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Streetwork Good Practice 2022

Contents

Study visit report: Gangway, Berlin, Germany 5

Study visit report: HNMKY and Aseman Lapset, Helsinki, Finland 19

Study visit report: Zavod BOB, Ljubljana, Slovenia 34

Study visit report: Castricum, Middelburg, Moerdijk, the Netherlands 53

Study visit report: MONO, Tallinn, Estonia 68

Study visit report: PROSTOR PRO, Hradec Králové, Czech Republic 84

Study visit report: Beztíže, Cesta integrace and Neposeda, Prague, Czech Republic 103

Study visit report: Maják, Liberec, Czech Republic 121

Study visit report: Ratolest Brno, PVC Klub Blansko and Klub Lavina, Brno, Czech Republic 145

Study visit to Vrtule, Pacific, Jedna Trojka and Jizni Pol Prague, Czech Republic 157

Streetwork – Good Practice 2022

The following text was created by the Czech streetwork association, z.s. and it is a compilation of reports of social workers and youth workers who participated in exchange study visits within the project “Schools and (social) streetworkers – the same target group, the same goals”, number 2019-2-CZ01-KA205-061588.

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This publication is intended as a source of information for everyone in the field of youth work, and especially for those who work with young people with fewer opportunities – social workers, streetworkers, outreach workers, social educators, youth workers.

The publication brings information about good practice in the Czech Republic viewed by the eyes of colleagues from Germany, Estonia, Finland, Slovenia 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 cooperation.

We would like to thank all those who participated in the development of this electronic publication, especially our foreign partners – **Gangway**, **Tallinna Haridusamet**, **HNMKY**, **Zavod BOB** and **BVJONG**.

Study visit report: Gangway, Berlin, Germany

Date: 4.–8. 10. 2021

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Introduction

The study visit took place from the 4th of October to the 8th of October 2021 in the Berlin-based organisation Gangway e.V; a total of five workers from the Czech Republic took part in the study visit. Germany is a federal republic and Berlin is both an independent federal state and the capital city. It is important to understand that in the context of social policy, Berlin is governed by laws that may be different from other federal states. Political representation thus strongly influences the way in which these organisations operate. At the moment, the system there is influenced by the Social Democrats and the Greens who are more supportive of social services and perceive their importance and contribution to society. Social services in other parts of Germany (primarily in the Eastern part) are often underfunded and workers are poorly paid, according to the staff we met. We were also told that streetwork is not sufficiently covered in rural areas. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are funded by the city and Berlin city districts and a small part is paid by donors.

Gangway focuses only on outreach social work and has been operating for around thirty years (since 1990), it employs about 120 people and is the largest streetwork organisation in Europe.

The director of the organisation has been working in her position for many years and has made a significant contribution to negotiating good working conditions for the organisation and for the employees. The management is represented by the director and three managers. Workers in the teams feel that the management trusts them and they are given quite a bit of freedom in their work, for example they can flexibly adjust their working hours and their working times are not dependant on registration of services as it is in the Czech Republic. They write a report on what is happening in the locality every month and they create annual statistical reports, whereas we report on all our interviews with clients. Gangway produces one report for the whole organisation.

Not only social workers but also other professions such as educators can work with the target group in the organisation. However, the organisation primarily employs social workers and they are paid according to their level of educational attainment. According to the current law, workers must achieve a certain level of education or complete courses to be able to work as streetworkers, otherwise, they have a lower salary.

Gangway primarily works with young people aged 14 to 27, although this age range is only indicative and they can work outside it. Within the organisational structure there are twelve teams who work in almost every city district in Berlin. Sometimes two teams work in one district (such as in the largest district Mitte with 40 – 50,000 inhabitants). Every city district is different; for example, East Berlin has a higher population density and not as many cultural opportunities but there is a lot of 'street life'. West Berlin was created by the unification of villages in the 19th century, and is made up of different communities with a lot of foreigners. The area called Treptow-Köpenick is home to many socially disadvantaged people and is also a popular city district for students and people living alternative lifestyles ("hipsters"). Berlin as a cultural centre is vibrant and ever-changing.

Gangway does not itself operate any clubs (i. e. low-threshold centres for children & youngsters), as other organisations in the Czech Republic usually do, however, it cooperates with other organisations that do run such clubs. The basic principles that workers observe are free will, anonymity, empowerment of clients, non-cooperation with the police, and if the client wishes, cooperation with their parents. These are quite similar to the principles we follow in the Czech Republic.

In some districts Gangway work a lot with young people of Arab and Turkish origin, however, it is quite difficult to find streetworkers who have the relevant language skills. They often address the topics of racism and xenophobia with clients.

Gangway works on projects focussing on various areas, these include:

Street College

Street College is aimed at young people who are struggling to complete their education or who have not completed a school education. The project helps clients to complete their studies outside the mainstream educational system; without this support clients would have no educational qualifications and would face difficulties on the labour market. Street college is based on the individual needs of clients. They can choose any subject in which they need support (mathematics, languages, etc.) with the goals of the collaboration based on their individual needs.

More of the good practice is described below.

JobInn

JobInn is a project where workers help clients to prepare for employment: they offer help with CV writing and with job searches for suitable positions.[1]

Cooperation with other entities

Gangway also cooperates with other organisations and institutions, for example they organise workshops and meetings focussing on various practical topics (e. g. substance use, etc.). According to the workers this type of cooperation works well. However, they do not consider the cooperation with schools sufficiently good, which will be described at the end of this report.

Gangway staff can accompany clients to employment offices, to police stations or to Youth Welfare Offices. In Germany the "Youth law" (i. e."Protection of Young Persons Act) is divided into work with young people in clubs and social work with young people. The Youth Welfare Office reports to the Federal State of Berlin. If workers see that violence is taking place against a child, they are obliged to report it to the Youth Welfare Office. This authority then investigates the case and decides whether it is necessary to contact the police. The Youth Welfare Office is responsible for people under 18 years[2] of age (especially for housing and education). Streetworkers work with them when clients are living on the streets or in danger of becoming homeless.

They also work with the Crisis Intervention Centre when clients are in acute danger – the clients are able to stay for a while in the centre and don't have to immediately find alternative housing. The Intervention Centre usually works with youngsters under 18, but the above mentioned institutions are able to work with people up to the age of 21 if necessary.

1 Note Gangway: This work happens in a streetwork context as well, but is focussing on job perspectives.

2 Note Gangway: This can be extended until the age of 21, if needed.

Sharing good practice and experience

This section of the report will detail the experiences we gained during our study visit, describing what we did on the individual days.

Street college

Street College was originally set up as a 3-year project with private funding, and is likely to be subsidised financially by the government from January 2022. As part of this project, workers support young people to complete their schooling; for example, by preparing them for exams. Clients can choose their field of study and when they feel ready they can take the exams (which are held twice a year). Mostly they assist clients who are living on the streets, children traumatised by the school system, young mothers and refugees (these are often refugees from Syria or Afghanistan who do not speak German well). The project is not known throughout the whole of Berlin, as it is not well publicised (they do not have the capacity for it), but children and young people from all over Berlin and beyond come here – to talk, meet new people and get to know the environment. Different classes are organised for clients based on demand (there must be a minimum of three people to open a class) and these include: song writing, electronic music production, singing, audio, film making, acting, drawing, graphic design, “image building” (if they want to become influencers on social media). They also organise summer camps for clients.

They also cooperate with the juvenile prison and the project NY Bronx connection[3]; they organise exchange stays and discuss topics such as racism, etc. In addition, politicians regularly come to the college to discuss the school system and the need for change. Street College combines school, youth work and cultural work, which is quite difficult to fund. They have no contract with their clients, who instead enrol on different courses via an online form. However, they generate daily statistics documenting activities, conflicts and their resolution or group conversations. Most children pass the first level and a few fail the second level, but everyone eventually gets an education. There are three tutors in the Street College, they are employed on a work performance agreement (they are not paid as much

[3] https://gangway.de/bronxberlinconnection-es-geht-los/


INTERSPORT
INTERSPORT

here as they would be for one-on-one tutoring elsewhere), and they also work a lot with volunteers. In Germany it is possible to work as a volunteer for a year after graduation and be paid from public funds. Once a week a meeting is organised with the tutors and the volunteers. which is focussed on their personal growth. There is no strict hierarchy in the centre – everyone works according to their own discretion and capability.

Cooperation with school and club – Hohenschönhausen Region

Grüner Campus Malchow (school social work) / Hohenschönhausen region

Even though Gruner Campus Malchow is the largest school in Berlin with 1,700 pupils, from Gangway only a team of nine people work there, of which four are social workers and five are educators who focus more on leisure time. They work a lot on the basis of systemic therapy; some workers have undergone training and some have only a basic knowledge. Workers with therapeutic training work with children only through counselling; unfortunately there is no time to provide therapy to pupils. According to the social worker, it would be useful for each child to have a social worker dealing with daily life and a therapist for specific problems, which is useful when working with trauma. Pupils are often referred to follow-up services in psychology and therapy. The school has a cafeteria for pupils and teachers, staffed by social workers. There is also a room for counselling if pupils want to deal with something individually, or practical sessions that take place in the cafeteria kitchen. They strive to work as a team, without strictly divided responsibilities, everything is driven by the needs of the young people. If a child is not attending school then they hold team conferences with teachers, the head teacher and social workers.

Social services employ the social team, who often work with families as well. The city allocates the budget for workers directly to the school, and the school then decides who should receive the funding (e. g. they can terminate cooperation with them after one year). For example, they run projects such as “young carers” designed for children who have to look after ill or disabled parents, providing support for children so they are able to talk to someone about their situation. They first educate teachers to be able to recognise such children in the classroom and then contact social workers. Prevention weeks are organised in the school where external organisations or institutions

are invited and topics such as drug prevention are discussed. More and more teachers are now consulting with external experts. During the time of Covid-19 restrictions, the school provided tutoring for children from socially disadvantaged families.

Fullhouse (youth centre)

We visited this low-threshold centre for children and youth for only a short time. The worker gave us a brief tour of the club (including the kitchen, gym and bike repair shop) and explained to us how the club works. It seemed to be based on very similar principles and values to the clubs in the Czech Republic. The club worker shared with us his experience from the Covid-19 pandemic when various measures were introduced. Clients had to register and wear face masks when attending the club, which discouraged some clients (hence it led to a loss of clients). The club is strategically located in close proximity to the school, but it is frequented by children and young people living in the neighbourhood rather than by pupils of the school. Some clubs had decided to close during the Covid-19 pandemic and hold community events outdoors instead.

Cooperation with schools and Gangway

As part of the cooperation, Gangway implemented social skills workshops (e.g. violence prevention by the team Hohenschönhausen) for seventh to eighth grade elementary school students. The Gangway team “Hohenschönhausen” employs an additional worker for violence prevention (unfortunately this position is only paid from year to year). They introduced this project but found it difficult to transfer streetwork experience to the school system, especially the principle of it being the child’s own free decision to participate, as, for instance, children often consider youth workers to be teachers. They eventually reconsidered the workshops and terminated the regular cooperation. The original intention was to visit classrooms once a month. The schools are grateful when anyone from outside comes up with an activity for the pupils. A lot of energy was put into the project, but the result was not favourable. For example, they created group prevention activities, but it was difficult to reflect the experience in the school premises in a way that created a sufficiently confidential environment.

They cooperate with schools in other ways: with social workers, or by organising workshops for children who are interested, e.g. in the club, but after schoolvhours. They cooperate with clubs in the same way, if clients are interested in given topics. 4For example, one of the prevention activities proved to be a good practice, where workers prepared a bag with imitations of different addictive substances and children took them out of the bag randomly and workers asked what they took out and what it meant to them, how they felt about it. Gangway also organises different trips for clients, prevention days and presentations of the service in schools, similar to the practices in the Czech Republic.

Cooperation with Berliner Jungs

In Berliner Jungs (an independent organisation), we met workers who work with sexually abused boys or those who have experience with some type of sexual violence. The organisation tries to work with children's homes, refugee camps, clubs and other entities. The workers emphasised the importance of their work as sexual violence is mostly associated with girls, not boys. Thus, part of their work includes breaking down this stereotype and the taboo around the issue of sexual abuse among boys. Sexual abuse often manifests itself in clients through increased aggression, non-communicativeness and is generally related to changed behaviour. These boys can contact the organisation, if needed. The workers also run workshops and counselling sessions for professionals (teachers, social workers, etc.) within their city district.

The other three city districts in Berlin receive extra funding for the organisation and employ an additional worker; they are the only ones in Berlin who work with boys in this way. The workers usually visit the clients. A similar project has been set up for girls and it is a bit more well-known. They create prevention activities, such as sex education in schools, clubs and refugee camps. The purpose is to explain that consent is required for any act associated with sexual context. A similar type of education is provided in the Czech Republic by the Konsent organisation.

[4] Note Gangway: The whole concept here has changed, we don't offer "social skill workshops" any more. Instead we focus on drug prevention and safer use and offer workshops or counselling in youth clubs.

Berliner Jungs was originally a project in the 1990s working primarily with children at-risk (street boy prostitution). Then, as part of a university research project, the experience of young boys on the street with sexual violence and harassment was surveyed. They discovered that many boys were confronted with this issue. According to yearly statistics, the number of young boys is increasing, which is probably related to the fact that the topic is more known and talked about. Boys experience sexual violence in institutions (churches, schools, etc.). We also addressed the topic of cooperation with the police. According to the workers, it is sometimes better not to cooperate with the police, however, sometimes the young person themself wants it. Meetings with the police usually take place twice a year. According to the workers there is not enough evidence when investigating sexual violence, usually only 2% of the crimes are punished. There is a risk of re-traumatisation of children and the whole investigation process may take years. Neither Berliner Jung nor the child often has information about the investigation and has no control over when the police are involved. In Berlin, there are so-called ”open flats” – apartments where children and young people can stay or live with the permission of the owner/landlord (an adult), nevertheless staying in these apartments is associated with many risks (sexual abuse or substance abuse). For example, in one case a man accepted a teenager to his apartment where they were abusing substances; these young people were also visiting the club. Social workers then informed Berliner Jungs about it. Workers often deal with complicated cases where children do not know what to do, are poor and have nobody else to help them. Some don’t even want to talk about their situation because they are afraid of the police and of getting in trouble.

Workers are obliged to report cases only if they become aware of credible information of crimes being planned, not about past crimes (which is different in the Czech Republic). Perpetrators can be punished in Germany for up to 30 years after the crime occurs; however, this is difficult to prove when sexual violence is involved.

Sex education takes place through role playing, which is effective for building good relationships with children and they may experience how difficult it is to tell an adult what is going on. Children learn that they can say no, leave or ask for help. It is important for them to know that they are not to blame for what is happening. Berliner Jungs informs other organisations that it is possible to call them anytime when they feel any child is in discomfort. They do not cooperate with self-help groups; according to workers, there are quite a few of

them in Berlin. Victims organise themselves in the organisation and counselling for parents is also provided. If anybody wants to work in this organisation, they must be qualified as streetworkers, social workers and have attended a course on working with traumatized children. However, this is not a therapeutic training. An internal rule states that only workers who have attended this course may provide sexual violence counselling; others may provide sexual education only. An annual report of thirty to forty pages is the only report they produce; their work is more flexible.

Streetwork

An example of good practice – streetwork represented an integral part of the study visit. The principle is that workers go out in pairs. In the Czech Republic, different services work differently, but the recommendation is that streetwork is better done in pairs. In Berlin we made a “walking tour” in an area called Neukölln. However, this was not an example of direct work with clients. The Neukölln district is known for its diversity; many people of different ethnicities and nationalities live here, as well as many artists. It is quite a popular part of Berlin. Within the city district, we walked through different informal places where children and young people may be present. We were told that especially younger children who are alone in the city feel threatened by other groups of people (e. g. people under the influence of substances). For this reason, many children do not travel by underground train, for example.

Streetwork Treptow-Köpenick

Another example of good practice was streetwork in the Treptow-Köpenick area. This is the site of “Fan project”: every football club in Germany in the first, second and third division is obliged to have a team of about three social workers. It was established here in 2014 for the young fans of the 1. FC Union Berlin football club. Every big club has a team and these teams mediate processes with the police. A gradual de-escalation of conflicts is being achieved. The teams work with groups of so-called ultras fans (they visit other parts of the city with them and are present at youth events). Fans can come to see them at the stadium. The project is funded by the German league

and it is usually funded in thirds in other German cities: one third funded by the city, one third by the league and one third by the federal state. The fans then contact the workers themselves and invite them to various events. The fans, i. e. this target group, are mainly socially disadvantaged Germans, people who are at risk of poverty and are being pushed out to the more peripheral parts of the city.

