a very important part of Czech society, mainly with the Roma-gypsy community (+350,000 people).

They have been living in the Czech Republic for more than four generations, and they keep arriving in the country. The social situation of the Roma population is similar to a ghetto regime. Many live in separated neighbourhoods and without access to the same rights. After communism, Roma people were separated from the rest of the population, put in buildings and blocks apart from others. Children and adolescents are sent to special schools. Some share classrooms with students with disabilities, others go to schools only for Roma Gypsies.

The Vietnamese community is also very large (+90,000 people). Although apparently “they do not cause problems”, the problems exist but they are not reflected on the street and are not visible. Eastern people, mainly from Romania and Ukraine, are starting to arrive to the country, and there is also some population coming from Turkey. There is hardly any African population.



*Cooks without Homes - canteene in Prague*

To remark on some aspects that have drawn our attention during these days and after visi-



ting and learning about different projects and programs, firstly we point out that it seems that there is little interest on the part of the institutions to support prevention and support services for people at risk of social exclusion.

Also, we appreciate a lack of spaces for dialogue and networking among institutional and social organizations in the field of social intervention. Coordination with institutions does not seem very fluid and sometimes it is experienced as an added difficulty, which implies a handicap since interdisciplinary work is necessary to address the global nature of individuals (individual, groups, families, community, public services). This networking and a global approach would allow for the building of better coordination and achieve a higher impact. Also, and regardless of the difficulties, the relationship between professionals and families and Social Services should be improved.

One of the difficulties detected among the organisations is the fact that usually the entities that work in this area have to search continuously for funding from different sources (public bodies, institutions or private entities) in order to be able to carry out and continue with their work and programs. This search of funding involves a lot of effort, multiplies the management work and necessitates having a lot of staff dedicated exclusively to the preparation of projects and reports.

Despite this effort, the salaries of educators are quite low (currently, the minimum salary in the Czech Republic is around 470 euros), which means that in many organisations staff are not stable and there exists a shortage of educators, as young people do not choose social education studies, partly for this reason.

Our attention was drawn to the use of the term “client” when referring to people who attended the different services. In recent years, in many of our organisations, there has been reflection on how to improve social intervention with a more person-oriented approach, involving attention and care, subjective rights, terminology, etc. From our point of view, the concept of “client” involves the colonization of the social sector by the economic and neoliberal society. It is explained to us that this is a word that is accepted and commonly used in the country.

Regarding the direct work on the street, the way of approaching young people that we observed is remarkable, understanding the importance of personal space and taking respect for it in a broad way. And the assumption that cultural difference is a reality that directly affects

the way they create relationships. This made us reflect on the importance of considering both aspects: respecting their own personal spaces and the need to understand the cultural and historical idiosyncrasy of each community and the collective history shared by the whole community.

Another issue we observed during our visit was to do with the gender approach. Our perception was that the gender perspective was not fully integrated in some of the programs and teams. A reason for this could be that, in some cases, they work more often with men, we observed a lack of attractive activities for young women, or that gender stereotypes continue to be reproduced and sometimes ignored. Despite some of the differences already pointed out, there is no doubt that the impulse to help people and the desire to transform society are common, that we share similar concerns and motivations and the same way of understanding our work. The realities and problems that we face are not that different, although each place has its own history and idiosyncrasies.

The experience has allowed us to put in value the good practices of both countries. Both Spanish and Czech professional teams had the opportunity to learn and improve their skills while sharing daily work, difficulties, desires and expectations, and this exchange of practice always has a positive impact on the people that we accompany in our work.

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# Prague



## Report of the Good Practice Study Visit Prague, Czech Republic

April 2018

By Adreas Karrer, Roland Krause,  
Alexander Rönisch, Sophus Riexinger,  
Stephanie Andrä



# INTRODUCTION

From the 23rd to the 27th of April, five social workers for young people/juveniles from [Gangway](#) in Berlin were invited to Prague to participate in an exchange for social workers. The exchange was organized by the [CAS](#) and financed by the European Union as part of their [Erasmus+ programme](#).

During our visit we had the opportunity of getting to know the wonderful city of [Prague](#) in addition to the common tourist places. Different organizations specialising in open and/or outreach social work invited us in and gave us valuable insights into their work.

Our impressions and experiences of these five days, which flew by in no time, are described in the following pages of this report.

## BEZTÍŽE

For us, the streetworkers/social workers Andreas, Roland and Alexander, Tuesday started with a visit to the youth club [Beztíže](#). On our arrival we were received by Romana, one of the staff members at the club. She showed us around and told us a little bit about their way of working. At the [Beztíže](#) club in the district of [Prague 3](#), the staff work in the youth club and also perform outreach work. Therefore, there are staff members who work exclusively in the club as well as staff members who work on the streets. As there was a team meeting taking place that day, we had the pleasure of meeting the whole team who are based at the club. The team meeting at the club traditionally starts with a warm up game which we were invited to join. We played “musical chairs”/“Reise nach Jerusalem” much to the amusement of the young team. Afterwards we were shown around the youth club Ulita, of which the club [Beztíže](#) is a part. [Beztíže](#) is aimed specifically at teenagers, whereas Ulita also has a kindergarten/preschool group and has activities for school kids. They have a computer room, a gym, a creative workshop and a large outdoor area with a fire bowl and a lot of opportunities for sporting activities.

After we had seen everything that Ulita has to offer, the [Beztíže](#) team meeting had also come to an end and we were taken on a tour of [Prague 2](#) and [Prague 3](#) by Romana and her colleague. First of all we visited a neighbourhood centre in Praha 3, where we had lunch with some volunteers in the garden of the house. From there we walked through Vitkov Park, where there are frequently groups of young people. From the park the route led us along the main railway station to [Prague 2](#). On our tour the streetworkers showed us again and again a lot of different



*Youth club Beztíže - staff and visitors*

places where young people gather and spend their free time. We also got to know about the work done by other carriers/organisations. For example, our route led us past a school in front of which stood a mobile youth club in the form of a reconstructed bus. Young people are able to spend their free time here once a week. The bus has a seating area, computers, a small library, board games and table football. The bus can be used to get to various places in the city. In addition, the colleagues showed us a football field where large groups of young people were meeting. The two street workers are known to many of the young people and so it was easy for them to make contact and invite the young people to various events.

From the sports field we went to a shopping centre that is very popular with young people. Our colleagues told us that the food court in particular is a big attraction for young people, because there is free Wi-Fi and many restaurants have a refill system for their drinks, meaning that the young people can buy a drink and fill it up again and again for free. At the end of the day we said goodbye, we were quite tired and had many new impressions of streetwork in Prague from the two colleagues.

After our eventful Tuesday we found ourselves in the youth centre of Ulita, to reflect with Romana on the events of the previous day. Our accompaniment of the colleagues of [Beztíže](#) through [Prague 2](#) and [3](#) on Tuesday had been very intense and exciting. After reflection and clarification of some remaining questions, we used the time to strengthen ourselves and then met Kristyna Malikova.

We went by train and bus for about 20 minutes and met her colleague at the location of [Prague 10](#) (Vrsovice). The district, as it was described, is characterised by a differentiated social structure. This means that the closer to the city centre, the more prosperous the population becomes, while in the other direction social problems such as poverty, displacement and lack of prospects become more openly visible. Our tour led us through prefabricated housing areas, like those that can also be found on the periphery of Berlin. The colleagues from [Prague](#) approached children at playgrounds and invited them to a graffiti workshop at Ulita. What was unusual for us was the very young target group with which they work.

We then went to a shopping centre located next to the “Slavia Prague” football stadium, which is a popular meeting place for local young people. However, on this day we didn't meet anybody at that location. Our journey led us further along the railway tracks to visit a house where many socially abandoned people live in one room per family. The rents are exorbitant and the surroundings are anything but child- and people-friendly. The surrounding bushes were full of rubbish, used syringes were lying around and the noise of the neighbouring cars and trains did the rest. We stayed in the background to allow our [Prague](#) colleagues to talk to their clients without them feeling intimidated or watched by us. Beside the house there was a skate park, which was hardly usable, since it was partially overgrown.

Approximately 100 meters behind the park there was a housing estate with small flats intended for the “reintegration” of socially disadvantaged people. At the playground we met a pair of young siblings who were in contact with Kristyna and her colleague. We talked and played a little football on site. On the way back we walked through backyards, small streets and saw old factories as well as newly built townhouses for higher income residents. We said goodbye to our colleagues and were very grateful for the exciting tour.

At the tram stop we met Romana and Bara, with whom we had spent Tuesday, and drove together to Nusle (Prague 4). The organization [Beztíže](#) has a youth club in this area, which is visited by the local young people to spend their free time together. The colleagues there explained to us about the premises and the existing “club parliament” in which wishes and rules for the club are negotiated with the visitors in a grassroots democratic way. The visitors were predominantly Roma and were very interested in the visitors from Berlin. We gave each other “language lessons” and had a good contact. Afterwards, the young people showed us their surrounding neighbourhood and we met more of their friends and acquaintances on the



way. Back at the club there was a farewell photo and a big thank you to all involved for the beautiful day.

# PROGRESSIVE NO BIOHAZARD



*Streetworkers of outreach programme for drug users - No Biohazard*

Outreach programme, Žitná 51, Praha 1

**The NO BIOHAZARD** - Outreach programme offers low-threshold street social work with drug users in the centre of **Prague**. The eight strong team goes out every week at fixed times and offers low-threshold social work and health-related counselling, especially for intravenous drug users. In addition, the social workers provide people with access to clean consumables - they can get up to three clean syringe sets or exchange an unlimited number of used syringes for clean ones. Through this outreach work, an average of 50 to 60 people are reached per day. The streetworkers can be easily recognized by drug consumers/addicts through a special

symbol on their pockets.

What impressed me above all was the high degree of awareness of the work on the street, and also the uncomplicated and value-free handling of the syringe exchange and the advisory work. It could be seen that the street workers receive a high degree of trust from the target group. I also think that it is worth mentioning the apparently successful cooperation with an agency that offers a similar service in [Prague](#). I think that there might be a danger that some people perceive street workers merely as an “exchange option”. Social workers are called upon to make their other offers transparent.

# NZDM DŽAGODA – JAHODA YOUTH CLUB

The [Jahoda Youth Club](#) is located in [Prague](#) 8 on the outskirts of the city. The journey from the centre of [Prague](#) to the club had already provided us with many interesting impressions and views of this part of the city. The staff were very eager to give us a comprehensive impression of their work in the club and of their work with the young people they are involved with. At the time of our visit the club was unfortunately not visited by any young people, but this gave us the time and opportunity to ask detailed questions on many different topics. We noticed that the work of the social workers in the youth club does not differ significantly from the work of the youth clubs in Berlin, and there was not so much new in the work itself.

However, the fact that the core visitor group at [Jahoda](#) has an almost exclusively Roma background was particularly interesting for our colleague from the Berlin Friedrichshain team, as he himself has a lot of experience in working with young people with a Roma background. The exchange with our colleagues was very interesting and we thank them for their hospitality.

# NÍZKOPRAHOVÝ KLUB VRTULE

[Club Vrtule](#) (in English Club Propeller) is special in several respects: the youth club located in [Prague 8](#) is the oldest in [Prague](#). It was founded 17 years ago under the umbrella of the



*Fussball is favourite activity in most of clubs - Youthclub Beztíže*

Salesians of Don Bosco. [Vrtule](#), a low-threshold youth club, is located in a large building that offers countless leisure, sports and cultural activities for children, teenagers and their parents. A climbing hall, skateboard area with ramps, gym, football field and volleyball field are useful resources for the club, to name just a few. They also offer activities such as dance groups, theatre, excursions and trips lasting several days as well as football and table football leagues. In total, the centre offers around 60 different activities. The [Vrtule](#) team consists of five colleagues (one woman and four men, which is an unusual structure for social work in [Prague](#)).

In addition to working in the low-threshold youth club, the colleagues are also outreach workers. The times for the outreach work are pre-arranged and always the same (two fixed areas

that are visited four times a week), whereas the outreach work of [Gangway](#) e.V. is completely flexible in terms of time and can be changed as required. Both models have their advantages and disadvantages. I think that fixed walking tours create commitment and ritual, but it is likely that only certain people or groups will be reached, those who are in the exact place at the exact time. The more flexible design in Berlin may make it possible to meet different groups at different times of the day and week, but it also hides a lack of continuity. The operation of a youth club and the outreach work combine two different approaches - it is not necessarily the aim that the young people who are found in the public space come to the club. This means that two different target groups can be reached.

We noticed in particular that a team was on its way to map a new area in Prague 8. The order was placed by the District Office, which is also one of the sponsors of the organisation. The aim is to find common meeting places for young people and to mark them on a map so that street workers can find them precisely, but the district office also knows these places. Together with two colleagues (Johnny and Tomas) we spent a day in the area of outreach work. In order to cover the long distances within the extensive district, we took the bus. In general, we found little difference between the outreach work of our Prague colleagues and ours. The meeting points (shopping centres, parks, football fields) and the way of making contact (low-threshold, non-binding and voluntary) do not differ from our own approach, but then we got to see another special feature - a construction wagon, which is operated by [Vrtule](#) and currently stands on a football field. This construction wagon combines a place to be during bad weather, a changing room for football games, a contact and conversation room and a place to play table football or board games, it serves as a regularly scheduled meeting point for many young people.” A lot of young people quickly gathered at the football field and it was clearly noticeable that Johnny and Tomas had very good contact with these young people, the eye contact, appreciation and trust could be felt. A big football match developed, which was more about fair play than goals.

All in all, we were impressed by the concept and commitment of the employees and we can well imagine cooperating on a football project in the future, because this is an area where the language barrier is irrelevant.

# KŘIŽOVATKA | NEPOSEDA

The name of the association “Neposedá”, located in Prague 14, can be roughly translated as “fidgety”. [Neposedá – Krizovatka](#) Programme was founded in 2012 and consists of four street workers (three women and one man): Barbora, Regina, Hana and Martin, who work with all age groups in Prague 14, 20 and 21, but focus on older homeless people. In addition, there is a large network of cooperation partners such as the local police, the health department, the social services, doctors, the Salvation Army, the church and the Dogs Life organisation, which specialises in homeless animals. The street workers offer counselling both in their office and on the street. However, an oral contract must be concluded with the addressees directly on the spot in order to initiate possible assistance. It is interesting to note that certain days and times for the outreach work are fixed and have to be adhered to. The tours of the areas take place on foot or by public transport. According to our Prague colleagues from Neposedá, there are surprising number of homeless people in Prague and the surrounding area, many of whom are dependent on help and cannot reach it anywhere else. When we were on the tours of these areas with our Prague colleagues, we observed that they had a very professional and competent way of working with their clients. They work very precisely and purposefully and they were able to help directly on the spot and refer several clients to other agencies. The clients already seem to know the street workers very well, and they were also very open and talkative. This has shown how important and also how good the colleagues are, and how they quickly provide their clients with the right and most suitable help. Otherwise, they work in a relatively similar to us here in Berlin: low-threshold transparency, non-intrusive, flexible, non-judgmental and very professional. It has been noticed that they enjoy doing their work very much, and this also goes down well with the clients. By meeting at eye level and working in a value-free and open manner, rapid help can be provided and problems can be approached and solved in a humane manner. In addition to the Neposedá project, there are other projects that run a form of mobile youth work in the same district of Prague. A youth club is also connected to this, which has moved to a very interesting location due to its placement in the district from where it reaches as many children and young people as possible who would otherwise not be able to be reached. The good networking and cooperation of the various institutions and bodies enable a very professional and competent way of working.

# CONCLUSION

The stay in Prague was very successful for us. We would especially like to mention the good and reliable organization by CAS. We felt very welcome during the five days, both in the city itself and in the various organizations we visited.

Thank you very much and see you soon.

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# Brno & Prague



## Report of the Good Practice Study Visit Brno and Prague, Czech Republic

June 2018

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# INTRODUCTION

This report combines the impressions our group – consisting of four people from differing occupational fields in Graz (open youth work, streetwork, social work to counter poverty) and one colleague from Salzburg, who is active in working with the homeless. We set out on a journey to Brno together in June 2018, where we spent a working week gaining insight into various institutions.



*Brewery in Brno*

From the very beginning Brno welcomed us with wonderful weather, which certainly made for a positive mood. The colleagues involved with the institutions we visited were always well prepared and welcomed us very warmly, which allowed us to overcome any linguistic hurdles. Aside from enjoying good food and the “Czech national drink” (after our arrival, we had a nice evening meal in an internationally renowned brewery), the intensive week was accompanied by extended city walks in the sunshine. In addition, our overworked footwear was thankful for being able to make use of the well-developed public transportation in the second largest city in the Czech Republic.

Herein, we would like to give you a glimpse into the institutions that we visited. We include our experiences and ideas stemming from reflection and afterthought in the framework of this practice-oriented exchange.

Our impressions originate from intensive visits that were relatively dense in terms of content. It is naturally true that five different people sometimes have a number of different opinions, and moreover their perceptions may differ. Therefore these reports are naturally subjectively experienced snapshots that are not necessarily meant to encompass the reality of local conditions.

For this reason we ask our readers, as they take in this text, to carefully note that no definitive conclusions concerning the services offered ought to be made based on the perceptions described here. On the contrary, our written impressions can be an incentive for learning something new. If it functions to awaken your interest in this city and its interesting social welfare institutions, we encourage you to pay a visit. Going to a place and getting an impression for yourself is always the best way to begin a successful appraisal.

There is one definite conclusion that we can provide you with:

**BRNO** IS ALWAYS WORTH THE TRIP!

# GOOD PRACTICES

## PRESENTATION BY THE CITY OF BRNO SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE

The start of the week-long excursion took place in “Klub Zastupitelů” with a comprehensive introduction to the diverse offerings and ideas of the social welfare office of the [City of Brno](#). During a detailed presentation, we were provided with insights into the core area of their

work. One of the main projects is called Rapid Re-Housing, which was set up as a pilot project between 2016 and 2018. The target group is families with children in need of a place to live. The NGO “Platform for Social Housing” of the [City of Brno](#) functions as the main cooperation partner, and the [University of Ostrava](#) takes care of the science surrounding the pilot work.



*Presentation by the city of Brno Social Welfare Office*

# RAPID RE-HOUSING BRNO

Regional challenges exist: The social/economic situation in Brno puts families at a disadvantage. Private owners rent rooms in so-called “hostels” for families, including single mothers. The financial housing assistance from the City of Brno goes directly to the owner. The rooms seldom meet minimum standards for acceptable living conditions for the people who live there.

- Too many people live together in very cramped spaces
- There is commonly only one shared bathroom and a kitchen on the ground floor
- Rents for the single rooms are comparatively high (often corresponding to the equivalent of a 3-room flat) – a 10m<sup>2</sup> room is presented as a drastic example, which serves as accommodation for a family of five.

The “[Rapid Re-Housing](#)” project started out with a census week. The result of this survey was

that as of the reporting date, 421 families in Brno were in acute need of housing (i.e. in extremely precarious living situations – in rooms in hostels, in women’s homes, on the street). The data of the respective families was gathered by staff members from the employment office and by government-employed social workers. When referring to homelessness, we reference the EU definition. As the project was initially limited to 50 families, a “lottery” was decided upon. In the presence of a notary, 50 of the respective families were drawn and were subsequently assigned a flat. This social housing met their living standards, and the rental price was also set to be affordable. Additionally, the families were regularly checked on in the flats by social workers.

The success of the project was verified in an evaluation after the first year. Of the 50 families, 48 families were still living in the flats, and only two families were excluded from the project. The main reason for their exclusion was their failure to pay the appropriate rent for the flat.

Key features of the [Rapid Re-Housing](#) project:

- 95% of the funding comes from the resources of the European Union
- Conditions placed on the renters should be kept to a minimum. Meeting minimal requirements is important, including the following:
  - On-time payment of rent
  - No vandalism of the property
  - Obligatory meetings with the official social worker(s)
  - Families are seldom addressing issues related to addiction or mental illness, however violence is a common theme
- Those unlucky families that were not selected in the draw continued to receive the standard level of assistance through the social welfare office

“Testing of the Concept of [Social Housing](#)”

The flats for this project were made available by the [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#).

