

## Section III.

# EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES FROM POLAND, BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS

The professionals in contact and low-threshold services have always been greatly inspired by their colleagues abroad. In deed, many countries have up to 50 years long experience with street-work. It is always interesting to learn about the differences as well as similarities in the work of street-workers in different countries. Thirty experts from the Czech Republic took part in the good practice excursions. During two excursions, we have visited ten establishments in four European countries: Slovakia, Poland, Belgium and the Netherlands. You can read about insights from three of them; you may feel envious or smile at the thought of how advanced our practices are.



## TRAJEKT: MAASTRICHT AND ENVIRONS

Mgr. **Patricie Hanzlová**, NZDM DROM, Brno  
Bc. **Simona Zatloukalová**, PROSTOR PRO, o. s.  
NZDM Klídek, Hradec Králové

### Topic Selection

The example of good practice covered by this paper is field-work with the youth in rural areas. I will focus on the programme of a Dutch organisation Trajekt, which has impressed me more than any other organisation I have visited thanks to its background, approach to social work with youth, as well as the scope and focus of its activities. Nonetheless, I made the final decision to use this establishment as an example of good practice only after returning from my excursion thanks to an unexpected event.

*Saturday afternoon, my home village of 300 inhabitants: [I am on a] visit to my parents, [enjoying] a walk to a playground with my two little nieces and my sister. On a bench by the playground sits Marek, 24, he greets me. He knows my brother, I remember him from the school bus – he could have been seven at most at that time. I sit next to him and we chat. He is waiting for an acquaintance who will drive him to his house for a part-time work; he is installing high end kitchen furniture to his new house.*

*M: "A pretty neat job. I cannot find any regular work. The best thing would be to go to Prague but I would be like a needle in a haystack over there." More about whether to leave for Prague or not. He shows me a new pair of glasses. They cost 150 crowns, he is paying them off to the friend for whom he works. It occurs to me to ask: "How much does your friend pay you?"*

*M: "300 per day."*

*P: "And how many hours per day do you work?"*

*M: "10, 12. He also sells good weed for 200-300 per gram."*

*He shows me a sample. Then I keep mostly listening. He keeps sipping white wine from a box. As the conversation progresses, the frequency of gulps increases. He talks about his stay in a rehab. He got fired after 2 months and 19 days for breaking the rules.*

*M: It was strict but I have quite improved since then. I used to drink two boxes a day, now I drink just one." It is 11 AM. The conversation continues, he is talking about the drugs.*

*M: I have never shot up, just snorted. That "K-place"<sup>1</sup> is really great, they have helped me a lot."...*

*We did not get to many details during the conversation, we had to go about our business. In the end,*

<sup>1/</sup> K-centre in a nearby town with illustrious industrial past, for the past 15 years known rather for persistently high rates of unemployment and a high number of drug users.

Marek received some assistance, which he had to go to seek in the town. I wondered how long it would take and what it would look like if some assistance came to reach him.

## Trajekt Establishment

The organisation operates in the city of Maastricht and six regions at its outskirts. It employs a total of 250 workers, 180 of whom work with the clients, while the remaining 70 are in charge of support services. The annual budget is 11 million Euro. 90% of the funding come from the government and the remaining 10% from donors.

Approximately 40% of employees have a secondary school diploma, while the remaining 60% hold a university degree. In the Netherlands, no law specifies minimal educational requirements for social workers. Our guide and Trajekt employee Henk Geelen believes that more social workers should be recruited from the clients' ranks, i.e. from the ranks of people with lived experience of social exclusion.

The ratio of direct and indirect work is about 80% of direct and 20% of indirect work. (An employee who works the standard 36 hours per week clocks 1340 hours of direct work with youth annually.) According to their own words, they maintain only the minimum necessary electronic records of work, recording individual work operations and time spent on them. Every quarter they prepare reports and overviews for the donors (primarily for the government). Henk Geelen explains that it is very difficult to document immediate effects of their efforts; nonetheless, since the social policy in their country is very decentralized, once they receive some money from the government, they have a great degree of freedom when it comes to spending it.

Henk Geelen draws attention to the process of gradual individuation related to modernity, as well as the related decline of social solidarity which needs to be resurrected. On a practical level, he points out the necessity to cooperate with other institution – school, police, community, other governmental institutions in charge of the problems of young people. In the game for the support of the young people, each of these institution has its share of the pie.

The 20/80 paradigm constitutes an interesting principle of the organization's work, as well as an argument justifying its existence, its style of work and its costs. The paradigm describes both the actual state of Dutch society and the approach taken by Trajekt and Dutch social services in general. The paradigm refers to the fact that 20% of the population consists of endangered individuals (usually endangered by poverty), while the remaining 80% are relatively well off. At the same time, 80% of energy gets devoted to the disadvantaged 20%. This model is valid also for the young people, who are threatened not just by social exclusion but also by the process of growing up itself. Trajekt's principal mission and activity consists of prevention efforts. When needed, they [also] refer young people to specialized services.

## Examples of Good Practice

Trajekt offers a number of programmes. It employs field workers in charge of individual work with the youngsters in Maastricht proper as well as in Maastricht region and supports young talents through coaching.

It operates a specially equipped field bus – a sort of rolling club staffed by two workers, which visits neighbourhoods inhabited mostly by poor families in the evening hours, making 90 minute stops to take care of local youngsters.

Moreover, it offers various substance abuse prevention activities aimed both at young people and their parents and school communities

Trajekt also runs a low-threshold club, which in contrast to clubs in our country is only rarely open and which our guide considers as the least important among the organisation's programmes (he believes that only fieldwork has some future.)

## Programme of Field Work in Rural Areas

In my opinion, already the focus of this practice can be considered good. The service was presented by Vincent, a field worker (who also describes himself as a coach) who is in charge of it. He arrived to our meeting on a motorbike, which is one of his work tools. Filed work in the countryside, like all Trajekt activities, is intended for young people between 14 and 23 years of age. A field worker travels around municipalities in Maastricht region<sup>2</sup> working with groups but most importantly scouting for young people who struggle with any kind of problems.<sup>3</sup> He/she becomes their partner in solving these problems and supports them, offering services such as chaperoning, dealing with the authorities, provides them useful information, advises them on possible approaches to solving of their problem, mediates contact with other services or other professional help.

Vincent has mentioned that his work relies on the above mentioned cooperation with local authorities, police and schools, which share with him contact information or tips regarding potential clients.<sup>4</sup> The programme is especially important due to limited access to all resources – from information to financial – available to young people in the countryside. They suffer from multiple handicaps – they are people in the risky stage of adolescence, they come from the countryside, frequently they are also poor (members of lower class or underclass), which, among other problems, makes them unable to deal with the institutions, which are tailored to the needs of the middle classes. On the other hand, the civil servants often lack the patience needed to deal with them and classify them as troublemakers, which further decreases their chances of successfully claiming their rights, achieving their goals. The field worker plays the role of a guide, an assistant and a mediator.

In this respect, it is not very different from the field worker's activity as we know it in the Czech Republic. The added value is his ability to cross not only social but also spacial barriers faced by his clients. The point is that he has the bike, which he uses not only to move around but also to transport the clients when the need arises. It is hence possible to immediately proceed with a solution of a problem that was proposed during the discussion between the client and the field-worker. This eliminates the threat of a delay, of postponing the decision and doing something, which so often leads to abandoning of the plan. The motorbike has not only practical but also symbolic benefits: it draws attention, for groups of youngsters it even represents an attribute of coolness, a social worker on a motorbike may be perceived as a saviour, a modern day prince on a white horse. On many different levels a motorbike may help facilitating contacts with potential clients, building a trusting relationship, breaking through the feeling of helplessness or isolation.

The challenge faced by Vincent is the dependence of his clients on the service and on himself. He copes with it by building a network of contacts with and among institutions he cooperates with (schools, authorities, police) so that they can step in for him when he is not available.<sup>5</sup>

### Bus

The field-trips are made every day by 2-3 workers who usually prearrange the meetings with the clients. On some days, they work in the field between 2 PM and 11 PM, on other days between 6 PM and 11 PM. They usually spend 1,5 hours at each place. Inside the bus, there are benches for sitting, a large screen connected to a Playstation and two computers with Internet connection. The primary focus is on group work. Henk Geelen, a field worker, believes that the key to work with the youth consists in creating conditions for meaningful use of free time by pointing the clients to various activities, rather than offering specialised care. Various free time activities, trips, picnics, etc. are offered to the clients. However, the activities are not

2/ Surrounding areas comprise some 80 000 inhabitants.