There are many “forgotten and abandoned places” in this city district (such as a bunker, tunnel, etc.). Young people experiment with addictive substances in these places. Gangway rents a gym at a school for clients every Friday afternoon (they organise sporting events, especially in the winter). Young people between 18 to 27 years of age do not receive any special assistance from the government and they have fewer opportunities to get funding from the Labour Office compared to those under 18. The team is currently working here with about four larger groups and about 20 clients with individual support. Some teams work with more groups and communities. For example, their work resulted in a street football tournament with Neukölln. Normally, these “fans” would not meet each other at all (as there are many foreigners in Neukölln). They also once took a client who is an extremist on a trip to Neukölln to “see foreigners with his own eyes”. Clients often don’t even look beyond their own district, they don’t have any personal experiences. Alternatively, they take clients on trips abroad to experience being “foreigners” themselves.

Conclusion and comparison

The study visit in Berlin was a really beneficial experience that revealed some differences as well as some common practices. We believe that the approach of how they work with clients and the principles of social work are practically similar. However, the context in which they work is different, i. e. the social cultural context as well as the political situation in the area. Social work in the Czech Republic is often criticized by the public; the profession is not prestigious or well rewarded (financially or symbolically). Clients, as well as social workers in the Czech Republic, may feel stigmatised and unsupported by wider society. We perceive that in the Czech Republic there is a lower level of trust in the social policy system and the instruments are burdened with unclear funding or too much bureaucracy and

administration. It has been beneficial to share our work experience with other actors; we were particularly interested in the Berliner Jungs organisation, which is quite unique in its focus, but also determined by the size of the area it operates in.

It was interesting to note that there is different legislation - if workers in Germany become aware of a crime, they are only obliged to report it if it's in preparation, they are not obliged to report crimes that have already been committed.

Berlin and the individual city districts enjoy a greater degree of public trust, leading to a greater degree of freedom in terms of the fulfilment of the tasks. Czech social workers must keep careful records and consistently report every contact with clients; they must constantly justify their work. In the Czech Republic, social work is underfunded; support from the political representation is lower. In Berlin, the Social Democrats and Greens are represented in politics and strongly support this area. However, Gangway is a large organisation with a long tradition, and the workers themselves emphasised that the position was earned by the director. Workers pointed out that the city in which they operate is multicultural and very diverse. Other ethnic minorities, migrants and asylum seekers are more widely represented in Germany. The Czech Republic has a rather restrictive migration policy and the diversity is much less evident here. Czech society is rather hostile towards foreigners and also towards minorities that have lived in the territory of the Czech Republic for more than several generations (e. g. Roma, but also Ukrainians, Vietnamese and others face prejudice). The Roma in particular are at a greater risk of poverty, lack of access to education in the Czech Republic and segregation in large cities. However, workers mentioned that their clients also encounter various prejudices, stereotypes and xenophobia.

It was really positive to see that social work in Berlin is at such a high level and that workers can fully focus on work with clients (focusing less on administration). Of course they also face different challenges, as we saw when we visited one of the local schools. Based on the experience, it is quite difficult to set up suitable cooperation with schools, as the schools themselves and the education system may be outdated, fossilized in some respect. However, our study visits gives us hope and also a meaning that sharing experiences and good practice is one of the paths everybody takes.



Study visit report: HNMKY and Aseman Lapset, Helsinki, Finland

Date: 27. 9.–1. 10. 2021

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The study visit took place under Erasmus+ from September 27th to October 1st, 2021. Our host organisation was the Finnish branch of the international YMCA (NMKY) organisation and Aseman Lapset, an organisation providing outreach programmes for youth and also street mediation.

September 27th

Aseman Lapset

Aseman Lapset – translated as Children of the Station – is a project of Helsinki Central Railway Station that began in 1983. At that time the station was, and still is, a popular meeting place for local youth. A programme to reduce the impact of risky behaviour by youngsters and effective ways of dealing with such risky behaviour was gradually developed. The principle of conflict mediation was also developed here, which later became a service that operates across the country with the ability to resolve a wide range of conflicts and cases. Since 2013, a mediation service has been provided in the Kamppi department store by Aseman Lapset streetworkers. They described the department store (exaggerating) as the largest low-threshold club.

Mediation service as a tool

Introduction

The Helsinki Mediation Service started its activities in 1987. Between 1990 and 2017 it operated as part of the Helsinki City Social Services Authority; it currently reports to the city council. The city contributes two-thirds of the budget for its activities, the

remaining third comes from private donors and from the profits of the state betting office which donates part of its profit to non-profit organisations; this is similar to the way Sazka used to operate in the Czech environment by offering support for sports activities.

Objectives

The core work of the Helsinki Mediation Service is mediating crimes and offences and reaching a settlement agreement between victims and offenders, without lengthy and demanding criminal proceedings. The most common offences are property crimes or offences such as theft, assault, defamation, threats, etc.

Values

The mediation services operate on the values of accountability, respect, human relations and equality. These values include principles such as safety, voluntariness, trust, empathy, understanding, self-determination, etc.

Governing legislation and accessibility

Since 2006, the mediation service has been anchored by its own law and has become a service operating nationwide. It currently operates in 18 areas, with over 100 mediation counsellors and 1,200 mediation volunteers providing their services.

Principles and cooperation

In Helsinki, over 71% of cases are initiated by the police and over 27% by the prosecutor.

Mediation services are offered through the active addressing of stakeholders. The impartial position of the mediator (not being in the role of the police, the parent nor the victim) when trying to resolve the crime in question is also beneficial. The final agreement may eventually be recognized by the court, as some cases do progress this far.

Reach

There were 9,762 mediated cases in Finland in 2019, with 859 cases in Helsinki; compared to over 2,000 cases in Helsinki the previous year. Cooperation was established in 70% of cases, in which an agreement was reached in 89% of cases, most often in the form of an apology or financial compensation.

Working with minors

There is a community service programme for minors up to the age of 18. It is conditioned by the age of the offender and the city being a prosecutor. Mediators can work in any city district for up to a maximum of 40 hours per case.

Partner relationships

Only the police or prosecutor can offer mediation in these matters and they offer and recommend this service. Cooperation may be terminated if conditions are not met. It is not offered for those who have committed repeated violent crimes.

Advantages of mediation

Mediation brings benefits to the parties, both the victim and the perpetrator. For victims, it allows for the naming of the consequences of the act, for reflecting emotions, for coming to terms with fear and anxiety, the possibility to forgive the act, and finally it enables a quick and easy way to compensate the damage. For perpetrators, it allows for learning about the consequences of the act and brings a possibility of taking material and moral responsibility. Last but not least, it also serves as a tool to prevent recidivism.

Job prerequisites

The basic volunteer training lasts 60 hours and includes the theoretical basis of mediation, an overview of the legal and penal system, communication and mediation exercises.

Mediators with at least two years of experience can then be selected for further training in the area of mediation between couples.



Aseman Lapset



Aseman Lapset

Meeting with a representative of the police

The police act as initiator and active player in mediation cases, as was confirmed to us during a personal meeting with a representative of the police. The dual role of a police officer and social worker was described to us. This active involvement has been in place for over 10 years and the city contributes to it from its budget.



Meeting with a representative of the police

Walkers Cafe

This project was founded by the Aseman Lapset organisation. It is an 'open café' for young people who can find a pleasant and welcoming environment. The café was very attractive as a place to meet and spend time, which was proven by quite a few young people being there during our visit, some playing chess or talking to each other. We discussed with the worker the rules for entering and staying in the café – similar to those applied in the Czech low-threshold centres for children and youth – and also an outreach work performed in the Café. Prices were minimal, even when compared to Czech conditions.

It was interesting to see that there is no registration or cooperation contracting with visitors, everything works on a free basis.

September 28th

YMCA

On the second day we were introduced to our host organisation NMKY, which has been operating in Helsinki since 1889. Its mission is wide, starting with the development and organisation of hobbies and active leisure time, up to the education of children and adults, as well as help with integration, language training, etc. It is interesting that there are two official languages in Finland: Finnish and Swedish, due to their shared history.

They focus a lot on the development of basketball, which is popular in Finland - and which is also expensive to practice, our Finnish hosts told us it was one of the most expensive sports to do. Social skills are also strengthened through sport; the aim is not to produce professional athletes.

As part of the leisure activities they do outreach work with young people, organise evening basketball training sessions and matches, scout groups, etc.

NMKY run day clubs for families, after-school clubs and clubs for young families. They also run workshops, a club to help with finding and keeping a job (as described later), development programmes of multicultural cooperation and other programmes in schools, in school clubs and outreach work for youngsters and young adults.

An interesting feature is the location of one of the basketball courts on the roof of the YMCA building; the YMCA also operates the Arthur Hotel (where we stayed) in the same premises.

Youth Centre in Vantaa

This is a type of sheltered housing that has been operating here for 27 years. There are 5 such facilities for families and children in Finland. All drugs and alcohol are prohibited in the Centre. Active cooperation by clients in solving their own problems represents a condition of stay. Legal guardians must agree with the stay for minors under the age of 18. The Centre is a safe place where clients are motivated to acquire standard habits.

Heureka

Our Finnish hosts arranged a visit to the Heureka Museum in the afternoon; the Museum was an example of a modern concept of the institution, which was demonstrated by presentation forms of various exhibitions aimed at engaging both children and adults. There were exhibitions on mankind, the universe, wood and manufacturing industries, etc., all designed in one large interactive exhibition attractive for visitors. This visit confirmed our existing impression of the high level of public institutions.



Youth Centre in Vantaa



Youth Centre in Vantaa

September 29th

Malmi

Malmi is a suburb of Helsinki with a large immigrant community. Our guide referred to the area as a ghetto. For this reason, it is quite logical that youth programmes and services are concentrated here.

Basketball

There is a basketball training centre in Malmi where we met a young worker, originally from Afghanistan, who told us about the basketball training sessions he is responsible for, which are organised by the YMCA. He gave us a good example of how it connects the majority and the minority.

Clubs at schools in Malmi

We visited two school clubs in Malmi. Schools primarily address non-profit organisations that then became the operators of the clubs; schools run the clubs themselves only when they cannot find an outside operator.

The teacher who spoke to us considers the club as an all-round benefit, allowing different topics to be transferred from schools directly to this environment and to the workers. Information sharing or mutual consultation between teacher and pupil can take place only with parental consent. A disadvantage may be the blurring of the distinction between the school and the club, teachers and social workers.

The club is designed not only for 750 pupils but for a wide range of young people in that age group.


Head Coach
4 Primary Schools
Optional courses
Head coach training
Life skills

Malmi



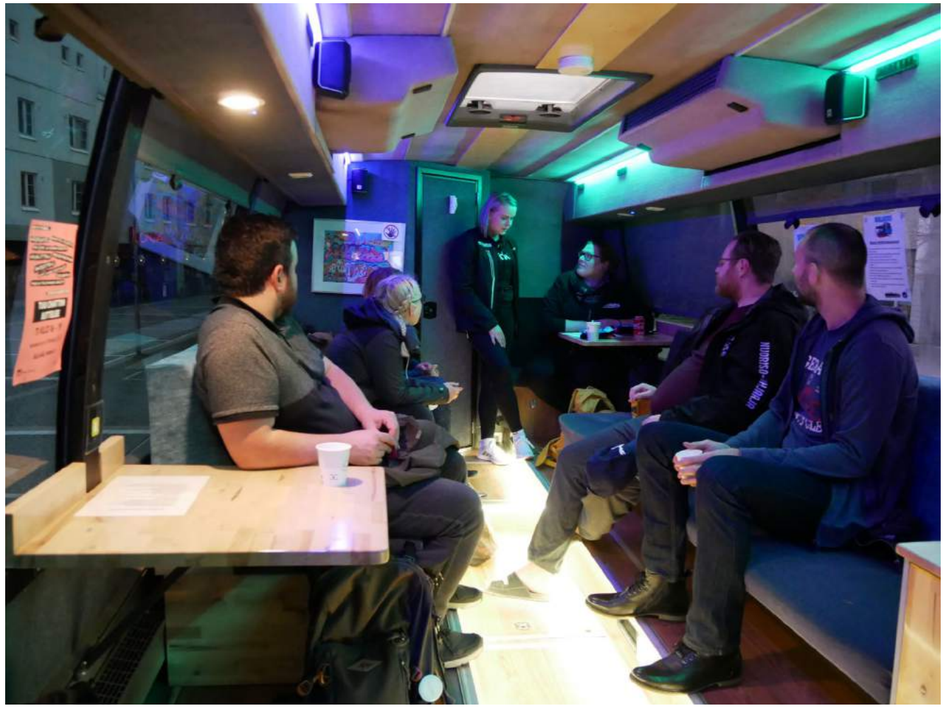
Malmi

September 30th

Walkers bus

This is another of the projects operated by Aseman Lapset. It is a low-threshold bus operating on the outskirts of Helsinki (Vantaa and Malmi, mentioned above), and this project has now been underway for thirteen years. Apart from this bus, Aseman Lapset operates several caravans that also travel outside Helsinki and provide their services right in the places where young people naturally meet and hang out.

They stay at one location for approximately two months. The service is designed for youngsters aged between 13 and 18 who often demonstrate risky behaviour, this is similar to what we know in the Czech Republic. It operates on a similar basis to Walkers Café, with social workers being present, and offers low cost refreshments and a comfortable environment. It is open 3 days a week and receives 30–40 visitors per day.



Walkers bus



Walkers bus

October 1st

YMCA – Youth Club

This project, which operates in the YMCA building in the centre of Helsinki, provides employment and qualifications for unemployed youngsters up to the age of 28 who are interested in doing social work as their profession. When YMCA workers start to cooperate with such a youngster, he/she can claim benefits from the social system. So actually he/she is learning/gaining a qualification and at the same time gets “paid” from the state via social benefits.

Clients can then spend a maximum of six months gaining qualifications and potential future employment in one of the clubs in schools, or as youth workers in activation activities, basketball, training, etc. The Club operates three days a week and clients can spend a maximum of 4 hours there. A typical client is a woman or man aged between 20 and 24.

Inspiration and good practice

Good cooperation among several people from different fields, who meet with young people with a common goal to address their issues, can definitely serve as an inspiration for us. We found that individual institutions communicated with each other using a partnership approach. The way mediation is applied and available on a large scale and actively offered and promoted represents an example of good practice. We have been able to see it from several angles, both from the workers themselves and from the institutions that consider this form of cooperation to be common; this relationship of trust is deeply rooted and systematically supported in Finnish society.

A fundamental approach, also in terms of prevention, that we could observe was the promotion of active leisure, especially with regard to sport, which is developed more in terms of skills rather than a competition aimed at winning. In doing so, children are instilled with principles of fair play and mutual respect also outside of the playground, etc.

It was a great inspiration to see how new workers are recruited among the clients and how they are motivated to participate in youth programmes, to get qualification during such cooperation and, as mentioned above, such involvement is reflected in the social assistance of the state.

Study visit report: Zavod BOB, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Date: 7.–11. 6. 2021

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Miloš Březina (Prostor plus, o.p.s.), Jáchym Elliot Kolouch (Proxima Sociale, o.p.s.), Magdaléna Matoušková (Proxima Sociale, o.p.s.), Anna Švarcová (YMCA Praha), Renáta Turoňová (Bunkr, o.p.s.)

Introduction

this report represents a summary of all the activities and findings from the study visit to Ljubljana, which took place from the 7th to the 11th of June 2021 and was attended by five social workers from all over the Czech Republic. The study visit took place mainly in the Zavod BOB organization, in cooperation with other organizations who do streetwork.

The workers of Zavod BOB prepared a busy programme for us. We had the opportunity to visit all of the places where they work in Ljubljana (streetwork in Metelkova Street, the LivadaLAB community garden, streetwork in Savskasreda, the ULCA Youth Centre), some of us participated in an online workshop with the MC ZOS organization, we had a chance to see how the Ljubljana organization Skala works, and on the last day we became part of the NEXTival festival, a youth festival for young people production organized every year by Zavod BOB.

Zavod BOB – introduction to the organization

Guides: Matjaž, Anja Manja, Nežka
Participants of the study visit: all

Zavod BOB is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 2007. Its mission is to ensure the active participation in social events of those youngsters who do not have a public voice or whose voice is not heard.