The project consists of several subsections. At the time of our visit, the implementation is still not fixed because the Czech government has not ratified the proposed legislation. The draft includes social housing in 16 municipalities in the Czech Republic.

Key features of the pilot project:

- Conceptualization of new regulations for flats, which make rents affordable for socially disadvantaged people (e.g. single mothers, retired people, people with disabilities)
- Establishment of crisis accommodation
- Prevention of eviction for people with debts
- Survey and analysis of various issues related to the living situations of people in acute housing need

The city of Brno owns approximately 30,000 flats. The private housing market is no longer financially feasible for many residents, or is not accessible due to discrimination.

# HOUSING FIRST - CITY OF BRNO

For the implementation, 65 of the city's flats are available. There are two target groups – young adults between 18 and 25 years of age and adults who are 26 or older (most having intensive need for support based on mental illness and addiction) – who are homeless. They are allowed to provisionally obtain a flat for a year. The [social work](#) support for the clients (carried out as outreach) is intended to last for three years. If after a year “housing competence” is shown, the rental agreement is extended. The focus lies on recovery (in the case of illness) and the reduction of possible risks factors. As to the allocation of the flats, various criteria are used in order to determine the urgency of the need. Case management is the

method used for this, including two committees – both a government-internal team and one made up of external experts. The primary support system is utilised. Basically this project looks to the residential competence of all people.

As an outcome an action plan has been established, the goal of which is the elimination of homelessness for all families with children in Brno by 2025. Currently (as of June 2018) approximately 600 families are known to be acutely affected by homelessness. The plan is to get 100 families into their own flats per year.

# HOUSING FIRST FOR INDIVIDUALS – CITY OF BRNO

In the afternoon we divided up into two groups in order to alternate and visit two different public support offerings that were contextually related to our morning.

## Visiting Client Flats

The people we spoke with had been living in the property for a few months, in the framework of the “Housing First” program. A woman told us that she had previously been living on the street for several years – in a small shack in the Brno municipal area. The person living



*Municipal "Housing first" flats*

in the flat, as well as the social worker, said that the flat meant a state of joy for the resident, which seemed to us to be believable and authentic. The people in the two flats we visited enjoy being able to cook in their own kitchens. A positive side effect is that they drink less alcohol since having their own flats.

The social worker said that part of the plan was to house the target group in “better” neighbourhoods; however, in practice this intention has met with failure. The flats that we viewed were located in the part of the city that is also known as the “Brno Bronx”. It is coincidental that some flats in the project are in the same building. To put things in a positive light, it can be said there is some development potential in terms of the condition of the infrastructure in the area surrounding the building.



#### *Municipal "Housing first" flats*

As part of the discussion, our colleague Katharina noted that some flats in the Housing First project in Salzburg are in better neighbourhoods, but this has repeatedly led to conflict because neighbours often complain about the clients in the project.

In the framework of the visit, the social workers suggested the incorporation of a questionnaire. The vision for the future is that instead of the unsatisfactory allocation of flats via a random draw, to establish a points system that better identifies who should be the next to receive housing assistance.

# DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE – CITY OF BRNO

## Visiting a “Hostel”



The second visit involved a so-called “hostel” (as had already been discussed earlier in the day). Having a look at the actual conditions, the owners seemed to be quite unscrupulous. As was already described, families with many children live together in extremely precarious living conditions in the most cramped of spaces in this hostel, and they are ripped off by the owner through exorbitant monthly rents. Only Roma families live in the hostel that we visited. For a living space of about 20m<sup>2</sup>, the rent was €400. Each floor had two toilets and one shower that was substandard in quality. The

social worker also questioned the people

*Municipal social worker (right)* living there, and at the same time informed them about the possibility of applying for social housing. One family was interviewed in our presence. The questions concerned various aspects of life (e.g. number of children, life history, health problems, marital status, etc.).

The dedication and personal commitment, as well as the idealism of the social workers, are remarkable. Moreover, all of them emphasise how important and helpful the resources from the European Union are, without which much would not be possible. The continued existence





and the development of such projects are closely linked with future regional and national elections.

# IQ ROMA SERVIS - RAPID RE- HOUSING AND STREETWORK

In the Czech Republic, many people are members of the “Roma culture”. On the basis of this cultural affiliation, these people are excluded from many areas having central societal significance, or the threshold for access is too high for them. The [IQ Roma Servis](#) NGO has reached out to this population and offers support services for Roma people. In total about 60 people work there providing social assistance. The financing consists of a small amount of public money, with the larger portion coming from support through donations and fundraising. [IQ Roma Servis](#) has specialised in four essential areas:

- Social work and outreach
- Work with families
- Youth centres
- Rapid Re-Housing

## **IQ Roma Servis, Rapid Re-Housing, Streetwork**

It is generally true that it is very, very difficult for Roma people to find a flat in the Czech

Republic. Many landlords refuse to rent to them on the basis of their cultural background, i.e. their ethnic group. The Roma receive an approval approximately six times less often than other residents when applying for a flat. For this reason, some members of this group change their last names in order to avoid such discrimination.

The on-going problem in the project is that once families are provided with a flat, the family grows and thus the housing is once again too small. Within one year, more than 30 children were born to the families under supervision. This change in numbers represents a new challenge for the project. Altogether there are five RRH staff members (three women, two of whom are Roma, and two men).

Contact with social work is also compulsory. There is an interesting method worth mentioning here in which those affected can choose among various “job types” (buddy, police officer, mediator, artist), which are presented to clients by means of a video presentation. The role chosen can also be changed. [IQRS](#) cooperates with the housing department, respective building management and the City of Brno.

Here are some additional impressions from the outreach offerings:

- With families, we were accompanied by staff members from [IQRS](#). We were also allowed to ask questions. In both families, the people we spoke with were women. They confirmed to



*Families involved in IQRS housing programs*

us that that are very happy with the new housing situation.

- Other people told us about a “hostel” that was closed in 2017 because the “slumlord”

had to file for bankruptcy. The families then had no water and no electricity for an extended period of time. In total, 16 families were impacted by this incident.

• A social worker from [IQRS](#) was specifically assigned to these families. Threatening a



*Families involved in IQRS housing programs*

protest, he told us that he was able to encourage city politicians to organise temporary accommodation for the affected families. We visited the accommodation together with the successful social worker. The mood of the people in the housing was low, as the future housing situation was still unknown at the time of our visit.

What else made an impression on us when visiting the families:

- We saw very many children in very precarious living conditions.
- Being around other people was a constant part of everyday life in the “Roma accommodation”; we never encountered people alone there.
- It was noteworthy that the cooperation between social workers and clients is built upon a relationship of mutual trust and continuity.
- As to the issue of birth control, a social worker answered that this can be a very sensitive topic. Talking about it requires a lot of sensitivity, and additionally one risks the immediate breaking off of the relationship by raising this topic.

## **IQRS Program for Families, Case Management, Preschool, Youth Club, Foster Parents**

### Program for Families

The work with and in the families focuses predominantly on social components and the needs of the affected persons. What exactly that means has already been described above under the impressions of the previous day.

### Case Management

Case management involves working with families with children or with parents who are looking after children who are not their own (i.e. foster parents). Some families choose to participate of their own volition, and sometimes families are also referred by the authorities. Depending on their needs, the families are also supported through family therapy, in addition to social work and case management.

### Family Conference

Family conference is a concept that stems from the idea that family members have sufficient competence themselves to support one another in times of difficulty. This involves preparing the family in a process lasting several months so that they are able to hold a family conference.

The process of preparation often shows the greatest results – in only about 50% of the cases is a conference actually held.



*IQRS Preschool*

### Kindergarten & Preschool

Before Roma children are sent to school, they are commonly not very well prepared for school life. In so-called “preschool club”, the children

are taught the necessary fundamentals (e.g. the names of colours, the Czech language, speech therapy, etc.). Parents are also coached (e.g. preparing health snacks for children, complying with obligations). Parents even sometimes receive homework. Roughly 12 children per year are provided with guidance in this way. [IQRS](#) also carries out informational campaigns in order to make Roma parents aware of how important education is for their children and what the possibilities are in terms of school choice. One social worker works with roughly 10 to 15 families (of them 8-10 families actively).

## Foster Families

For various reasons, it sometimes happens that children are no longer able to live with their biological parents. They are then handed over to foster parents. These foster parents are “tested”, given instruction and provided with assistance in advance. Foster parents are often related to the children that they chose to take into their care. From time to time, joint excursions with foster children are organized by Roma Servis.

What else caught our attention at [IQRS](#):

- [IQRS](#) places a lot of value on the level of design quality in terms of the informational materials that they provide.
- The upkeep of relationships with clients and moreover with cooperation partners is characterized by respect and appreciation.
- The many creative materials of [IQRS](#) are impressive. For example, comics are developed and produced by the project leader. These are both very aesthetically appealing and very well thought out in terms of content!

Communication is essentially a crucial component of the cooperation. After visiting the [IQ Roma Servis NGO](#), we all had the impression that a very engaged and eager team is at work there. You can really feel the high regard people have for one another in terms of the communication that happens in the places we visited; this seems to be an essential criterion in the success of this organization.

# RATOLEST BRNO

## Center for Prevention and Resocialisation

In the morning on the last day in Brno, we visited this program for young people who have committed offences and/or seem to be in danger of committing offences. They can be divided into three age groups:

- 11-15 year olds – one of a kind offer for this age group
- 15-18 year olds – changing direction
- 15-30 year olds – longer term, topics such as education/debt

The young participants are referred by the court, probationary services or youth welfare services. Only 5% of the young people participate voluntarily. The main principle is transparency in the work. The framing conditions are specified at the very beginning of the program. They include an attendance requirement, but the young people nonetheless do not have to attend. Excessive missing hours mean that the program cannot be completed. However, the young people are permitted to try again later. In total, the Center for Prevention and Resocialization employs three staff members.

## Ratolest Brno Youth Club Likusák

To conclude our stay in Brno, we visited the youth outreach institution known as Ratolest Brno.



This youth centre includes streetwork and is in one of the outer districts of the city, situated in the middle of a large residential complex. The target group is people between the ages of 12 and 26.

The team consists of seven staff members, two of whom staff the youth cen-

tre while the other five are directly involved in streetwork. Altogether there are 12 youth centres in Brno, eight of which are in “socially marginalized” districts. The young people can use the space for meeting up or simply “chilling”, or they may need a safe place to get some support. The legal situation in the Czech Republic means that the youth system services on offer are tied to conditions. The young people have to complete a contract with the social worker. In it, goals for the young person are developed together with the social worker and documented in writing; these goals should be achieved in the time at the JUZ. Any social support that the young person might need is also addressed. For example, a goal can be finding an apprenticeship, or doing better in school. In 2017, 250 contracts were completed, and the average age of visitors was 14 to 18 years of age. Online advice/counselling via Facebook rounds out the offering of services.

## SWOL - STREETWORK ONLINE IN PRAGUE

The visit to Prague began with an innovative idea that is to be found right in the office of the Czech Streetwork platform. [The project](#) was initiated in 2012 and is handled by five staff



members, each putting in five hours of work per week. Coordination takes place via telephone, email and the website. In this [project](#), the Internet is where the work is done. Online pages are provided where one can chat directly with the staff

*Counsellor of Streetwork online Eliáš (in the middle) presenting the project* members.

Which topic areas are dealt with in the online counselling?

- Questions about friendships, relationships, neighbours, partners
- Questions about education and work
- Questions about violence and abuse
- Conflicts with the law
- And more...

In addition, one can play online games on the homepage, read informative comics, watch videos and take part in raffles with prizes. The project is exclusively financed through donations and sponsorship. At the time of the visit, the primary sponsor was “Bohemia Energy”.

## CONCLUSION

Everyone in our group felt that the possibility to participate in an exchange of both similar and novel project ideas in a professional framework was very enriching. Moreover, seeing how things are done in an unfamiliar setting certainly has a positive empirical influence on the work we do in familiar surroundings.

From our standpoint, what still needs to be mentioned, summarised or reflected upon? Many of the projects that we visited are familiar in that they share common content with what we have in Austria. At first glance, serious differences might appear, but looking again one can see mostly parallels. The lottery method for choosing who was to be included and excluded in a program was new for all of us in terms of a social welfare offering. At first we found this system irritating, but after giving it more consideration we grew in our understanding. The socio-political relevance of the widespread exclusion of an entire ethnic population was made all too clear to us. The fact that in the middle of the prosperity of the second largest city in the Czech Republic, there are still many families with small children who are living under the most precarious of conditions had an effect on us. A positive should be mentioned here, in that the City of Brno is looking to the future and showing many signs that there is the will to sustainably improve upon the negative current state of affairs.



Some of us had a disquieting feeling at times in relation to entering the private domains of people in the framework of the “field visits”. The insight gained into the work of a social worker when in the living environment of someone who is part of the social work system was thus made more emphatic. Still we ask whether in making such visits, one is not penetrating too deeply into the private lives of people, into their own space, and if this is absolutely necessary.

On several occasions we were impressed with the incorporation of creativity into the professional context.

In terms of the financing of institutions, we see an essential difference with Austria. In Austria it would be almost unthinkable that urgently needed public assistance offerings are all too often only financed in a small part by the state sector. In addition, those working in this field in Austria can for the most part concentrate primarily on their actual work; they do not have to use working hours to look for sources of financing. It seems all the more important to mention that the accessing of project money from the resources of the European Union can be a learning arena for all of us.

For existing and also future challenges in the context of social welfare, general solutions should be worked on jointly and transnationally. Ultimately, the various public assistance offerings available to disadvantaged people are an essential part of providing for the social peace of Europe, and thus its future. Social work on the ground is educational in terms of the politics of democracy – no less important is the creation of opportunities for participation.

“Exchange of Good Practices in Youth Streetwork” is thereby a felicitous example of how one can use opportunities in a united Europe for the further development of what we offer. Thereby the Czech Streetwork Platform CAS functions as a role model. Learning about their experience and the use of the Internet was a first for us. Regardless of where we come from, the people consistently took us in with openness and warmth. If challenges did arise, they were immediately addressed to our satisfaction.

Finally, a big thanks goes to the CAS team, in particular Karolina Panuskova and Martina Zikmundova. Zuzana Stastna gets our thanks for the best-organised day in Brno for putting together an ambitious and at the same time tightly packed program.

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# Pilsen & Prague



## Report of the Good Practice Study Visit Praha, Plzeň, Czech Republic

June 2018

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# INTRODUCTION

The study visit to the Czech Republic started with a trip to [Prague](#) where we visited CAS: The [Czech Association of Streetwork](#).

After a nice reception and a short introduction we were divided into two groups. We went to visit various youth clubs and to the organization Neposedá, which stands for bouncing ball or spinner, because without bouncing you cannot do anything.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## NEPOSEDA

[Neposedá](#) consists of 4 services:

1. [Hopo](#): (area Horni Pocernice) youth club for those between the ages of 11 and 18 years
2. [Autobus](#) /means “Bus”/: For young people outside on the street (9 - 26 years)
3. [Křižovatka](#) /means “Crossroad”/: For adults
4. [Zastávka](#) /means “Bus stop”/: For families with small children: child day-care, outside the school system

In Neposedá they work with 20 workers in total. There are 3 ways of working, namely:

1. Youth club work (here they are active with 9 workers);
2. Outreach work (up to 26 years) on the street, in conversation with the youngsters outside;
3. Outreach work in and around schools (during breaks and outside school).

Outreach work in and around schools (during school-breaks and outside school).

This is their latest new project, which they have already been running for 3 years, inspired by a working method in Norway. There are several clubs that have followed this example. As youth workers, they are authorized to visit the schools during the breaks and free moments of the school day, they go to the square and around the school in order to get in touch with youngsters.

What was remarkable for us as Dutch workers was that the youth workers do not really like to go inside the school, because they are made to feel that it is not their place by the teachers. The teachers are not used to it, and they see it as a threat instead of an added value. The youth

workers want to offer help and not to be involved. However, many teachers do not see it and want to keep the problems contained within the school. Even after three years there are teachers who are against the youth workers and do not want to have anything to do with them. They do not want to see the benefits of this, for example because some teachers are also active outside of



*Youthclub Neposeda - HOPO*

school with young people and therefore see the youth workers as competitors instead of co-operation partners. Fortunately, there are a few teachers who want to work together, but the numbers that do remain very limited.

**Club HOPO** (area Horni Pocernice), which focuses on young people between the ages of 11 and 18 years: Club HoPo has been established for six years in a dressing room of the local soccer club, where they have two small rooms with one toilet. Here they have an office and a room for youth work. In comparison with other clubs, it is very small.

Because space is very limited, they are not able to work with a large number of youngsters at once. Only a maximum of twelve young people can visit the club, but in practice they sometimes have twenty five, which is a large group compared to the small space that they have. A problem arising from this is that they have no room to have private conversations with young people, which is something that they miss because they need it. An advantage of the set-up is that everyone is in contact with each other because in the small spaces you are literally always visible. In particular, young people of around 15 years old, who form the permanent group, are reached, but because there is so little space, this means that other age-groups and young people do not visit the club. Once there is a permanent group inside, that is often the group with which one gets to work. What we also noticed is that people work a lot with specific groups; like skaters, Roma, special education, football hooligans, etc. We saw that these groups are hardly mixed, and this is further discussed later.

### **The Aim of the youth worker**

The aim of the youth worker is to prepare young people to become adults (from 9 years) and teach them that they can solve their own problems. As youth workers, they are active on the street for those up to 26 years of age, so they can keep their contacts.

Various types of activities are organized. The youth workers always get asked the question: What do you take with you? What is your passion and hobby and what do you want to give the young people?

Examples of activities are:

- Board games

- Computer gaming
- Sports and activities
- Watching movies
- Creative programs
- Going into the countryside
- Activities in the playground(s)
- Free football, a kind of football competition where the youngsters determine their own rules and discuss them afterwards. Was there respect for the rules or not, and what can we do differently next time?

In short, the young people participate and therefore they also learn to enter into a dialogue among themselves. In this competition one not only scores points by winning, but also by fair play and interaction with each other. A nice example to take to Maastricht for our Sport-coach project. Walking around in the parks, squares and playgrounds

After the visit to HoPo we made a tour around the local area. We saw that there were many green parks, squares and play facilities. A big contrast to the large buildings and flats. The workers have a lot of contact with youngsters on the street, they often visit these outdoor facilities and we hear that at many of the places where young people gather they are accused of being a nuisance. There are a lot of alcohol and drugs used, and experimentation on a sexual level, etc. As a result, benches/facilities are removed, but the young people keep on coming.

Because the neighbourhood is very problematic, not much effort is made in this so-called disadvantaged neighbourhood as according to the workers there are too many problems to work on. From our Dutch point of view we think: “don’t walk away and don’t close your eyes, you can make the difference!”

On the way we passed a building which has already been promised to the youth workers for the last four years. They would receive this building instead of the changing rooms at the football club, as the football club wants to reclaim the rooms and they do not actually recognize the added value of cooperation with youth work. In our opinion this is a missed opportunity.

The municipality/government has already been saying for four years that they are going to have access to this 'new' building, however words and deeds appear to be far apart, and it is still uncertain when they will have access to this location. The expectation/commitment is now for the autumn, and an advantage may be that there are also elections in this period and

they will therefore try to use it.

We continued on our way towards Skate Park Cerny Most. A location where P. once worked, but unfortunately could not continue his ambitions. He would like to help the people, but it is primarily a meeting place and people do not want to be disturbed. The skate park is a place where many local residents (from the disadvantaged neighbourhood) meet, of course while enjoying a lot of beer and wine, and children can play on the different playing fields and the skate park. There is a conscious choice is to close the park at around 8 pm to prevent problems, particularly problematic alcohol use.



*Pilsen Jateční street*

In the evening, after having missed 2 trains, we travelled to [Pilsen](#) and arrived at the beautiful hotel in the

night, where again everything was very well organized. At 2 am we finally went to sleep, after a very long day of 22 hours.

# STREET WORK AND YOUTH WORK IN PILSEN

Our second day started in [Pilsen](#). After a short night we continued our way to [Ponton](#).