3/ Vincent used an example of a young pregnant girl to describe his work.

4/ This topic brings up the issue of anonymity and confidentiality, the importance of which for social work in Belgium and Netherlands was already mentioned. I have not fully understood the exact extent of confidentiality. Nonetheless, it is possible that the requirements of anonymity and confidentiality do not restrict the governmental institutions in communicating with social workers as they do other way round.

5/ Unfortunately, Vincent could not cover this topic in detail as the time for his presentation ran out. Hence I am not sure how specifically this network works.

organized for the clients but rather in cooperation with the clients. In response to our question whether they possess a special licence to drive the vehicle, the field workers just smile shaking their heads to indicate they don't. Everybody in the area including the police knows them, they have good reputation and society knows they are needed. Moreover, their bus does not drive faster than 30km per hour, so why should they need a special licence or number plates. Now it is us who shake our heads in disbelief.

#### Club

Inside the building, there is also a low-threshold facility for children and youth which at a first sight looks like most similar facilities in our country. A pool table, a futsal, darts, sofas with tables, a bar. However, there is no sign of the rules or noticeboards with information for the clients. An employee responds to our enquiry about the rules by explaining that these are simply rules of decent behaviour and that they do not want to treat the clients as idiots. The rules are posted somewhere by the entrance and the employees prefer to talk with the clients about this topic. When we enquire further, he enumerates the specific rules which are essentially identical to the rules used in our facilities – i.e. a space free of violence, discrimination, drugs, smoking, property vandalising or theft and sexual activities. He explains that in case of a breach of rules, an employee's significant glance towards the concerned client often suffices; when not, it offers a good opportunity for a talk with the client.

#### Drug Prevention

One of the employees who participates in the low-threshold facility demonstration is a young female specialized in drug abuse prevention. She explains that she visits the facility once a month to talk with the present clients about drugs and addiction. She also joins the field workers to talk about drugs with clients in the street. She provides information service to the parents who can arrange an appointment. She visits the specific household with a briefcase full of various drug samples, teaches the parents how to identify specific substances, explains them how to tell that their child is using drugs and advises them what to do in such a case. She also visits children with addicted parents. Combination of a briefcase full of drugs and an attractive and sympathetic appearance of the female worker seems to be a rather dangerous combination. I can hear some men in the room joking that they would not let such a visitor leave their house. Logically enough, an enquiry about security follows. The worker confirms that she performs the field trips alone. Nonetheless, as a security precaution measure she writes down her planned whereabouts into a work plan located in the office. Apart from the families, she also visits teachers, school prevention experts, physicians, coffee shops or large public events associated with large scale alcohol consumption or drug abuse. 2-3 times a year, she organises a healthy life-style campaign. She does not charge any fees for her training sessions, only for the publications the participants of her programmes may buy.

#### Further Observation from Maastricht as well as Brussels and Antwerp

- the employees who work with the clients are often older, in many cases they have spent years in the service,
- they work often alone, less frequently in couples or triples,
- most of the work with unorganised and threatened children and youth occurs directly in the street,
- The Vlaastov organisation active in Antwerp and entire Flanders region unites field social workers who are obliged to sign the Code of Ethics upon accepting their job; the Code, which is more important than the actual job description, emphasizes confidentiality and responsible approach to work,
- some fieldworkers focus on specific issues (e.g. work with homeless people, harm reduction services), others serve all needy individuals in the given neighbourhood; e.g. one social worker in Antwerp carried in her backpack paraphernalia for drug users, condoms and other needs for prostitutes, checks for the homeless, etc.

#### Topics for Reflection

- Orient our work more into field, limit seclusion in brick-and-mortar drop-in centres,
- strive for greater community engagement, increase cooperation with the stakeholders,
- provide enough care to the employees to prevent high turnover rates, employ higher number of older employees as children and youth workers
- employ less controls, provide more freedom and confidence to the employees while motivating them towards greater responsibility for their work.

#### Good Practice Transferability

I believe that youth oriented work in rural areas could be easily transferable to our conditions if... Actually, there are several if-s. There might be several obstacles to its immediate introduction:

Lack of appreciation of the importance of such service, lack of low threshold facilities, or, rather, overwhelming workload faced by the existing facilities, which could offer field service in these areas as an extended hand. And obviously the money. There are still large cities that do not have low threshold clubs but would like to have them, cities which would like to have more such clubs, cities, which do not want to have them although they could use them. Local governments in smaller communities either don't have the resources for such a service or do not perceive it as useful. The low threshold club format is also not suitable for some communities, which do not have enough potential clients. In spite of that, even in smaller communities, and perhaps especially there, there may be needy individuals, whose adolescence troubles may be complicated by the same factors as in the Netherlands. This is the place for field work with youth.

However, the capacity of the existing city clubs that might take charge of such fieldwork is saturated by services offered in their own urban environment and the possible expansion of services to the surrounding villages is impossible due to both their capacity and available resources. So far, field-work programmes serve villages and small communities only in exceptional cases and only when a socially excluded locality<sup>6</sup> belongs to such community and hence it is focussed primarily on the youth that belong to a distinct community. I believe that fieldwork in rural areas will get to the top of the agenda only once the cities get saturated with low threshold services in both ambulatory and field formats.

#### Information Resources

[http://www.trajekt.nl/http://www.trajekt.nl/organisation\\_website\\_\(unfortunately\\_only\\_in\\_Dutch\)http://www.trajekt.nl/http://www.trajekt.nl/](http://www.trajekt.nl/http://www.trajekt.nl/organisation_website_(unfortunately_only_in_Dutch)http://www.trajekt.nl/http://www.trajekt.nl/)

<http://www.nji.nl/englishhttp://www.nji.nl/english>

English version of Netherlands Youth Institute (Nederlands Jeugd Instituut) website, which contains a database of Effective Youth Interventions in the areas of youth care, health care, social care and penal law aimed at prevention or problem reduction in adolescence:

<http://www.nji.nl/english>

(<http://www.nji.nl/eCache/DEF/2/31/478.html>)

(<http://www.movisie.nl>) (MOVISIE organisation, unfortunately again with no English or other foreign language version)

6/ E.g. Prachovice where "Sance pro tebe" (A Chacne for You) operates.



## GOOD PRACTICE EXCURSIONS TO BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS

Helena Kotová, Milan Štorek, Artem Vartanyan

A good practice excursion for social-workers from low-threshold service organisations (mostly field-work programmes, contact centres and drop-in centres) was organised by the Czech Streetwork Association in the framework of the “Support of Sharing of Good Practice in Field and Low-Threshold Contact Services in Selected EU Countries” Project financed by the ESF operational programme Human Resources and Employment in cooperation with the National Training Fund – Centre for Quality and Standards in Social Services (NVF-CEKAS). The good practice excursion including good practice monitoring took place in May 2011 and lasted for five business days. The target countries were Belgium and the Netherlands. There were fifteen participants.

Each day, the participants visited one establishment. At the end of each day, the participants recapitulated and discussed their findings related to good practice monitoring in a discussion moderated by the expert guide of the excursion.

Visited cities and establishments:

- Vlastrov, Antwerp, [www.straathoekwerk.be](http://www.straathoekwerk.be)
- Dynamo International, Brussel, [www.dynamoweb.be](http://www.dynamoweb.be)
- AMOC/De Regenboog, Amsterdam, [www.deregenboog.org](http://www.deregenboog.org)
- Trajekt GGZ, Maastricht, [www.street-work.net](http://www.street-work.net)

### Field-Work in the Belgian City of Antwerp through the Eyes of Czech Social Workers

#### Encounter

Our first stop to draw some experience was the Belgian city of Antwerp. In a place called Scouthostel we encountered with 6 social workers: 4 street-workers – *Dorian, Sandra, Astrid* and *Wannes* (from two separate organisations: A.W. Metropool Straathoekwerkteam and Free Clinic / MSOC Outreach- en straa-thoekwerkteam) and two coordinators *Cis Dewaele* and *Eric Castermans*.