Zavod BOB focuses on non-formal education, streetwork with youth, community work and cultural events. The activities, including streetwork, are not registered as social services. Children and young people are not called clients, but participants in activities and projects. According to the legislation, by law, they should work with youths aged 15 - 29. However, in practice the age range of participants is much wider, namely 10-35 years, with focus on young people at risk aged 15-25

The activities of this organization are covered by the Ministry of Education and also by the local municipality, i.e. Ljubljana's Youth Department/Section of the Municipality. Of course this also includes financing. Furthermore, specific projects are also funded from other sources.

Note: Looking for similarities with the Czech system, we would find it in activities taking place in community centres, perhaps in schools or open club activities, in the activities of some libraries, and of course in the activities of various non-profit organizations.

Background of the organization

The organization uses a 2-storey building that serves as a base for the workers and also for some activities (BOB). It also rents space in the underpass of the train station (Youth center ULCA) and a large plot of land outside of the city centre for the community garden project (LivadaLAB).

Staff

The work team is currently composed of 10–12 employees with one male employee complementing the female team. Most members of the team work full-time. Most of the staff joined the organization in a similar way – they started as volunteers/studenst gradually integrated into activities as paid workers and when they stabilized in a project, they become employed.

Historically, the work team grew gradually until, with 18–20 employees, the organization had to decide how to build an organizational structure allowing further effective management. They came to the decision that they did not want to form a steep, multi-tiered hierarchical structure. Instead, they wanted a flat organization with a low number of organizational units and a low number of management levels. Therefore, through a natural decline of workers, they gradually reduced the size of the team until they reached the current number of employees, which makes this structure possible. Thus, the team officially has a director, a statutory representative, but his role is significantly marginalised in practice, just as other special positions (e.g. project manager, PR officer, and administrative officer) are not established. On the contrary, each of the employees is responsible and competent to prepare, administer, implement and manage his/her activity or project in its full scope, of course with the support of colleagues.


MLADINSKI CENTER BOB
BOB
ZAVOD ZA IZOBRAZEVANJE
IN KULTURNE DEJAVNOSTI

Zavod BOB


HELLO!
MY NAME IS...
ATTAK
PAYASSU
MAŠA
TYFENN
ULCA
NEMUGA
NESKINJEK
"...QUE TARDE,
...LAS GRANDES ALAMEDAS"
VIVA

As elsewhere, the workers attend joint meetings and they undertake further education. The team seems to be made up of highly motivated people. However, according to the director, the organization has also experienced exhaustion of employees, burnout and people leaving the team. As a result, they focus more on prevention and once symptoms are recognised, they actively plan rest and holidays with the worker.

Note: most developing Czech non-profit organizations face a similar decision about how to structure themselves organizationally, and they usually take a path of building a hierarchical structure. It was interesting to see a “flat” structure in practice. However, this model makes higher demands on workers, their skills and their personal maturity.

Operation – projects and activities

Its varied activities are divided into several areas:

Youth Centre

- BOB – a safe space for young people for self-development, activation, strengthening relationships and coping with various life challenges. It is open 6 days a week in the late afternoons.
- ULCA – a space specifically for self-realization and expression through predominantly hip-hop culture - DJs - MCs - Breakdancing – Graffiti.

Streetwork

- Outreach work in several locations in the city (Metelkova Street, park, housing estate)
- Networking – Mlada Street – coordinating a network of youth streetwork organizations
- Connecting the local community – engaging the community in activities with children

Non-formal education

- Pogon – for unemployed young people aged 15 to 29 – job search support, skills development, career counselling

- Theatre of the Oppressed – workshops using theatre methods and pedagogy for personal development and reflection regarding current social issues and topics

Cooperation with schools

- Outreach in primary schools
- Cooperation with secondary schools (workshops in classes)
- Offering training for teachers

International projects

- Volunteering – hosts international volunteers under European solidarity corps (up to 1 year)
- Strategic partnerships – the organization is working with various foreign organizations in the area of streetwork and non-formal education
- Foreign training, study visits

For the public, for the community

- LivadaLAB – open public space, enabling contact and work with the community
- NEXTival – a youth festival created by young people

Theatre of the Oppressed

Guide: Metka
Participants of the study visit: all

On the first day of our visit, we all had the opportunity to experience for ourselves the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed. The practice was combined with the theory, which represents one of the pillars of this technique – to experience and to feel, to put aside the rationale and be present “right here and right now”. Our guide Metka carried us away with her enthusiasm. First we started with warm-up and familiarization exercises that were all about cooperation and connection between participants. Eye contact and tuning in to each other represented a prerequisite for success. It must be said that it was great fun for all of us and the ice was immediately broken in the group. I was very impressed by an exercise where we had to use our body posture to demonstrate what ”strength” means to us. Everyone associates something different with this phenomenon, so we were confronted with how differently everyone can think about the same thing. I feel this particular exercise has a great potential to reveal hidden group dynamics, bullying or any other oppression in a group.

Metka then put our experiences into a theoretical framework. The founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed was the Brazilian politician and theatre director Augusto Boal. He argued that Aristotelian ethics oppressed the masses of working people. They become mere spectators, literally and figuratively – he compared a Greek drama to today’s soap operas. He regarded them as a propaganda instrument of the government, especially when talking about the Brazilian government. Boal wanted to create a theatre through which people would actively explore and transform the reality in which they live. The Theatre of the Oppressed builds on breaking down the boundaries between spectators and actors. Spectators are actively drawn into the story and have opportunities to create the story. For example, a short scene from a school environment is shown to a group of children – the main protagonist faces unfair treatment from his classmates and teacher. This arouses unpleasant feelings among the spectators, who spontaneously become actors and create a story that is in line with their moral compass. They experience first-hand what it is like to be an active creator of the reality in which they live. Metka also referred us to literature useful if we choose to use the Theatre of the Oppressed model in our work with clients. Overall, I was very

impressed with the Theatre of the Oppressed concept and I would like to find out more about it. I plan to use the techniques with our clients during experiential re-socialization stays.

ULCA Youth Centre – hip hop as a platform for youth work

Guide: Katarina
Participants of the study visit: all

Since 2016, Zavod BOB in collaboration with SKD Gor (hip hop culture association) has been operating the ULCA Youth Centre in the underpass of the main train station. It is a simple space, suitably furnished for dancing with sound, lights and a mirror wall. According to the workers, this rehearsal space is fairly busy throughout the week. The music heard in the underpass naturally invites others. Hip hop culture (breakdancing, graffiti, DJs, rap) seems to be very popular among young people here. The obvious proof is the abundance of graffiti everywhere in the city, including the historic centre. The workers use this language, understandable to young people, to establish contacts. Subsequently, participants gain information, develop skills and search for their own identity in an informal way. It is aimed at experimental learning, freedom, activities, teamwork and promotion of ideas.

The worker Katarina had prepared a detailed presentation about the history and development of hip hop culture, the development of music and the importance of breaking).

ULCA also offers a base for other ideas and projects. An example is an “open sewing workshop”, where several participants meet to repair, re-stitch or creatively improve pieces of clothing once a week in the early evening. The organization then offers the adjusted clothes in the form of a small “social wardrobe”.


PAZI!
VISOKA
NAPETOST

ULCA


ULCA
GOR
Zavod BOB
MLADINSKI
CENTER
ULCA

ULCA

Metelkova streetwork

Guides: Anja Manja, Dora
Participants of the study visit: Miloš, Anna

The area next to Metelkova Street represents a phenomenon of an autonomous way of life and of defining oneself against the commercial, capitalist and state system. The history of Metelkova began in 1993 when the first squats, galleries and clubs began to emerge in the area of a former military barracks, rejecting affiliation to the institutionalised culture and to the majority society as such. The complex covers an area of 12, 500 m^2, some parts of which are not open to the public. There also used to be the ROG centre in Ljubljana, about 1 km away from Metelkova Street, which also profiled itself as an autonomous social and cultural centre. In the spring, however, the municipality decided to demolish it, which led to a series of conflicts between squatters and police and right-wing extremists; news of the incidents were published in the European media.

It was explained to us that streetwork in Metelkova is quite challenging. Dora and Anja Manja told us that yougsters of families in difficult life situations, youngsters at risk of poverty, migrants and those with a risky course of growing are stakeholders of the area. The autonomous area of Metelkova guarantees them a form of shelter and refuge, but at the same time increases the risk of substance abuse and, for girls, harassment by older visitors. Our guides shared with us other examples of risky phenomena towards youth and we were thinking of issues related to the responsibility of galleries and bar operators for the situations and environment in their surroundings. All this at a time when the area prepresents an alternative to the 'unjust' current system. Dora and Anja Manja mentioned a certain closed-mindedness of business operators towards the Metelkova Street outdoor environment. Everything, in short, is happening behind the walls. They also pointed out that the area is becoming polarized into the territory of 'old' squatters and that of immigrants, between whom there is rivalry. Regarding cooperation with Zavod BOB workers or other services, opinion in some Metelkova clubs is that streetbased (they see it as social) work with young people should be handled by the services and they(clubs) should not bother with intervention while they are present. Local anarchists at the beginning represented an extreme example of the cooperation refusal.

They justify the lack of communication by the fact that Zavod BOB is partly financed by the city and thus cooperates with the establishment they are fighting against. Without having any ambition to judge anything, I don't think I have ever encountered such a radical attitude. It seemed that doing streetwork in a location surrounded by an aureole of freedom requires a tactical approach.

We arrived at the site on Tuesday at around 2 p.m. The place seemed to be relatively empty, only at the LGBT centre were locals moving furniture and getting ready for its operation. We walked through the squat sector and into the immigrant sector, where a group of men in their 30s were kicking a ball and listening to loud reggae music. A man of African descent joined us and chatted nicely with us, assuming we were members of the streetwork harm reduction team, but when he realized that we weren't changing needles he promptly left. We returned to the old sector where the guides started to talk with a bar manager. He invited us in for a brief chat. Inside the bar, which was approximately 10 by 6 metres, there were musical instruments, a bar counter and a recording console. When asked when he would open, he replied: "...I do not know, we are an illegal bar, let see



Metelkova streetwork

what the constellation will be after the big demonstration on Friday, if we open at the wrong time, they might run in and we would have a problem. But we'll open anyway…"

Outside the bar, Dora and Anja Manja met a group of teenagers with whom they already had contact. The group naturally accepted the workers and the contact was made in a relaxed atmosphere. We (participants of the study visit) moved away for a while and then, using skateboards, we made a contact with part of the group. During our entire stay we were surprised by the language skills of the Slovenians, so for standard conversation it was no problem to communicate. Our guides then said they considered the contact as a good one, they were mainly addressing motivations to complete school education, which is a common theme alongside discussions about prevention.

MC ZOS organization

6. 7. 2021
Online workshop with Nina and Sara
Participants of the study visit: Majda, Renáta, Jáchym

At the same time as the streetwork in Metelkova, an on-line workshop was happening with the MC ZOS organization – youth center that is based in the smaller town of Zagorje ob Savi. The organization is run by the municipality itself and creates a safe, open space for young people to spend their free time. It focuses mainly on non-formal education, volunteering and offers a counselling and information service. MC ZOS workers also actively cooperate with foreign participants of study visits/volunteers (European Solidarity Corps, formerly Erasmus+), which we have also noticed in other Slovenian organizations.

During the workshop we mainly shared good practice, and the participants of the study visit had a lot of opportunities to ask questions. We talked with Nina mostly about streetwork and how it works in their organization. The MC ZOS organization follows a rule of often giving something away when contacting new people on the street (e.g. making pancakes) and trying to offer something. They use

an informal approach to make contacts, which also breaks the ice when they first meet. Another important aspect is regularity. The streetworkers go to the same places regularly and thus establish stronger contacts.

Skala organization

6. 7. 2021
Guides: Kornelija (Skala), Anja Manja (BOB)
Participants of the study visit: all

In the late afternoon, we headed to the outskirts of Ljubljana to see the streetwork of the Skala organization. Skala has been working in Slovenia for 25 years and is one of the pioneers of local social work. The values of the organization are based on the Christian faith and it is affiliated with the Silesians of Don Bosco. The service we visited is called “Minibus veselja”, translated as “minibus of joy”, which focuses on children with migrant backround living in one of the suburban housing estates. These families are mostly 2nd generation of migrants, who came mostly from the republics of former Yugoslavia. According to the Slovenians, the wave of African and Middle Eastern immigration has hardly impacted their country at all. Two workers and one volunteer from Uruguay were involved in working with about 30 children aged 8 to 15. Skala uses volunteers on a regular basis and thus is able to partly secure its operation. Afternoons with the children are usually spent by unloading a tent and various educational aids from the van, followed by informal education on a topic determined by consensus. The entire group is involved, with a prerequisite of an active approach that workers try to motivate. After the learning, a street basketball tournament was held. Leisure activities change every day, but the meetings (clubs) are conducted in a similar way: “learn and then play”. The approach to the children is dignified and educational. However, in comparison to the approach in the Czech Republic, one could speculate about different forms of the dilemma of favouritism and exclusion. Workers treated some clients more familiarly than others, for instance hugging one child. Not all children could enjoy such privilege which may result in some rightly

feeling that they were less accepted. At the same time, ‘favoured’ children may find it harder to cope with the eventual termination of the service, or a change of the worker, due to their own perception of the relationship, which they may beautify compared to the reality - a respectful and responsive worker relationship with clients.

This form of work seemed to mainly activate youngsters in order to spend meaningful leisure time, rather than having the ambition to tackle specific individual tasks.[1]

Note: According to the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, the visited streetwork programme has been recognised as a preventive social protection programme since 2010, which is comparable to the status of a registered social service in the Czech Republic. We had a very good opportunity to compare two types of streetwork programmes in Ljubljana. At first glance, “Minibus veselja” has very similar legal rules for working with clients – meeting with the interested person, concluding an agreement, individual planning, and reassessment. Planning and then evaluating is done with the team every day, together with keeping documentation and submitting regular reports and statistics to the Ministry. From my brief conversation with Kornelija, it struck me that during the discussion about using the service with the child they make an increased effort to contact parents as well and to introduce them to the service. Despite the fact that even here it is not obligatory to ‘sign up’ children to the programme. This seems to me to be a good practice, especially when working with younger children, when workers occasionally organize activities for parents with their children to get to know them better so that they can work for the benefit of the child. There is also a school on the housing estate that the streetwork programme tries to work with. Kornelija admits that cooperation is not always easy; the school listens better to some of the worker’s suggestions for cooperation, and is rather unresponsive to others. This very generally described practice seems similar to the experience of many Czech services.

[1] R.Turoňová: I cannot agree with this statement, even though it may have seemed to us like that.


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Skala



Skala

LivadaLAB

Guides: Manneira, Mojca
Participants of the study visit: Anna, Magdaléna, Miloš, Jáchym, Renata
Classification: Community Work

During the study visit we had the opportunity to get acquainted with the LivadaLAB. The name of the project is composed of two words. Livada is the name of the area located near the city of Ljubljana. This area is known for its relatively abundant greenery and wet soil. LAB means laboratory. In this place, so-called experiments are carried out which are not focused on the result, but on the process that allows the learning of new skills. LivadaLAB is an urban green space that can be described as a garden full of trees, shrubs, plants, herbs and other greenery. In addition, a pleasant seating area, a shelter for gardening tools, a fireplace and an improvised playground with a volleyball net can be found in this place.

As participants of the study visit, we had the opportunity to learn about the garden through simple techniques. We were divided into pairs and half of us had our eyes covered. One of the pair became the guide and had to explain the way to the other one. When walking, the guide described what he/she was seeing and feeling. Then everyone took off their blindfolds and both roles (guide and guided) explained their experience. The reflection was followed by the presentation of the project.

The aim of this project is to improve the local environment and create a space where young people can spend their free time creatively and learn new skills. As already mentioned, the project aims to explain the process of growing to young people, not just the result in the form of ready food. The project enriches young people not only with information and skills, but also with opportunities that develop their independence and responsibility. The benefits of the project undoubtedly include fulfilment of the needs of young people and society as well. The project has a positive impact on the quality of local food production and the development of a healthy living space in the urban environment.

Workers of Zavod Bob, the City of Ljubljana, volunteers and follow-up institutions participated in the project. One of the inputs for the creation of LivadaLAB was finding that young people are not sufficiently involved in the planning and management of public spaces, despite the fact that these and similar places are used by young people. Participants meet professionals from several fields, including social work, architecture, construction, agronomy and forestry. Participation is free of charge for interested people.