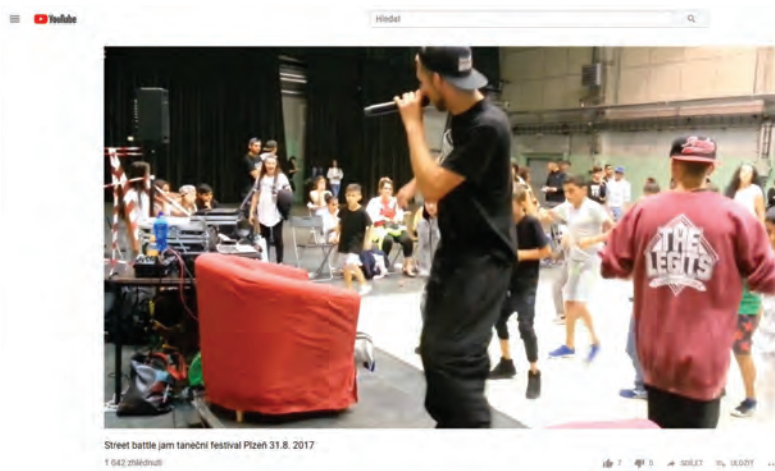
[Ponton](#) is located in a school building, with the youth club [Pixla](#). More about this organization later. We made a classification of which projects we could visit and then went out individually or in pairs.



# DIAKONIE ZÁPAD - KLUB AKCENT AND KLUB ATOM

We went to Klub Akcent, which falls under the organization [Diakonie](#). On the third day we visited Klub Atom, which also falls under this organization. In this report we describe both clubs together, since they are part of the same organization and carry out their work in the same way.

Upon arrival at Club Akcent's office we received brief instruction about the programme for the day. We first went for lunch and made a short walk through the 'richer' district of [Rokycany](#). There were fewer apartment buildings and it all looked more upscale compared to the places



we had already visited, however, that does not mean that it is also a better neighbourhood.

At around noon we visited Club Akcent and were kindly received by the youth workers. The beautiful location was striking, consisting of four pleasantly decorated youth rooms and one consulting room.

Klub Atom, which we visited on the third day, is located in a fairly deserted shopping centre, there are many apartment buildings in this neighbourhood and it all looked very quiet on the street. Klub Atom consists of 4 different rooms, 1 office space, 2 youth rooms and a consultation room.

Diakonie West is the second largest facility in the field of social work in the Czech Republic, with more than 200 employees working there. The organization has been providing its services for more than 20 years and cares about more than 3,000 clients per year, spread over 41 specialized facilities.

Examples of facilities are:

Adite Foster families

Plus People in crisis situations

Poradna Service for people in need

Terén Vulnerable persons

Domov People with disabilities

**KLUB ATOM**  
PRO DĚTI A MLÁDEŽ  
TULČÍN

**Diakonie**  
Cestovní kancelář a obecní diakonie

**Prevence**

- ADITE** PRO NAHRÁDNÍ RODINY
- ARCHA** PRO RODINY S DĚTI
- KLUB** PRO DĚTI A MLÁDEŽ
- PLUS** PRO LIDI V KRIZOVÉ SITUACI
- PORADNA** PRO OBČANY V NESNÁŽÍCH
- PREVENCE** PRO ŠKOLY A VĚKOVOST
- TERÉN** PRO OHROŽENÉ OSOBY

**Péče**

- DOMOV** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ
- JDEME DÁL** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ
- JUBILATA** PRO OSOBY V DOMOVNÍ PÉČI
- MŮJ 1+0** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ (podpora a samostatná úprava)
- MŮJ 1+0** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ (podpora a samostatná úprava)
- MÍRKO** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ
- PLAMÍNEK** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ
- STACIONÁŘ** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ
- DOBROVOLNICTVÍ** PRO OSOBY S POSTIŽENÍ

PLZEŇSKÝ KRAJ Pomáhající Plzeň



Jubilata Home care

Můj 1 + 0 Protected and supportive living

Examples of these facilities are:

Adite For foster families

Plus For people in crisis situations

Poradna A service for people in need

Terén For vulnerable persons

Domov For people with disabilities

Jubilata Providing home care

Můj 1 + 0 Protected and supportive living

Stacionář A day care centre

In Club Akcent and Klub Atom there are 3 youth workers who have received training to be able to perform this work. The big difference is that in the Netherlands we work with a lot of volunteers and this model is not familiar to people in the Czech Republic. With a few exceptions, it is not (yet) part of the culture to perform voluntary work. There is also no real effort to recruit or retain volunteers because they are not used to doing this. We think there is a chance to think about how this could be done, however, it will mean a whole cultural change.

It is nice to see that the clubs are open four days a week and that they have a lot of contact with the youngsters and know what is going on. The services they offer are very accessible and young people can visit the clubs in anonymity and can come and go when they want. They do not have to leave any data and may even 'register' with a nickname. It does not matter who they are, where they live or what their background is as they do not have to register this information. They focus on children and minors between the ages of 6 and 20, who are at risk of social

exclusion and, in particular, 'street children'. The youth workers mainly focus on a useful interpretation of the free time of children and offer all their services and activities free of charge and



*Street work with children in Pilsen*

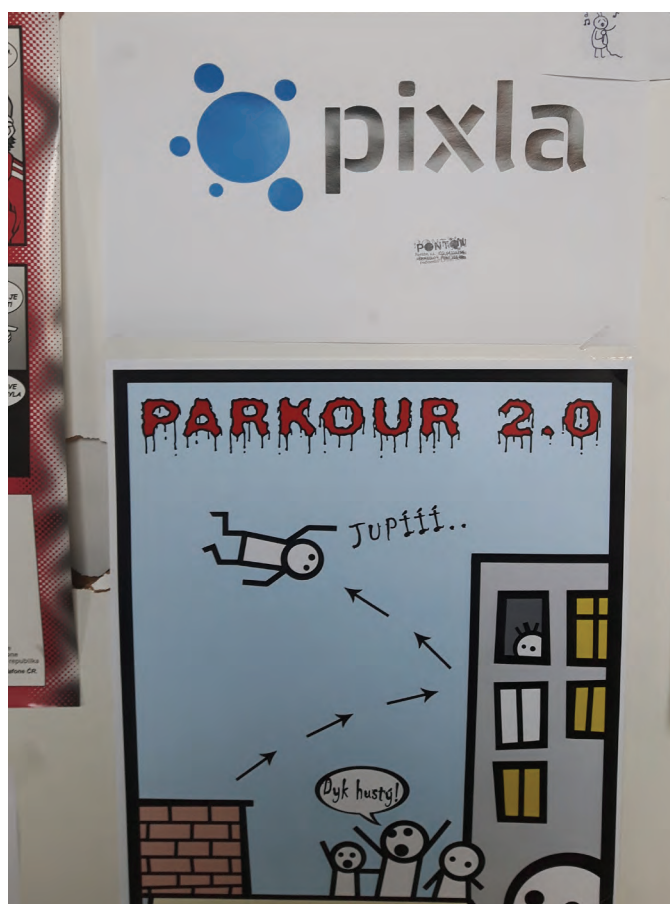
without obligation. The target group that is reached the most is between 14 and 16 years of age. A diverse range of activities are organized in the areas of prevention, education, activation and creativity, but there is also room for one-on-one conversations in the separate consulting room. Every month there is a new theme, such as work, love, health, education, etc. and every week at least one activity is organized that falls within the relevant theme.

The youth centre is open every day from Monday to Thursday from 2 pm to 6 pm. Friday is the InterVision day on which they have team meetings and do office work. They also do this in the mornings from 10 o'clock. They do not undertake evening or weekend work here. Incidentally, people sometimes work at the weekends when they organize overnight stays, but the workers do this voluntarily because they do not have the hours for it. Trips and overnight stays must be earned by the children through a reward system - they can collect stamps by doing well, doing chores, etc.

# PONTON

The fourth day was a shorter day, as we continued our journey in the afternoon to travel back to [Prague](#) by train. Once again we visited the organization [Ponton](#), located in a school building. As there were some facility problems, our program changed and time ran out. A short conversation followed and we received information, from this information I try to describe some findings.

[Ponton](#) stands for space for change and has been active in [Pilsen](#) since 1996, it focuses on the development of children and adolescents to have a positive influence on the lives of these young people. [Ponton](#) has a budget of 10 million Czech crowns or € 370,000. More than 100 children are reached every day. The organization has 3 different services staffed by 18 employees who facilitate four more salutary projects with the main aim of supporting the positive and healthy development of children, young people and their parents, living in social exclusion or in difficult situations.



The 4 main projects are:

1. [Pixla](#), a youth club in [Pilsen](#)
2. [Bedna](#), a youth club with outreach work in Pilsen
3. [Klubicko](#), a pre-school program for children
4. [Com.pass](#), outreach work in [Pilsen](#)

The activities are mainly aimed at setting up meaningful leisure time programmes, reducing the risks in the environment, supporting problems, training, talent development and interdisciplinary cooperation.

We visited [Pixla](#), a youth club that many Roma children visit. We played table tennis and table football with the children for a while and made contact in this way. They found it noticeably interesting that we, as youth workers, participated in the activities - we see that the youth workers of the Czech Republic do less. By working with youngsters in this way, it is possible to make easy contact and build up trust.

Here too we are talking about parent contacts, volunteer work and contacts with schools, things that do not yet fit into the system and that they have a lot of difficulty with. As we continued to ask questions about parent contacts, we noticed that there is a need to continue to address this in the coming years. People are thinking about how they can design this and are also discussing this with the municipality. It is good to hear that they want to do more with this, because I think there are many opportunities to strengthen youth work in this area and give it a stronger position in society.

More about this in the recommendations.

## STREETWORK ONLINE

After an overnight stay in a fantastically beautiful hotel in [Prague](#), we continued our last day by going to the [CAS](#) office where we had a short feedback session with colleagues from Austria. We briefly outlined our first findings and then we had a presentation about the [Streetwork Online project](#). Streetwork Online is a [website](#) where young people are referred

to the clubs in their local area, there is also information for young people, games that they can play and movies that they can watch. There is also a live-chat, where young people can ask any questions they have about school, work, sexuality, etc. The youth workers then chat with them and try to help the youngsters on their way and offer a listening ear. These chats can take place daily between noon and 7pm. This service mainly benefits young people who are not reached on the streets or within the existing clubs. It is often young people who are sitting at home or sitting around their computers all day who are reached by this service, and



they then find their way to one of more than 200 youth clubs.

Much attention is paid to PR on social media. They organize various prize questions where youngsters can win attractive prizes. Think for example of a like, share and win action on Facebook. The prizes are all made available free of charge. There is no money available from the government, so prizes are bought with subsidy money that they receive from, for example, the business community (especially an energy supplier that donates € 250,000 per year). The hours of the workers and all materials are also paid for in this way. There is a lot of advertising for these companies and, as a result, the website also gets a lot of attention in the media. The young people are then encouraged to receive their prizes at one of the youth clubs in their area in order to stimulate them to come out and get away from their computers.

Every day there are 2 to 3 chat contacts, which can generally take about 2 to 3 hours. So a lot of time is taken to have a good conversation with the youngsters. Everything happens anonymously and so young people can share anything or ask any questions that they want. A total of 5 youth workers are active within Streetwork Online, all of whom have received



specific training for the role.

All chat conversations are saved, but nothing else is done. There is no registration system, but it may be that they cooperate with other organizations. However, a password or code is given at the end of each conversation, so that the next call can be retrieved from a subsequent contact and they will know what it is about and what has already been discussed. It is also possible that they then share information to help the youngster properly. If it is in the interests of the young person, information can be shared, without permission, with, among other bodies, the police or the emergency services.

# CONCLUSIONS

- Working with specific target groups

I have noticed that people work with specific target groups. The visitors of a youth room often come from a (sub) culture. Think of skaters, football hooligans, 'white' Czechs, Roma children, etc. Once you focus on one of these groups, it excludes the other groups. It would be nice to look for the connection between these different groups. This naturally requires a change in working methods, but also of the system. If young people get to know each other and respect each other, then that is the basis for better interaction with each other and more understanding is cultivated. Trying out activities that bring the different groups into contact with each other, so that they get to know each other in a positive way would be a benefit. This of course requires a different way of working and could mean that the youth workers work in both fixed locations and in outreach. That does not happen at present. I would recommend making use of each other's expertise and adjusting the activities accordingly. A joint outdoor activity could then mean that the youth room is closed once, or that one of the workers is active outside. Look for that connection. In my opinion, there are great opportunities to connect young people.

- Parental contacts

It was noticed that in all of the projects there was no or hardly any parental contact. Again, this has to do with the laws and regulations and the system behind them. In order to get social work better on the map and to gain more respect for the work undertaken, it would be nice to be able to show who the streetworkers, social workers and outreach workers are, what they do, and how the youth clubs where the children spend their time look. We would recommend; inviting parents to come and take a look at the work being done, organizing activities for parents and children to do together and publishing flyers that are delivered to homes. Of course, this sounds very easy from our point of view and I also understand that this will be a difficult and long process in the Czech Republic, but I do notice that there are youth workers who are open to these developments and are already in conversation with the municipality and/or politicians to bring about change. In addition, parents can also play an important role in sending signals to the youth workers and vice versa. What is going on, and what signals do we see? Not from a position of control, but from signalling, prevention and in the interest of the young person.



- Volunteers

What we also noticed is that the youth workers hardly work at all with volunteers. That, too, does not fit within the culture and the system. The youth workers all say that they experience enormous pressure in their work, they have to do everything themselves and that takes a lot of time and energy. We are used to working a lot with volunteers who can take a lot of the organizing work out of our hands and can also supervise during activities. Try to get people



*Pilsen Youth club Atom (Diakonie Západ)*

involved in the work that you do for the young people. Let them participate and experience how great it is to volunteer, they will receive no financial reward for it, but they will get a lot of appreciation and joy from the youngsters. Perhaps it is also possible to work towards the deployment of volunteers from parental contacts. Parents of young children often find it very nice and interesting to lend a hand.

- Connection schools

There is cooperation with schools, but I have noticed that this is very difficult. The youth workers come to the school during break times and after school hours to visit the young people, but they do not experience it as a nice cooperation. Many teachers see it as competition and they want to keep the problems of the school within school. To what extent are the schools

well acquainted with what youth work does and what it has to offer? Think of presentations to the teachers. Find the common denominator and together look for how you can represent the interests of young people. Providing preventive lessons and/or workshops in the classes could also be an opportunity to show the added value of youth workers. Once again there is a long way to go, but I certainly think that there are also opportunities to put youngsters and youth work more firmly on the map and to be able to do more for young people.

- What do we take back to the Netherlands?

What I have taken back to the Netherlands, among other things, is that I found it very nice to see the low-threshold way in which they work. Registration and reporting are less important than the range and working with the target group. We are also increasingly bogged down in paperwork and office duties. We saw how much a social worker can achieve when they are able to work with youngsters for 4 days a week. You see them more, know them better and can achieve much more in the short term. It would be nice if we were able to work more in this way, and do less paperwork. I also noticed the creativity of the workers. With few resources they make something very beautiful. What creativity!

I would like to use the way in which people work with registration within my groups. By that I mean that with new visitors there would be a short intake to ask them some questions. We would not require a lot of personal data, but rather ask 'Who are you? How do you live? Where do you go to school and how are you doing? What do you do in your spare time?' A method of intake where you get to know the young people better and get a lot of information, which includes signing an agreement about the rules that apply to the club and what sanctions there are if you violate the rules. The rules are absolutely clear and the young person agrees to these rules by signing the contract.

In Klub Atom we saw a prevention and information game that the workers have developed themselves. It was very interesting to play with the young people and to get to know them better in this way, but it was also very informative and preventive. We intend to explore the possibilities of developing such a game in Maastricht and elsewhere in the Netherlands.

Finally, it seems nice to think about online youth work in the Netherlands. We too have many young people who are increasingly at home and are gaming. In thinking about how to better

reach this target group the example of Streetwork Online would be very good, at both a local level for our organization and at a national level, for example from [BVjong](#).

Finally, we have to thank everyone who made this beautiful and inspiring week possible. Everything was arranged down to the last detail and everyone made sure that we were able to experience this week in a very nice way. Díky za hezký týden.

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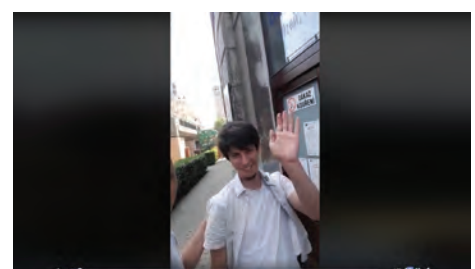
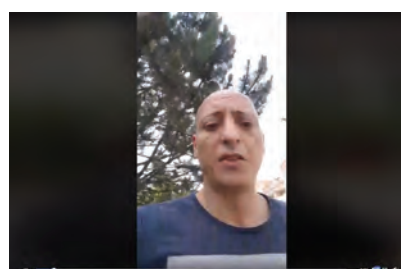
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# INTRODUCTION

Imagine the period after the fall of the [Berlin](#) Wall. Riots are a daily occurrence, criminality is rising and gangs are being formed, some of which have as many as 200 members and are



named after the numbers of their city quarters. The worst conflicts occur among adolescents who arrange street battles, and the situation seems unbearable. Work is done with young people only in the western part of [Berlin](#), in the real brick-and-mortar “youth clubs”, where gang members never come. A few volunteers come up with the idea of going and seeing them right on the streets, and because their work is successful they are soon noticed by politicians - this is the moment of origin of the [Gangway](#) organisation. Nowadays the organisation has 92 employees and 25 various teams. The organisation was established in West [Berlin](#), but its teams gradually spread to other localities of the town. Currently, Gangway has streetwork teams in 9 out of the 12 city districts.

The teams are very diverse. There is a so called horizontal hierarchy in the organisation, which means that there are no team leaders, the teams decide on work activities themselves and they create their own methodology. All workers should share a common feeling and they should respect the values of the organisation, for instance the mobility, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary nature of the cooperation. All employees partake in public relations, they write articles on websites and can communicate with the media.

The streetworkers have university degrees (corresponding to our bachelor degree), for instance in social work, pedagogy or other humanities. The precise field of study for a youth streetworker is not determined by law. [Gangway](#) offers half a year of education for its employees (in individual consultations and educational groups, both of which are supervised by an independent supervisor) and a three-day intensive training course with management representatives (consultants in various fields). The consultants focus on new laws, decrees and trends. Each employee can come and see them according to his/her need to discuss situations arising from their work with clients. Once a month there is a meeting of all the [Gangway](#) employees at the headquarters of the organisation. Employees can also ask for supervision according to their personal need, but these supervision sessions do not take place regularly.

Individual teams have their own offices in several parts of the city. The headquarters of the organisation are located in the city centre where the premises offer a spacious lecture hall, where all the staff meetings, appointments with donors and other meetings take place. There are also offices for the management in the building, and rooms for teams or individual appointments (with a kitchen and a chill-out zone). There is an online reservation system for each room, and the employees can reserve them in advance in the same way that they reserve the company car, slide-projectors and other equipment.

The organisation has been funded by several different sources, with the main source being a state contribution. Unlike in the Czech Republic, the organisation does not need to submit any subsidy requests as the government distributes the money automatically. There are also incomes from lottery, penalty revenues, etc., distributed in a similar way, but these are only very small amounts of money. The individual teams are also funded regionally according to their area of expertise. Some of the sources of funding come from abroad and large companies, such as Nike and Adidas, also support the organisation and provide them with products

for the service users.

When starting activities in a new locality, Gangway always discusses the situation with the City Council in advance. This meeting is attended by the head of the organisation and the streetworkers. At the meeting they outline the issues in a particular locality and the expected improvements that will come from the streetwork. The negotiations are not unilateral – they are not about accepting requests from the council. Every year the organisation is careful to set a realistic target, with representatives outlining goals, revising them and creating targets



### *Streetwork with youth in Berlin suburbs*

for the new period on an annual basis. The workers find this kind of negotiation essential as otherwise they would have to constantly defend their work or accept goals that cannot be achieved. The person responsible for communication with the team is a youth commission staff member, with whom any extraordinary situations and requirements can be discussed. This person also gets a brief report on the activities - this report is also the only administrative burden of the team. Thanks to the agreement of goals with the City Council, the work of



the streetworkers is clear and their importance is not called into question.