*Cis Dewaele* works as a coordinator of the Vlastrov association (founded in 1990) – a Flemish umbrella association for organisations that run field-work programmes. Vlastrov, which is a government financed organisation, not only represents and advocates the organisations and their employees, but also prescribes certain rules for field-work operation. It is perceived as a professional organisation by both government

and broad public and its position is relatively strong. Vlastros members have to meet certain professional standards defined by the association.

Its goals consist in improving the professional standards in the field (texts, training, manuals, references), street-work promotion and political lobbying.

*Eric Castermans* works as a coordinator for Astrov – a local chapter of Vlastrov that unites projects and organisations in the Antwerp region. Its goals include support of local projects, intervention and training programmes for social workers and organisations, project representation and community work.

The activities of both organisations were discussed during a subsequent almost hour long debate.

Vlastrov activities are almost indistinguishable from those of the Czech Streetwork Association. The main distinction is that it is perceived as a strong partner in political negotiations and as a guarantor of quality. Vlastrov members have to observe basic rules of work.

#### **There are three clear and concise rules:**

- deontology or deontological ethics (from the Greek to deon – what is required, obligatory, a duty) is a school of normative philosophical ethics, which assumes that humans should decide and act according to fixed rules of duty;<sup>1</sup>
- registration – each social worker must “as if” register his/her clients. “Registration” in this context should not be perceived as some sort of file or official record. Social workers use a special database, which, however, is closed and cannot be accessed by anyone else. It serves as a tool for recording their work;
- logs - each social worker keeps logs - files or casuistry records pertaining to his/her clients. The logs too serve only the needs of the social workers, enabling them to follow the client's story, his/her advances and interventions he/she has performed with them. The street-workers cannot be perceived as supervisors of the target groups. They are supposed to be there for the clients, for their benefit, to provide assistance. They are not supposed to protect society against “dangerous groups of people.”
- The social workers observe and honour so called professional confidentiality. That means they never disclose anything about their clients. There is only one exception: if someone's behaviour represents a threat to himself or to others. In such cases it is necessary to consult the situation and decide how to proceed – and to determine whether to report the situation. A great emphasis is put on the social worker's personal responsibility; it is up to him/her to evaluate and eventually consult the situation.

#### **Objectives of the Street-Workers' work**

- to establish contact and relationship with the target groups
- to get to know the target groups, their life situation and problems
- to support them
- to establish or re-establish communication between the target groups and those around them (community, neighbourhood)
- community work in the neighbourhood

## Target Groups

A distinct feature of the Antwerpian approach to field-work is that the street-workers work primarily for a certain neighbourhood and that they select their target group (target groups) only after they have become acquainted with the neighbourhood. It is no exception if they work with people from various age, racial, ethnic and problematic groups. Simply put, they focus on those who currently need them, providing support, listening and when needed helping them.

<sup>1/</sup> A leading representative of duty ethics (and hence of deontology in this sense of word) is Immanuel Kant who wanted to found his “metaphysics of morals” upon undoubtable and hence purely rational foundations. According to him the only truly “good” thing was a good will that acts according to its sense of duty. “Moral value of an action hence does not consist in the expected consequences” and “the object of (our) esteem is exclusively the law, imposed by ourselves as necessary in itself.”

The target groups are defined primarily by social exclusion, which may be perceived from two perspectives:

- they are excluded by society
- they feel to be excluded.

## In the Street

Second and much more interesting part of our internship followed. Divided into groups, we hit the streets together with the street-workers. In the following paragraphs, we recount the field experience of one of the groups. Impressions of other groups are summarized in an attachment at the end of this paper. Nonetheless, all the groups were left with similar impressions and discovered similar information.

Our group joined Dorian, a A.W. Metropool Staathoekwerkteam employee, who works in a location near the centre of Antwerp (essentially a neighbourhood consisting of a couple of streets.) She works mostly with the minorities – Moroccan immigrants, Polish immigrants, homeless people, alcoholics, prostitutes, youth, people who have problems with drugs and essentially anyone who needs her assistances.

Each field-worker in Antwerp is in charge of an area with approx. 10 000 inhabitants. Their work typically focusses on a particular neighbourhood, which may be inhabited by several socially disadvantaged groups.

It is therefore essential to thoroughly analyse the neighbourhood, get to know the inhabitants, institutions and related services in the neighbourhood. The actual service is then planned accordingly.

*“The field worker may work with more target groups in her location – drug users, prostitutes, immigrants, etc. The field-worker may thus walk her beat with a backpack full of syringes, condoms, sterile water, a container for used syringes, something to play with and dog biscuits.”*

The street-workers perceive themselves as neighbourhood workers; they often introduce themselves to the people in this manner: *“I am a person from the neighbourhood, I am here for you, I would like to listen to your story.”* *“Field-work is by its nature community work. The field-worker does not focus primarily on a certain problem/certain target group in the neighbourhood, but rather on knowing her neighbourhood including all the groups that are in need of social service. The field-worker knows well his/her neighbourhood and the neighbourhood (public) knows its field-worker.”*

The field-workers are seen as standing on the first line – as those who contacts the needy people, encourage them to change themselves and if they decide to change, accompany them to follow-up services. When she started working in the neighbourhood, she spent the first 6 months training; she was just studying the neighbourhood, did not even contact people, just kept moving around and observing and letting the people get used to her. The field-workers are trained by a coordinator, who, however, does not accompany them in the field.

The field-workers work alone, only after 10PM they request assistance of another colleague. That implies that the working hours are very flexible. They are supposed to work for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Nonetheless, the time when they start and end working may differ depending on the target groups' needs. They can also swap days – for instance work on Saturday instead of Friday when an event where one can expect presence of a large number of target group members takes place on Saturday. Another principle requires that at least 60% of their working hours must be spent on direct work. In reality the field-workers really devote a lot of time to direct work. Dorian for instance spends the entire 8 hours working in the street; she devotes just one day a month to paperwork – writing registrations and logs.

Once a month the street-workers participate in an intense meeting with their coordinator (approx. 28 persons); one a year, there is a meeting of all street-workers and coordinators. Other forms of support include team discussions, trainings and coordinator assessments. The leader/coordinator is perceived as a couch. Nonetheless, if the street-workers need a consultation, they can request more frequent meetings.

Individual responsibility is emphasized a lot, we have perceived high level of trust and no need for oversight.

To a great extent, this can be explained by the approach and attitude of people in Belgium, which is very different from our own.

[Belgian] employees would not even think about cheating in work in some way, about not working as much as they declare. We, on the contrary, have immediately started wondering about how it is possible that they work honestly without strict supervision and without regularly filing thousands of reports.

In Belgium, field-work is perceived as something useful, as something that no one doubts about. Therefore, there is much less administrative work because the field-workers do not need to keep proving their usefulness and efficiency. In Belgium, there are neither any quality standards of social services nor any law on social services. Youth oriented work is defined in the Act on the Protection of Children, street-work in the Act on Street-Work. The Government funds street-work programmes in order to improve security – “they know that working with people in the streets pays off.” Inspection takes place approx. once a year and it is not concerned with the quality of the service.

Dorian gets into contact with approx. one thousand individuals a year, out of which 400 are her registered clients. Field-workers usually have a university degree (in social work), nonetheless local conditions are taken into account (in some places, only secondary pedagogic school diploma and a social assistant course is required). At the beginning of his/her career, a lot of training is invested into a field-worker.

#### **Other Concepts we Have Encountered in the Field-Workers' Practice**

- *professional friendship* - the street-workers are in an “in between” position – on the one hand, they declare that they are field-workers, but in some respects their relationship with the clients is more personal – e.g. we have seen Dorian kissing some of her clients to greet them, another street-workers mentioned that sometimes she has a glass of beer with her clients, etc. Here too, the field-worker's own intuition and judgement is emphasized. They may decide to do something if they believe it will help to improve or build up their relationship with their client. (We must keep on mind that they usually work with adults, with whom it is more difficult to establish a relationship and one must do so differently than with the youth.) The field-workers obviously observe certain personal limits in their behaviour (e.g. they are not getting drunk with the clients every day and normally they don't go to bars with them.) Rather, they sometimes consciously shift the limits in order to achieve something; they always do so on case by case basis.
- *personal competence, intuition, trust* – this involves what was described above. The field-workers are competent and independent, and they enjoy trust when it comes to their work and behaviour. From our perspective this constitutes the most striking difference [compared to what we know from home] and all of us were surprised by it, some of us even thrilled.