The project has established cooperation with secondary schools. In the future, they would like to establish cooperation with a primary school located near the garden. They want to reach out to this school in particular, as there are migrants from the Balkans among the pupils, who are often socially excluded. Workers of Zavod Bob teach the children how it is possible to work with nature and available natural resources. Some workers would appreciate having animals such as chicken, geese, etc. on the property, but there would not be anyone to look after them during the summer holidays. They would like to motivate participants to take over this responsibility.

Unfortunately, the project was suspended during measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19. However, workers are now trying to re-establish new collaborations and attract new people to join the project.

The project started under international GREEN SURGE project. This project seeks to connect green spaces, natural assets and the people who draw on them.

Savsko naselje – streetwork

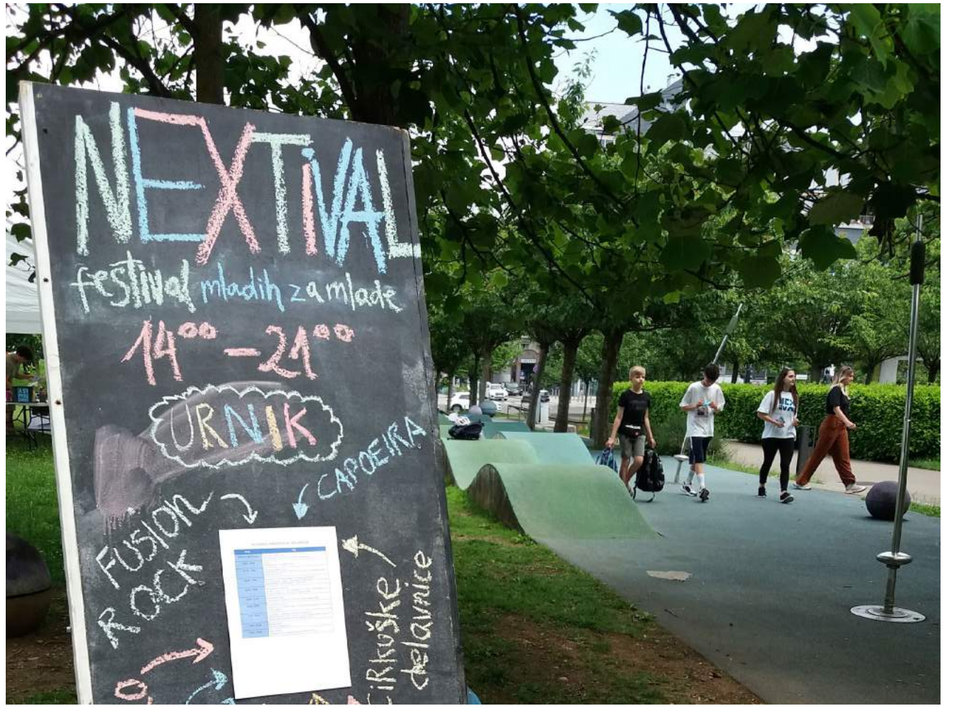
Guides: Sara, Nežka, Barb
Participants of the study visit: all

Savsko naselje is a residential housing estate area that BOB workers regularly visit twice every week for approximately 2–3 hours. They work with the whole local community with focus on youth to build a more pleasant environment for spending time.

Participants of the study visit helped to paint raised beds where flowers and herbs are grown, as well as to maintain the volleyball court. Together with the locals, we measured and painted the new sidelines on the court.

NEXTival

NEXTival is a community festival organized annually by Zavod BOB. The festival is free for everybody. The purpose of the festival is mainly to involve youth in organization of festival activities, enable them place for their expression and free-time production and to strengthen cooperation with them and with other organizations. At this year's festival there were several different workshops – capoeira, choral singing and breaking – that is, breakdancing. There was also a large water slide, a graffiti workshop and an art stall, as well as a stage on which all those who were interested could perform. Matjaž´s popular pancakes represented an equally important part of the event.



NEXTival

Conclusion

The whole study visit was very inspiring, enriching and diverse. We had the opportunity to see how social work is done in a different country, in an organization that is structured differently. Zavod BOB differs from the organizations we work with in the Czech Republic primarily by its flat structure – not a hierarchical one. Small teams of about twelve employees work for Zavod BOB; they work on different projects in groups and each group is responsible for its own project.

BOB's work is also based on working with the community (e.g. Savsko naselje), where workers regularly go to selected locations to work with the entire community (both youth and adults) to create a more pleasant space to live in, e.g. repairing a playground and growing plants. In this way, they connect everyone who lives in the place and therefore builds relationships with each other. Regularity (in the sense of being in the same place and the same time on a regular basis) is something that could also be used in our streetwork. As well as taking the opportunity to interconnect the whole community of locals.

One of the most inspiring moments was definitely the cooperation of BOB with foreign volunteers. This not only enriches the organizations as such, but is also an attractive element for clients. They find foreign volunteers interesting and thus have the opportunity to practice their English casually. Last but not least, the clients broaden their horizons and feel part of a larger unit. I think that for a large number of our clients, contacts with volunteers could be one of their few personal experiences with a different culture.

Another lesson we learned is "having something to offer". For example, Slovenian organizations use food in their first contact with clients. In practice, workers give out pancakes or muffins that they have baked themselves, thus engaging clients and creating a better space for first contact. By doing this, clients remember and recognise them better and perhaps approach them themselves.

We all learned a lot of new ideas that we want to apply in our future work. It is definitely desirable to have the opportunity to meet other organizations, be inspired and perhaps cooperate in the future. The whole team of Zavod BOB was available to us at any time, they were willing to answer all our questions and the cooperation with them was great in all aspects. Their team spreads really positive energy and basically they work like a big family – maybe that is the true meaning of social work.

Study visit report: Castricum, Middelburg, Moerdijk , the Netherlands

Date: 11.–15. 10. 2021

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Karolína Brabcová (Neposeda, z.ú.), Gabriela Lepková, Klára Pittnerová, Karolína Míková, David Hladík (PROSTOR PRO, o.p.s.).

Introduction

In October, namely from 11th to 15th October 2021, we visited our colleagues in the Netherlands for a 5-day study visit. We visited three cities and five clubs for children and young people (one in Castricum, three in Middelburg, and one in Moerdijk) and five schools. The study visit gave us an opportunity to look at the Dutch social work system and also the education system in a more comprehensive way. In Middelburg, our colleagues also gave us a tour through a refugee camp. The study visit was very inspiring in many ways; the important topics are described in the chapters below.

Dutch education system

In the Netherlands, primary education is free until the age of 18. Further education is paid for. The state contributes Eur 83 per month and the rest has to be paid by students or their parents. The cost of education depends on the quality and varies from institution to institution. The education system is divided into five successive levels. Up to the age of four, education is voluntary – it is similar to kindergartens in the Czech Republic. From the age of four to twelve, all pupils attend primary schools, with the exception of children and young people with some types of mental disabilities (e. g. autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties, etc.) who attend specialist primary schools for pupils with special educational needs of this type. From the age of twelve to sixteen, primary school is followed by further education, which pupils choose based on their own preferences. They can study at a school that focuses more on practical activities (similar to our apprenticeships) or a college similar to Czech grammar schools. In both types of schools the basic subjects are the same, but practical activities differ - the apprenticeship offers more practical teaching (flower arranging, animal care, different types of crafts, etc.). This level of education is completed with an exam. This may be followed by a two year extension, when it is possible to study a similar or different major and this level of education is ideally completed with an exam at the age of 18. Universities represent the last level of education, which may be completed by bachelor's or master´s degree.

There are specialised schools for foreigners within the education system, which primarily aim to teach pupils the Dutch language. These schools (ISK) cater for pupils from different cultural background from 12 to 16 years of age. Pupils are divided into classes according to the level of education they have completed. Young people from Europe and from war zones in Africa and the Middle East study together. The aim of the course is to attain at least a B2 (intermediate) level in Dutch. It is compulsory for foreigners to attend this type of school. Schools are graded based on the ratio of theoretical knowledge to practical skills that students will acquire in the school. It is common for students to change majors during their studies to find the one that suits them best. As already mentioned, the Dutch education system is more flexible than the Czech one.

The foundation of the Dutch education system is to make pupils feel comfortable – pupils' psychological well-being positively influences their school success. It is important to involve individuals in the group, to be sensitive to their individual needs, to support their talents and to help them with differences. The Dutch system allows for changing within specialisations, with the exception of foreigners who do not speak Dutch. Part of the Wellbeing First philosophy is that pupils and students are supported by a whole team of adult professionals in the school. This means not only by teachers, but also by school psychologists, social workers, team leaders and mentors. Teachers treat teenagers with respect and a partnership approach prevails. Risky behaviour is seen as an opportunity for change, rather than a problem. Students and pupils are given the space to achieve their full potential. The cooperation of schools and families is crucial. Teachers show an active interest in pupils, have an overview of their life situation and, in some types of schools, accompany students to practical trainings and to future employment. Schools are in most cases open institutions that organise public and community events, cooperate with non-profit organisations working with youth, etc.

Castricum Centre

The Castricum Centre was opened ten years ago to address the situation of squatting groups of teenagers. Amber and her colleagues work in an organisation that provides social services to a wide target group of people in the Castricum area, from children and young



Castricum Centre



Castricum Centre

people to people with disabilities and seniorcitizens. Professionals with different specialisations work for the organisation. There are six workers in the youth section, of which only two work full time (i.e. 36 hours per week) and the rest work part time. They cooperate with university students and volunteers and closely cooperate with other stakeholders of community life (school, family, police and offices and authorities). Once a month, workers organise joint meetings to discuss stories of specific clients in order to define the steps of joint work. In general, it is typical for the Netherlands that organisations work with a wide range of target groups, with each target group having a key worker. During the study visit, we visited three areas on the north coast of the Netherlands - Castricum, Middelburg and Moerdijk. Although the areas differed in size and civic amenities, the common denominator and key element of the youth work was the close cooperation between all stakeholders of the system.

Clusius College

During our study visit we had the opportunity to visit the Clusius College in Castricum town, an apprenticeship-type vocational school (with practical subjects focusing on agriculture, animal husbandry, window dressing/arranging and ecology). There are four academic years in the school with every academic year having a team leader who has an overview of what is going on in the academic year. The school tries as much as possible to meet the individual needs of each student. Students receive a yellow card if they break a rule during class or have a conflict with teachers. It is a document where students fill-in their view of the situation and teachers add their own opinion and then they discuss the situation together. There is a class for pupils with special needs in the school who, unlike the others, always study in the same classroom and have a permanent school bench. They are not given homework and they keep textbooks at school to avoid unnecessary pressure. They have weekly and monthly plans. There is a class in the school for pupils who find it difficult to concentrate, which has a member of staff helping pupils with their learning. In some cases, online learning and others tools are used to enable better concentration and calmness.

Discovery Club

The target age group of the Discovery Club is 12 to 25 years and most of the visitors are teenage boys. They usually abuse substances (typically marijuana, hashish, MDMA, ketamine); sometimes clients of the club sell substances and therefore get into conflict with the law. Street fights, family problems, alcohol use, dropping out of school, etc. are also common. These problems are common to about 15 % of young people who are prone to risky behaviour or come from a background that deteriorates their life situation. The Discovery Club also provides an outreach programme where workers contact teenagers in their natural environment during street work. They engage in community projects based on the needs of the target group – a skate park or a leisure shelter. Ninety percent of the budget of the service is paid for by the Castricum town district. Such a funding scheme is typical for most of the services that we saw during our study visit. Funding is usually provided for one year, however, it also allows for longer term planning. The services have typically established good relationships with the town council and therefore they gain long-term support for the programme. The programme also offers counselling for families.

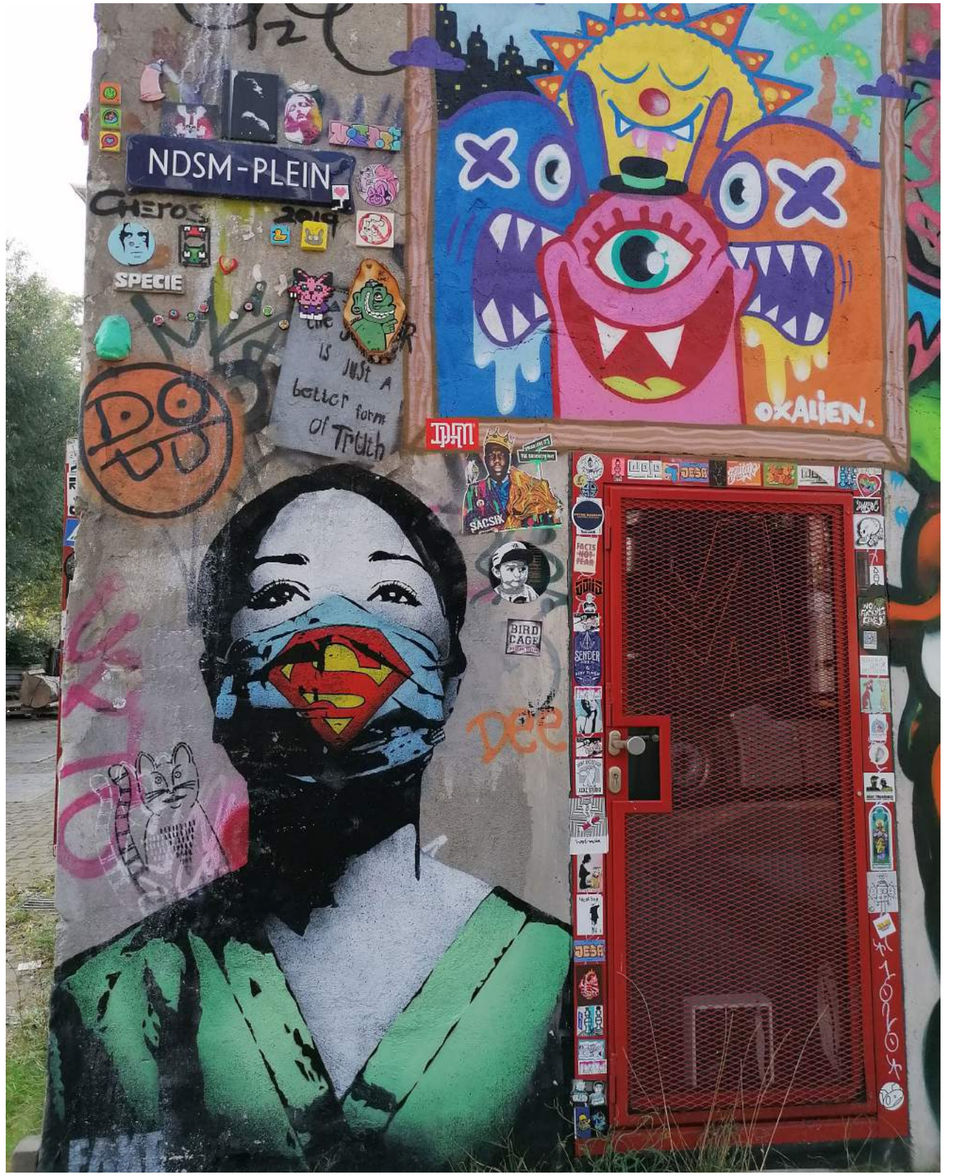
The workers always support their clients, and they become their advocates. Clients at the same time know that social workers are in contact with other workers within the network of follow-up services. Workers are visible when moving within the school and they are also in contact with the police – texting and informing each other about what is happening on the streets, for instance about street violence etc. In addition to this close cooperation, the transparency of the whole process is crucial. Workers support their clients in difficult life situations, however, clients have to be aware of the consequences of their actions (as in our programme with marijuana users, where we do not report clients but also do not cover for their potentially illegal activities).

The outreach programme does not have fixed opening hours; workers go out when they consider it appropriate or when called by the police. They closely cooperate with all stakeholders of the system in the youth programmes. Compared to the situation in the Czech Republic, there is greater tolerance of substance use. Special services commonly test substance quality at parties, the service may be used anonymously to find out what a substance is. Social work with young people is divided into several areas, including the Discovery Low-threshold Club, the outreach programme, working in schools, coaching and online work. Workers are available online – communicating

with clients via text messages or chats on apps and social media. The Discovery programme worker also randomly provides outreach services by getting on a bike and riding around the area. The outreach workers reach out to young people and ask for their opinion – the outreach programme is similar to the Czech Republic, only it is more random and situational. The programme has already performed several community projects (e. g. building a skate park, teenage leisure shelters, etc.)