The streetworkers know all the institutions in the region. At the beginning of their work in a new locality they visit all the institutions personally, introduce themselves and explain their tasks. After that they can agree the cooperation possibilities, engagement in public events and professional support in the area of expertise of the particular institution. In some cases they are also able to use the premises of these institutions for their work with clients. Other



*Streetwork with youth in Berlin suburbs*

forms of cooperation can be working groups, some of them internal (for instance groups for planning clients' activities or for work with refugees), whilst others are made up of representatives of various institutions who are called on to deal with crisis situations. The working groups do not have leaders, they only have

members with specific tasks and a common goal, their status is equal.

Thanks to the minimal administrative burden placed on employees, the local communication between the district and other organisations works very well. Gangway employees are in close contact with other workers, and these meetings constitute a great part of their weekly work. Thanks to the regular and frequent meetings with either all the representatives of the particular organisations, or with individual members, the Gangway employees know the other organisation's staff well and therefore it is easy for them to refer to follow-up services.

As mentioned above, the outputs of the work are presented to the benefactors, but the information is anonymous and it deals with the phenomena, rather than detailing specific clients and topics. There is no need to sign service provision contracts with the clients and there is no need to register individual work with them. In comparison with the Czech experience, the Gangway streetworkers do minimal office work, they don't need to enter the outcomes of any individual contacts with clients, they can simply submit an anonymous summary and the

number of interested clients.

Nobody orders the workers to do any specific tasks and the individual projects function with ease. Imagine a situation where you, as a social worker in a low-threshold youth club, don't need to deal with the question of number of contacts, number of interventions, on how many minutes you should spend on direct labour, and that you don't need to explain your factual work word by word into the electronic register. The fact that in the Czech Republic we spend almost 50% of our time on administrative tasks made the Gangway employees almost indignant and suspicious. The real work takes place on the streets and deals with people, not papers, and so even when someone demands documentation, they always work together and decide whether it is beneficial and whether they should do it or not.

### **Diversity of the projects and target groups**

Everyone is able to freely decide what he or she will work on, which brings various results and the organisation covers a huge field of activities, with different target groups, attitudes and methods focused on by the various teams. Somebody likes Hip Hop and can enthuse twenty teenagers of various age groups, focus and country of origin and involve them in collective recording of rap tracks. A different team focuses on reducing extremism and violence among football fans. Another team handles the difficult situation of released prisoners - their job starts before the release, when they help to take care of all the essentials and also help the clients in finding accommodation, jobs and creating a network of contacts, so that the released person is able to turn to someone. One youth streetworker will go to a climbing wall, whilst another throws a barbecue party in a park, one invents an interactive game, or arranges a youth exchange. They can organize a talent competition, slam poetry, Hip Hop session or rehearse a theatre performance.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## YOUTH STREETWORK

Streetworkers work on the streets according to the agreement of the team, they change their times and routes depending on the other activities of the teams. They are on the streets at least three times a week, which is good practice. The children and young people can also contact them through the WhatsApp application, can add streetworkers to communication groups or can discuss individual appointments with them. Communication through Facebook and Messenger is not very popular, so they do not use it very often. They actively monitor and address groups of young people who could belong to the target group. If they want to address a new bigger group then they come to their meeting place with a barbecue and free snacks. In this way, they can initiate natural contact and they can spend a longer period of time with the group, even until as late as 10 PM, as this extended contact is much more natural to them. They have financial means reserved in the budget for such events which don't need to be approved by the accountant (up to a limit of 150 EUR), and therefore they can use these funds according to their needs. It can happen that they are approached by the police during such events, and then the young people can easily understand that the streetworkers do not cooperate with the police and do not give them any information. The police are subordinated to the city hall and the town council of the district, and the council informs police officers about the tasks of the streetworkers and about their usefulness in the locality.

The next part of the job is to offer support to young people in negotiations with local citizens and the town hall regarding public areas. In one part of the town the streetworkers contacted young people who spent their time among the houses of the housing estate. The inhabitants of the housing estate had regularly complained about the noise and the mess caused by the young people. The streetworker got into contact with the housing association, the target of the citizens' complaints, and became a mediator between the community requirements and the youngsters. The streetworkers get into this kind of situation quite often, because public spaces are not planned to accommodate the activities of young people, and therefore young-

sters are compelled to spend their time in the residential zones of the city. In some cases the streetworkers are directly contacted by the owners of a building, or by representatives of the district. Clarifying the situation plays a key role here: the objective of the streetwork is not to eject young people from the streets, but to find a compromise between the two parties.

The streetworkers can also help young people find ways to turn their ideas into reality. We met a group of young people out on the street who had the idea of restoring a skate park that had been used in the past. The streetworkers discussed and implemented steps that led to an official application to the city council. They look at the requests of young people in [Berlin](#), which is good practice. Their activity is considered as desirable and leading to the functioning of a civil society, although of course it is possible to find differences in particular districts and their interests. Mediation of communication between the municipality and the community is a good starting point for streetworkers to work with new groups, especially if the realization of the idea is successful.

Another possible way for streetworkers to get into closer contact with youngsters are free time activities. They have enough money for these activities, so can therefore go to the places attractive to young people. They can also organize events of their interest in the locality. The streetworkers do not need to report their activity explicitly, and they have enough time to prepare such events and their colleagues from other teams can help them. They inform schools and cooperating organizations about the public events, distribute leaflets to message boards and to the vicinity of the event. The young people are usually informed through chat in WhatsApp communication groups.

The contact tools which are used are typically cigarette lighters with the organization logo, business cards and brief leaflets describing the services on offer. The leaflets are aimed at specific situations that young people find themselves in – police checks, pregnancy, debt, drugs, etc. The information is brief and accurate, and therefore the target groups read it.

If the young people are interested then they can utilise the knowledge of particular streetworkers, for instance they can learn how to play guitar. If they are interested in something the streetworkers do not know, then they can use a project of the organisation called “[Street College](#)”. Within “[Street College](#)” lecturers offer open leisure groups, workshops and educati-

on on the streets for free all over the city. Their aim is to help young people develop their talents and interests without any obstacles, because everyone can be really good at something. The youth streetworkers organize regular tournaments and some young people just take part in these activities and individual appointments. These free time activities constitute a much larger part of the work than it does in the Czech Republic, and they are a proven tool for establishing contact.

If the team meets a new topic, it can turn to the director or professional guarantors of the organisation. A meeting of the whole organisation takes place every month, where new topics are raised and the cooperation is planned. The workers do not need to be professionals in everything, instead they can focus on the contact with their clients.

# WORK WITH DRUG ADDICTS



*Streetwork in Berlin suburbs*

Drug addiction is a marginal topic in Gangway. The target group are young people between the ages of 16 and 26, therefore it is hard to say if these young clients are already long term addicts, or if their occasional drug use is beginning to become problematic.

There are other organisations in [Berlin](#) that deal with drug addicts, for instance [Vista](#) and [Fixpunkt](#). The [Gangway](#) workers cooperate with these groups and they can arrange their services for clients in case of need.

Gangway touches upon the topic of addiction mostly in the form of prevention and education. They use their own preventive method “[Rausch und Risikobalance](#)”, which aims for education and information about the real risks of drug use. They accept the need for young people to seek out certain risky and adrenalin fuelled situations. They consider it effective to speak with the clients about the dangers and the desire for adrenalin and risk. They also engage abstainers and peer workers in these prevention activities, and this practice is very successful. There is also an expert advisor in the management of the organisation with long-term experience of German addiction treatment services, and the Gangway workers can use his knowledge if they meet a client who is a drug addict and need to know how to work with them and where to refer them for further assistance. The workers also distribute leaflets with facts about how long different drugs can be detected in the body, to clients experimenting with drugs. There are also other leaflets with information about what to do in the case of being stopped by the police, information about pregnancy, and how to resolve debts. The leaflets are issued in a pocket format.

# FANPROJECT – WORK WITH FOOTBALL FANS



*Jiří visiting Fanproject*

On the first evening one of the participants of the study visit joined the Gangway team that works with football fans. Together with them he enjoyed a football match of the local club [FC Union Berlin](#). Gangway has already been working on this project for three years, the team works mostly with football ultras, the streetworkers visit all home and away matches and the target group includes mostly young people between the ages of 14 and 27. The original impulse to establish this service came from the German football association and this organisation, together with the district and the Federal

Republic of [Berlin](#), funds the activity. The workers are able to solve some of the clients' requirements whilst they are at the football stadium, but their good practice is to forward them to the office hours of the Gangway football team project. This is not their only activity, the streetworkers can also relieve tension between the ultras and the police, and they can act as a means of communication between the club management and the ultras. They meet workers offering similar services from other clubs, and they share information before matches. All the



clubs of the Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 use this kind of service. There are three projects in [Berlin](#) with two streetworkers working on each of them.

How did the situation look during the football match? I met the streetworkers about one and a half hours before the match and was given a card authorizing me to enter all parts of the stadium. We entered the stadium and waited at the entrance for the home fans. The fans contacted the streetworkers themselves, the appointment was a normal dialogue about how they were feeling and if they needed anything - they also discussed their predictions for the result of the match. About 20 minutes before the match began we moved into the guest sector and contacted workers from the similar services belonging to the guest club. They greeted one another and exchanged information about the fans and the expected course of the match. During the match the workers visited individual sectors of the home fans. During half-time they spent their time in the fan site. After the match they greeted fans they knew, and went to the guest fans exit point. They also greeted their co-workers from the second organisation and accompanied the crowd of fans leaving the stadium and making their way to the public transport stop.

What was important:

- The workers find it very important to be in touch with the so called “boss” of the ultras, even if he is not in the target group of the service, as it is he who decides with whom the members of the group are allowed to talk.
- They spend their time with the target group between the matches as well, for instance at club meetings, fan tournaments, etc.
- They join the fans of their football club when they travel to see matches at rival clubs in other towns. The Gangway team travel by bus along with the ultras core.
- They use Facebook and WhatsApp as a contact space with their target group.
- If the situation gets tough, the streetworkers try to calm it down.
- The workers do not enter into a contract with the client. They only write a brief note about the events, they do not create personal files for their clients.
- Once a year they submit a report to their benefactors, explaining what issues they are facing.

# ZWISCHEN WELTEN

## (BETWEEN WORLDS)

Project – work with young prisoners

During the visit to [Berlin](#) our group was invited to participate in the conclusion of the project [Zwischen Welten](#). This was a project by the Gangway workers in cooperation with the [Berlin](#) juvenile detention facility, dealing with life “between worlds”: how to deal with doubts, find new aims and create a future with self-determination in one’s “after prison life”. Together they dealt with the question of what “home” meant for the young people, either in prison or outside, and what their dreams and fears were.



The project lasted for a year and its outcomes were very interesting, including several videos, a music project with a video clip and an exhibition of photographs. In the video project three young men summarized their lives before prison and talked about their future plans and about the loneliness they had lived through whilst in prison. This enabled the spectator to look into



the private life and current feelings of a young man in prison, his past and his dreams for the future. The other video was an animated cartoon by anonymous prisoners about their dreams and fears, accompanied by thematic animati-

*Centre for migrants*

ons, poems and drawings made by the clients. The last one was a professional video clip of the clients – who gave a rap performance of a thematic song called “Traumhaft”. The word means “wonderful”, but is divided into two words “Traum” meaning “a dream” and “Haft” meaning “imprisoned”. During the course of the project the streetworkers came to visit the prisoners and at certain times facilitated Skype communication and cooperation among clients involved in the musical project, for the prisoners this was one of the few contacts they had with life on the “outside”. Another output of the project was an exhibition of photographs, documenting the project in [Berlin](#).

The closing ceremony took place in a common room at the juvenile detention centre. The whole event was hosted by two Gangway workers, and guests were able to watch the videos and music performances and afterwards participate in a group discussion with all the participants on the topic of the future and their dreams for a life of freedom.

# STREETBER – WORK WITH HOMELESS ADULTS

[StreetBer](#) is a project of the organisation which is aimed at adult people. The team works with local homeless people, and with refugees who came to [Berlin](#) and also became homeless. Unlike other streetwork teams, which work in certain hotspots of the city, StreetBer works with the neediest clients all over [Berlin](#) as a supplement to other teams. On the streets of the Friedrichshain quarter we joined a woman who is a founder of this project.

Manja has been working as a streetworker since 1993, although she has no specific education for the job. She works at a community level and has a very good relationship with her clients, all of whom know her by name and accept her very well. She gives her work telephone number to the clients and always calls them back when she finds a missed call. She accompanies her clients to the authorities or to the doctors. She is very much occupied by housing issues, and finds gentrification to be one of the main problems of [Berlin](#) in recent years. She tries to find ways, often on the edge of legality, for her clients to have places to live or sleep. For instance, she negotiated with the owner of the last unbuilt



area in Friedrichshain (the S-Bahn Ostkreuz) so that they would un-officially let her clients stay on their land and would not call the police. If the police were to find the clients there and check their identity cards, they were able to call Manja and she would communicate with the police. This unwritten agreement only lasted until April of this year, as the developers

started to build new houses in the area. Manja is now trying to find new alternatives for her clients to move to in the future. She communicates with owners of buildings, with the city, the police, with other institutions and she gets involved in politics too. Manja distributes the contacts of various institutions' to her clients, she brings hot water with her for making hot beverages and also medical equipment for basic medical treatment. She uses the private contacts that she has been collecting for years, and tries to find alternatives for helping homeless people in this way. She initiates street protests and petitions against changes to laws and inappropriate signing of new contracts with developers. She lives for her work and for the revolt against gentrification.

The visit to the Friedrichshain quarter with the streetworker Manja was certainly unique and very interesting. She is full of energy and totally enthusiastic about her job. However, a problem with this kind of attitude to the work can be a difficulty to set borders; it is very hard to divide work time from free time. Manja also works alone which may be dangerous for her, but right now she is personally full of energy and angry with the system.

## YOUTH CAFÉ – “CAFÉ MAGGIE”

We visited “[Café Maggie](#)” - one of the three Gangway clubs. This coffeehouse was established for clients who needed a quiet place to relax, away from their parents or from unsuitable living conditions, somewhere they could create their own things and have their own space in a safe environment. The young people do not need to buy anything here, they can bring their own beverages and food, they can cook in a communal kitchen or can use the facility according to their own needs. In the club (café) there is a bar, a well-equipped kitchen with a dining table, a stage, sound equipment, a lot of tables and seats (also in a separate room), restrooms and a small garden. The clients can access the services of a social worker in case they need to speak to somebody or be put in contact with somebody, or if they need someone to help them for instance with their homework. In [Café Maggie](#) it is also possible to attend re-

gular events, for instance communal cooking sessions, creative writing, or meetings of young people belonging to the LGBT community. There are three social workers and two volunteers, who take turns in the café as bartenders. Gangway has had a long-term problem with the financing of the café, therefore they must use volunteers for the bartender jobs (student-trainees can also work there, financed by their schools). The opening hours of [Café Maggie](#) are therefore restricted but regular – Tuesday to Friday from 2 PM to 8 PM. Regular meetings of young people interested in graffiti also take place in the café, where staff provide them with a place for their art – the café is covered with graffiti on the outside and currently the group is working on the decoration of the restrooms and the corridor.

# CONCLUSIONS

Michaela Kubátová:

The thorough mapping of the clients' needs in the local community, which the [Lichtenberg](#) team performs, was very inspirational. The team answers these needs very well with specific activities (political workshops, legal graffiti projects, etc.). The work of the [Gangway](#) teams in different parts of [Berlin](#) differ very much according to the specifics of the target group, the locality and the team structure. What I liked very much was the intense communication and cooperation with various institutions and authorities regarding the specific clients' cases, and also the youth education in politics aimed at prevention of radicalisation and greater engagement with young people. Each Gangway team works in its own way, which was very interesting, the teams themselves decide what to do, they try to find their own methods consistent with the targets of the organisation, and they actively look for activities they can do together with their clients.

The overall impression from my [Berlin](#) stay and the inspiration I obtained from the Gangway organisation was very positive. The streetworkers spend every morning “networking” with various local institutions, and the afternoons they dedicate to the direct work, which I find very interesting. I think that this intense cooperation with various authorities, organisations and institutions plays a key role in the community work with clients and in establishing coopera-

tion with the service network, and I find it very important and beneficial for the whole organisation. The level of trust shown to the workers by the organisation is also very inspirational. The Gangway workers have huge freedom when deciding about their work and the direction of the whole team. Both rules and inspection by management and authorities are minimal. Of course, each worker takes a lot of personal responsibility and this approach has its risks as well. However, the model created by the organisation seems to me to be an engine for high creativity and enthusiasm amongst the majority of the workers. I also liked the honest approach to cooperation with political parties. I think that in the Czech Republic work with young people is not really connected with a political discussion unlike the practice abroad, where this connection is supported as something beneficial and leads to a stronger interest by youngsters in politics, prevention of radicalisation and also better transparency and media promotion of non-profit organisations by political parties.

Zuzana Šťastná:

One of the differences that I found interesting is the system of debtor records. The state office registers the debt and the institution or company where the debt was acquired – transport company, shop, telecommunication operator, etc. - and this institution or company is responsible for reporting the debt. You can call the office to find out what your debt is and you can agree on repayment of the total sum with the office. Thanks to this system of central registration it should not be possible for a person to be liable for a debt that is not on the list, and it should be impossible for a financial seizure to be made during the repayment period. Unlike the situation in the Czech Republic, I find this system to be clear and it does not lead to over-indebtedness amongst members of society. Another essential difference is that the work with young people takes place in a pedagogical way, with an emphasis on social work and free-time activities. The organisations are supported in interdisciplinary cooperation, dialogue and networking. If some of the contacts do not work, it is about the human factor, not about adjustment of the society. An established history of streetwork, which has found its way in the system and has a recognized status in the context of youth work and also appropriate financial support, has a great impact on the situation. The workers do not need to defend and explain their work all the time, on the contrary they can complement the work of other professionals who invite them to cooperate. For instance, schools engage streetworkers

for lectures on drugs, the youth clubs request them if they have groups of people in need of the help of a social worker.

The absence of a team leader in the organisation brings more responsibility to the workers, and they mentioned that they like to agree on issues together. If a conflict appears then they can discuss it during supervision sessions or they can ask the director to decide what to do. It is normal for the professionals to work for the organisation for ten years, and they move from one team to another. In [Berlin](#), as well as in our country, there is a problem with recruitment of new employees – the number of open positions is huge. The workers described the model of whole team responsibility as functional, motivational and supportive of cooperation. This is one of the reasons they stay with the organisation, because they can do something meaningful and adapt their work to the current needs of the target group.

Jiří Dvořák:

During my study stay I realized that it was very difficult to compare the positions of social workers in Germany and in the Czech Republic. The biggest difference I perceived is the freedom of the workers there - I saw that it was often easy for them to adapt their work to the current needs of the target group, and that it was not a problem to modify the target group according to the current needs of the citizens. The workers in Germany are able to focus on the direct work with their clients and they do not have to record anything. Personally, I can see risks in this approach too and I described this attitude to my German colleagues. I asked what would happen if all the employees were to leave the organisation, because the new employees would have trouble identifying existing clients, finding out what services had been offered to them and what they were interested in. The idea of working without coordinators and team leaders is very interesting, but the most interesting thing I saw was the work with the football fans, which we do not offer in the Czech Republic at all.

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# Graz



## Report of the Good Practice Study Visit Graz, Austria

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# INTRODUCTION

As part of a five-day study visit focused on exchange of experience, we visited a number of centres for children and youngsters, outreach services and a probation service and talked to youth workers, social workers and officials. All the time, a busy programme brought interesting insights, especially related to the functioning of local low threshold social services.

[Graz](#) is divided into four areas (Vier Sozialräume). Each area has its own budget and even its own social laws governing social issues. This model comes from the German Strasbourg and seems to be ideal. Upon its introduction, the service was modified with a number of changes.

Some projects are allocated substantial funds – especially those that are managed and funded by the city. At the same time, services are facing a lack of finance for social workers' salaries. The team that decides on finance is formed of three people – a “social space manager”, a social worker and a representative of a non-profit organization. In the past, organizations co-operated with one another, however at the present time there are several non-profit-organizations in every area that apply for money and compete with each other.