The field-workers' approach is active (seeking), positive (they approach the clients based on their qualities and potential, rather than their problems and deficiencies; they respect their questions, needs, values, starting with their own responsibility) and integrated (together with the client, they work on all aspects of his/her life and they also engage people close to the client). The most important thing is to establish a relationship and gain the client's confidence. They seek to reestablish positive connections between the target group and society.

During our walk through the street we had an opportunity to have a look at the neighbourhood where Dorian works, we observed several contacts she made with the clients, but we stayed back. Most of the clients were older males. On the way, we stopped at a small establishment – just one room that serves as a daytime centre for homeless people, which is run by a local church. Twice a day, the clients may come here, eat a soup, drink a cup of tea or coffee and request assistance. We also visited a squat in a former convent that used to belong to the order of St. Francis Sisters. In Belgium, the provincial government may issue a permit to occupy an abandoned building. In this case, the provincial government permitted the squat, as did the Sisters of St. Francis. The city does not like it but they cannot do anything about it.

The squatters try not to disturb their neighbours, they take care to maintain peace and order, and on top

of that they do other useful things for the neighbourhood. Every evening they hand out unsold bread from local stores to poor people, every Friday they prepare a large dinner for the poor, they run a warehouse with clothes and useful items. They lend out parts of the monastery for cultural and artistic activities – concerts, workshops, practice rooms, exhibitions, etc. They have a large hall where various events are held – apart from concerts also weddings, events for children, celebrations of various holidays. They thus remain true to the original idea of squatting, which focusses on discovering and maintaining a building, and eventual on community service.

## **Summary and Possible Inspiration**

To summarize the findings from our internship, we could divide them into several principal items:

### **Street-Worker's Personality**

- The field-workers in Antwerp fulfil the basic scouting and monitoring role including referral to follow-up services.
- They are frontline workers, they address people in the streets, filtering out those in need. They try to have a word with everyone; anyone could have a potential problem.

We have been most surprised (some of us thrilled) by their independent work, trust in the street-worker's personality, intuition, personal abilities and responsibility. They would not even think about abusing such freedom. When we inquired about the control of their work, they wondered why should there be any additional oversight apart from the interventions. Apparently, they would not even think about leaving the field an hour earlier or not filling the clients' registrations. I believe that this may be one of the reasons why the employees stay in their jobs for such a long time (Dorian 6 years, Sandra 10 years.) Their work is demanding and unappreciated, but this at least gives them some sense of personal relevance and responsibility, they may themselves invent processes and approaches, they are perceived as experts in their neighbourhood and their people.

This is precisely another thing I got thrilled about. The street-worker works in a neighbourhood, addressing its existing problems. He/she is here for everyone and keeps helping people out. The street-worker is not a narrowly specialised expert trained to deal with a single issue. I believe this approach is much cheaper and more efficient because they employ just one person instead of 4 – each for one problem. Nonetheless, that is possible only because each location has a strong network of follow-up services – either governmental, municipal, non-governmental but mostly self-help.

### **Minimal Amount of Paperwork**

What was described above implies that there are only minimal requirements for paperwork. This is possible primarily due to the fact that the field-workers do not have to justify their work by tons of paper and piles of charts and reports. Both national and local government are convinced of their usefulness and efficiency and impose on them only minimal standards, which are nonetheless fully and meticulously observed.

As a result, the working conditions are more enjoyable. Obviously, the coordinators have to do more paperwork related to project management, fund-raising, etc, nonetheless this is clearly their task. The obvious role of the field-workers is to be in the street with the clients, which is also why they are required to spend at least 60% of their working time by direct work. Most of them, however, exceed this requirement. They do not need to watch for this limit, on the contrary, they like being in the field.

I believe we could learn a lot from this and try not to overwhelm ourselves with paperwork above the extent required by our donors. Sometimes we can be really good at it – we have hundred page thick manuals describing something that could be put down much more succinctly; we ponder over questionnaires but somehow lose sight of the client and his/her story.

### Social Conditions

Belgian society is clearly more advanced when it comes to thinking about helping and doing good deeds than Czech society. The reasons for this are well known and there is no need to elaborate upon them here. It just always surprises me again that it is possible to get things done. While they do encounter some problems during the implementation of their projects, from our perspective these appear rather petty. Our fundamental problem is being recognized as a useful service with a role to play; in Belgium, no one would doubt about it.

The public values the street-workers and their work similarly to the work of teachers (i.e. as important). In the Belgian context their salaries are a little bit under average but they make enough to live on.

This also applies to the position of Vlastov association. The organisation is perceived as a solid partner whose word has its weight. I hope that ČAS [Czech Streetwork Association] will also evolve, or rather, will get the conditions to evolve in this way, that it will be listened to and respected.

### Usability in Practice in the Czech Republic – Suggestions, Ideas, Recommendations

During the subsequent evening debate we recalled the suggestions for a similar “unification” of target groups in the Czech Republic, as well as the dread and resistance with which these proposals (usually raised by regional politicians and civil servants) were met. Having experienced Antwerps, we can imagine it might be possible. During our “walks” in the field we quite often meet potential drop-in centre clients, homeless people, insufficiently treated mentally ill individual and others. We would know how to contact them and refer them.

In many respects, this is a more “purist” concept of field-work, consisting primarily of contacting, escorting and referring clients. Nonetheless, in the Czech Republic we lack a network of high-quality follow up services, which the street-workers (based on our experience and experience from the regions) frequently substitute and therefore hardly manage to take care of “their” target group. It would also require higher capacity of field-workers and lower administrative and reporting requirements.

In four out of five visited establishments, I was rather surprised by the variety of approaches and methodological practices used in spite of rather uniform contents. To put it otherwise, insofar as their principles, goals and missions are concerned, all the establishments are very close to each other, as well as to [comparable establishments in the Czech Republic.] Nevertheless, the practices vary, depending on the context (target groups, local and national policies, location, etc.)

I found it interesting to try to separate the necessary differences from the differences applicable elsewhere (even in our country) because while structures and standards may be necessary, uniformity is one of the threats that can transform a living, creative, flexible and, most importantly, easily accessible service into a part of bureaucratic system.

*To put it differently: we, as the guides and bridges between the world of our clients and the “system” (no offence intended) should avoid becoming parts of the “system.” That would, paradoxically enough, mean, we would be no longer capable of providing the service for which the “system” is paying us.*

### Appendix:

#### Field No.2:

We had an opportunity to get to know one of such neighbourhoods in Antwerp together with Sandra, a Free Clinic employee. During our excursion, or joint field outing, several brief contacts between the field-worker and clients occurred. The neighbourhood is not too large, one can walk around it in approx. 1 hour. In a large city like Antwerp, up to 30 thousand inhabitants may be living there. The service recipients in the neighbourhood we visited consist primarily of drug users, sex-workers and homeless people. Free Clinic

is an organisation focussed on problematic and chronic drug users, that provides HR services, health and social counselling and substitute treatment. Sandra originally worked with drug users and subsequently became a street-worker responsible for the entire neighbourhood. In the past, individual street-workers focussed on various target groups and even today, some organisations specialize in field-work focussed on a specific target group. Most street-workers have taken up additional clientele, which was linked to their core target group, and became “neighbourhood” or “community” street-workers. Sandra really belongs into the neighbourhood – people greet her and not even the presence of 4 “strangers” can dissuade her clients from contacting her. We have seen a square where the local drug users have been meeting for years, as well as a “street of love” from which the authorities are gradually pushing out street prostitutes. Sandra has also shown us several shelters for people in need, to which she can refer her clients. Sandra works under guidance of a coach who is also in charge of some five other field workers. The colleagues she knows from the regular intervision meetings work in the surrounding neighbourhoods and she may request their help. Otherwise, she works alone.