Lonelinessiskilling_projektJoinus

JoinUs is one of the projects operated in cooperation with the Discovery Club workers. They provide group work with young people who experience social isolation, are lonely and find it difficult to make friends. The aim of the programme is to strengthen their social skills and make new contacts through regular meetings. The group meets once every two weeks. The programme has been heavily promoted through social media, paid advertising and a national television campaign.



Middelburg

Middelburg is the capital of the Zeeland province and with its almost 40,000 inhabitants it is also the largest town that we visited during our study visit. In Middelburg we visited a total of three low-threshold clubs, an outreach programme, a refugee camp and several schools. As part of the school visits we visited schools for foreigners (ISK), which have a specific approach to education. The approach to social work in the youth programmes and in schools is very similar to the approach in Castricum. Youth workers (their job description corresponds to outreach rather than social workers as established in the Czech Republic according to the Social Services Act) work both in the Club and also in the outreach programme. Each programme is managed by a liaison worker who in a way designs the operation of the given service and a team of volunteers, colleagues on study visits and students working within internships (the record was a city where all the services were provided by one social worker and three hundred volunteers). Student internships, as part of their university studies, are long and intensive (at least several hours per week for the period of one year). Services can be supplemented with an alternative labour force, student interns tend to work alone in the service or with volunteers. The 2nd base Club is located near the ISK School for foreigners and it is mainly refugee boys who visit the Club. Another club is a rehearsal and music club. The workers at these clubs go out on the streets in pairs to reach out to both familiar and new groups of teenagers. The aim of this outreach programme is to establish contact with the target group; it is performed rather as outreach work, building relationships and establishing contacts. Individual workers also care for their catchment schools, which they visit during breaks or give lectures during prevention programmes. Each worker uses their own “superpower“ to reach out to children and teenagers. Even though Middelburg is a large town, collaboration between the youth workers, follow up services and local government is crucial.



Middelburg



Middelburg

Principles of youth work

Cooperation of the individual units of the child care system

The success of youth work is based on the functioning child care system as a whole. Both preventive and repressive services work together in the interest of children and young people. Cooperation with the police is essential (e. g. in the Castricum Club, the sale and use of addictive substances and weapons, petty crime and street gangs are frequent topics). A project called Drop your knife-week (11 – 15 October 2021) demonstrates an example of this system of work. During this week, young people throughout the Netherlands may hand in their weapons to police stations without any penalty. The event is based on the story of a boy, Nick Bood, who lost his life in a street shooting while selling drugs. His father, as a journalist working for the local newspaper, was the first to arrive at the scene. After discovering that it was his own son, he began actively addressing the situation with local government. Cooperation with local government regarding implementation of community projects, communication with schools, social workers from the child welfare authority, dealing with the situation of clients e. g. in the form of case conferences, is common in Neposeda. In PROSTOR PRO we are experienced at working closely with local governments especially in small municipalities, however, in larger towns it is still a challenge for us to establish close cooperation and represent an equal partner in youth work. The Dutch model is exceptional since it also works extensively with the police. Youth workers are informed in advance of planned street conflict between different groups and workers therefore act as mediators and experts on the local situation. Their task is to mitigate tension. Youth workers are welcomed in schools despite the fact that schools have their own social workers. Staff in the schools we visited repeatedly told us that youth workers from the low-threshold youth clubs were important to them, particularly in the afternoon free time that is out of scope of the school responsibility. They inform each other about what is happening in their area and when they can help each other. Students know about this cooperation, the communication is transparent.

Work as a lifestyle and a mission

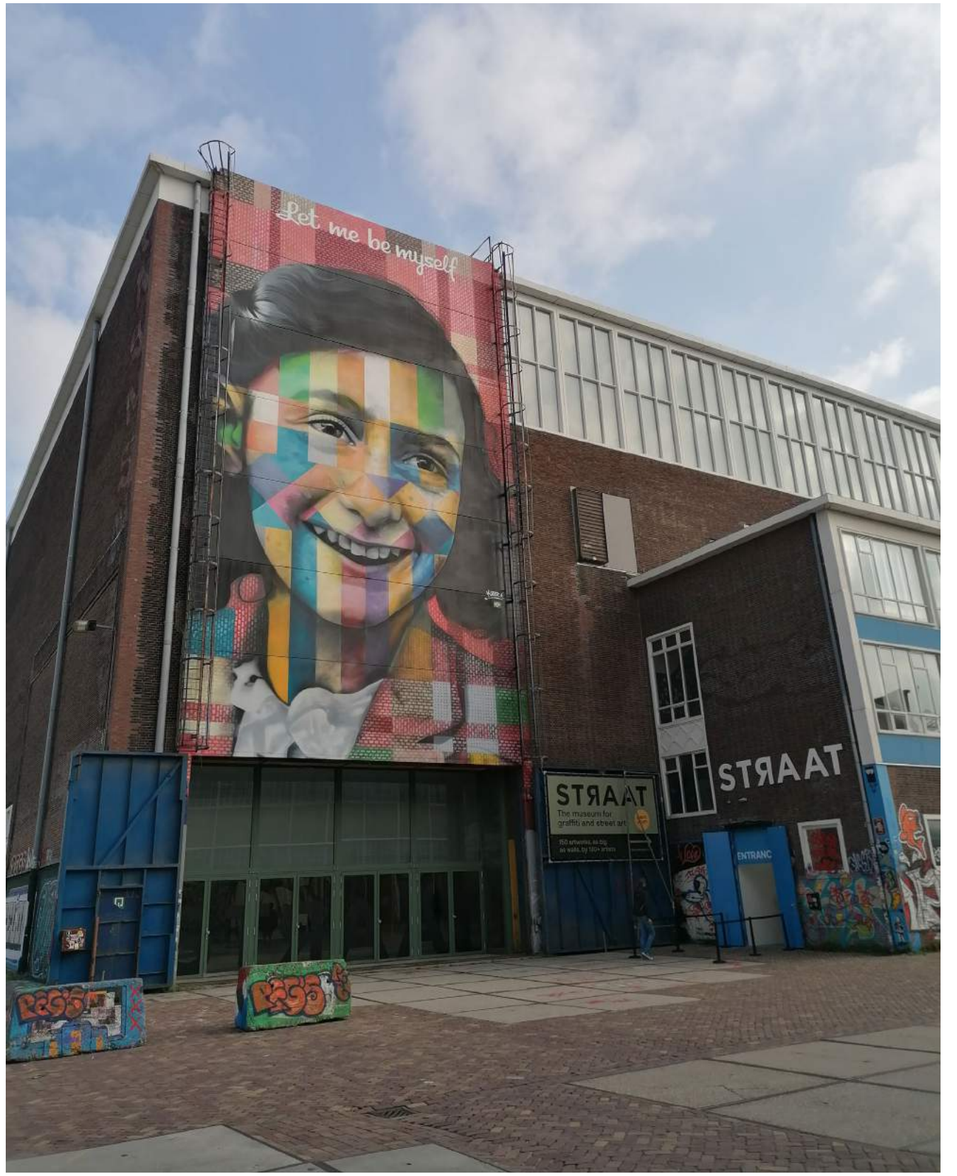
Youth workers, depending on the length of practice, position, experience and skills earn an average Dutch salary (higher for managerial positions). It is common in the Netherlands that the work is based on established relationships with all parts of the system (school, police, authorities, etc.) and clients. Good knowledge of the location and local key players represents a prerequisite for successful problem solving. The cooperation is based on personal contacts; some workers have been working in the same position for several decades and often live in the local area. This blurs the boundary between professional and personal life. Workers are available (in a figurative sense) 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at least via a personal / service phones. The success of the service depends on the personality and contacts of the individual youth workers. The difficulty of replacing the worker in the event of his / her departure, long term absence, etc. represents a limitation of this approach. On the one hand, we see it as a great advantage that the service is represented by one or two familiar faces, which allows for easier contact and identification. On the other hand, this approach places great demands on the skills and abilities of the individual, who has to adapt his or her personal life to the profession to the extent that professional and personal roles merge into one.

Workers are always on the side of the clients

As already mentioned, services for children and young people and the education system are focused on the needs of individuals. For example, the normal opening hours of clubs are generally between 1pm or 2pm to 5 p. m., followed by a break, and then clubs reopen in the evening until 10 pm. The clubs have established basic rules that must be observed. The rules serve primarily for maintaining the safety and operation of the clubs. The employees of the clubs and schools strive to make these institutions a safe environment where everyone is given the opportunity to become responsible for their life story. The funding system set up for services helps to achieve this. Funding is allocated directly by the council to the specific services, so it is possible to influence the allocation of funding to a particular service according to long term outcomes. The implementation of sub-projects on various issues is also typical. Simplified record keeping also contributes – workers report services and client attendance. In contrast to the pressure to report and meet commitments and targets, this simplified



Middelburg



Amsterdam

record keeping allows for the avoidance of pressure to solve problems and allows young people to decide how to proceed with their situation at their own pace. Dutch society is very liberal even within Europe. Tolerance for responsible substance use (marijuana, MDMA) is typical even among teenagers (e. g. testing at parties where people bring an unknown substance and have it analysed on site, is common). Addictive substances are very accessible in the Netherlands. Their daily use (especially for marijuana) is not uncommon among clients. The easy availability is caused by their low price in certain areas (e. g. in Moerdijk, a tablet of ecstasy only costs Eur 3 (for comparison, a can of Coca-cola in a shop in the centre of Amsterdam costs Eur 3.50). The Czech society is very conservative in certain areas, compared to the Dutch society (e. g. topics related to LGBTQ+, immigration, sex workers or euthanasia). This difference is particularly evident in the fact that in the Czech Republic many teenagers who in any way deviate from the standard set by the society (e. g. based on ethnicity) are not fully accepted by the society. On the contrary, they are judged on the basis of facts they cannot change (skin colour, sexual orientation, origin). In the eyes of the public this leads to a reduction of their personality based on the label assigned to them (typically for example the Roma). This negatively impacts their self-esteem. Even in the Netherlands there are schools and environments that are more Dutch, yet the country's development is very inclusive compared to the Czech Republic. Our school system is not very good at working with differences as services are focused on the 'normal' or 'average' user and there is little opportunity to work more individually, adapt to those with unique circumstances or be really inclusive. This openness was evident, for example, in the fact that workers did not know if there was a legal limit for consent to sex, whereas in some Czech organisations sex under the age of 15 is a big topic.

Inspiration

Like other countries in Western Europe (e. g. Belgium or Germany), it is typical for the Netherlands to have youth workers who have been working in one organisation or area for as long as several decades. Workers therefore manage to build a network of contacts across the system, and they are able to make good use of this knowledge when dealing with clients' troubles. Thanks to the cooperation with the police, they are able to work preventively and mitigate the effects of risky teenage behaviour such as street violence. At Neposeda

and PROSTOR PRO we also consider knowledge of the local area and all its key players (stakeholders) and cooperation with them as crucial. Similarily to the Netherlands, it would not be possible to implement larger community projects (e. g. Neposeda: skate park in Újezd nad Lesy, opening of a new club in Běchovice, PROSTOR PRO: public event PRO STREET JAM, opening of a club in Kostelec, general landscaping in small villages, etc.) without the involvement of the wider community and its leaders. However, while building relationships in the community is crucial, it is a very demanding and long-term discipline. This experience has been confirmed by organisations in the Czech Republic, where the "lifespan" of a youth worker in the low-threshold youth clubs is on average 2 to 3 years. Here, in addition to a major change of the system (which is primarily single-source funding for one year, dependent on the changing political scene, which is not pro-social in the long term), a reflection on our practice in our organisations would be appropriate.

Karolína (Neposeda): "For me personally, the easy-going approach of my Dutch colleagues was very inspiring. On the one hand, based on this experience, there is room for revision of the methodology of individual plans. Within the team we can discuss how we want to implement the plans and how to simplify the entire process. Another phenomenon that helped me to reflect on our perception of services is the way that Dutch colleagues work with boundaries. For us, it was surprising how much the personal and professional life is interlinked, with workers being available all the time. I find this model truly client oriented, but on the other hand I wonder how Dutch colleagues deal with the troubles associated with burnout syndrome. Facilities use various tools to prevent it (psychologists, multisport passes, etc.), but they do not actively use supervisions (they have not used this type of tool even once in 15 years). The disadvantage of this approach may be when the worker loses perspective of their work and becomes too immersed in it (e. g. messiah syndrome); they may unwittingly have a negative impact on clients without realising it. However, in the organisations intervision works well. I cannot imagine such a system of services in the Czech environment. I think that setting boundaries for both clients and workers is crucial. Even though it may seem that if a worker observes the working hours (which are adapted to the client needs), his/her help will not be needed to the extent and for the number of clients as in the Dutch model. In the past, we have experienced various breaches of set rules (e. g. lending money to clients, contact outside of working hours, etc.) and this approach has proved ineffective in the long term and in some cases even risky (e. g. frequent contacting of the worker by a particular client outside of working hours, etc.). The extent of work with volunteers and interns is also inspiring; I can imagine that we would cooperate with vocational schools in a wider scope in order to achieve long lasting effects.

PROSTOR PRO workers: “We agreed in principle with the inspiration described by Karolína. The insight into the Dutch school system, its openness towards the students and the collaboration with other stakeholders working in the location (although schools employee a school psychologist and social worker) was very inspiring. We are currently trying to link our low threshold work with schools, so it was nice to see how they have organized it in another country and how the model works for both sides. The system of internships for university students studying social work (we often met students in the clubs working on internships or volunteering) was great, students spend a large part of their studies in the chosen social service during their internship – so the services can basically “educate” their future colleagues. The overall attitude of the workers towards the meaning of their work was very inspiring; we repeatedly encountered the perception that working with children and young people is considered a way of life: “social work is not a job, but a lifestyle”. On the one hand we can identify ourselves with such an approach, on the other hand it is in contradiction to the setting of boundaries (personal/ professional) described by Karolina. We were interested in the JoinUs project, where we had the opportunity to have a discussion with one of the clients of the programme – it is an interesting idea that could be implemented in our Czech conditions (considering the Covid pandemics, but not exclusively – also with respect to the virtual world and social media).

As the participants of the study visit we agreed that it was good to visit several places, talk to more workers, and see a lot of things – but a drawback of this was that we didn’t see the work in more depth
(as we would have if we had visited only one organisation). During our visits we were only able to see a snaphot of the work that was going on, however, this is not meant to sound like a negative assessment, but rather a fact which is also reflected in this report. Had there been more time, we would have welcomed spending longer in direct work. If we had the opportunity to go to the Netherlands again, we would certainly be interested in working in the capital or another large city (where we feel that social work with children and young people may be different).

Thank you very much for the experience.

Study visit report: MONO, Tallinn, Estonia

Date: 4.–8. 10. 2021

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Vendula Kunová, Barbora Cmerová, Adéla Škvorová (Neposeda z.ú.), Jan Horyna, Šimon Pohořelý (Beztíže, DDM Praha 3 – Ulita)

Introduction

In the following text we describe our experiences gained during the MONO study visit in Tallinn that took place from the 4th to the 8th of October 2021.

In the text we do not intend to evaluate individual services, but to compare different aspects of services and practices, based on our experience.

When we wrote the report we reflected on the situations we have experienced or observed and conversations we have had with the workers of MONO Tallinn.

The resulting report combines several texts written from different perspectives, and the events described thus sometimes repeat or overlap.

MONO Tallinn

MONO – Mobiilne noorsootöö Tallinnas (Tallinn mobile youth work) employs 8 team members and one coordinator who work and carry out streetwork in Tallinn. The organisation is also involved in various programmes and activities that they organise.

The mobile youth work is based on the principle of street-based youth work, i. e. working with youngsters on the streets, focusing on young people who spend time on the streets and other urban and suburban areas. Mobile youth work is based on two basic principles: outreach – the organisation works with institutions such as schools, police, youth centres and the Youth Welfare Office and detached work – work that takes place outdoors, directly on the streets.

When we refer to mobile youth work we mean the whole range of activities and not only the streetwork. Thus, mobile youth work includes streetwork, individual planning, group work, various social events and workshops and projects like Jalatalla and Vaadetulevikku (more information is provided below).

Unlike many Czech organisations who work with young people at risk, working hours in MONO are 40 hours a week. Mostly from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m., or from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. If necessary, staff work longer hours and then take time off to compensate for the overtime.

MONO is the only organisation that operates in Tallinn, and it covers the entire city. Workers regularly visit four city districts that are most problematic.