Since youth work is not anchored in Austrian law, the state is not obliged to establish these services. However, in the context of redistribution of finances, low threshold centres for children and youngsters receive funds from the state budget for a certain period of time (similar to the principle of our project applications).

Social work is perceived differently in Austria compared to the Czech Republic. In Austria, there is no statutory required qualification that must be met in order to work as a social worker. Although the subject is studied at universities, graduation is not compulsory for the performance of the work. Organizations in Austria address this situation by emphasising the previous experience and practice of potential social workers.

The public and the government consider social workers as experts in the given area; people who have graduated from university in the subject of social work, gained the necessary knowledge and experience, and therefore know best how to help those who need it. This fact gives social workers more freedom at work, they are not limited by law or administration to such an extent, and they may devote an estimated 90% (or more) of their working time to the direct work.

This is demonstrated not only in the direct work with clients, but mainly in the positive approach and motivation of social workers, who can look for new paths to solve problems in order to help the users of the services as much as possible. It gave us a very different impression, compared to the Czech Republic, where services often face not only a shortage of workers, but also the low motivation and burn-out of social workers who no longer enjoy their work.

Although, at the time of our visit, there was uncertainty in the non-profit segment related to the changing political situation and dismissals, all the social workers were extremely friendly and willingly answered our questions.

In the next chapter we will give a description of selected services that we visited. For clarity, we have divided the text into three sub-chapters – working with children and youngsters, which includes various interesting projects, working with homeless people and working with drug users.

In conclusion, we offer the personal insights and experience of the individual participants of our study visit.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNGSTERS

There are 14 low threshold facilities for youngsters in [Graz](#). They are funded by the public sector and by sponsorship. In Austria the ruling parties have now changed, and the new government is not so inclined to finance services for youngsters which leads to a degree of uncertainty within the services. Low threshold centres for children and youngsters are operated outside the Act on Social Services and therefore outside the financing of social services.

Social workers from all the low threshold centres for children and youngsters in [Graz](#) meet

once a month at an informal breakfast, which is designed for sharing experiences and deepening co-operation.

- Youth-Club ECHO / [Jukus](#)

**The Echo** Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youngsters aged from 11 to 18 years was magnificent – an old building had been taken down and replaced by a building consisting of several parts (a low threshold centre for children and youngsters, a playroom, a consulting room, a room for girls, a bicycle repair room and facilities for social workers) and an outdoor roofed space. It is a modern wooden building with floor-to-ceiling windows opening on to



the garden and glass dividers separating the rooms. The space is designed to allow social workers to have a view of everywhere from the bar, so that they can easily keep track of everything that is taking place in the Centre.

The Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youngsters is attended mostly by foreigners or descendants of

immigrants from a different cultural environment, who are not accustomed to having fun in a mixed group, which led to the need for a special room for girls. According to the social worker working in the Centre, for those younger than 15 years both boys and girls usually visit low threshold facilities; but regarding young people over 15 years, it is mostly only boys who visit the Centre, a fact which is related to the position of women in Muslim patriarchal families.

An interesting idea for developing relationships with the local community is the use of the Centre's workshop where young people can repair their bicycles or create small wooden items. Every two months, Echo organizes the so-called Repair Café where locals come to have a cup of coffee and bring small electronic devices and home appliances for free-of-charge repair.

The Centre co-operates with [Project HEROES](#) ("[Unterdrückung in Namen der Ehre](#)") project working with boys from the so-called "Culture of Honour" (this is embedded in the Muslim culture, but not all Muslim boys are representatives of this culture). The boys of this culture are both victims and aggressors at the same time – they are obliged to guard their sisters and other



relatives. The honour of a woman is perceived as the same as the honour of the whole family and cannot be recovered if disgraced. If a boy is forced to take revenge in a violent way for an act of disgrace

towards his family, then he perceives himself (and is perceived by his relatives) as a victim, not as an aggressor. The honour of a man depends on how he is able to protect the honour of the women in his family. Tradition dictates that it is not suitable for girls to study and to go to work, but that they should take care of the family and stay at home instead. At around 15 years of age some girls begin to oppose such attributed status; a common solution for the family is to confine the girls to their homes or to send them back to the family's country of origin. Social workers in the low threshold centres might not even find out about what is going on, sometimes it is simply that girls of this age suddenly stop visiting the Centre.

[Project HEROES](#) is built on discussion meetings with boys from this culture. They try to lead the boys to think about this culture in a reflective way (to become aware of their behavioural patterns) and to allow them to decide whether they want to continue being involved in such a culture. The project has been operating in [Graz](#) for 9 months and in Berlin for a longer time.

- JA.M Youth Club

[JA.M](#) is a low threshold centre exclusively for girls from 12 to 21 years. They primarily target girls who cannot or do not want (for culturally religious reasons) to spend their free time with boys. There is a nice atmosphere in the Club and the girls can even take a nap there.

The girls who visit the JA.M Club are younger than those who attend '[Funtastic](#)' (see below); the girls told us that if the Club were not intended exclusively for girls, then their parents would not let them go there. A teacher is available every day at the Club to help them with schoolwork, which is also the reason that some parents let their daughters to go to the Club. However, when we talked about boys, it was clear that the girls address the same teenage issues as everyone else, regardless of whether the girl is Austrian, Kurdish or Afghanistani. Some girls from the Club participate in the above mentioned [project HEROES](#) where they combat the violence of honour with their experiences.

- Funtastic / Jugend am Werk

The Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youngsters '[Funtastic](#)' has a characteristic atmosphere thanks to the appearance of the people visiting the Centre.

Rainy from the [Funtastic](#) Centre promotes the opinion that it does not make sense to separate girls - there was a girl's room established for a while, but they closed it (they introduced a room for young mothers instead – which is attended by girls from the age of 14 with children). It follows the approach that a woman should be able to defend her position. If girls wish to come, then they can sit in the Centre and they should be able to find a way to be respected. If a girl fails to do that in the safety of the Centre, then she would not be able to do it in everyday life. The approach to cultural differences made by individual centres varies; the needs of the target group also play a role, taking into consideration their age.

[Funtastic](#) is open five days a week, including Saturdays, for five hours a day.

- NeuSTART

In addition to its regular agenda, the probation service in Graz [NeuSTART](#) also deals with the organization of family conferences for young criminal offenders. Criminal liability in Austria

starts at the age of 14 and family conferences are organized for juvenile offenders (from 14 to 21 years of age) and for people with mental health issues who have been taken into custody. These family conferences are attended by all the important people in the life of the person concerned and consist of three parts. The first part is attended by everyone, including e.g. social workers, teachers and other professionals. The role of the experts is to offer different forms of support, which the family together with the concerned person selects in the second part. They aim to create a support plan after the person is released from detention, which in the third phase, when everyone comes together again, is approved or modified by the probation service workers. It will then be shown to the prosecutor and the special juvenile judge, and the juvenile is released from custody until the court hearing is held.

In practice, it may be agreed that a truant who is not attending school and is committing crime during school hours will be driven to and from the school by his/her father, and if the person stops attending school, he/she will return to custody.

Alternatively, it may be forbidden for him/her to visit certain places or he/she can be ordered to be at home by a certain time and in case of violations, he/she will be taken into custody again.

A meeting is held, usually twice a week, with a probation and mediation service where fulfilment of the agreed plan is discussed. The degree of motivation to follow the plan is usually high, and therefore a significant number of juvenile offenders are kept out of prisons and families, friends and relatives are supported to help the person concerned.

## INTERESTING PROJECTS

- Points4Action

The city of [Graz](#) successfully supports the interconnection of the younger and older generations through a project called [Points4Action](#), thanks to which adolescents from 13 to 19 years of age collect points for undertaking volunteer activities with seniors, that can then be exchanged for instance for cinema tickets, buying books or pizza. This project thus successfully

connects not only young people with seniors, but also non-profit organizations with local government and the private sector.

- Tag.werk / Caritas

The Austrian system of employing people motivated to work is very helpful. Interdependence with non-profit organizations, other projects and also with the city is working well. Whoever wants to work will get a job almost immediately. There are two labour markets in Austria – “the first” one and “the second” one. Protected jobs (protected working positions) and supported employment are referred to as the second job market. However, the protected jobs are scarce, with a salary of 6.5 Euro per hour. People in these jobs often produce bags, renovate furniture, do gardening, clean parks, help with moving, clearing out the city’s social



apartments and the like. In [Graz](#) there are several organizations that specialise in offering



protected jobs. One of them is [HEIDENSPASS](#), as well as [Tag.werk](#) and [Offline](#), which specializes in addicted clients.

[Tag.werk](#) is a social enterprise for young migrants from 15 to 25 years of age who neither participate in any education nor have a stable job. It is a place where they can learn basic working habits, financial skills and practice German. They sew bags made from recycled materials, e.g. from the canvas of trucks and safety belts, and they also do joinery work. They are paid daily.

- ProAct

[The ProAct project](#) also aims to activate youngsters, allowing young people from ages 14 to 21 to sign up and present their own ideas for interesting and socially beneficial projects. An extraordinary aspect differentiating [ProAct](#) from other youth-oriented activities is that the youngsters themselves vote on the winning projects.

Therefore the participants not only develop their organizational and persuasive abilities, but they also strengthen the consciousness of their own responsibility and learn democratic principles.

[IN: TRA](#) is a project providing training and low threshold employment to young girls and women from 15 to 25 years of age who, due to various reasons, cannot work on the normal labour market and who do not study. This pilot project focuses on supporting women in professions that are technically focused. They try to break gender boundaries and show the girls that they do not have to be just hairdressers or beauty therapists and that they can make more money.

A typical client is young women who is not in education employment nor in training (NEETs) and does not know the language well, is mentally ill or has not completed school, or a combination of the above. However, the target group is very diverse.

The project itself is divided into two parts. The first part is a daily training session, which takes place on a voluntary basis. Twelve girls can participate in the daily training; if more of

them arrive then it is decided in the morning which girl will work and which will not. It is usually decided on the basis of an agreement between the girls themselves, if one voluntarily

surrenders her place, then she is guaranteed to have a place on the next day's training. If a girl arrives on time and stays for all the working hours with compulsory pauses in training, and if she does not use a mobile phone, then, as a motivation, she gets a financial reward at the end of the day. The day is organized as follows: in the morning the girls speak with the social worker and talk about their lives and how they



are doing. They then go to either the workshops – e.g. sewing or joinery, or to an educational room where they learn e.g. German or mathematics. If a girl proves herself to be good and is able to work, she is offered a job in the organization for 25 hours a week and she receives a standard salary, which is the second component of the project.

A girl can work in this way for a maximum of four months, then she finds a regular job, starts studying again or has the opportunity to get a fully-fledged job here with a classic employment contract and work duties. Throughout the time, social workers and teachers provide support to girls to help them identify and slowly fulfil their goals. Clients meet regularly with the social workers, depending on how often they visit the service, and they discuss what they will do once the project is over.

The whole project is funded from federal subsidies; and is sufficiently funded. The products made by the girls are of a high quality but cannot be sold, it would mean cuts in the budgets. Periodically, however, a “selling market” of these items is organized and the clients have the opportunity to decide who to donate the collected money to, as they cannot keep it. At the moment, these funds are used for the operation of the Schlupfhaus, where some of the clients of [Mafalda](#) also sleep.

- FAB Produktionsschule

The main objectives of [FAB Produktionsschule](#) are to increase the education of young people aged 15 to 25 years, to increase their practical skills and to get them into various companies (during their studies they participate in various internships at these companies). Regular meetings with a social worker are also a prerequisite. The social worker or special pedagogue (special teacher, special educator) helps the person to map their own resources and assists



him/her in choosing what to do in the future.

During the initial interview, the social history of the newcomer is determined, often first solving the personal problems and traumas of the service user and only then working with the client. This is the first step up and even after the completion of education, clients can continue to see the social workers.

The school responds to the Austrian obligation that everyone from 14 to 18 years of age must be in training or work. [FAB](#) is a low threshold option especially for those who, for various reasons, cannot work or participate in training. These are often foreigners, so they are also able to learn the language while working. Clients – both male and female - can work in the kitchen, with wood, with metal or in a creative workshop. They work three days a week for half a year and the Labour Office contributes to their salaries.

- 4-Raum / SOS Kinderdorf

[SOS villages](#) are also known in the Czech Republic, they are a form of alternative care for

children who cannot stay with their original family.

**Graz** is divided into 4 self-governing units, with four departments of social legal protection of children. Social workers (similar to our departments of social legal protection of children) also provide an outreach service and inspection of problematic families. In Austria, there is a law that children must not be taken from the family forever, so therefore a Court reviews the removal of a child every two years.

Social workers work very closely with vulnerable families, because, in their opinion, nothing but keeping the children in the family works. Some children, however, really do live their whole lives away from their parents – as every two years the court can confirm that the family environment is not appropriate for them. The principle of this practice is the idea that a child can return to the family at any time – which results in more intensive work with the parents.

**The 4-Raum project** is based on the concept of „Sozialraumorientierung“, which aims to create an environment that allows people to better overcome difficult life situations. It includes multidisciplinary teams of up to 20 employees from the social legal protection of children and non-governmental non-profit organizations. The project is implemented by six local non-profit organizations and operates two small group houses for children under the age of 21. It offers eight rented apartments for 36 children and young people. The project is supported by 24 working positions in a planned period of five years (until 2020) and is funded by the region of Styria and the city of **Graz**.

The target group are children, young people and their families in difficult life situations, whether this involves neglect, violence or, for example, substance abuse. An emphasis is placed on individualised assistance and services are tailored to the individual client based on his/her will and interest, not on his/her needs, as is often the case with standard social services. This changes the client's view from “what others can do for me” to the perspective of “what I can do to achieve the change”. In practice, social workers use a system-based approach focusing on the strengths and resources of the client. Family conferences, systemic family counselling, motivational interviews, ecomaps and the use of elements of positive psychology are among the frequently used methods.

The important components are the activation of assistance and the empowerment of the client (to provide the least possible assistance, but everything that is needed), networking and

co-operation, working with different target groups and non-specific case work (community work in group activities) and emphasis on the client's resources.

[The 4-Raum project](#) services range from mobile services for families (support, prevention, and respite care) through alternative provision of care (small therapeutic or crisis group houses, foster care, small group houses for lone minors and the like) to psychotherapy, group therapy, parents' education and crisis intervention. When risk factors are identified that threaten the development of a child, social workers define them together with family members and allow them to look for the best solution to the situation. Experience shows that families are best encouraged to find and define their own goals, as the motivation to fulfil them is thus much higher.

The houses and apartments of [the 4-Raum project](#) enable rapid support for children, young people and their families responding to their immediate needs. The service is still trying to adapt to clients (e.g. if a child always argues with others in the group home when having a meal together, then there is no reason not to let the child to eat alone in the room – the group should suit the child, not vice versa).

In practice, for example, they may help by providing support to an orphaned 18-year-old girl who is providing care for a younger brother, or a boy who aggressively responds to any alternative care environment may be left in the care of a father who is not working and is alcohol addicted because it is a better solution for the boy.

# WORKING WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE

- Caritas/BEX/WOG

Similarly to the charity in the Czech Republic, Caritas/BEX/WOG operates throughout Austria where it provides its services both to children and their families, as well as to homeless people or those addicted to drugs. In [Graz](#) we visited a centre established by the state which

is subsidized mainly by the city, the region and the government. It is a centre for homeless people and people at risk of losing their homes. [The services](#) are located in one building.

The reception office for clients is located on the ground floor, where the initial interviews take place and the social workers find information about the client and about his/her needs. Clients visit this office during the co-operation period; the financial security of the client is important, social workers try to help the client with obtaining benefits from the state, if possible. Given that [Caritas](#) does not operate any low threshold day centres for homeless people, it is possible to ask for new clothing and use of the shower in the office. Food is not delivered in these areas, people are directed to the [Caritas](#) dining room, which is located on the ground floor of Marienambulanz a few streets away. There are no necessary requirements to receive food, nobody has to be registered, and anyone can come.

A men-only dormitory is located on the first floor of the building, where men can come every evening at 7 p.m. and leave between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. Each room has 2 - 4 beds, wardrobes and a wash sink. Clients must not keep their belongings in the rooms during the day, but if necessary, they can put them in the lockers that are located on the same floor. Facilities include showers, toilets and a common room connected to a breakfast room where breakfast is served. These services are charged at 1 Euro, the same as in the Czech Republic; social workers may issue vouchers for people who cannot afford even this amount. What is different compared to our dormitories is the length of the client's possible stay. In our country they can use the services for half a year without interruption, whilst at the Austrian charity they can stay for only a month, although everyone is treated individually, so the length of stay can be extended. In [Graz](#), however, there are a lot of services for these people, clients can switch to another service and their situation is always solved with their co-operation. Rules must be observed (the same as in our country), in addition to timely arrival, clients must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or use or be in possession of such substances whilst there, smoking and the handling of weapons are also prohibited. Clients do not clean up the rooms, this is done by staff.

On the second floor there are offices where prevention of homelessness is tackled, so people who live in an apartment but are unable to pay the rent come here - for example, they cannot manage money or they have insufficient income. The goal is to prevent these situations getting worse, so the social workers discuss with the clients their possibilities, and

subsequently help to arrange any state benefits that they are entitled to. When clients have problems with money management then it is possible to send their benefit money directly to the organization, which first pays their rent and then helps them plan what the rest of the money can be used for. Alternatively, they discuss how to save money. At a more critical stage, when rent arrears have already occurred, it is also possible to obtain a small loan from [Caritas](#) to repay the debts, however, it is usually not enough, but it is possible to obtain other small loans from different organizations, so this problem may be resolved.

On the third and fourth floors there are individual apartments. These are similar to asylum homes in the Czech Republic. Clients can stay here all day, but it is different because everyone has their own room. On the same floor, there is one fully equipped kitchen with a smaller



*Asylum homes*

dining room, a living room with a TV, a computer corner, a laundry room and a balcony. Socialisation of clients works really well here as they spend afternoons together. Clients may stay here for up to a year and a half. The clients then move to apartments provided by the city, so only in rare cases would a client stay in another residential service.

I should also mention another [Caritas](#) residential service that we were supposed to visit but was cancelled at the last minute

due to illness – Schlupfhaus. This is a dormitory for young people from 14 to 21 years of age that works like the adult dormitories, but is not limited by time. The target group are young homeless people as well as teenagers who are afraid to go home, for example because of domestic violence, or even for teenagers who just have missed a train home and would not otherwise have anywhere to sleep – in such cases social workers often communicate with the client's family.

- Caritas – Marienambulanz

Another Caritas branch is a low threshold out-patient-unit (established in 2012), located on the first floor of the previously mentioned building with a dining room. It is funded in the same way as other hostels, by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the City of [Graz](#) and by public donations.

When we walked through the waiting room, it was clear that this is mainly about helping people who have migrated to Austria (they say they are coming to work) - the target group consists mainly of people from Eastern Europe - Romania, Chechnya, Hungary, Slovakia; then the Afghans and the Austrians being the smallest group. The common feature for these people is that they do not have insurance or can access medical care only with difficulty even though they have insurance – for instance they are homeless, long-term unemployed, low-skilled people and people with intellectual disabilities.

Several volunteer physicians work in the Centre, with some being employed full-time. In addition to GPs, there is also a dermatological and psychiatric out-patient-unit. By next year they plan to provide a dentist, but there are major problems with regard to hygiene and some regulations of the European Union. In addition to provision of medical care, attending physicians also issue medication to clients and coordinate follow-up care at the hospital. Once a week they provide an outreach service with a bus where they co-operate with VinziBus, and drive to locations where homeless people stay.

Twice a week a social worker also visits the organization, whose purpose is to provide insurance to the clients, referred by the physician. Less than 10% of these people are Austrians - they are excluded from the benefit system and are long-term unemployed – the social worker informs them where to go in order to be registered in the system again and be insured. Other clients are foreigners who can transfer their insurance to Austria if they are insured in their own country; if they are not insured in their own country then they are not able to get the insurance and they also need a residence permit after 3 months of stay at the latest - if they fail to arrange the residence permit, they have no chance. Social workers provide them with information about where and how to apply for documents and also help clients with application for benefits, obtaining rehabilitation or medication and free treatment in hospitals. Asylum seekers in Austria are automatically insured, but it is a problem to find a physician and therefore they use these low threshold services.