#### Field No.3:

Subsequently, we set forth for a field outing with Astrid Loos – a street-worker. We rode a tram with one transfer all the way to the Kiel neighbourhood (approx. 20 000 inhabitants) where Astrid works for Cawmetropool organisation. She works mostly with immigrants (Moroccans and Roma) whom she assists primarily with obtaining of documents and paying off debts. Her clients do not include any drug users, homeless people or prostitutes (a while ago, there was one prostitute, who got transferred to a colleague from another part of the city).

Astrid who started as a volunteer has been already working in the field for 12 years (some of her colleagues for 14 years.) Her salary is slightly under national average, but she said she can live on it. When asked how the public values her work, Astrid replied that at about the same level as teacher’s. She showed us her office and a “club” intended for children and mothers from the neighbourhood. Most of them come from Arab families. They also tried to create a Roma group, nonetheless the attempt was unsuccessful due to grudge of some families.

She walked us through the Abdijstraat street which used to be a traditional Belgian avenue lined with small shops. To the dismay of the original residents, today, one can find there mostly immigrants who have opened their own stores with ethnic goods. People in the street (shopkeepers, saleswomen, Moroccans) recognized Astrid and stopped to exchange greetings and a couple of words with her.

Astrid took us to a charity shop (locals bring things free of charge here and people can then purchase them for a symbolic price: a glass costs 0.25 €, a record 1 €, a t-shirt 1-2 €.) A year ago it supposedly looked like a second hand shop but today it looks almost like a normal store.

Then she walked us through the Tir department store, where we did not see many people (high rents and higher prices = few customers in a socially disadvantaged neighbourhood). After that, we finally got to a place where people similar to our clients congregated. Astrid showed us a housing estate that was similar to those we know from our country (slightly different architecture but identical purpose of the buildings) and a community centre offering activities to all groups of inhabitants. It is interesting that during the entire time we noticed just one sprayed sign on a wall (“fuck da police”). Apart from that, no major signs of client presence (most likely due to the work of the “violet vests.” It is becoming popular to solve problems by removing a bench rather than working with the group of people that that makes mess next to it.)

Interestingly enough, Astrid went for a field outing carrying only a small handbag with her documents. At most, she carries business cards with her contact information. She explained that she is well known in the neighbourhood and does not need any additional promotional materials; she knows her people and her neighbourhood.

We did not see any direct work (indeed, she could hardly take four Czechs into a family) and the field outing consisted rather of a walk around the neighbourhood.



## MOPS KRAKÓW - MUNICIPAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE IN KRAKÓW

Lucie Voláková, Nadace VIA  
Tomáš Příhoda, Proxima Sociale, o.s.

### Introducing the Organisation

Municipal Social Assistance Centre in Krakow is a semi-budgetary organisation established by the city of Krakow. MOPS Kraków focuses on providing social assistance in overcoming difficult life situations to persons who are incapable of overcoming such situations themselves using their own competences, resources and opportunities. The organisation supports these persons in their strife to fulfil their basic needs and enables them to live in conditions compatible with human dignity. The provided assistance also aims at preventing the onset of difficult life situations through measures aimed at empowering of individuals and families and at their reintegration.

As a social assistance centre, MOPS Kraków is responsible for providing of social services in the city of Krakow. The services offered cover all target groups (families with handicapped children, foster families, seniors, Roma, refugees, persons in acute crisis, homeless persons, mentally or physically handicapped persons, unemployed, persons threatened by home violence or substance abuse, persons recently released from prison.) When the demand for some service exceed its capacities, it procures social services from non-profit organisations and subsequently oversees their delivery. It is hence in charge of providing, procuring as well as auditing the performance of social assistance. The provision of social services in Krakow is entirely subordinate to public authorities.

An example of a non-profit organisation created in response to MOPS Kraków's demand would be the Parasol Centre for Prevention and Social Education, whose employees among other matters focus on field-work with younger children.

I believe that the existence of an umbrella organisation in charge of all social services in a given location offers a number of opportunities and advantages, whether it is the fact that people know it well or, on the other hand, that the social workers have a comprehensive grasp of the situation thanks to the practice of exchanging information, which also enables better planning and development of services.

### Field Programme Development

The objective of this paper is to introduce the practice of field social work in MOPS Kraków. The organisation has been running its field programme without any interruption since 2005.

In 2003 a Zima [Winter] pilot programme aimed at working with the homeless people and prevention of frost related deaths was launched. The first continuous project aimed at field social work with homeless people was launched in 2005.

In 2006, the organisation launched an ESF supported project called “Street-Work – A Real Contact,” which already included youth [as a target group.] The launch of this programme was accompanied by large scale media campaign.

## Target Groups Analyses

The field-work in the street environment is focussed on homeless people and on young people, who are threatened by social exclusion and exhibit signs of social inadaptability. The field-workers target group consists of individuals who avoid normal institutions and social services network. The children and youth that belong to the organisation's target group at most participate in some free-time or sports clubs. The organisation offers the services of its field programme for children and youth at two Krakow housing estates. Street-work with homeless people takes place in the centre of the city.

Target group surveys were performed at the onset of both projects. Krakow has approximately 1 million inhabitants; about 800 thousand of these are permanent inhabitants while the rest consists of students living in the city during the academic year. A survey performed in 2006 counted 800 homeless persons, nonetheless it is estimated that some 2000 reside in the city throughout the year. As for the homeless people, it is estimated that the entire homeless population of Poland is about 300 thousand persons out of the country's 40 million. As for the minors: there are about 9 million children living in Poland, out of which approximately 13% (1.2 million) are so called children with a key around the neck. In Krakow alone, a survey has discovered almost 1400 minors belonging into the street-workers' target group.

How exactly was such survey conducted? Monitoring of the groups of children and youth was conducted by a total of eight researchers who worked in two-member teams. For two months, they kept visiting identical locations – three housing estates – to search for and contact potential clients. The principal criteria of monitoring included: substance abuse (alcohol, cigarets, drugs), aggression within group, as well as the fact that the parents had obviously no idea about their children whereabouts or their free time activities (dangerous locations such as ruined houses at the outskirts of the city, begging, etc.)

Having conducted the survey of the target groups, the future street-workers left for an internship in an organisation running a street-work programme in Frankfurt am Main to obtain basic experience with this method of social field work. The organisation's social field workers hence underwent a long training process prior to setting out for streets to work with the clients, which I regard as good practice.

## Field Social Work with the Target Group of Children and Youth

The organisation's employees try to avoid using the term “street children” and refer to their clients rather as “beneficiaries.” The point is that the Krakow street-workers, as they put it, do not work with street children but rather with children who spend a substantial part of their time in the street. The youth target group is defined by the fact that its members experience significant life events in the street (they meet each other there, make various deals there, date there, get drunk there, etc.)

The field social workers who work with the youth focus primarily on the young people who are experiencing or are threatened by social exclusion. In their activities, the street-workers focus also on the local community, advocating their clients' interests.

The field social work takes place in two Krakow housing estates with a total of approximately 111 thousand inhabitants. The street-workers are in touch with a total of 786 local young people between 15 and 27 years of age. 75% of them are boys, 30% are permanent clients.

From an observer's point of view, I thought it was a pity that the MOPS Kraków street-workers do not contact also younger children at an age, in which it is easier to establish a relationship and when it is still possible to prevent an onset of certain problems. The street-workers usually know these younger individuals at least by sight but do not contact them. On the other hand, in the Czech Republic it is not very common to work with older clients above 20 years of age as is the practice among street-workers in Krakow. At the same time, it was obvious that they strictly adhere to the target group's age limits.

Nonetheless, younger children between 9-15 years of age form a target group of the Parasol organisation street-workers, who function primarily as free-time educators, copying the French model (so called “street education.”)

The launch of the field social work with the youth was accompanied by a questionnaire survey of problem areas – in my view a very practical approach. The organisation first established the clients' needs and desires and subsequently integrated them into an ESF project application.

The first analysis of the most pressing problems of the local youth, defined as the most urgent the following topics: lack of available free time activities (93%), school-related problems (86%), family-related problems (83%), psychological problems (82%) - most often in the form of inability to cope with everyday situations such as learning or integrating into a peer group, drugs (73%), and last but not least also peer groups (58%) with over half of the clients having experience with rejection or bullying. The survey revealed that among the Krakow youth, there is a great demand for some events. Furthermore, it revealed that a substantial part of the clients displays a negative attitude to school and studies and that they come from dysfunctional families.