During the outreach work they walk through parks and outdoor sport grounds, squares and very often shopping centres as well.

Most of the workers speak Russian, which is also important for communication with local youngsters as Tallinn has a large Russian minority. According to data, up to 38.5 % of the population are ethnic Russians and 46.7 % have Russian as their first language (2011).

On Friday morning we observed two “teatime hours” which were very inspiring - time is dedicated for individual discussions with employees, that were introduced by coordinator Aleksei. Employees can sign up in advance if needed and have time to address their work difficulties and needs with their supervisor. This is a tool to reinforce burnout prevention and to complement the regular team supervision sessions that take place at least 4 times a year. The possibility of an individual meeting with the psychologists the very next day represents another tool to reinforce burnout prevention and professional consultation in youth work.

Contact with clients

Workers always walk in pairs, in exceptional circumstances they work alone, however, in such cases they only have contact with young people that they already know. First contacts are always done in pairs. They try to be mindful of national differences during all contacts. For Russian clients and workers, closer contact is natural; workers do not wait for the client’s greeting but approach the clients themselves. They approach both couples and individual clients. They hug clients and also communicate with them outside of their working hours. Estonian-speaking workers have stricter boundaries and consider to a greater extent when and how to address clients. It is easier for all workers to communicate with people of the same nationality as themselves.

Experience with outreach work

Our first outreach work was organised on Monday, when we were divided into pairs and assigned to two Estonian workers. We stayed in the office at the beginning where our colleagues showed us the environment where their regular meetings and administrative activities take place. They also have facilities to store outreach material, which is not very different from ours.

Compared to our clubs and office spaces, Estonian colleagues really have plenty of space for their work. The youth centres are also a bit bigger than in the Czech Republic.

My colleague and I did our first outreach work in the centre of Tallinn. Firstly we monitored the area around the historic centre, where our colleagues showed us where and when the clients are usually present or in what activities they are engaged. A large number of the clients in Estonia are skateboarders, so they are not very different from our clients especially in the Neposeda organisation. It was this specific group of clients that we met in their neighbourhood – Freedom Square, with a monument commemorating the fight for independence. In skate culture, this place could be compared to an area around the former Stalin monument in Prague. Streetworkers together with these clients organise various skate events and races. Some streetworkers come from this community which is convenient and it could be one of the criteria for establishing a good relationship with clients.

We spent the second day of our streetwork in the northern part of the city, where we were again monitoring and looking for a group with whom our colleague from Tallinn wanted to discuss a current topic: he already knew about a street fight between some young people and wanted to know what had happened. Unfortunately, we did not meet this group of clients during working hours. However, our colleague from Estonia got in touch with them after working hours. We noticed that our colleagues from Tallinn set boundaries in slightly different ways compared to our practice. In the Czech Republic we are more careful about our working boundaries and do not get involved with contacts outside working hours or outside of the areas where we do streetwork.

On the other hand, tools such as observation, monitoring, reaching out to the target group and contact work are very similar. The workers also try to act as mediators between the city and their clients.



Tallinn Suburbs



Tallinn Suburbs

Comparison of services

I work in the organisation Beztíže based in Prague and therefore I can compare the differences in services only with the Beztíže organisation. However, I believe that some of the parameters of our service are the same for all services in Prague and maybe even in the whole Czech Republic.

What is the difference between outreach work in Prague and Tallinn?

In Tallinn the organisation works under the Ministry of Education and is established and funded by the city. Therefore it is not bound by the Social Services Act as it is in the Czech Republic. Consequently, workers do not enter into contracts or agreements on provision of social services with the youngsters, i. e. their clients.

However, the services they provide and the contact social work they carry out shares the same parameters as our outreach work in the Czech Republic.

They look for and evaluate clients interested in the service in a similar or identical way as we do in the Czech services.

They keep a database of clients just like our services do and record information about the interventions they have made, just like we do.

What varies quite a bit are the working hours and days when they provide the services. In our organisation we provide outreach services on an average of 3 days a week, and only on week days. The time we spend on the streets of Prague is always the same, i. e. 5 hours. Our service is designed to cover the free time of the youngsters and therefore we work during afternoon to evening hours.

In Tallinn the situation is different. The workers work every day for several hours. The working hours are not strictly determined and they even work on weekends. Workers rotate and therefore they are able to cover all the days to provide the service. Each worker works full time, on average 4 hours per day.

The outreach work is performed in a very similar or identical way to Prague. Workers approach young people in the streets, parks, shopping centres and other places in the city. A large part of the work takes place through social networks and in housing estates, as in the Czech Republic.

During our trip we visited, among other areas, the largest housing estate in Tallinn - Lasnamåe, where the population is largely made up of Russians.

There are separate Estonian and Russian schools in Estonia, with the Estonian language being compulsory in Russian schools. Russians communicate in their native language and also differ from Estonians in their culture. The streetworkers reflect the cultural differences of potential clients and approach them very individually. Most Estonian workers speak both Russian and Estonian. They use their knowledge of linguistic and cultural differences in their work to the benefit of their clients. For Russian-speaking workers, contact with Russian clients is much easier. They always do the outreach work in pairs and often in a combination of Estonian and Russian speaking workers.

We visited several shopping centres during the outreach work, where young people spend a lot of their free time. They work in a similar way to the Czech Republic. However, there are no “official“ contact points in the shopping centres, as in selected shopping centres in Prague. They also do not commonly cooperate with management of the shopping centres.

I observed that in most cases workers were more personal, compared to our usual practice. They routinely hugged their clients and maintained very warm relationships.

We later discussed it with Aleksei who told us that this is common practice but they adapt the communication style to the target group.

Another topic I would like to address is the work-boundary setting. The work in Beztíže is primarily limited to fixed working hours. Unless in an exceptional situation, we finish working at 6 p.m. or 7 p.m., depending on the time of year, with the end of our working hours. At the end of the shift, we may briefly evaluate the working day, which usually means an end of work for that day for us.

However, as I learned from the MONO worker, they do not stop working at the end of the working day, as they meet clients afterwards at the training and sometimes they communicate with clients through social media, sometimes even at night. I asked a lot of questions and we discussed the topic together. Our colleague from Estonia argued that if clients needed help, no one else would then be ready to help them. For example, if it were not low-threshold enough for them to call a crisis helpline.

In another case we went to a restaurant together after work and the Estonian colleague met a group that was involved in the conflict earlier, so he approached the group and tried to find out what had happened. This practice is not common in our organisation – if we meet clients outside working hours then we do not approach them and do not work with them.

Youth Centres

During our stay we visited three different youth centres. These centres do not provide social services as low-threshold youth clubs in the Czech Republic do. The activities of youth centres in Estonia rather correspond to leisure clubs established in youth centres in the Czech Republic.

Individual centres are established and funded by the municipalities to offer quality leisure activities for all groups of young people in the area. Funding is based on 3-year periods, which provides some stability for their operation and development. Centres communicate well with schools, often due to their location close to schools. One of the main objectives of the youth centres is fundraising (in addition to funds provided by the city), generated by their own thematic workshops or other day activities which are also organised at weekends (sport afternoons, street art projects, etc.) The centres have established a single database (registration is compulsory during the first visit), which is shared by all the centres. As a rule, they are open on weekday afternoons until about 8 p.m. It was unusual for us to see cameras in the centres. We were assured that they respect the anonymity of the clients. When photographs are taken during routine and leisure activities, they ask the youth if they agree to be photographed, which is similar to the practice in the Czech low-threshold centres for children and youth. Routine activities are based on regularly recurring monthly activities (Djingu, dancing and skating workshops, programmes promoting group cooperation, art activities, etc.). In addition, and similar to the activities organised in the low-threshold centres for children and youth in the Czech Republic, the youngsters may play various games or find a place to relax. However, workers in the centres who take care of the operation of the centres work differently, they act rather as animators than social workers. Participation of the young people in the operation of the centre is supported by simple scoring motivation programmes or by taking care of the communal garden. The centres that we visited, Lasnamäenoortekeskus and KesklinnaNoortekeskus, operate in the way described above.

The Raadikudistrict Youth Research Centre represents another type of centre for children and young people; it was established in a former apartment on the first floor of a block of flats and is based on grassroots activities of residents living in the city social housing in the Mustakiviv city district. The centre operates 5 days a week, closed on Thursdays and Sundays. The centre provides services to children from the neighbouring houses who often come from multi-problem families with a history of alcoholism, other substance abuse or domestic violence.

Police and schools

During our study visit in Tallinn, we talked a lot about cooperation with the police, which is still not very common in the Czech Republic, but in Tallinn has become a regular part of their work.

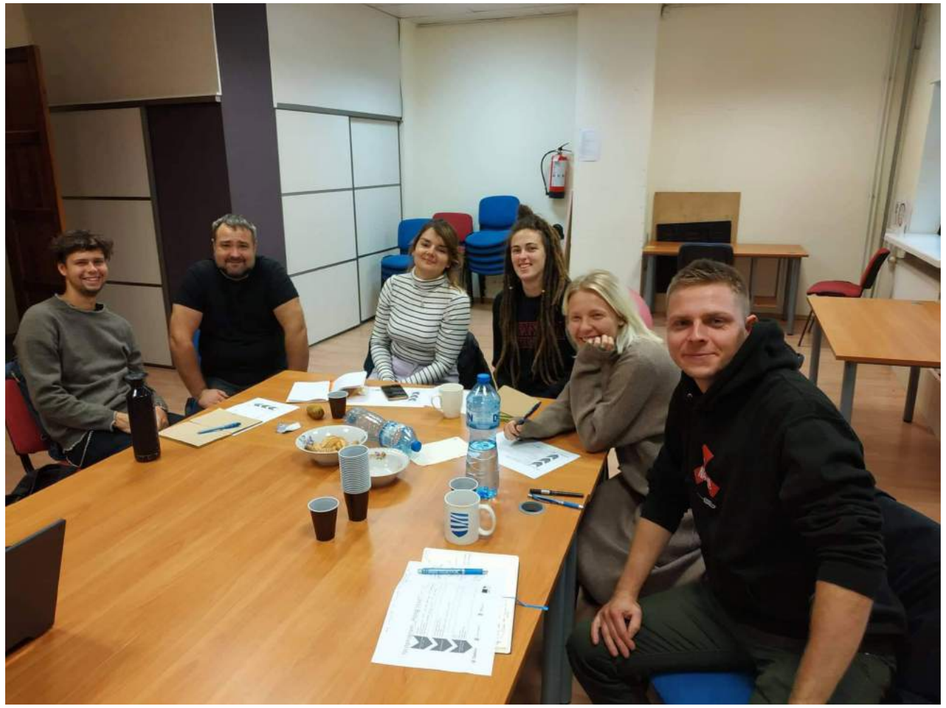
However, cooperation between the MONO organisation and the police was not always good. Aleksei informed us that the cooperation was evolving. At first, the police expected that MONO workers would inform police officers about what young people were doing, essentially "snitching". The Tallinn organisation strongly objected to this requirement and gradually began to build a relationship with the police officers. Indeed, the police soon realised that working with the outreach workers would help them and bring new insights about the life of youngsters.

During the pandemic MONO workers cooperated with the police intensively and reported

the needs and concerns of young people and thus created a good relationship with the police. Therefore, they developed a partnership relationship – for example, when the police announced that they would be conducting a drug raid, MONO workers would then inform young people in the street about this plan. This helped them to prepare for the police raid and also to establish a stronger and more trusting relationship with the workers.

Police officers use the MONO organisation for communication with young people. Workers become to some extent mediators and facilitators of communication.

They have now established direct chat communication with police officers to address topics that spontaneously arise from their work in real time. The communication involves not only police officers but also representatives of the city. For example, in the past they were



Tallinn – Community Police Officer



Tallinn – Community Police Officer

resolving conflicts related to skating in Freedom Square where some citizens were obstructed by people on skates. However, young people have been skating there for a long time and the city centre was their natural territory. Thanks to the MONO workers the whole situation was facilitated, and in cooperation with the city, they dedicated an area for skating and and an area where it was not possible to skate. The skaters themselves were then able to participate in equipping "their" space and designing it; the city then paid for it.

The whole event would not have been possible without the involvement of the city counsellors, the police and MONO Tallinn.

A police prevention officer currently cooperates with the outreach workers and, if needed, can communicate suggestions from the MONO workers further and get support from the police.

In Estonia, unlike the Czech Republic, there are so-called community police officers in every district, representing a possibility for citizens to get in touch with the police. These police officers then deal with the problems of the community. The police are therefore not considered to be as anonymous and such oppressive institutions by the citizens. People know whom to contact, they know them and the community police officers then address the issues with their colleagues, creating a support network.

Regarding the schools, we did not discuss cooperation in such depth, but Aleksei told us that cooperation with schools is also not ideal and explained that the situation in the education system is similar to the Czech Republic: people have been working in the education system for a long time without changing their behaviour and they feel that "they understand the youth issues". Introduction of new trends and changes is therefore slow and demanding.

Tallinn Centre for Children at Risk

This is a Centre for children and young people who face danger or are without parental care. The Centre also provides various services to family members. It provides support, a place of safety and helps to prepare for independent living; it is funded by the city.

The Centre targets youngsters aged 10 to 18 who do not have to come from Tallinn.

Staying in the Centre is completely voluntary and depends on the decision of the individuals. It is an alternative option that does not have to be used, but if chosen, a trial period will take place. There are cases where, on the other hand, the Centre may refuse referred children.

The programme in the Centre is scheduled for 9 to 10 months, with a capacity of 40 individuals, 20 girls and 20 boys. There are 4 departments, 2 for girls and 2 for boys, differentiated according to age: for children 10 to 14 years and for youth 15 to 18 years. Children or young people who speak the same language usually stay in one department and everybody is assigned to a specific social worker. The Centre was originally established primarily for addicted youngsters, mainly heroin addicts. Nowadays clients stay for a variety of reasons.

A similar centre for young people aged 3 to 18 was established in Tallinn and it is used for all kinds of leisure activities. Children can spend here from as little as one night to 14 days. The centre was designed for the acute protection of children and youth.

The Centre for Children at Risk also provides school lessons substituting education if children cannot attend their usual schools. This means that the children do not have to repeat the school year when they return from the centre. However, it is not a traditional school. Teachers from primary schools and grammar schools come to the centre and teach in classes with a capacity of a maximum of 4 pupils.

The programme also develops social skills and skills relevant to everyday life.

One component of the programme is group work led by psychologists and psychological work in the form of individual and family therapy.

Physical and sports activities, occupational and music therapy are organised in the centre.

The programme includes aftercare and Vibroacoustic therapy to help manage stress, anxiety, improve sleep disorders and muscle tension.

A regular daily routine is essential. Each day starts at 7.40 a.m. with a wake-up call, personal hygiene and room cleaning. Breakfast is at 8.30 a.m., followed by lessons starting at 9.30 a.m. Lunch starts at 2 p.m., followed by a break and time for homework. From 4.30 p.m. there is time for sports, group work and recreation. Dinner starts at 6.30 p.m., followed by free time to be spent outdoors or with computers. Evening group starts at 9 p.m., followed by preparation for bedtime and lights-out at 10 p.m.

There is a rehabilitation unit for minors under the influence of addictive substances, but without signs of aggression, incorporated into the centre. Youngsters are brought here once they’ve been examined by a physician and have an accompanying report describing

their medical condition and a statement that the condition is not life-threatening. Minors are allowed to spend the night here in a safe environment and leave the centre in the morning, with a worker present at all times.

The MONO organisation cooperates with a centre for minors. The advantage is, for example, the possibility of joining the Jalatalla programme.