- Vinzidorf/Vinzenzgemeinschaft

Vinzidorf is a self-sufficient community that provides shelter for homeless men. It was founded 25 years ago by a priest called Wolfgang Pucher. Its low threshold feature is unique in its focus on people who, due to incurable alcohol addiction, cannot use standard residential social services and cannot work and live alone. The rules are very simple - no violence, spirits, drugs or women (visits are allowed but no overnight stays).

The goal of the service is to provide these people with a real home. Large habitable containers are divided into two rooms where the client has privacy - there is a small place for personal belongings (the capacity is 35 clients). They have permanent address here, the entrance is numbered. In addition, there is a common room where they provide a place of dignity for their lives, although there are also cases where someone returns to a relatively ordinary life. A hospice was established a year ago in Vinzidorf, where women are also accepted.



two rooms where the client has a bed, table, wardrobe and belongings (the capacity is 35 clients). They have permanent address here, the entrance is numbered. In addition, there is a common room where they provide a place of dignity for their lives, although there are also cases where someone returns to a relatively ordinary life. A hospice was established a year ago in Vinzidorf, where women are also accepted.

Three part-time social workers in the service provide social counselling. They work with a clerk who visits the community every afternoon and helps the clients with official affairs, such as benefits.

The residents are provided with lunch and dinner, clean clothes and medical care. It is interesting how many volunteers come to Vinzidorf, and also that the majority of the operating costs are covered by donations. If clients have a permanent financial income then they contribute to the budget of the community, otherwise all services are free of charge for them. Those who have no money can 'pay' for services by for instance helping with gardening or cleaning, but it is not an obligation. A similar institution has been established in another location in Austria for women.

# MOBILE SOZIALARBEIT – STREETWORK



[Streetwork for homeless and excluded groups](#) is managed by the social department of Graz. The city is their founder and therefore the main financial sponsor. They receive a budget to operate the service that they can use at their own discretion. They buy food and clothing for clients, have an individual approach to them, and therefore also individually ensure their needs from the budget. They are not restricted by any limits, they have no obligation to do administration and thus they have more time to work with clients.

The target group are persons over the age of 18 who live on the streets and those who are on the streets during the day-time despite living in an apartment (for example, the apartment is so small and overcrowded with the rest of the family that a client does not stay there during the day but spend their free time in parks). The feature that is common for them is drinking alcohol.

The workers are active and innovative, when they do outreach work they carry a huge backpack

with hygiene supplies, condoms, t-shirts, underwear, socks and a sleeping bag, in addition to a laptop and printer for the use of clients. (“It was worth it for us to submit an application at the end of the year - the city had some unused funds, so they allowed us to buy sleeping bags for homeless people.”). A small brochure for clients in German and English with pictograms, a map and contacts for all the service providers in [Graz](#) for homeless people is also very useful. Among the tasks undertaken by the social workers is outreach work with the security team (disciplinary team, riot team) (Ordnungswache), which is a measure introduced by the city to guarantee security and which reminds us of the preventive anti-conflict team in Prague. This security team (disciplinary team, riot team) is part of the city’s effort to move this particular target group out of the ‘attractive’ parts of the city. This is also related to the regulation of begging and the purposeful division of the city into zones where there is a ban on alcohol consumption or noise reduction at certain times. City officials focus on a ‘quick solution’, especially the distribution of fines. However, according to social workers, this does not solve the situation as penalizing people who do not have money lacks logic, it only deepens clients’ indebtedness.

As far as social work is concerned, the most common problem for clients is money and housing, which is expensive in [Graz](#). The organization would like to be part of the “housing first” project but it is difficult because they have no apartments. They are trying to get some apartments from the city, and for the time being they can offer other housing projects to clients- for example, housing in a former army building where accommodation is free of charge. Vinzidorf is also an important residential service.

As part of another project, the organization co-operates with veterinarians who provide care for the animals of homeless clients for a small fee, with vaccines covered by the project.

# WORKING WITH DRUG USERS

- Caritas – Contact Centre and Streetwork for Drug Users

There are three organizations in [Graz](#) that work in drug related outreach.

**Drug streetwork** under Caritas operates two contact points and is also engaged in streetwork. They offer great local accessibility - one of the buildings is located right in the middle of the park, so the target group is within easy reach. Contact points are open from Monday to Friday. On some days, streetworkers work until 10 p. m. On Wednesdays they are only open for women, and only female social workers work on Wednesdays.

We could not enter the Contact Centre because there were clients present and we would have violated their rights, but we followed the streetworker along a route that he regularly walks through the parks and the railway station to the city centre. On the way we met several clients who greeted the social worker from afar and asked him how he was doing.

**Streetwork** is operated here on the same principles as in the Czech Republic, anonymously, voluntarily, with respect, and it takes place in the natural environment of the client and in most cases involves working with people on the street. The target group includes users of both legal and illegal drugs. 80-90% of users are involved in substitution treatment. Age is not important so minors can use the service, but it does not happen because there are other services available for them. A typical client is a person aged between 30 to 40 years;



*Vending machine with clean pipes, needles. Disposal box for needles (right)*

the social worker said that the clients are ageing. However, when working with clients they primarily focus on the key issue – and that is drugs. Younger users consume different types

of speed, older users are primarily on morphine. Many clients also abuse anti-anxiety drugs. The social workers often co-operate with drug addicts who are serving time in prison, where they visit them on a regular basis. Practitioners have confirmed that the people they work with during their sentences are more motivated, try harder to find work, and they come to the Centre even after the end of their prison time. Social workers mostly work in outreach during the day, they only provide a night outreach service twice a month, visiting big parties where drug use is likely to occur. Working hours are divided into several groups where clients have the opportunity to use the centre, take a shower, wash their clothes, browse the internet, exchange injecting paraphernalia and have social counselling. The facility also includes a health service where clients can obtain free treatment or tests for various diseases such as HIV, hepatitis, etc.

When we walked in the streets we also had the opportunity to see syringe vending machines, where drug addicts can get needles, hygienic packages or disinfection for the price of one Euro. Long discussions were held on the topic of the establishment of the syringe vending machines (according to streetworker Stefan), but they operate without any problems.

Clients and social workers primarily discuss areas such as employment, housing, drug use, health and after-care, insurance, and family. Social workers go out with clients twice a month for various events - cinema, billiards, skiing, etc. and they also pay for these activities for the clients.

Social workers openly co-operate with the police. They hold meetings three or four times a year with both parties respecting the principle of anonymity. This co-operation was previously unimaginable, but the situation changed in the last year and everything works well. Both parties are very helpful and, due to the data protection law, they do not discuss specific clients but rather help to reach them to deliver official letters. At the meetings, the social workers act as ordinary citizens of the city who have the right to say whether they have seen the person in the city or not. Stefan gave an example when a client called and asked him to come and solve a situation because he had a conflict with the police. When the interested parties know each other, it is easier to reach an agreement. When we asked him whether he considers it threatening that, for example, users refuse to speak to him, Stefan answered that he is able to dispel the fear. The fact that streetworkers talk to clients on the streets does not mean that the police will know more about the clients. The information that the police

looks for is known for a long time from mobile communication, from the appearance of the user himself/herself, his/her behaviour, from the fact that he/she deals drugs, etc.

# CONCLUSION

Hana Musilová:

The Application for Foreigners (sponsored by the city of [Graz](#)) is without any doubt a great app. Generally there are not many social services where you can go when you do not speak German. It is the same as in the Czech Republic, where most services are only available in the Czech language. From the recent experience of my colleague (a streetworker) I know how difficult it was to provide everything needed for a person who did not speak Czech and how many hours of direct and indirect work it meant. With this application, streetworkers can arrange interpreting directly from parks through a video conference.

Another great initiative of streetworkers is that they look for houses that are owned by the city. There are plenty of places where construction is planned or a road is due to be built and the houses are already bought and empty. Then they offer such places to a homeless person. However, this is an activity they do not talk about, they do not ask anyone about anything and it is associated with plenty of risks. I find excellent the very fact that a local streetworker can afford to do so from his position without a fear of losing his/her job, paying huge fines and life complications.

Šárka Vohlídalová:

I appreciated that social workers are trying to empower and motivate clients to talk with politicians, and they accompany them to such meetings.

Romana Bohánková:

During our visit we met only positively motivated social workers who enjoyed their work. Personally, it made every day of our study visit more pleasant, and I was glad to see that work can be done differently, with pleasure instead of the annoyed expressions that I sometimes experience in the Czech Republic. In addition to the new knowledge and experience I have

gained, this was the key fact for me to take away from Austria.

The whole organization of the study visit and its agenda was flawless. A great team of girls, a varied programme with lots of nice people from different organizations, beautiful accommodation and a relaxing trip to the vineyard with dinner. Thank you and I hope I will be able to take part in future study visits.

Andrea Kelnerová:

A noteworthy thing is the minimal administrative bureaucratic burden, social workers in the low threshold centres for children and youngsters only record the number of incoming visitors, their gender and age, or the provided counselling, and this information is used for social workers themselves as an overview instead of being a control mechanism for donors who are usually the city and the Land of Styria. As a result, social workers spend much more time directly working with their clients. This concerns, for example, the Funtastic Centre, but also other services that we visited.

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# Pamplona



## Report of the Good Practice Study Visit

### Pamplona, Spain

April 2018

By Miloš Březina, Tomáš Janků, Kateřina Jiroušková,  
Petra Pidimová, Nikola Šrainerová



# INTRODUCTION

The [Basque Country](#) is one of the autonomous communities in the north of Spain, with nearly 2.2 million inhabitants, and its own police, local taxes and education system in its own language. Basque is an isolated language, probably of Finno-Ugric origin, and is the first official language of the Basque Country, with Spanish as the second language. It is a specific cultural region formed by three provinces – Araba (capital Vitoria Gasteiz), Bizkaia (capital Bilbao) and Gipuzkoa (capital Donostia – San Sebastian). Vitoria Gasteiz is the capital of the Basque Country, Bilbao is the largest city. The Basque Country is situated in the north of Spain, bordered by the Bay of Biscay in the north and the Pyrenees towering in the west.

The [Basque Country](#) is bordered by the autonomous community of Navarra in the southwest. There are approximately 600 thousand inhabitants living in Navarra, the south is agricultural with the prevailing population being Castilian; the north is mountainous with the prevailing population being [Basque](#). Pamplona is the capital of Navarra. Both the [Basque Country](#) and Navarra are regions dominated by the fishing and mining industries. There are relatively large differences between areas with the above-mentioned economic activities, as the fishing regions are richer than the industrial regions, where poverty is often more prevalent.

A great number of people began to move from villages to larger cities due to industrial development in the 1960s and social problems started to grow. However, the social welfare system had not yet been developed at that time. As in the rest of Spain, development of social work has been influenced by the Francoist dictatorship. The entire social care system had been provided by the state and the non-governmental sector could only develop after the fall of the regime in 1975. In the 1980s, social services in the north of Spain primarily tackled drug use and this period was known as “a heroin addiction epidemic”. Heroin spread from nearby France and the [Basque country](#), and Navarra served as the first hub for distribution to the Iberian Peninsula. A youth drug prevention system and drug-addict assistance system were created and services for other target groups have been developed over the years, with social workers focused mainly on problems. Nowadays, social work focuses on people’s rights, not on the problems that they face or that they cause (“I work with you because you have the

right to be helped, not because you have a problem.”). Another important principle is to work with people in their natural environments and not in institutions.

Currently, a public social network has been established in the Basque Country and Navarra. The state maintains a list of guaranteed social services and these providers apply for the opportunity to provide services. The whole system works as follows: the state determines selected terms and conditions that are subsequently compared with the propositions of individual service providers applying for service provisioning in a given area. In fact, the service providers practically compete for the possibility of providing services. The winners of the “procurement” are guaranteed two years of service provisioning during which they may provide the service. However, during these two years, they must precisely respect the terms and conditions set by the state and cannot deviate from them.

People working with children and young people are not social workers, the name of the profession “educador de calle” loosely translated means a street educator. The name of the profession of colleagues in France is similar, regardless of which target group they work with within their outreach activities. In my opinion, the name of the profession is quite fitting; based on my experience gained in these countries I can say that their tasks cover not only social work in the truest sense, but affect broader aspects of their client’s lives and the community they work in. The relationships between streetworkers and the community (parents, other services, the public, volunteers) are described in the specific projects visited.

# GOOD PRACTICES

## **Pamplona-Iruña**

Asociación Navarra Nuevo Futuro

Our host organization in the city was called Nuevo Futuro, we spent two days in a mobile school (street education) during our study visit, and visited a centre for children and youngsters, “emergency” housing for vulnerable children and a therapeutic art group.

# MOBILE SCHOOL

Two colleagues with a trolley were waiting for us on an 80m by 70m square near the hostel. The trolley is a simple but sophisticated device that allows a relatively large number of educational and also game activities. It can be moved to different places by one or two people. Two sliding panels similar to black boards (with various didactic elements) are stored in the trolley's inner space. The trolley can be enlarged, four elements may be used simultaneously on each side while two others may be replaced.

When we arrived at the location, almost immediately children started to teem around the tro-



lley. They were initially interested mostly in the basket with disguises and various costumes. At first, I thought that the children were going to rehearse a theatre performance, however, their activities were not managed or structured. The children simply changed and tried different disguises while performing short scenes. Everybody enjoyed it. In the next half-hour, there were about 25 children on site who were engaged in various games and activities; there was a relaxed atmosphere, local inhabitants were sitting on benches and watching their

activities, without any indication of annoyance. A number of the children were accompanied by their parents, primarily mothers. The streetworkers also communicated with them, and it was evident that the parents knew well both the streetworkers and the services offered by the organization. I would say that it was a two-sided benefit. It was similar in all of the services that I visited during the week. Parents were considered part of the community and the streetworkers were in regular communication with the children about the troubles and joys of everyday life.

At the end of the working day, the streetworkers exchanged feedback, discussed the course of the day and some specific cases. They also recorded simple statistics (the number

of contacts, not individual records). A monitoring report on the progress of the programme is drawn up once a week. I still could not figure out the way they recorded contacts for sponsors. Our Spanish colleagues considered our method to be bureaucratic, they emphasise personal contact between individual stakeholders

and close multidisciplinary co-operation. In particular, they describe the quantitative impact on the target group, while individual interventions are not essential.



European Mobile School Exchange (2017)

# LOW THRESHOLD CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNGSTERS

The Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youngsters is based in a two-storey building located close to a school and sports facilities. A hall with a table tennis table and table football is located close to the entrance to the building. The next room is dedicated to a large multifunctional hall designed for dance, exercise, various workshops and film projection. On the

ground floor there are offices for social workers and other facilities. On the first floor there is a second hall, a computer classroom, a storage room for equipment, a charity wardrobe and a rehearsal room with a recording studio. A workout playground is located in front of the building and a skate park is currently being built. The leisure activities on offer are truly complex and are used by children and youngsters in a wide age range from 6 to 21 years. Up to 100 people visit the facility daily, with an average of 60 visitors per day. Four social workers (and of course volunteers) are responsible for the entire operation. The Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youngsters is open all week from midday to 9 pm, with specific times assigned to different age groups. The workers are engaged in contact social work and social pedagogy. The service provides prevention, mapping of needs and detection of problems. It co-operates closely with schools and municipalities and recommends other services for further interventions (physicians, therapy, social workers, etc.). Therefore, any specific requirements that do not involve leisure time or preparation for school are handled outside the Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youngsters. The rules for service delivery are similar to our Low Threshold Centres for Children and Youngsters.

### Vitoria-Gasteiz

- IRSE Araba

Our host organization Irse Araba focuses on complex needs of families and children. Certain centres are engaged in domestic violence, others provide alternative housing to children and youngsters in difficult situations, provide mediation services to children and youngsters who are in conflict with the law or visit families and supervise appropriate development of children or safeguard the right to contact of the child with both parents. Outreach work with youngsters represents just one of many programmes of the IRSE Araba organization.

# STREET EDUCATION

Outreach services for children and youngsters have been taking place in Vitoria since 1988. These programmes provide services to target groups of children aged 10 to 18 years, in indicated cases streetworkers also work with younger children (8 to 9 years). Altogether 21

streetworkers work for the organization. The city is divided into 10 areas, 2 streetworkers (usually a man and a woman) are responsible for each area, where they monitor the location and look for places where children meet. They provide counselling, support and assistance and offer alternatives for leisure time (leisure time activities take place in community centres located in each city quarter). Additionally, they may co-operate with a wide range of experts in the enlarged team, they co-operate with social workers in the organization dealing with the situation of entire families (housing, finance). Externally, co-operation with physicians, legal counselling, consultation with psychologists, etc. is established. 736 young people were in contact with the service during 2016 to 2017. Leisure activities take place in the so-called Centro Cívico; there are 15 such fully equipped community centres in the city.

Our study visit took place in the department of socioeducation programmes (which is also responsible for outreach work, in Spanish street education – “educación de calle”.) At first look, the outreach work with children and youngsters does not particularly differ from the Czech outreach work, streetworkers are present in their neighbourhood and speak in the streets with children and young people about their lives. However, at second glance, one will find



some differences. Streetworkers for instance participate in elementary school education. Centro Cívico's - social and leisure centres - are established in every neighbourhood, offering cultural and sporting activities; the organization uses the centres for its activities. Thus, all age and social groups from the entire community meet there.

The target group of the streetworkers are children and youngsters from 10 to 18 years of age who are at risk of compromising their social and personal development. The service is primarily focused on finding and establishing contacts with the target groups, promoting their natural development and informing the community about the troubles of children and youngsters.

Social workers also use the facilities of the Centro Cívico for indirect work that represents about 25 % of their total working time, including briefings and other meetings. Social wor-

kers primarily meet during morning time or on Saturday mornings. The Centre also houses other related services of the organization. Although colleagues primarily work in pairs, everyone is responsible for organizing different activities so they often split up to increase the effectiveness of their work. They share information with each other and with a broader team.



*The Centro Cívico in the Zabalgana quarter*

They carry out the work both at an individual level - children may have an hour of individual counselling in the Centre where they can address their troubles together with social workers who often help them with school duties or provide tutoring. Group work is also important, they work with groups of children mainly in various activities, such as workshops, thematic meetings, sport tournaments, etc. Social workers are responsible for the organization of the activities, volunteers or peers (who are for instance in charge of lessons in parkour, dancing or swimming) are often involved as lecturers.

“Every person in the community is needed for the community and every person needs other people”. In my view, this is the main difference compared to our conditions, where we mostly work with children themselves but only minimally with families or the whole community. It was inspirational to see that it could actually work, and I consider it to be an opportunity for



future development. Posters with programmes of activities and reminders for events are displayed in the streets so everyone is informed about what is going on and how to participate.

- Centro Cívico

The Centro Cívico in the Zabalgana quarter is a modern concrete, wood and glass building, fully air-conditioned, with several gyms, dance halls, a swimming pool, music rehearsal room, art workshops and other leisure activities. There is a café in the building; at the time of our visit, it was almost fully occupied by people of all age groups. According to the social workers, it is difficult to find a free table there in the afternoons. A Ludo Club is also part of the complex, where parents can come to play with their pre-school children and social workers provide babysitting if parents need to arrange something in the offices. Social workers are also available to parents for counselling. The Centre also includes a library with a reading room, a computer room, training kitchens and many other facilities, such as offices for social workers.

- Al Laket!!

Afterwards, I had the opportunity to visit the [Al Laket!!](#) organization (Basque modification of English “I like it”) which provides drug services. The streetworker showed me a mobile laboratory that he takes to festivals to provide testing not only for ecstasy but also for marijuana



THC and CBD content. [Al Laket!!](#) also works in squats and the apartments of drug users. These services are similar to ours. To intranasal cocaine users, they distribute paper cards with instructions for safe use (these cards

can be rolled and used for snorting the drug) and a water solution to rinse the nasal cavity after snorting to avoid mucous damage.