A further survey conducted by the organisation's employees focused primarily on boys who comprise 80% of the target group. A more detailed analysis was conducted at this stage. Drugs (80%) ranked as the first of problem areas, followed by financial problems (62%) faced by both the clients' families and themselves (loans and indebtedness are common), school-related problems (58%), conflicts in the family (54%), problems with law (50%), violence (28%) - whether it occurs in the family or outside of it, and health problems (24%).

The street-workers' experiences confirm largely negative effects of the perceived lack of finances, which is closely interrelated with lawbreaking. It frequently happens that when their clients cannot obtain certain things by standard methods, they opt for the uncalled for and frequently even illicit ones (stealing, robberies, prostitution, begging).

The experienced violence, on the other hand, is largely correlated with the identification of the youth with the local “ghetto” and football team. There is a high level of animosity between individual “fan” groups, which tends to arouse violence even among relatively trouble-free individuals, leading to frequent mutual assaults and fights. Nonetheless, the street-workers' clients recruit typically from those “children of the housing estate” who do not identify clearly with any subculture (such as emo, rasta, or skate); they rather tend to merely sympathise with various subcultures. Even when it comes to identification with the football clubs, they are not hooligans in the proper sense of the word. The boys with whom the street-workers are in touch do not visit football matches, they just fight for “their” club. The organisation's field-workers tried to go to a football match with their clients on several occasions in the past. Nonetheless, they found the experience as counterproductive, since it proved impossible to influence the clients in the overwhelming atmosphere of an ongoing match. In Krakow, there are actually other organisations that strive to work with the “fans”; nonetheless, identifying members of this target group is no easy task.

## Field Social Work with Homeless People and Daytime Counselling Centre

The organisation also carries out social work for homeless people, running a number of services including homeless shelters. The street-work section is in charge of field-work with this target group, actively seeking out homeless people, inquiring about their needs, and informing them about follow-up services in

order to help them improve their situation or prevent its worsening and also to prevent them from acting in a way that would threaten themselves or people around them. In MOPS Kraków, there are only three employees in charge of social field work with the homeless people. They work for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. According to the statistics, the field-workers are in touch with a total of 300 members of the target group whom they actively seek out around the entire city – both in the centre where they engage e.g. in begging and in the squats and similar places where they spend their nights. The field-workers visit a total of 140 places a month, in the winter period they work even at night. The field-workers carry out three principle projects:

1. Project Winter focusses on contacting homeless people on public transit and in other public spaces and providing them with homeless shelter contact information and other services to help them survive the winter unharmed without bothering those around them. This project, which takes place between November and March, involves very intense cooperation between the street-workers and Municipal Police who either escort them or, conversely, call them up.
2. Safe Heat is a project focussed primarily on fire prevention and safe ways of obtaining heat. Moreover, it provides assistance to individuals involved in begging, whom the social workers seek out, informing them about the laws and social network and helping them to apply for social benefits even if their legal residence is outside of Krakow. An important aspect of the street-workers' work consists of motivating the clients to get registered and obtain a certificate of their homeless status, which enables them to use further follow up services. Without the certificate, they may not use these services or receive welfare benefits (similar to "Assistance in Material Need" in the Czech Republic). Generally speaking, the social workers try to avoid supplementing existing services. Rather, they provide a bridge between the clients' world and the existing services; only urgent problems that can be resolved by themselves are addressed together with the client on the spot.
3. Moreover, the fieldworkers participate in creating an assistance network for these people, taking part in joint meetings e.g. with the curators, police, etc. At these meetings they exchange information about the events in the region; the activity is similar to community planning in the Czech Republic. Once a year they publish an updated list of follow up services for homeless people. At the same time they run a day time counselling centre for homeless people, which is open three days a week in the centre of old Krakow. The centre also offers free weekly consultations with a psychologists for the clients.

## Krakow's War against Beggary

The city of Krakow has recently started a systematic fight against begging, which had started gaining popularity even among children for whom it became a favourite way of making some extra cash in their spare time.

A social campaign called "Do Not Leave Your Money in the Streets" represents the struggle to change this situation. The campaign brings attention to various forms of social assistance, appealing to all those willing to help to support organisations that provide professional assistance to the needy, while discouraging people from supporting beggary by giving alms. The campaign involves handing out foreign language leaflets to tourists in order to inform them about the situation (e.g. a leaflet with a sign "When you give money, you steal childhood").

The fight against begging involves apart from the Municipal Police patrols also MOPS Kraków's social workers. The Parasol organisation got involved in the prevention efforts as well. As explained by the field program manager, in the early stages of the programme, repression used to play much greater role. When, for instance, child beggars ignored their threats, the police officers would take them to the police station, making their parents come to pick them up. In most cases, the parents were completely unaware about their children's begging. In my opinion, the most inspiring part of this programme is the promotion of the possibilities of providing financial support to non-profit organisations.

## "Street-Work – A Real Contact" Project

This is an ongoing ESF funded project focussed on young people between 15 and 25 years of age. One of its principal goals consists of improving the social integration of 150 individuals.

Drawing of ESF subsidies in Poland has a disadvantage - a requirement to specify clients' personal data (first and last name, address of residence, contact information, but also whether or not the client attends school, etc.) The clients have to sign an agreement with the release of their data; in case of minors, legal guardian's signature is required. Nonetheless, the agreement with the clients gets concluded only when a specific request is made, which may often be a year after the initial contact. According to the street-workers' experience, the clients do not have problems with providing their data. The clients trust the street-workers; problems emerge rather with some of the parents who do not want to sign the agreement because they do not agree that their children are threatened by social exclusion. In case some parents are afraid about who contacts their child, the street-workers carry their employee IDs on them. Clients' personal data facilitate record-keeping, as well as social workers' co-operation with other organisations on client's behalf, which obviously always requires his or her acknowledgement.

The aim of the "Street-work – A Real Contact" Project is to promote the clients' participation in prevention and education oriented workshops (e.g. sex education, but also re-qualification courses – e.g. cosmetology or driver's licence courses). As a reward, the clients may participate in a number of attractive events. To participate in the project, each client is required to agree with an occasional participation in a workshop, after which he or she is allowed to participate in the events program. Persuading the clients to participate in the workshops proves rather difficult in practice, but they are gradually getting used to it.

The organisation, in cooperation with the Labour Office, holds an annual "Job Day," which is open to broad public but focusses primarily on the street-workers' young clients. The visitors may use professional consultancy services and obtain a list of current vacancies. They may also participate in a workshop aimed at self-promotion during a job search.

MOPS Kraków street-workers also cooperate with the House of Culture where they present their activities.

Majority of the bonus events are held outside of the Club premises. (One of the exceptions are futsal tournaments held in the winter period.) The advantage of holding the events outdoors, in the clients own environment, is the possibility of contact with local community. The organisation's major advantage is that people know it, and hence understand the field-workers' role as the organisation's outstretched hand.

Examples of events include film screenings, regular gym visits, football tournaments or graffiti events. During the events, the field-workers try to involve professionals whose task it is to demonstrate to the young people that it is possible to become a successful athlete or artist. Among the most popular events, according to the field-workers, are football tournaments with professional football players invited to the finals and a trivia quiz for the participants as a supplemental programme. As the street-workers argue, the fact that the clients wear their team jerseys even when they are not playing and that they show off the diplomas they have gained, demonstrates their need of success.

In my opinion a particularly inspiring approach was demonstrated during the successful graffiti event, when the MOPS Kraków employees together with the police required that the clients request the private garage owners permission to spray on their walls as a prerequisite for participation.

Another event consisted of clients taking photographs of each other leading to an exhibition, which is expected to travel to other places; the photos will be eventually sold in an auction.

## Methodology

The organisation does not have any standard guidelines for work with the clients; it only has guidelines pertaining to ESF conditions, as it uses ESF funds.