Hoogsisse

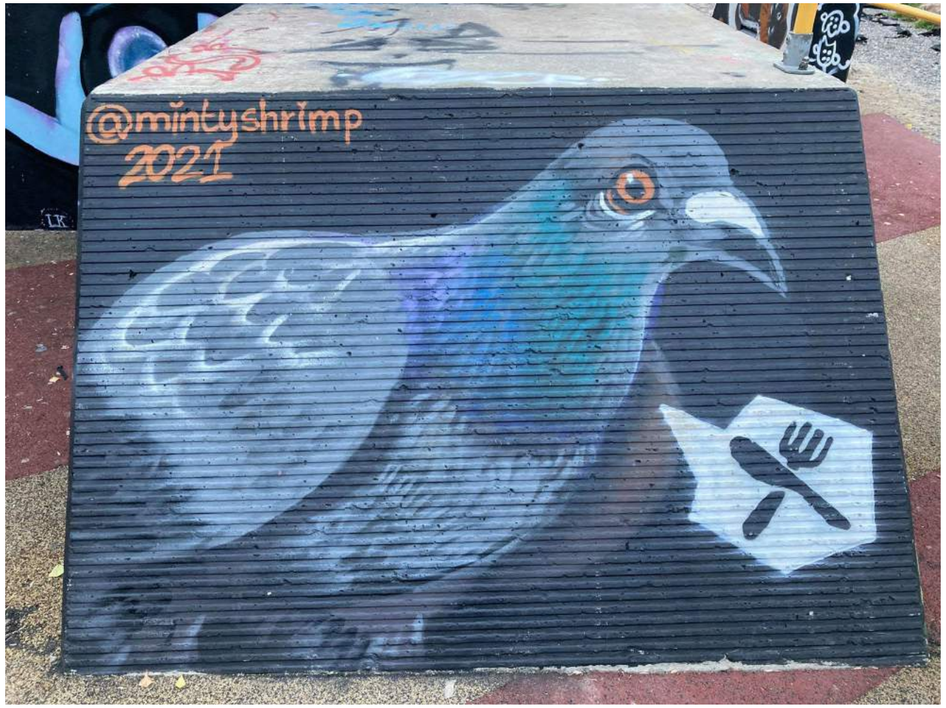
When we listened to Christjan explaining this programme, we asked how he would translate Hoogsisse. He explained that Hoog means “speed” or “movement” and sisse means “in”, it loosely translates as moving forward. And that is what the programme is striving for. It is designed for minors in Tallinn aged 15 to 26 years, who have not completed school education and are not in employment. In Estonia, as in other countries, the term NEET (not in employment, education or training) is used.

In 2021, there were 4,400 of these young people in Tallinn and 7% of them were involved in the Hoogsisse programme.

The programme was launched in 2019 and is expected to last for three years. It is funded by the Ministry of Education and the European Social Fund. A multidisciplinary team of 6 members work in the programme and they cooperate with different organisations, such as MONO.

The main objective of the programme is to find these young people and, according to their needs, involve them in active life. This programme for young people is set up for 6 months from the first contact with the worker. It is divided into three stages. The first stage is about contacting young people - the programme obtains contact details for this target group from a social services data register called STAR, from municipalities, partners and also from the public. For example, it shares the stories of clients in local newspapers, on social media and on Tallinn’s municipal website. Potential clients may contact them themselves. They contact clients by email or by phone and introduce them to the service – if clients agree, they are enrolled in the programme.

The next stage is dedicated to identifying the client’s needs and wishes, to motivation and increasing social competences such as writing CVs, emails, looking for new jobs or educational options with individual support from the workers. It also includes working with the client’s relatives. These initial stages take 4 to 6 months.



Tallinn Suburbs



Tallinn Suburbs

The last stage starts afterwards – young people are no longer in a NEET situation and join the education system, training for work or become employed. However, workers continue to be in touch with clients and monitor how they develop.

International programmes and study visits

The home organisation participates in two programmes that offer young people an opportunity to travel abroad: Jalatalla and Vaadetulevikku. The Jalatalla programme is structured in three parts and is funded by the Erasmus+ project. The first phase of the programme aims to contact the target group, reach out to those interested in the programme, select mentors and, most importantly, organise an event where those interested in the project learn about the conditions they need to meet in order to participate in the programme. In the first phase, selected candidates will attend 13 meetings with their mentor (who is chosen according to mutual preferences). Two camping trips outside Tallinn are also included. The motivation of young people is high at the beginning of the programme since a trip abroad is included in the second phase. If everything works according to the agreed conditions and the young people participate in the meetings, then they can take part in the exchange visit to a European Union country. The third phase of the programme is volunteering, i. e. working experience/study visit abroad.

An alternative is the Vaadetulevikku programme, which develops cooperation with schools within the city. It is therefore implemented at a municipal level. The implementation process is similar – the first step is to identify the target group and the schools, followed by the actual approach of schools to set the terms and conditions of the cooperation. The programme itself consists of 12 meetings for participants aged 13 to 14, with an afternoon leisure activity once a month. The advantage of this programme is that half of the content is chosen and planned by the young people themselves, therefore they are effectively involved in the project and their role is that of both participant and creator. It thus offers the opportunity for young people to discover and explore their interests, hidden talents and other opportunities for action.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in the text above, work with (vulnerable) youth in Estonia differs both at the individual and structural level. At the individual level, differences can be observed especially in the worker-client relationship, where workers have shifted their personal boundaries towards the needs of the client. This may appear at first sight as acting in favour of the client, but it could become a nuisance in the long run.

With clearer boundaries, workers could avoid both burnout syndrome and maintain a consistent role that doesn't slip into that of a friend.

On a structural level, it is primarily about the way services are funded – in Tallinn, this service is funded by the city, and about the independence of the service from the Social Services Act which is different in the Czech Republic.

Youth centres are not conceived as low-threshold centres for children and youth as in the Czech Republic, but rather as a space for leisure activities. They are larger in size and therefore provide a more diverse range of services.

Czech streetwork differs from the Mobile Youth Work mainly in the content and number of activities offered to clients. In Czech organisations, these activities are usually part of the clubs' offers, while in Tallinn it is the other way around and the offer of activities is provided by the Mobile Youth Work.

We consider the cooperation between the Tallinn Police and the MONO organisation to be significant, as Aleksei and his team have achieved constructive and effective cooperation. International study visits, such as Jalatalla and Vaadtulevikku, which offer foreign experience to young people, represent another opportunity for self-development. The same applies to the Hoogsisse programme, which offers youngsters who are unemployed and not in education a systematic six-month preparation for future employment.

An interesting experience for us was a visit to the Centre for Children at Risk, which is based on voluntary assistance to children who find themselves in a difficult life situation, are endangered or are without parental care.

Study visit report: PROSTOR PRO, Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

Date: 14.–18. 9. 2020

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Amber Hulsken , St Welzijn Castricum; Daryoush Shirzadi, St. Welzijn Middelburg; Gerard de Pagter , St. Welzijn Middelburg; Lise Huitema , Incluzio Leiderdorp; Stephan Beute, Sport and Welzijn Moerdijk

Introduction

This report is made in order to justify the study visit to the Czech Republic, during which five Dutch youth workers spent a week doing streetwork in Hradec Králové. We, Amber, Daryoush, Gerard, Lise and Stephan, are very grateful for the opportunity we have been given to represent Dutch youth work. We were lucky with the group as we could view the services from different perspectives with a very diverse team.

We would like to thank Niko de Groot from BVjong who gave us the opportunity to participate and Karolína Panušková from Česká associate streetwork (CAS) for the warm welcome in Prague and the explanation about the project. We would also like to thank PROSTOR PRO for their friendliness, warmth and insight into their organization. And of course: David H., David P., Gabriela, Karolína, Klára, Marek, Nikola and Václav , because they started a conversation with us and took us into the work of a Czech streetworker.

Despite the limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic, we really enjoyed our study trip. We have seen a lot, learned a lot and, in particular, we have met great Czech colleagues. We hope that we will meet again in the Netherlands in 2021.

The Netherlands, October 2020

Preface

The organization where the field research took place is PROSTOR PRO. To keep the report legible, the document is made up of different parts, and starts with a comprehensive description of the organization, explaining more about the principles and values of PROSTOR PRO, the location of the organization, organizational structure and salaries. In addition, it zooms in on cooperation partners and the financial resources of the organization. In the second part, more attention is paid to the various services, first of all the services that focus specifically on schools and education, such as the Spirála project and the collaboration with the student complex. Subsequently, the other

services that the researchers have become acquainted with are examined. The report finishes with the conclusion, describing the lessons learned and our recommendations.

Description of the organization

PROSTOR PRO (established in 2000) is a non- profit organization in Hradec Králové, a city to the east of Prague. The mission of the organization is to strive for a society in which no one is left alone with his or her problems / challenges. In doing this they support people in overcoming obstacles and in learning new skills that allow them to take control of their own lives. The aim is to be the leading provider of social preventive services for children and young people in the Hradec Králové region by 2028. The organization wants to be a stable organization in the future in terms of finances and employees. Every three years the strategy plan, and with it the mission and vision of the organization, are refined and updated if necessary.

Values

The organization has five values, which are kept in mind for each service:

- Responsibility; We are responsible for ourselves and for others. We accept our own responsibility and expect the same from others. We act in such a way that others can rely on us
- Respect; We respect ourselves and others. We set appropriate boundaries that respect the boundaries of the individual and the services we provide.
- Openness; We are open to new ideas, we are open to collaboration. We act fairly and transparently. Honesty and sincerity are important to us, especially when dealing with customers.

- Professionalism; The team is composed in such a way that its composition corresponds to a professional organization that meets the requirements arising from legislative standards. We connect professionalism with a human approach.
- Individual approach; We offer an individual approach to each customer and we respond to their specific needs and life situations.

Location and population

PROSTOR PRO is located in Hradec Králové, a city of just over 90,000 inhabitants. At the beginning of this year it expanded to work in the wider region, including small towns outside the city limits. The building from which the work is carried out has different spaces for the different services that are offered. This building belongs to the municipality and PROSTOR PRO is able to use it free of charge. According to the employees that we met, the building is old, unsafe and there is insufficient space. There is also a small park and a sports field adjacent, so there is enough space in the outside area for activities. The building they work from is located in the middle of a residential area in a relatively wealthy neighbourhood. The Mobile Club is used for work outside the city limits. Youth workers use public transport for itinerant work in the city. If there is an appointment with a school, they use their own transport.

The people in Hradec Králové are hard workers, and in most families both parents work. Besides the wealthier people in the city, there are also many people who are poor and live below the poverty line. You are either rich[1] or poor, which is still something of a hangover from communism. If we look at the population structure, the Czech Republic has a very homogeneous community, which is also the case in Hradec Králové. The only populations that you will encounter besides those born and raised in the Czech Republic are the Roma, and small groups of people from Ukraine or Vietnam.

[1] Note PROSTOR PRO: "Rich" here means middle class.

Organizational structure and employees

The organization has 17 employees, in addition to the social workers there are also a number of employees who facilitate the work of the organization: a director, an assistant to the director, a fundraiser, a financial administrator and a project manager (the person who puts everything on paper and is responsible for the projects, for example towards municipalities or other income streams).

The team that we worked alongside is the social team that is committed to youth work. The team consists of 8 employees and 1 programme manager (a total of seven full-time employees), who are 7 women and 2 men. It is a young team, everyone is between 24 and 36 years old. The programme manager has now worked for the organization for 10 years, the other employees have worked there between 3 months and 3 years (some have experience in other services).

All social workers have a university education, most of them are skilled in social work or social pedagogy. In the Czech Republic they are quite strict when it comes to training and further training of social workers. For example, it is mandatory to have completed a university education or a specialized course or vocational college education, and they are obliged to follow at least 24 hours of additional training every year. The value of the Bachelor's degree is doubted by a number of the employees as this is standard in the Czech Republic. For each employee it is decided which additional training has the most added value. This can include themes such as self-harm or dealing with difficult behaviour. Other professionals are also brought in to provide training, such as streetwork experts. The employees can choose which topics they want to explore in more depth.

The employees of the organization have regular consultations, which take place once a week with the team and once a month with the entire organization. They also have an external supervisor in Prague who they see every 8 weeks. When an employee needs a confidential advisor, he or she comes from outside the team if necessary. In addition, employees can always turn to someone they trust in the team, the manager or a colleague. It is also possible to go to a specialist.

Within a full-time position, the employees undertake 4 days of contact work and 1 day of administrative tasks. During the 4 days of contact work they also work on administration in the mornings. Most contact moments take place in the centre or outside between 2p.m. and 6p.m. In the mornings there are also activities with school classes, although this varies per worker.

Salaries of staff

The salary is an average of €1,040 per month for a full-time position. Compared to their educational qualifications and to the average salary of a Czech, this falls below the average. To give an example: a primary school teacher earns an average of €400 more than a youth worker. By way of comparison: in the Netherlands the salaries of youth workers are almost the same as those of teachers, and this figure is about three times higher than in the Czech Republic.

Due to the low salary, most youth workers stop after about 3 to 4 years. After this time they start doing something else, often something that is less fun but where there is more money to be made[2]. As described earlier, the team is very young, and they were also very surprised that the Dutch youth workers were slightly older, as it is rare to meet older youth workers in the Czech Republic.

Network partners and collaboration

The organization has existed for 20 years and has had a lot of time to build a network. They intend to pay even more attention to this in the coming period, by increasing their visibility. The employees are members of various expert groups (e.g. community planning, intervention teams for children, cooperation with the crime prevention coordinator, a group for working with children in difficult situations on the street (who have problems with the law), drug prevention, etc.), in addition there is cooperation with the local police and social and legal protection agencies for children.

Other partners are the schools and other social work organizations such as an addiction institution, an organization for the social and legal protection of children and a psychology practice.

It is important to mention the relationship of trust that the youth workers have with the young people. This bond is not jeopardized by cooperation with police or legal protectors. The information that is shared is quite general, for example no names are passed on unless real criminal or prohibited behaviour is observed which endangers the young people themselves.

[2] Note PROSTOR PRO: This is very subjective and different for each social worker.

Financial resources

The organization is funded by the state, the municipality, the district and from private sources. The distribution is 85%-90% government money and 10%-15% from funds and local businesses. The funding from the government is only secured for a period of 1 year, which creates a lot of uncertainty for the organization.

Marek Nagy is a full time fundraiser for PROSTOR PRO. The organization began fundraisng 20 years ago, but this type of activity was unfamiliar in the Czech Republic at that time, so it hasn't always been an easy thing to do.

Regarding PROSTOR PRO's youth work programme, 80% of the money comes from the government (state and regional), while 20% comes from the municipality. PROSTOR PRO is independent, but it relies on these donations. Money for additional activities comes from fundraising initiatives or foundations, and a minor income is generated from the public through paid activities, but these amounts are very low.

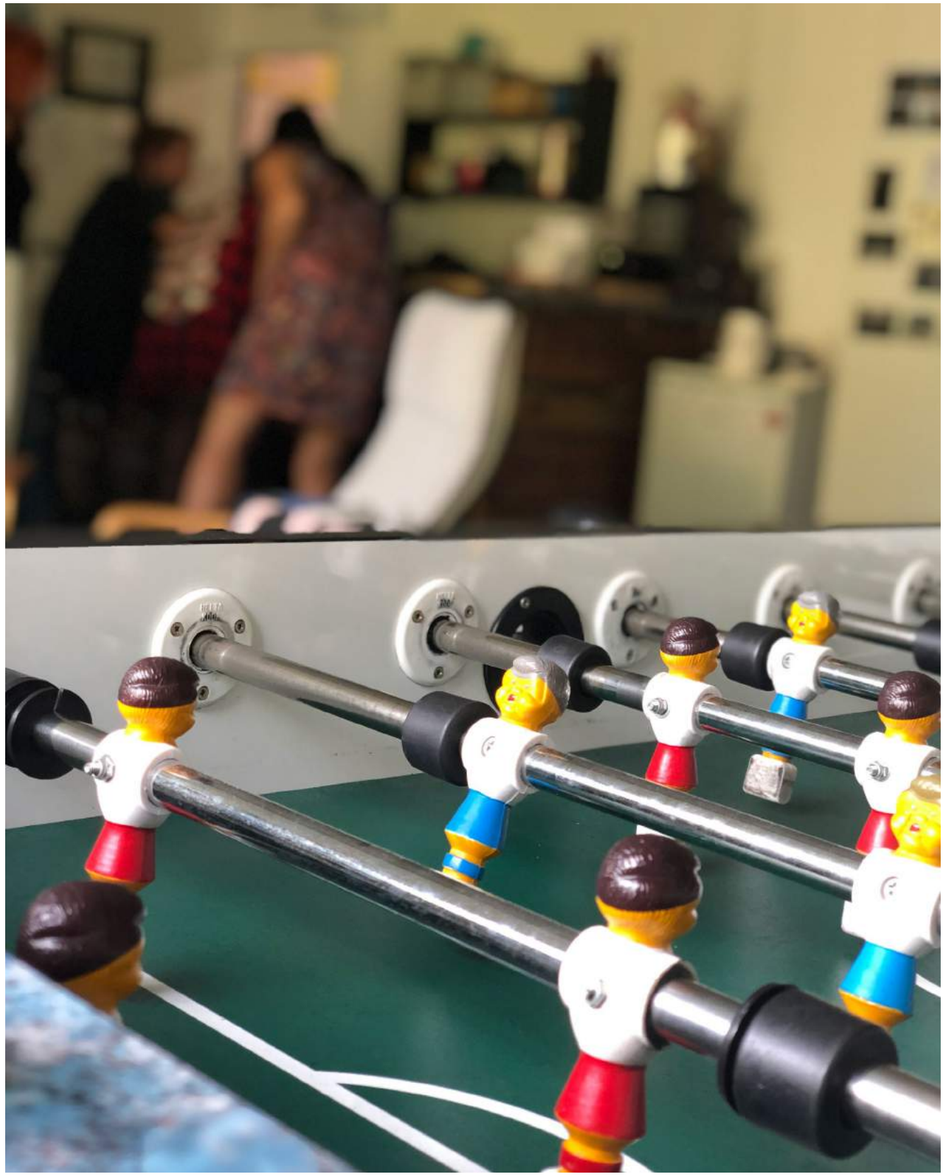
Campaigns are made to interest companies in donating. For example, a promotion has been started at a coffee company whereby people can pay a little extra for their cup of coffee, with that money going to the foundation. Donations are also made in kind / materials, and in addition other colleagues also pay attention to receiving donations. There is no person appointed with the responsibilty for PR, and although the organization are quite well known in the city there is still room for improvement.