I also found their summer activities attractive – they walk in coloured wigs and with megaphones through parks where young people drink and call out: “Hola, hola, those of you who would like to avoid a hangover, come to us!” and so on. They then inform young people about the risks associated with alcohol use. They explain to them what to do if someone gets drunk, about the need to drink enough water and to eat before drinking. They distribute promotional and educational materials and also small snacks like water and packets of peanuts. Social workers from the organization also talk with young people about the social consequences of drinking alcohol in public places and related troubles with the society or police.

## Gipuzkoa

### [Servicio municipal de prevención comunitaria Hondarribia](#)

Our host organization ‘Servicio municipal de prevención comunitaria’ operates in a small, coastal town called Hondarribia in the province of Gipuzkoa. [Hondarribia](#) is a medieval fishing town with about 15,000 inhabitants; the number of people in the town can double as a result of tourism in the summer. The town is a popular tourist destination, a centre of the fishing industry and fishing related gastronomy.

The organization is run by the town and has already been active for twenty years, focusing on prevention of risky behaviour, activation of youth and interconnection of the whole community; streetwork is one of the methods used. [The projects of the town](#) are aimed at youth at risk, and therefore social workers try to work with them in a way that prevents stigmatization because of their problems. Social workers work on the streets where they meet various groups of young people and try to motivate them to participate in the activities and projects of the organization. Activities are designed for all age groups of children and youngsters, from pre-school children to young people under 18 years of age.

Social workers often co-operate with volunteers or peers, they are called “dinamizadores” and are often older participants of the programmes who became volunteers in the course of time; they motivate and stimulate groups of younger children to participate in the activities

of the organization. “Dinamizadores” are motivated to demonstrate that they are able to do something additional and they are good in some areas since society may sometimes have negative views about youngsters in general or specifically about some “dinamizadores”.

They work with children and youngsters not only on the streets of the town but they also use indoor activities - they have opened a games room / gym for younger children and a club for older children where various programmes are offered such as movies, cooking, etc. Multi-day events are regularly organized when social workers, “dinamizadores” and children hike around the area.

The organization also promotes preventive activities during festivals that it either organizes or participates in. It co-operates to a large extent with schools; there are several schools in the town. It also develops programmes interconnecting work with children and seniors. What I like about the work here is the degree to which they interconnect the community; we have not managed yet to connect our communities as much as is done here.

- HeziZerb

In the province of Gipuzkoa, the HeziZerb organization is active in the area of working with vulnerable children and young people. We became acquainted with programmes in three cities - San Sebastian-Donostia, Hondarribia and Andoain during our study visit. The first two are cities on the coast of the Bay of Biscay, the third one is a smaller industrial town in the hinterland with a previous history of high heroin use. Through several projects, the organization provides child and youth outreach work and involves young people in the social life of the local community.

[The HeziZerb organization](#) has been active here since 1994. In its early days, it operated on less regulated streetwork, similar to our system: streetworkers were present at the meeting points of youngsters and made natural contacts, moreover the administrative burden of the streetwork was much lower. At the present time, streetworkers have clearly identified locations to work with children. Great emphasis is also placed on the screening of streetworkers who should primarily activate young people, and connect them with the community and the society through various focused projects.

The social work system is set up in such way that clients are assigned to a social worker who

addresses serious issues with them and then refers them to other institutions or recommends suitable projects for them. “Educadores de calle” do not address the particular adverse situation with clients, but involve them in project activities and work on prevention and protection against risk phenomena.

One of the projects that I had the chance to participate in was called “Education and Game”. Within this project, children bring along homework or schoolwork that they do not understand. Work on school tasks alternates with leisure time activities. About 8 children aged 7 to 12 years arrived at this “tutoring lesson”; they arrived at the Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youth at about half-past four and their parents picked them up at around half-past seven. The social workers carefully prepared joint activities, the children had fun and it was informative. We were introduced to the children and then we started to play with a map, the children tried to find the Czech Republic on the map and showed us where they came from. Then we started talking about the languages spoken in each country. We were saying basic phrases in these languages: “Hello. How are you?”, “Thank you”. Then we tried to determine the number of languages in which we could say “Thank you”. It was a fairly dynamic activity that the children enjoyed.

In the last three years, the organization has started extensive co-operation with a therapist. As part of her practice, the therapist leads both individual and group therapies and works with entire families (in a form of sociotherapy and art therapy). Most often she works with mothers, as fathers do not participate in therapies very much. During these sessions the mothers often realize how children see the world, and they learn to respond with appropriate educational methods.

The participants found two inspiring methods that could be applied in our environment both in the projects of the [HeziZerb](#) organization and in other places during our study visit - working with the community and working with volunteers. Children and youngsters are being interconnected with seniors or people with disabilities. When working with children, they also work with their families. Communities know their streetworkers and know that they can contact them and ask for help. The public understands the importance of working with youth and respects it. Older, more experienced teenagers act as volunteers and teach others what they are good at (parkour, swimming or surfing) or they simply help with tutoring and homework and assist with organization of the one-off events and trips. It is beneficial for all.

# CONCLUSIONS

Miloš Březina:

This study visit exceeded my expectations. I returned refreshed and inspired by new impulses. It turned out that we are able to do our job well and that we can discuss it internationally. We were inspired by the natural approach of social workers towards a wide range of people when providing the services and the smooth course of the day without a strictly determined schedule of activities. I liked the art therapy techniques and other strategies used for creative work with children. I think that we can in return offer our know-how of working with adolescents and the planning system. In my view, this is a weakness of the mobile school. Its openness prevents more structured work (we reached this conclusion during a reciprocal study visit of Spanish colleagues to our premises).

Tomáš Janků:

Overall, it was very beneficial in my view to witness during our study visit a system that works with the whole community to a greater extent, and that does not emphasise so much the anonymity of clients. I also found the extensive network of Centro Civico's very interesting; the social workers explained that this was also unique in Spanish conditions. The colleagues were very nice and hospitable.

Kateřina Jiroušková:

I really enjoyed the way that they work with volunteers and I would certainly like to implement it in our environment. Issues related to the promotion and reputation of the organization were also very interesting for me, as my home organization struggles with misunderstanding by the public, with prejudice related to users and with hate commentary about our entire organization. I like the way that they work with the community, they interconnect generations and achieve better harmony. I think that interconnecting generations is quite unrealistic in our city. We are limited by law and anonymity. Perhaps it would be good if legislators would think about ways to identify low-threshold centres and outreach work to make it more useful, understood by the public and to make it more transparent.

Petra Pidimová:

The entire study visit was very stimulating, beneficial and inspiring for me. I was amazed by the equipment of the community centres, which most of the Czech low threshold centres for children and youngsters can only dream of. Of course, material equipment and conditions are not everything and should not have a crucial impact on the quality of services and work, yet in my opinion they can influence it a lot. I was particularly interested in the system in Vitoria where the whole community, including the general public, is given an opportunity to engage and participate in youth work, while we in our services work almost exclusively with target groups only. This may, to some extent, be influenced by the slightly different nature of services and facilities, because we in the Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youth protect the anonymity of clients, observe confidentiality, etc. However, I liked the Spanish way of working very much and I became enthusiastic about it, though of course I am aware of the fact that nothing is perfect or only positive and every journey has its pitfalls.

Nikola Šrainerová:

I tried to look for differences in youth work in the Czech Republic and Spain during the entire good practice sharing. I found the approach of streetworkers to their clients to be the most important one. The difference in the approach is hard to describe. Perhaps it is about being more open or warm-hearted with the clients or linking prevention, pedagogy and social work. Considering my experience, it may be also about the approach of the community. The local community is truly diverse and intercultural, while I work primarily with the Roma community where trust is built in a more difficult way compared to other communities.

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# Maastricht



**Report of the Good Practice Study Visit**

**Maastricht, the Netherlands**

March 2018

By Petr Košek, Hana Musilová, Barbora Šiklová, Pavel Venzara and Jan Vondráček



During the five days of our trip we visited and saw more than 20 different places and projects and have actively participated in various activities. We have unfortunately not witnessed any direct work with clients as we only briefly visited the services, heard about methods of work and the specifics of individual services/projects. We usually moved in the traditional Dutch way – by bike – between different locations. So every evening we fell into our beds in our hotel rooms full of experiences, impressions and information, but also completely physically and mentally exhausted. We stayed right in the centre of [Maastricht](#), in the Hotel de la Bourse, which was a strategic place for cycling trips and experiencing the city's atmosphere.

We will introduce our host organization, its financing, specifics, clients, values and principles of work in the first part of the report.

In the following part we will describe selected services that we visited.

We will share our personal insights and the experiences of individual members of our group in the conclusion.

# INTRODUCTION

About the city of [Maastricht](#)

Our host organization [Trajekt](#) operates in the city of [Maastricht](#), the capital of the Dutch province of Limburg, and in adjacent smaller locations.

[Maastricht](#) is located in the southeast of the country and close to the borders with Belgium and Germany. The long history of the city and its strategic location determined that history was often written here, both during the Napoleonic Wars and in modern times with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union which significantly contributed to the integration and federalization of the EU. [Maastricht](#) is also a centre of education and home

to [Maastricht University](#) with 16,000 students – despite being the second youngest university in the Netherlands. Students form a substantial part of the population of the city, which has 121,000 inhabitants.



### Status of outreach social work in the Netherlands and funding

The tradition of outreach social work was established in the Netherlands in the 1950's and is therefore embedded in the social environment and is positively accepted by the public, who recognize the importance of working with youngsters, and it is also supported by local authorities. In more than 25 years of its operation, the organization has gained a substantial position in the area of social services in the city. At present, 90 % of the [Trajekt](#) operation is funded by the city of [Maastricht](#) and surrounding smaller cities where it operates, with an

amount of approximately 10 million Euro annually, with only 10% funded from other sources (donors).

Projects represent a significant part of the funding. Our guide, Henk Geelen, currently an external co-operating retired person, takes pride in being able to get millions of euros for the organization in the framework of these projects.

In recent years, the organization has undergone a restructuring that was done hand in hand with the decentralization of financing of social services in the Netherlands in 2015. A transfer of powers to distribute funds from the state to local governments limited the total amount of funds. This resulted in a reduction in the number of both employees and services (social workers told us that they have half the money and staff compared to the 2011 report).

However, the pragmatic approach of local government and the organization has resulted in a higher efficiency of work and co-operation across organizations and institutions. Nevertheless, social workers also mentioned negative phenomena, such as increased administration and the loss of long-term social workers.

# SOCIAL WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY

With respect to the size of our organizations, we considered the [Trajekt](#) organization to be a giant. With more than 150 employees and 900 volunteers they provide services at 25 locations, of which 6 are in suburban areas and the rest are located directly in the city of [Maastricht](#). Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of employees provide direct work, with others focusing on development of services, securing finances, promotion, etc. In the terms of size of organization and service coverage, the [Trajekt](#) organization in fact holds a monopoly in the city.

The personality of a social worker is, the same as in the Czech Republic, absolutely crucial:

if we are not able to engage youngsters with our own attitude, then we are not able to have discussions with them and therefore cannot educate them at all. Social workers are in contact not only with children, whether in individual or group work, but sometimes they work as “neighbour teachers”. They accompany clients, with whom they have established contacts, in their lives. They sometimes co-operate with clients for 10 or more years and they achieve a great deal of progress during this time.

Every employee knows their own job description, knows what to do and what the tasks are – he/she is a competent professional. Social workers work full-time for a maximum of 36 hours a week. All employees of the organization follow a Code of Ethics - very similar to our own Code of Ethics – the so called “Beroepscode”, which may be translated as a professional code. These rules are dynamic and repeatedly discussed with new social workers in order to keep them in mind. The lowest required education for social workers is a bachelor’s degree. However, staff may join the organization and subsequently complete their education.

The [Trajekt](#) is, among other features, an organization with the highest number of active volunteers in the region with many of them recruited from amongst clients, some later aspire to become social workers. Volunteers represent an integral part of the organization, the services would not be able to operate without them; some of the volunteers even run various pro-



jects themselves, such as sports or theatre performances. In addition to volunteers, [Trajekt](#) co-operates with many organizations, including governmental, non-governmental and private organizations. They interact with schools, courts, the police, health care, sport clubs, etc. Local residents, neighbours and communities also represent an important element. Co-operation is considered very important in [Trajekt](#), it helps them to increase the impact.

## BVjong

[Trajekt](#) is a member of the Dutch organization [BVjong](#), an umbrella organization for professional youth workers, which pursues similar goals to [ČAS](#) in the Czech Republic. The organization was founded 15 years ago and has around 4,500 members today. All members pay a membership fee of Euro 25 per year that allows them, among other things, to have access to large meetings and discussions with other members. These meetings are held twice to 3 times a year. Interestingly, the association is governed by its own members, i.e. workers who voluntarily manage it, with an occasional contribution from their organizations. [BVjong](#) focuses on monitoring, networking, a Code of Ethics, definition of terminology, and advocates the interests of youth organizations among institutions, politics and society. It strengthens and stimulates work with children and youngsters in the Netherlands and also promotes the interests of the profession in general. It aims to improve and professionalize work with children and youngsters and follow new developments and proven strategies, trying to introduce them into practice. [BVjong](#) is, like [ČAS](#), a member of the international [Dynamo International Streetworkers Network](#).

## Key principles

The main principles of the organization include:

- “Ownership” – the owner of the trouble is always the person who arrives with the trouble, it is not the social worker;
- Local availability – social workers / services are present in locations where they are

needed. Their presence is visible, local people know them;

- Responsibility;
- Co-operation – co-operation with other organizations;
- Professionalism;
- Individual approach;
- Trajekt focuses its operation on three main areas:
  - o Working with children and youngsters
  - o Working with the community
  - o Individual work

The values of the organization are not only perfectly defined, but above all they are truly applied in practice and the everyday work of the organization is built on them.

The approach to clients is fundamentally based on the above mentioned principle of ownership. Clients are considered experts in their lives who can actively solve their own problems. The role of a social worker lies in helping the people with whom they work to live their lives. Social workers strengthen the personal opinions of clients, including children. On the other hand, they direct and transform threatening opinions through sensitive conversations. They involve clients to help them resolve their troubles by themselves, instead of expecting somebody else to do it for them, and this results in a situation where clients become responsible for improving their own circumstances.

This philosophical view is also reflected in the professional approach of the social workers. It is important for social workers to be involved pro-actively rather than passively waiting for tasks to be assigned to them. This, of course, requires competent social workers – not only with regard to their own responsibility, but also their talent and ability to engage the target group.

If we apply this view to responsibility, we see a whole range of perspectives – not just the

individual one (responsibility for one's own life and own decisions), but also a more general perspective of individuals contributing to the entire society (responsibility for one's own performance and professionalism, community development through individuals and through promotion of social responsibility, including corporate social responsibility).

We see parallels in the structure of the organization (locations can decide independently, decision-making should be based on a wide-ranging discussion between workers and clients).

Provided that this approach is also applied by the city and the donors, then often complex control mechanisms (representing a great burden for both parties) may be replaced by a simple confidence that the organization is working in a professional and responsible manner.

### Triple mandate

The work of Trajekt is based on three mandates – from the city, from social workers and from clients.

Trajekt is service user oriented (clients who are in difficult circumstances and are no longer able to cope). Social workers are “entrusted” to do this.

Social workers pursue their own motivation (desire to act professionally and deliver high quality work to clients), they follow standards, principles, co-operate with each other and





are members of a Social Workers Chamber. The undisputed interest of all are well-educated and satisfied social workers who are able to make autonomous decisions while facilitating individual approaches to individuals, co-operation across the community and discussing problems with other social workers. Innovation, constant development and response to current issues, trends and technologies, while keeping pace with the current situation and its teams, represent an important element of the social work.

The third mandate is determined by the interests of the city, municipality, offices and local government that wishes to promote local social services and is aware of their meaningfulness. Individual areas (users, social workers and the city) overlap as three circles. Where the mandates meet, there is space for social work.

### Target group

Trajekt is interested in almost all target groups, not only in terms of age but also of diversity of unfavourable social situations – financial troubles, low education, seniors, drug addicts, migrants, etc. In particular, Trajekt focuses on vulnerable children and youngsters (under the age of 23).

Trajekt is open to anyone, but at the same time, its services are primarily used by clients who already face social troubles or are likely to be more endangered by them, compared to the general public.



# VISITED PROJECTS

During our study visit we had the opportunity to get to know a wide range of services focused on youth work (clubs, sport activities, volunteering), social entrepreneurship, sheltered workshops, community projects, innovative projects (“trading floor”, escape games), fundraising, hidden poverty, social teams dealing with complex cases, a centre for mothers, the background of the organization (warehouses, social housing, offices), co-operation with local government, leisure time activities with educational overlap, urban games for students, drug prevention and others (however, we refer only to part of the activities of the organization).

Generally speaking, they provide services which, in combination with the active engagement of the clients, address changes in the client’s difficult life situation rather than charitable services, although a provision of material assistance and satisfaction of basic needs is also included in the services.

- Work with children and youngsters in Mariaberg

On Monday we cycled to the [Mariaberg](#) area where we met with other Trajekt employees at the Local Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youth. The Centre was furnished in a similar way to centres in the Czech Republic, equipped with table football, billiards, a bar, a sitting area and with the interior decorated with graffiti. We were welcomed by local social worker Gina and volunteer Roy. We talked about their work after seeing the Centre.

The services offered by the centre and by streetwork are interconnected and are represented by the same social workers. The opening hours of the Centre correspond with the clients’ ages, and are different for younger and older clients. The opening hours really respond to the needs of the clients and the community, the Centre is open until late in the evening and also during selected weekends.

They try to engage the clients in the programme of the Centre, involving them in its creation. They also regularly rehearse and perform a “neighbour theatre” with the local community, reflecting the stories of the clients and topics from the local area. Like the so-called social

circus, they try to involve the entire community in the process of the creation of the theatre performances. Each participant may contribute to the overall work according to his/her abilities – write a script, perform on stage, create a stage set, take care of promotion, contact theatres, sell tickets, etc. The theatre performance should be a joint effort by the community, binding it and teaching it how to co-operate. In addition, the play depicts a current event or a phenomenon that directly affects the population.

A weekend school or so-called Youth Council (where young people learn how to actively participate in decision making about their own locations) were among some of the other interesting activities. An important element of this activity is that the City Hall takes it seriously and considers its views.

So who is a typical client of the Centre? A poor child wearing branded and modern clothing and devices. They do not admit their poverty, they are ashamed of it. Their IQ is low, they are ADHD diagnosed, with troubles at school and related specific needs. Some children spend all their free time at home and do not go out at all.

So called “drug runners” represent a specific problem. They sell drugs and move between different cities, thus making it harder for law enforcement agencies to find them and catch them.

- Programme [Beursvloer](#) (Trading Floor)

This [platform](#) operates in [Maastricht](#) and its surroundings. Once a year, a market for services is organized, with Trajekt being one of the main organizers. Participants, who are representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, services, companies, entrepreneurs, volunteer groups, community associations, etc. meet at one location where they can reciprocally “shop” for services. Organizations both offer their own services but can also inquire about specific services, conclude agreements with each other, and exchange their services for the services of others. During this ‘shopping’ process they do not use money and should not ask for gifts or donations (“closed wallet system”).

This type of social entrepreneurship is related to the active engagement of clients so that

they are not only the passive recipients of benefits, but they actively contribute to changes in their lives. Different social services are offered for the specific social needs of people.

For instance, a painting company donates surplus colours to the water scouts and in exchange they organize a boat trip for them. Trajekt organizes such a project with several large partners, including ING Bank. This [platform](#) is attractive for large companies, for example to promote their PR, to get closer to the local labour market and it can also serve as a team-building exercise.

- Athos

[Athos](#) is a project that offers employment to those who are disqualified from the labour market, or from everyday life in society, and who wish to change their own situation. These include, for example, people with disabilities (both physical and mental), refugees, youngsters from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, etc. An important principle for them is to be independent from the system, which gives them the freedom to do what they need. The project is aimed at finding meaningful work for everyone, thus responding to the needs of the clients, looking for opportunities and investing in individuals.

A cosy café/ restaurant is housed in a former school building, community members take lunch and arrange meetings and several sheltered workshops are also located here.