General rules of contact with clients require that the street-workers do not give any money to the clients

and that they should keep their work phones off during their free time. Another principle states that the street-workers should not work at the place of their own residence; this is possible because the organisation provides its services at two separate housing estates. The street-workers realize that observing boundaries in the work with the clients is essential to prevent the burn-out syndrome, since about half of cases constitute “failures.” The clients, on the other hand, know that the street-workers are there for them but also that there are some limits. In spite of that, clients do occasionally contact street-workers privately. Nonetheless, the specific boundaries of contact with clients get established rather in a natural and non-formal way. For example a certain street-worker we have observed offered cigarettes to some of his clients explaining that he knew that these clients would not abuse the favour and that he can afford it in their case. Although this would probably not be possible in our conditions, we found it completely natural. The street-worker adjusted the boundaries to the situation being aware that lowering of the boundaries may, in case of certain clients, help to establish the contact and at the same time that it would not harm him in any way. Another street-worker has made an agreement with the clients that he would not smoke in front of them. The clients hence do not smoke themselves as they would feel ashamed.

The work with the boundaries is hence always based on a particular client group. Moreover, each street-worker has his or her own natural threshold that becomes manifest even in his/her professional life. Each street-worker hence has to establish and defend his/her rules in the work with clients. According to field programme manager, the street-workers could feel limited and constrained by standards they could not accept as their own, since they would have to enter into the clients' space pretending something they do not really identify with. Working with the boundaries clearly includes the ability to explain that a privilege is not a rule (e.g. that I won't be handing out cigarets or chocolates everywhere and to anyone).

In their work, the street-workers respect the wishes and decisions of their clients. On the other hand, when protection of life, health or personality (e.g. sexual abuse) is at stake, it is possible to intervene even without client's consent. As an example, the street-workers used a case of a woman who shared an apartment with her child and an aggressor; she got one week to resolve the situation herself with an option to use the street-worker's assistance; otherwise the organisation would intervene even without her consent. The situation was resolved when the woman voluntarily moved out of the apartment and away from the aggressor. Clients' rights are respected as a matter of course as we could observe in practice when, for instance, the street-workers asked the clients whether they could bring us – the interns – among them. Respect for clients' space was supposedly one of major topics that were discussed before the employees started working in the street. Personally, I really appreciate it. As is the case in our country, the street-workers [in Poland] do have a duty to report [a criminal offence], although they try not to intervene in their clients' lives without their knowledge. Under legally defined conditions, the police may require the organisation to provide information pertaining to a client. Nonetheless, MOPS Kraków maintains good relations with the police and other institutions who appreciate the mission of the organisation and its street-workers and try not to hamper their work; usually, their cooperation tends to benefit the clients. For example the street-workers have experience of acting on behalf of a client in court proceedings where they had a chance to provide positive testimony on the client's behalf, commend him on what he had accomplished together with the organisation, etc.

The organisation's field social workers in general try to advocate and support their clients whenever possible (e.g. accompanying them on their meeting with authorities on basketball field renovation) and they also pursue active cooperation with other professionals, working frequently with teachers, Labour Office employees, etc. I found as particularly inspiring the frequent use of mobile phones in communication with clients (the street-workers would for instance send out group text messages about their whereabouts to let the clients know where they can meet them.)

## Environment

The organisation's street-workers operate in two large housing estates on Krakow's outskirts working in three-member teams. The street-workers can freely choose how much time they spend on what part of the assigned location, taking into account the current situation, as well as the clients' needs.

During our internship we have visited one of the two suburban housing estates. The street-workers operate mostly in the part and at the cement playground (Photo No.1). We have been really shocked by the city's project, which consisted of moving families of policemen and socially excluded families into a single apartment building. In reality, the policemen with their families occupied the lower 5 stories, while the “troublemaking” families occupied the upper floors. The corridors dividing these two groups had been locked on purpose, which is quite understandable, since the upper part of the building looked dismal (graffitis on the walls in corridors, garbage, etc.) The walls and the elevator were frequently “adorned” by insulting references to the police. In my opinion, this could serve as a powerful negative example of a headless integration effort that, paradoxically enough, leads to increased segregation. As such, it would be useful especially for the politicians who offer populist proposals for fast and easy solutions for all sorts of problems.

The “low-threshold” club premises are used by the clients primarily in the winter and occasionally also during the rest of the year. In the past, some of the clients used to come to the club to skip school. In such cases, the social workers made it clear to the offenders that they were aware of their behaviour and that they would not tolerate it. The main idea is that the clients must bear the consequences of their actions (must stay outdoors when it is cold, etc.)

## Organisation and Staff

The field programme's major advantage consists of the support of the city government, which however, does not mean that the social workers could avoid the necessary communication with the city's representatives. Since it is a city-sponsored entity which enjoys good reputation, the organisation has easier access to funds and can afford to employ more workers.

In the field programme, there are three male and three female employees, which enables contact with clients of both sexes who also get to choose from three workers serving the given neighbourhood. All of the current field social workers have a university degree in such fields as free time education or psychology. Nonetheless, the minimum requirements specify only secondary school education.

Apart from direct work, the street-workers' duties involve writing service reports (number of clients contacted, topics discussed), as well as preparation of events. Each team of field workers disposes of approximately CZK 2000,- a month for events with the clients, which they may use according to [the clients' momentary] needs and interests. I find this latitude in using funds as very pleasant, especially when compared with the situation in our country where we have to plan the use of any funds approximately a year ahead.

## Legislation

In Poland, there is an Act on Social Assistance, which, however, does not even mention street-work or low-threshold clubs. Street-work as a field social work method is mentioned only in ESF document, which regards the service beneficiary as a student and hence requires that the field workers educate and coach him. Similarly to our country, the standards of quality are defined in the implementation regulation related to the act and define the criteria for individual types of service.

In Warsaw, there is an organisation called OSOS, which unites street-workers and strives to define

standards of quality for this type of social work. These, however, are largely irrelevant for MOPS Kraków field programme, because it is financed from ESF funds and hence subject to different requirements. The organisation however uses the association's services to educate its employees.

#### Zuzana Bartoníčková

Between 2003 and 2007 she was a student of an undergraduate programme in Social Anthropology at Pardubice University, focussing primarily on the Roma culture and language. During her studies, she conducted a short-term research in socially excluded communities in Slovakia. Between 2008 and 2009 she worked as a contact worker in Social Programmes of Šance pro Tebe civic association, especially in Futur drop-in centre, also as a head of Activation Programmes and Agora drop-in centre manager. Currently, she is the head of Social Programmes for Children and Youth in Šance pro Tebe.

#### Barbora Brichtová

A social worker. Since 2007, she has been working in the Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic as project manager of MIXklub and MIXáčik projects and MIXklub coordinator. She also works in direct work with the clients. She has graduated from a university programme in social work with focus on psychological care. She has obtained professional experience by working with underprivileged children and youth in the Crisis Centre and Integrated Kindergarten. Currently, she is a student of a two year intensive training programme in systemic therapy and development for helping professions based on Virginia Satire's model. She is a member of working group for socially excluded communities at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. She is a founder and an active board member of the Association of Low-Threshold Programmes for Children and Youth in the Slovak republic.

#### Lenka Čiháčková

Graduate of the Social Work undergraduate programme of West-Bohemian University in Pilsen. She started her professional career as a volunteer in SOS Archa crisis centre, working in the field and conducting debates at elementary and secondary schools. In the Summer of 2009, she worked as a teacher assistant at Youth Detention Centre in Prague – Hodkovičky. Since October 2009, she has been working in non-profit organisation Proxima Sociale as a contact worker and manager of the Krok club. Currently, she is pursuing a master's degree in Social Pedagogy at Masaryk University in Brno.

#### Zdena Filípková

She studied social work at Higher Professional School of Law and Social Work in Prague, as well as special pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Charles University. Since 2006, she has been an employee of Proxima Sociale, working in Krok drop-in centre. Since 2008, she has been a regional coordinator of low-threshold services in Prague 12 district. Since 2010, she has been working as a probation programme lecturer.

#### Patricie Hanzlová

She graduated from the Sociology programme at Faculty of Social Sciences of Masaryk University and from the History programme at Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University. In 2008-2011 worked as the head of Drom drop-in centre in Brno (a drop-in centre in a socially excluded neighbourhood). Currently, she is at a maternity leave. Between 2005 and 2007, she worked as a researcher at the Institute for Research of Reproduction and Integration at Faculty of Social Sciences of Masaryk University in Brno.

#### Martin Holiš

Masaryk University in Brno, sociologists and social worker. Since 1999 has been working in o.s. Ratolest Brno. Has experience with field social work and low threshold programme. A ČAS lecturer and auditor. Also a methodologist, consultant, as well as supervisor.

#### Katarína Chovancová

In 2009, she obtained her master's degree in social work at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in

Nitra. Currently, she is pursuing her doctoral studies at the Department of Social Work and Social Sciences at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra. Since 2008, she has been working in STORM association as a field social worker, working with intravenous drug users and sex workers, since 2010 she has been a coordinator of primary prevention project at primary and secondary schools.

#### Jana Jarošová

Currently, she is finishing her studies of social work at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Masaryk University. Since 2009, she has been working in drop-in centre Club Čas Tišnov.

#### Monika Juríková

Is a graduate of social-pedagogy programme. She has been working at Kopčany Community Centre since its inception. Since 2008, she has been acting as the organisation's manager. Apart from administrative work, she coordinates the social field-work programme and the group for 10–13 year olds and directly participates in various activities.

#### Helena Kotová

She studied social work at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem and subsequently social policy and social work at Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno. She worked in K-Centrum in Litoměřice. Since 2001, she has been working in PVC Club Blansko. Since 2007, she has been acting as the Club's manager. Currently, she is also active in the Czech Streetwork Association's Auditing Committee, lecturing social workers; occasionally she writes various papers and provides methodological guidance.

#### Jaroslav Marek

Has been working in low-threshold services for children and youth for four years. Currently, he is a street-worker in the "Streetwork" programme of Šance pro Tebe [A Chance for You]. In 2008, he participated in a survey mapping the target group presence, which has conducted in preparations of a field programme focussed on youth and young adults between 12–21 years of age in the town of Chrudim.

#### Alena Mirgová

Graduated from a child care programme of Secondary Pedagogical School in Čáslav. Since 2008, she has been working in the field as a Primary Prevention lecturer, as well as a contact and field worker in Kotelna drop-in centre in Zruč nad Sázavou, Prostor civic association. Currently, she is working in a community centre at Roma neighbourhood Zengrovka in Kolín, again as a civic association Prostor employee.

#### Jan Neudert

Studied Special Pedagogy at Masaryk University in Brno. Since June 2009, he has been working for Sdružení Podané ruce o.s. [Helping Hands Association] as a contact worker in Low-Threshold Club PVC Brno.

#### Ivana Pitková

A psychologist. Since 2009, she has been working in the Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic as project manager of MIXklub and MIXáček projects and MIXklub coordinator, where she also works directly with the clients. Together with her colleague, she leads a group of 13-18 year of children with hyperactivity, attention and behaviour disorders in the framework of the Centre for Families in Crisis project. In the past, she worked as a recruitment coordinator in an employment agency and she has experience from several internships abroad. She is a student of a four year intensive training programme in psychotherapy for a closed group of future psychotherapists based on Virginia Satire's model.

#### Tomáš Příhoda

Since 2002, he has been working in social work with youth, mostly as a drop-in centre, field and contact worker. Currently, he is working for Proxima Sociale civic association as a field-worker and music practice room manager.

#### Jindřich Racek

Is a graduate of Special Pedagogy programme of the Charles University Faculty of Education. Since 1995, he has been working in low threshold social services as a contact worker at Proxima Sociale's contact centre Krok and subsequently as a manager of contact centre Jižní Pól. Since 2004, he has been chairman and subsequently director of Czech Streetwork Association. Currently, he is working for Lumos – an international organisation, which supports de-institutionalisation of the care for at-risk children and youth; he is also a social services inspector.

#### Lenka Staníková

Since September 2006, she has been working as a contact worker at PVC drop-in centre in Blansko, which operates under the auspices of Brno civic association Podané ruce. In 2009, she graduated from a BA programme in Social Pedagogy at Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín. She worked as a lecturer at Czech Streetwork Association (ČAS) courses on Good Practice in Low-Threshold Services. She is a ČAS lecturer and currently is finishing the ČAS Contact Work Training Programme.

#### Martin Svoboda

Studied middle school pedagogy (Czech Language and Civic Education), sociology and gender studies at two universities. He has been working in social services since 2006. Currently, he is working as the head of Centre of Field Programmes of Pardubice Region at Laxus civic association. He underwent courses e.g. in Complex Crises Intervention and Motivational Conversations. Currently, he is a second year student of a five year self-experience training programme in dynamic psychotherapy.

#### Ladislav Vondruška

Currently, he is finishing his undergraduate studies in Special Pedagogy for Educational Workers at Palacký University in Olomouc. He has been working in social services since 2006, when he started working in a weekday care centre for mentally handicapped. Since November 2009, he has been working in the Contact Centre of Prostor civic association as a contact worker and counsellor.

#### Lucie Voláková

Graduate of a social work programme at Higher Professional School of Law and Social Work in Prague 10 and of Social Pathology and Prevention Programme of Hradec Králové University Faculty of Education. During her six-year career in low-threshold services she worked successively for three civic associations (B-SIDE, Prev-Centrum, and Proxima Sociale). Since May 2011, she has been working as a project manager in VIA Foundation.

#### Jozef Vycpálek

During his university studies, he worked in the years 2007-2011 in Bratislava for the Children's Fund of Slovak Republic in the MIXClub drop-in centre, and in the Streetwork social field service programme for homeless people run by Proti prúdu civic association. Since 2011, he has been working in Podané ruce civic association as a field social worker of Multipurpose Drug Service in Blansko region and in the daytime psychotherapeutic centre Elysium, working in the project "First Aid for Pathologic Gamblers and their Families."

### Vymětalová Zdenka

She graduated from Social Pedagogy programme at Faculty of Humanities and from Management of Non-Market and Social Services at Faculty of Multimedia Communications of Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín. For the past five years, she has been working in Unie Kompas civic association in Zlín as the head of social field work programme for children and youth. Previously, she worked for four years as a volunteer in Tulip drop-in centre in Uherské Hradiště.

### Michal Zahradník

Graduated from the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University in Olomouc majoring in Czech Language and History. He has been professionally involved with contact work and low-threshold services since 1995. In 1995-1999 he worked at Chrudim District Authority as a social assistant and social prevention specialist. Between 1999 and 2003 he was founding and managing HR services in Pardubice Region (Contact Centre and Field Programmes at KHK civic association, specialist – consultant for the development of KHK services). 2003-2011 director of Šance pro Tebe civic association in Chrudim (currently the head of the development of quality of services at ŠpT civic association.) Czech Streetwork Association (ČAS) lecturer (Contact Work Training, Mapping of the Needs, Foundations of Low-Threshold Services, etc.) Supervisor and junior lecturer of ČAS Supervision Training Programme. Member of ČAS Ethics and Supervision Committee.

### Simona Zatloukalová

Has been working at PROSTOR PRO civic association in Hradec Králové, formerly for 7 years as a social worker at KLÍDEK Youth Club, and for the last year as KLÍDEK coordinator and internships coordinator. She graduated from Hradec Králové University majoring in Social Work and Social Policy programme. She underwent a 4.5 year long psychotherapeutic training programme REMEDIUM I focussed on dynamic psychotherapy.

### **Czech Association Outreach-work (Street Work)**

is a professional association of experts and outreach services and youth drop-in centres in the Czech Republic. The main aim of the Czech Association Outreach-work is to increase the quality of services and develop the field. The association puts stress on ethical part of social work.

#### **Czech Association Outreach-work brings to members, non-members and whole community:**

- informative and professional advisory service
- education and supervision of social workers
- Public relation campaigns about problems of street children and street youths, drug addicts, homeless, people living in socially excluded areas and prostitutes
- lobby at government institutions
- seeks for donations and divides the donations among the outreach services
- participates on a research and a development designed on clients need working methods and evaluation systems
- provides evaluation of service quality
- oversees ethical matters in social work
- guarantees a quality of services to its members

[www.streetwork.cz](http://www.streetwork.cz)

Contact: [asociace@streetwork.cz](mailto:asociace@streetwork.cz)