There are 15 jobs available per day for up to 50 people. Some people come for example for only 2 – 3 hours a day, others work in a standard way. The positions within the restaurants have gradually been expanded, so that there are several rooms today offering completely different working possibilities. Within the premises of the former school there is also a wood workshop, a sewing workshop and a spray-painting workshop, the emerging community garden has an ambition to partially supply the restaurant with fresh vegetables.

[Athos](#) is therefore not only a functioning restaurant, whose manager Paula claims that she always wanted customers to come because of good cuisine and high quality service, not because of people with disabilities working there and customers feeling sorry for them. It is, above all, a place for self-realization that gives everyone a chance to contribute to the com-

munity according to their own capabilities and abilities.

- Trefcentrum Wittevrouwenveld Low Threshold Centre for Children and Youth

We did not visit the [Happy Kids](#) Centre until the evening, but the Centre was still full of young people. The service was presented to us by a senior social worker Sjef, a real enthusiast at heart and a prominent character for the entire community. His approach is unique even to local circumstances, he has devoted his lifetime to his work. He now works with the children of his former clients, he knows very well what is going on in the community where he also lives himself, and he is excellent at positive peer pressure.

Many of the evening visitors were volunteers recruited from former clients. They accept volunteers of different ages, the youngest ones from the age of 14, while volunteering is split into several levels and mentors are available for the volunteers they coach. Every volunteer signs an agreement and then starts working under the supervision of more experienced colleagues. This volunteer role is associated with a great deal of responsibility, but also with a certain prestige and privilege, so it fits exactly into the principle of empowerment. Volunteers actively care for the service (maintenance, decoration, bar attendance), they carry out their own fundraising events (collecting bottles) so they can enjoy better equipment in the Centre or better experiences (purchasing their own PlayStation and projector). The community notices these activities which involve many young people and positively impact the community. In addition, the Centre is housed in a large building visited by many target groups and thus it is easier to interconnect the activities of the various projects.

- An [escape game](#) as a preventive programme

The concept of an educational [escape game](#) is based on feedback shared by young people spending their leisure time on the streets. Clients were asked about their frequent troubles, which were then incorporated into the story of an escape game. They suggested topics such as domestic violence, debt, bullying, etc. [The escape game](#) encourages participants to think about the impacts of their decisions. [The escape game](#) is followed by feedback sharing with players, clarification of decisions and their impacts, as well as the handing over a checklist

with useful contacts to be used not only in the case of emergency.



[The escape game](#) is designed to help the children who play it to improve their skills of communication, addressing troubles and also accepting responsibility. [The escape game](#) is not designed only for clients, but also for social workers themselves, parents, students and even for city representatives.

- Daalhof Community Centre – “Social Team” Project

The two-story Daalhof Community Centre is the largest youth centre in [Maastricht](#). We were informed about the activities of social teams working in the neighbourhood. There are 8 social teams in [Maastricht](#), covering the entire city. Each team is formed of different helping professions (carers, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, personal assistants, etc.). The teams try to find the best way to help clients; the teams evaluate whether they are able to resolve the situation themselves, or whether they need to refer clients to other professionals.

Everyone who needs advice, help or to be shown the way is considered a target group. So they may receive a phone call from a grandmother in poor health who cannot shop or from a young mother who does not know what to do with her baby. The advantage is that people in the local community know the social work team, they trust them and therefore the service / workers are not anonymous.

One of their activities is to convene a so-called social neighbourhood team. This platform is more actionable and the action is somewhat more dynamic and assertive compared to a traditional social team. It is used to address troubles in the community, with the involvement of all key players (families, social workers, nurses, state administration and police). Meetings

resemble case conferences, but they are convened according to one-time needs, while in the Czech Republic the activity is continuous. Since this is a community centre, they are not limited by the age of clients. Again, they strongly emphasize co-operation in the community and an interest in individual members. The service is routinely contacted by parents, teachers, physicians, etc. Social worker Ingrid summed up the wisdom “It takes a village to raise a child.”

- Kamers met Kansen Maris Stella – Sheltered Housing

There is a higher concentration of poverty and crime in the Maris Stella neighbourhood. The



project introduced to us helps young people to stand on their own feet and live in better conditions than naturally available for them. The building, formerly a centre / club for children and youngsters, is now rebuilt as start-up housing. There are 10 individual rooms, a shared kitchen, a clubhouse and hygiene facilities for young adults. A condition for using the housing is that the person has an active life i.e. working, studying or volunteering. The tenants pay discounted room rental rates and have an opportunity to learn how to manage money and prepare for an independent life in adulthood. Residents are not under permanent supervision, social workers spend only selected times of the week in the house. Once a week

residents dine together with social workers, they talk about their needs, how their lives are going, what needs to be done, whose turn it is on the cleaning rota, etc. Residents may stay for a maximum of 2 years.

The attitude towards clients is specific, they retain the freedom to shape their own lives, including making mistakes for which they take responsibility and bear the consequences. This is considered to be a way of learning.

The building used to be a youth club that had problems with complaints from neighbours (about noise, groups of smokers). The service keeps this in mind and tries to maintain good relationships with the local community (for example, distributing Christmas greeting cards to mail boxes, barbecues and other events with partners, clients and neighbours).

- Samenspielen

The Parent Centre in the Maris Stella neighbourhood is a place where parents can play with their children. Emphasis is placed on the parents communication with their children, parents are also advised how to play with their children. Groups for mothers are also organized here, where they can share experiences and concerns about raising children.

- Storeroom of equipment for events

During the lunch break we had an opportunity to see a storeroom of equipment used by the organization in various leisure activities. Although it was clear to us that a large organization would have a large warehouse, we were amazed. A storeroom the size of a small sports hall was filled with everything possible that could be of use – an inflatable football playground, bouncy castles, music equipment with a stage, complete boating equipment (several canoes, barrels, vests), lots of games, a few new and even more old bicycles to lend, a car to lend and even an old bus rebuilt to be an escape game. Equipment from the storeroom can be borrowed both by the services and by members of communities who order items through an online system.



- “Safe Housing” Project

The Maastricht municipal authority plays a specific role in youth work. It secures all social work within the municipal territory of Maastricht, including the distribution of finance and direct work. We met Manon at the town hall (Mosae Forum) who coordinates with another 9 people from the government. These people also co-operate with other bodies, such as the police, government, courts and also with Trajekt. A total of 44 organizations are involved, some of which are located outside [Maastricht](#) (e. g. in Eijsden). An agreement on co-operation is signed with each body, guaranteeing the active approach of the other party as well. [This project](#), which involves about approximately 200 families, is implemented in every larger city in the Netherlands. The project was triggered by a tragedy when number of people, including children, died in a fire at an apartment building.

[The project](#) focuses on working with the community (specifically youth work). This is a similar system to our case conferences organized by the Social Legal Protection of Children, with the difference that social workers are trying not only to mediate the process but also to be an active element in the process of solution finding.



*Czech visitors spent the time in Maastricht very actively*

By assigning clients to the project, the municipal authority indicates to them that they are given a last chance to deal with the situation differently than in a judicial (restrictive) way. [Safe Housing](#) has established strong contacts with the police and is also in contact with other services that work with clients. Despite the large number of related services, there is a clear attempt not to use the same social workers in certain cases. They continuously address troubles, which therefore results in the need to meet several times a year to evaluate the process and to develop plans.

The project does not work with people who do not want to be helped, however, if their behaviour or situation is detrimental to their surroundings, then they develop a plan even if the individual refuses to co-operate. This local way of thinking and addressing troubles is

demonstrated in the following sentence: “Should there be any trouble in the community, then the community should be involved in resolving it.”

- Eijsden Low Threshold Centre For Children And Youth

A visit to the suburban town of Eijsden, considered to be an agricultural area, took place in



*The guide of the czech vistors group Henk Geelen (right in back row)*  
a large building where two schools, medical facilities and other services, including a youth centre, are housed. They specialize in boxing training. The activity started 4 years ago when a volunteer – a coach – approached them and offered to help the local community through boxing. Since then the activity has grown successfully, there are two boxing coaches, and regular training is held twice a week not only with youngsters but also adult members of the community. Coaches were trained to work with children. The activity of social workers is beneficial to individuals not only by becoming physically stronger, but also by increased self-confidence and a desire to stand up for their rights. We were also interested in the specifics of work in a rural area compared to larger cities. Clients are aged approximately 16 to 23 years, often with lower educational attainment. In general, villages do not offer enough

opportunities for young people, they smoke marijuana outdoors, the community is not as anonymous as in cities and therefore neighbours know them and label them as criminals. Hard drugs are also more common in rural areas. There is also drug trafficking with Belgium and Germany taking place. The service tries to offer entertainment to young people with a broader range of activities – indoor rock climbing, graffiti workshops, specific groups for young women, etc. The theoretical part of our visit was followed by a practical part – we were totally exhausted after an hour and half-long boxing session and we felt “the consequences” until the end of our stay.

- Malberg, Sportcoaches, Oonder Drök Youth Centre (Centre Manjefiek Malberg)

We met social worker Roy in another centre located in a large modern community centre building; in addition to the [Centre](#), he is also responsible for the [Sportcoaches project](#). This project actively involves clients in work with younger children in the location. Volunteers involved in the project are divided according to their abilities and experience into three groups – candidates (beginners), [sport coaches](#) (coaches) and mentors (teaching beginners and inventing new activities). [Coaches](#) try to activate and develop the talents of young people from the area, they prepare various sporting activities, trips, film clubs, etc. Their ages range from 11 to 27 years, currently there are 25 coaches and everybody is responsible for a group of 15 – 25 participants. Most activities are free of charge, and although some things are paid for they try to agree different discounts. Once again, after the theoretical part of a visit a practical part followed, and we arrived at the nearest playground and played football and dodge ball with a group of children. We returned to the Centre after some pleasant physical exercise, and we watched the movie Oonder Drök 2 (Under Pressure 2). The clients themselves, in co-operation with social workers, created this movie whose quality is quite high taking into account that is an amateur film. The story of the movie (starring clients and their families and friends – and also social workers) takes place in their well-known neighbourhood and responds to topics they encounter in everyday life (drugs, crime, sex). We learned how the movie started, about its pitfalls and plans for the future in the following discussion with the actors.

- Playing For Success (Geusselt stadium)

**Playing For Success** is an after-school-programme for schoolchildren. The majority of the children have low self-esteem and are underestimated; they are referred to social workers by school teachers. At regular meetings, which are divided into sections such as a football match (warming up, first half-time, break), children are engaged in various sports, educational and developmental activities that are designed to enhance their self-esteem. We were able to try a few of these activities. The Programme uses the facilities of a successful football club, engaging in its activities, organizing events for parents (e. g. communal cooking). Teachers select children for the Programme from their schools. Participants then complete a twelve-week cycle. At the end of the cycle, they may participate in one more cycle. The organization organizes three such cycles in a year and alumni meet once a year. The programme is attended by children aged 8 to 12 years of age from mainstream schools and by children aged 12 to 16 years of age from special schools. One group is formed of 10 to 15 people.

- Urban game No Credit, Game Over (hotel Stayokay)

Urban game No Credit, Game Over is an activity invented in Belgium; they offer it to other organizations to be used under paid licenses. High school students aged 16 to 19 years play the game. They are divided into small groups; each group gets a tablet and is assigned to a character starring in the game. There are 10 characters in the game with different problems and interconnected relationships. The game is aimed at dealing with the current situation of the character represented by the group, especially in dealing with their financial situation.

The game was truly interactive and opened many topics; there were many characters, including real officials, constantly offering new tasks - players could consult people that passed-by, invent ways to get money and co-operate with others. This allows children to experience risky situations and forms of assistance in a safe manner. Sometimes, they also experience frustration from failure, which is a valuable life experience (even if one tries, success is not guaranteed). We spent the whole morning in the central “control room” of the game and we were able to watch how individual teams prospered; two organizers explained the principles and interesting moments of the game. It was nice to see how each group pursued a different

strategy according to its abilities. Only school groups currently participate in the Project, but they intend to extend this to a range of participants.

- Quiet community

There is a famous magazine published in the Netherlands called QUOTE, which writes about the 100 wealthiest people in the country. A society enjoying success, and very happily overlooking failures, thus learns about the lives of rich and successful people. [The QUIET project](#) focuses on this attitude of society, and the project manager decided to create a magazine called “QUIET” to write among other topics about poor and homeless people and so-called silent poverty that is often hidden. They then sent this QUIET magazine, with a request for help (helping those in need, living on the streets, etc.) to the people featured in QUOTE. Two of these people, of the 500 approached, contacted them and that is how the project started.

Poor people are usually ashamed of their situation and do not talk about their problems. The campaign is aimed at informing society about this topic and solving it. If the problem is neglected, then people fall deeper in the spiral, get indebted, live from day to day and lose their faith in the future. A social network is created through the project to engage socially disadvantaged people in the functioning of the whole community and in routine community activities, with the aim of improving their strengths and increasing their confidence. They learn about people to work with in the project through food banks in Maastricht.

Support is provided in the form of gifts that poor people receive 6-12 times a year. These gifts are common items that nevertheless these people cannot afford – i.e. the possibility to dine in a good restaurant, to go to a theatre, to an educational course, to buy various home appliances, etc. Kees described how important such mediated experiences are for clients, empowering them with confidence and giving them a feeling that they belong and are part of society. This example also showed the advantage of having a large organization with good facilities, as clients may also borrow formal clothing in a dress hire service which helps them to overcome another barrier to participating in social life.

In this form of work they do not ask for anything in return from the clients, but they try to activate them – with clients usually wanting to help, so they often become volunteers themselves by their own choice. Relationships with neighbours also improve and this is very important for the Dutch people. “Neighbour meetings” are organized regularly where people discuss possibilities for the given location – what can be improved or changed and what represents a threat. Members of the [QUIET](#) community are divided into three groups: member (clients), supporter (helpers) and sponsor (companies). Most of the work is done through an online platform (75 %), but the project is looking for suitable premises in the centre where they could meet (they do not want to act “socially” but seriously).

- Live broadcasting on RTV Maastricht Radio (Centre Ceramique)

A [radio](#) host called Pep Peperkamp co-operates with the Trajekt organization and they broadcast a regular live show called [Bij De Lieve with Sjef](#) (we have met him already) where they talk about various topics interesting for society. We were invited to participate in a youth block together with an organizer of a children’s film festival. It was a very interesting experience for us, we were nervous and for most of us it was our first appearance on the radio, and even more difficult since we had to speak English. Yet we understood from the responses that they appreciated our visit and that we did not commit any faux-pas.

- Hans Dupont – drug use prevention

A presentation by the drug expert Hans Dupont focused primarily on soft drugs, i.e. alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. A chart showing alcohol and marijuana use was very interesting, showing several locations in Maastricht and also a few other cities. For instance Daalhof, where we also visited the low threshold centre, showed the highest consumption of marijuana from all these places. In addition, an individual preventive programme Moti 4, which is an application for mobile phones, was presented. The application focuses mainly on the use of alcohol, marijuana and problem gambling, but it can also be used for other addictive substances. We also saw an application called Moti 55, targeting middle-aged people, for whom

excessive consumption of alcohol or prescription drugs often represents a problem. Another topic was drug testing during events.

- Streetcornerwork / BVjong (Blijf Groep Amsterdam Bedrijfsbureau)

On our last day we left early in the morning by train to Amsterdam, to fly back to the Czech Republic in the evening. Whilst in Amsterdam, we visited another large organization with a long history - [Streetcornerwork](#). The tradition of street social work in the Netherlands dates back to the 1950's and the SCW organization has been working for over 40 years. Its main activity lies in the care of various target groups (youngsters from 12 to 27 years, homeless people, intellectually disabled and psychiatric patients, migrants). In addition, they participate in research on outreach work, they co-operate internationally and they promote foreign assistance (police training in Tunisia, prevention of radicalization in Indonesia). 80 workers in 7 areas of Amsterdam and in 4 other cities work with youngsters. They focus on combating radicalization, working with national and sexual minorities and have established specialized services for girls. In the VIA programme, they try to return clients to school or work in co-operation with the authorities (mainly with the Labour Office). They have an open house for homeless people (18 – 23 years of age, Monday to Friday, 10 – 15 clients).

# CONCLUSIONS

Hana Musilová:

“We all left with the idea that if there is a will, there is a way. The situation when we entered a busy centre and suddenly everybody interrupted their activities and came to us to shake hands and meet us was surprising and maybe even humorous. I honestly did not understand what was going on, and wondered if this was a normal practice. The stability of the Centre is in my view crucial for the success.

I would like to emphasize that relationships are a priority here. In the Netherlands, social

workers work for even dozens of years, while in the Czech Republic it is rare to find social workers in low threshold centres for children and youth or streetworkers working in these positions for so many years. In low threshold centres for children and youngsters in the Czech Republic, work is often based on relationships, however it is rather an exception to meet people working in this area for longer than 5 years.

Knowledge of individual stories and their progress and building relationships takes time. It is therefore a pity that there is such a high turnover of employees in the low threshold services. This may be related to a difference in remuneration of the work and the overall different attitude to the profession. I had an opportunity to see the comparison in exchange of good practices – with both Dutch and German colleagues.”

Jan Vondráček:

“You arrive at an unknown place, with some experience and views and you find out that the entire work is done differently there, but actually following the same principles and objectives. A unified system for the whole city is the main difference compared to the situation in Prague. By building a reputation and extensive community work, the organization ensures its place in the society. All these factors truly radiate throughout the services of the organization.

It is remarkable what a prestigious emphasis social work and social services may enjoy in the society. Everything seems relaxed and functional. There is certainly no doubt about the prestige associated with the profession of social workers, because the prestige is linked with financial appreciation, stability of services, the possibility to start new projects, the satisfaction of employees and much more.

I would recommend that everybody, especially young colleagues in the profession, participate in similar study visits; and for the same reason I would also recommend it to more experienced colleagues who feel they already know everything but have never seen how it is done abroad. The reason is learning new approaches and getting a feeling generated in similar visits - being charged with new vitality and energy to work.”



Barbora Šiklová:

“The way that prevention is linked to a popular form of entertainment (an escape game) is truly inspiring. In my work, I experience similar troubles that young people face because they do not know their obligations associated with adulthood or graduation or do not realize the seriousness of the situation and become indebted due to unpaid insurance. If we are working with them on these topics, then they have the opportunity to solve their troubles, but what about those who do not visit any service or do not talk with us about such topics? I think that the opportunity to put them into the situation of somebody else and successfully solve his/her trouble through the game allows young people to gain experience which could then be applied more easily to their real lives.

Pavel Venzara:

“What I was really trying to take away was the atmosphere in the services and the way of thinking of workers and the entire organizations, both about the clients and the troubles and solutions. I was very impressed by the principle of empowering clients, instead of exaggerating the care provided by individual services, giving them detailed guidance on how they should behave and how they should address their problems. I sometimes feel that services are imposed on clients in the Czech Republic, instead of simply offering the service and leaving the decision on whether they want to use the service, and do something about their troubles, to the clients themselves.

Another thing that I found absolutely great was the communication with other institutions such as police, offices, etc. And also the co-operation with these bodies. This is also quite different in the Czech Republic and although it seems to me that the situation is gradually improving, I think it would take several years to get to their level. As an example, I would like to refer to the joint outreach work organized several times a year with outreach programmes for homeless people or low threshold centres for children and youngsters. This is considered as something new for us, which did not exist several years ago, but in the Netherlands they do not consider it just a common outreach work performed three times per year, but a regular and very common co-operation. Communication with the authorities or the municipality is also not very good sometimes, but I think it is necessary that officials change their atti-

tudes towards non-profit organizations and their work. They need to find out that our work is needed and it is finally financially advantageous. However, this also requires us, as social workers, to be able to present our work efficiently and effectively.”

Petr Košek:

“Although individual work with individuals is made to suit (customized support), it is always based on neighbourhoods, communities, and co-operation between individuals or organizations. In my view, this was the fundamental difference from our work, because we focus on problems or difficult situations, i.e. negative definitions and an effort to minimize pathological phenomena, as opposed to working with a healthy working community which has the means to take care of marginalized people. This enables, for example, the involvement of former clients in the operation of the Centre (including the possibility to use the Centre as clients even if they are not in a difficult situation). Responsibility transferred to clients requires their active approach, in contrast to the mere passive acceptance of benefits, which has been common in the past.”

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