Education

The organization offers a number of services in collaboration with educational establishments. These services are described below.

Spirála

The idea behind Spirála is the implementation of certified primary prevention programmes in primary and secondary schools in the Hradec Králové region. This concerns general primary prevention, which we in the Netherlands call "The big jump". A standard



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programme is offered to a group of first- year students (15-16 years old), who are not yet familiar with each other. Group cohesion is promoted by means of sports and games, in which cooperation is necessary. In doing so, the group gets to know each other and the students are more likely to feel safe and familiar with each other. In addition, there is a customised programme for more vulnerable groups of students. These groups require selective, primary prevention which is done by creating a customised programme with specific social skills training. Both groups use the youth centre's sports field and in addition to a youth worker, the presence of a teacher is desirable.

Spirala intends to specialize more in the future in the long-term prevention programmes. In addition to the actual programme, the project also offers advice for students, teachers and parents. One method that is now being implemented is the development of the web and mobile application NEMÁ TO NA ČELE, described in more detail below, which literally means: 'he/she doesn't have it on his/her forehead'.

Nemá to na čele

Three years ago, the team started to look how youth workers could get parents and teachers more involved in the process of tackling bullying . As part of the project a mobile application has been developed. This application clarifies how to recognize bullying, for example at home but also at school. A survey found that 90% of teachers denied that any bullying took place within their school, while 40% of children said that they had experienced bullying. 12% of the children knew how to do something about it, mainly with the help of their parents. However, because bullying is increasingly taking place on social media, the key figures of parents and teachers are unable to offer approriate support. They don't know how to fix it, and furthermore only 40% of teachers are trained in anti-bullying strategies. Youngsters therefore face issues of online bullying alone, without appropriate help. After a screening with parents and teachers, they were asked what would help them. The results were as follows:

Parents: They felt that they should learn to recognize the signs of bullying, that they would appreciate a quick roadmap for targeted action, and that they would prefer professional help in the issue.

Teachers: They wanted a simple manual, help from a professional, and a manual for teaching children how to talk about bullying.

This has resulted in an app that clarifies how teachers and parents should deal with bullying. It guides them step by step: to the emergency room for bullying, detailing how they can work together with the child, school and parents. Here they are linked to the youth workers in order to talk to each other and receive help. The youth worker or other professional will guide them through the process. They complete 12 questions so that the seriousness and magnitude of the problem can be analysed. Then follows a step-by-step plan and an explanation of what has happened to the child. Basic tips are provided to solve the problem. Names are not mentioned and no personal information is given, it is only linked in order to make an analysis and get an overview of the size of the problem. The intention is that the app will eventually be used by all age groups, but it is not (yet) used by young people.

Contact student complex

Due to the Coronavirus, we had no access to the school. Luckily we could visit the student complex where the students live on campus, but again due to the coronavirus we were unable to have a tour. We did have a nice conversation with one of the coordinators of the student complex.

In total there are three student complexes like the one that we have seen. They house about 700 students from various different schools. This student housing is mainly intended for students with a long travel time. They often come from the environment outside the city. The age of these students is between 15 and 19 years old. Many expert employees work in the student complex and there are 5 assistant pedagogues such as counsellors, psychologists and educationalists who help the young people. These are paid for by the school and the local government. The school and the student complex have good contact with each other and exchange signals with each other. In this way, the youngsters learn to tidy up their rooms and thus learn a daily rhythm so that they learn to live independently. There is a lot of structure that young people can hold on to. They have a strict schedule to follow when it comes to cleaning and going out. There are many leisure activities such as sports and creative things such as making newsletters. There is someone available 24/7.

The goal is to educate them well and to show them how best to spend their free time. In the beginning they have an introductory meeting to get to know each other which is always playful so that they hardly even notice that they are learning and they appreciate the

presence of the youth workers and the free-time activities they provide. To develop the programs, they make use of other professionals such as youth workers, youth services, doctors, etc.

They have a strict schedule to follow when it comes to cleaning and going out. This varies by age. Parents are allowed to visit, but not during this Coronavirus period due to the risk of contamination.

There are a lot of topics that are discussed with the students such as bullying and social media. There is now a collaboration between the student complexes and youth work. Youth work addresses young people outside and / or in the galleries of the student complex. There are specific topics that are discussed with the young people such as about drugs etc.

The coordinator we spoke to has been working here for 3 years now. Before that she worked in one of the other student dormitories. The young people are generally already very busy with learning and various other activities, although some still go to the youth centre. The student complex refers young people to the youth centre Club Klídek if they see that this is necessary. The coordinator indicated during the conversation that she needs the youth workers to be available in the evening and not only until 6 p.m. This is because the young people often attend school until the afternoon. She also indicated that there is a lot of variety between the youth workers and the turnover is very high, which is very disappointing to her. She wants more certainty to build and maintain a good basis of trust.

When are the conversations between youth workers and students at school successful? The answer is when the students keep asking questions and showing interest. At school the youth workers have 6 to 8 contact moments with students per hour. The same students often come here every week, but there are also new students checking in. Posters are put up at school stating when the youth workers are present. They often have a different main topic that they work with such as addictions and bullying.

It is therefore noticeable that the youth work is only available until 6 p.m. When we inquired about this the youth workers said it's because they want to set boundaries to maintain some personal life outside work. There was also no enthusiasm for this among the youth workers who we spoke to, and they also noted the high turnover rate among youth workers, suggesting the high fluctuation of workers is usually connected to gender because women go on maternty leave.

Other services

PROSTOR PRO has a number of services that they offer for young people in addition to their educational offer.

- **Club Klídek youth centre** - Young people are welcome here and various activities are possible;
- **Ambulant Youth work** - activities in the town of Hradec Kralove and the suburbs around the city;
- **Probation project Právo pro každý den** - coaching programme for young people who have been in contact with the law.

Club Klídek youth centre

Being in conversation with young people is central to the implementation of the youth work, so that problems are mapped out. It also zooms in further on themes with which the youngsters come into contact, for example drugs and alcohol, sexuality, social media, bullying, school, etc. The power of this preventive approach, being present when things go well, also ensures that the youth workers can be found when there are challenges in the life of the young person.

The youth workers spend a lot of time and thought on mapping the groups. Who is in which group? Where are new young people becoming visible and where are shifts occurring? Young people are registered under a nickname, this data is recorded primarily to identify which municipal budget applies, keep a record of the work undertaken, and identify what the reach of their work is. The youth workers enjoy great confidence among the young. The disadvantage is that the turnover of youth workers is high, making this bond of a temporary nature.

The entry at Club Klídek is free. We found out that in the Czech Republic, in addition to free youth work, there is also a paid form of youth work. This could ensure a clear division between population groups (rich / poor), which for the young person later affects opportunities in the labour market. Because it is often not about what you know but who you know to increase your success. Youth work also has a low prestige, which is reflected in the low salaries and therefore the high turnover.



Prostor PRO



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The umbrella organization would do well to show the successes and the savings in the long run so that public opinion about youth work shifts positively. The aim is then to make politicians aware of the need to invest in this. Collaboration with foreign organizations such as BV Jong may be able to support the umbrella organization in this.

Ambulatory Youth Work – Outreach work

On the street, the youth workers also aim to make young people enthusiastic about activities or to lead them to the youth centre (the club). Young people can also make an appointment via a Direct Message via social media. The ambulatory youth worker then meets with the young people at a place in the city. The youth workers use public transport to move to the city and make their rounds on foot.

The organization succeeds in achieving these goals. There is a weekly team meeting and during and after their ambulatory round they record with whom, where and what was discussed. It is good that there is a program that can be referred to, but it is not necessary for every young person, and not every young person is suitable for the centre. Long contacts on the street are therefore also of added value. The youth workers enjoy great confidence amongst the youngsters.

It is noticeable that a lot of time is spent on registration. A lot of time can be gained here by only registering what stands out and is worth mentioning. Moving through the city on a bicycle would also save time and work more effectively. It was also noticeable that the youth workers often linger with the young people for a long time. If this becomes too long, it could cause the young people to avoid contact.

Probation project Právo pro každý den

The rehabilitation programme of the Ministry of Justice has set up a programme for minor offenders who have committed minor offenses. These young people are obliged to come together as a group to the youth work project and learn in an interactive form of 12 to 14 lessons about how to develop practical skills. The practical skills that are focused on are conflict resolution, learning to think critically, speaking intelligibly, learning to view problems from multiple angles and learning to be independent. All this is therefore aimed at preventing the juvenile from repeating the crime.

What was striking during the street work was that a young man who had previously had to participate in this project did not want to have anything to do with the youth workers. There was no relationship of trust, which was a concern arising from this project. Because the youth workers in this project assume a different role from in their usual work, this can have a negative effect in building a relationship of trust[3].

Conclusions

The central topic of this study visit was the cooperation between schools and streetwork. Despite the emerging second wave of the Covid-19 epidemic, the Dutch youth workers got a broad picture of the Czech youth service. The lessons learned and the recommendations are therefore broader than just the collaboration between schools and street work initially envisaged.

What struck us about the study trip to the Czech Republic

General:

- Employees only remain in their positions for a short time, about 2 -4 years.
- The employees are very enthusiastic, but cannot build up know-how about their profession.
- In the Czech Republic there are two different cultures: the Czechs and the Roma. The youth workers did not have much contact with the Roma population.[4]

[3] Note PROSTOR PRO: This was an unusual situation. The young man was ordered to come to our club by a social worker from the city council. He was afraid that he would be criticised by this social worker for not following the agreement, because he did not come to us at the club regularly. The social workers from our team do NOT work in the probation programme. This programme uses external workers.

[4] Note PROSTOR PRO: From our perspective we feel we have lots of contacts with Roma youngsters, but we work with them mainly during streetwork. They seldom come to the club.

- Youth workers are mainly women.
- The youth workers only work until 6 pm and not in the evenings. This is due to the large number of female workers, issues of safety and the low salaries.
- The youth workers have a good relationship of trust with most of the young people they work with.
- More should be done in advocacy so that youth work / streetwork really is a respected profession.
- Employees are passionate and achieve a lot with few resources.

Issues:

- Financing. This is a really big issue. Even for regular work, fundraising must always be provided in order for the case to continue. Fundraising is an important and necessary part of the work there.
- Registration: there is – in our opinion- too much control on the presence of participants (logbook), yet little or no registration of the actual social work, such as what an intervention has yielded.

Lessons learned

Good practice examples:

- Projects for children beginning secondary school (transition primary school-secondary school).
- For the target group 8 -15 years: project-based work in schools, mainly on a twice yearly basis.
- The website and mobile app are a great way to support teachers and parents with bullying, among other things.
- The approach with minor delinquents is a permanent part of the work. This is comparable to the Dutch HALT-project (Halt intervention in the Netherlands is carried out to quickly dispose of minor offenses - such as vandalism, (shop) theft, nuisance and

absenteeism from school - committed by young people between the ages of 12 and 18, with a training order and sometimes community service) There is therefore more integration here in the Czech Republic between youth work and Halt (rehabilitation) related activities.

- The use of the outreach Mobile Club to get to the outer edges of the city and to ensure that youngsters also have a place there.
- Young people indicate that they have a very good relationship of trust with the youth workers, they describe this as very positive.

Recommendations

- Being accountable for the work and with it the money flow is something that goes without saying. At the moment, the ratio between administration / registration time and time invested in the target group is not optimal. Talk to those who must be accountable and try to ensure that you only register what is necessary. This leaves more time for contact with the target group or to invest in other projects.
- The organization is funded from the state, municipality, district and private sources. The funding from the government is only for 1 year, which creates a lot of uncertainty for the organization. It is assumed that this is the case for many youth work organizations, which is why it is important that national and political attention is paid to longer-term investments in the youth domain. CAS can perhaps play a role in this.
- In addition to the uncertainty in funding, the financial reward / salary for Czech youth workers is very low. As such, there is a lot of movement in the workforce and no long lasting relationship can be built between the young person and the youth worker.[5] This subject must also receive national or political attention.
- Invest even more in visibility. All the youth workers have is a bag with the organization's logo, and there is nothing else that is recognizable as being connected to the organization. Investing in visibility / recognition also increases support.

[5] Note PROSTOR PRO: We also see this as an advantage, because we don't want our clients to be fixed on a specific person, and we still feel we can create trustworthy relationships with clients even in 2 or 3 years. We are aiming for the clients to have trust in the service.

- More contact can be established with different target groups. For example, there is still room for improvement in contact with the Roma community and targeted group evenings could be organized, for example
- The youth workers use public transport to move through the city and do their rounds on foot. A bicycle would be advisable to save time and increase the catchment area.
- In addition to contacts with the target group, it may be interesting to invest more in contacts with, for example, local residents. In this way, the support for the organization can also be increased.
- At 6 pm the youth workers stop their work, the schools and partner organizations indicated a need for investment in work during the evenings.
- Registration: there is too much control on the presence of participants (logbook), and little or no registration of the actual social work, such as what an intervention has yielded.



Study visit report: Beztíže, Cesta integrace, and Neposeda, Prague, Czech Republic

Date: 8.–12. 11. 2021

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Merilin Ülem, Alexander Arabkin, Kevin Ivanov and Aleksei Jefimov (Mobiilne noorsootöö, Tallinna Haridusamet)

The following report summarises all the experiences, thoughts and ideas gathered from the study visit.

Our first day started with a meeting with Karolína Panušková, who is the coordinator for international cooperation in ČAS. We met in DDM Praha 3 – Ulita building, which also houses one of the youth clubs – Beztíže.

ČAS is a professional non-profit organisation founded in 1997. It represents programs working in the field of low-threshold social services and contact social work. The programs include low-threshold centres for children and youngsters, contact centres for drug users, low-threshold advisory centres and street work. Street workers look for clients on the streets to establish contact and provide them with counselling and help to solve their adverse social situations. The job positions are determined by the Act of Social Services No. 108/2006 Coll. ČAS offers courses and seminars for many people, from beginners to experienced street workers. Both regular as well as tailor-made courses are provided. In conclusion, ČAS brings together all the organisations and programs in the Czech Republic to carry out different methods of social work with youngsters as well as other target groups.[1] ČAS also creates standards and methodologies, provides audits of quality, and supports supervision.

Ulita is a leisure centre which provides services for hobby education - there are programs for the active use of leisure time for children, youngsters and adults. The focus is on courses and hobby groups, events, open workshops, camps and holiday events, educational programs, and competitions for schools in Prague 3.[2]

Karolína briefly introduced us to the week's plan and other vital aspects of our trip. Then we headed to club Beztíže on the other side of the building. The staff of Beztíže, the Neposeda organisation, and Klub Cesta greeted us warmly. Karolína gave us a presentation on ČAS - how the organisation works, how they help children, youngsters and adults. We also learned about Beztíže.

Some noteworthy things: every year in September ČAS organises a low-threshold clubs' week to increase the visibility and openness of their clubs. The Youth Work Week in Estonia might be similar. It is organised every year in November with a topic important for youngsters (mental health, participation, youth work possibilities, etc.), but it is a clever idea to bring attention to the clubs themselves.

1 https://streetwork.cz/stranka/13/co-je-streetwork

2 https://www.ulita.cz/

We could use this method with our youth centres. There is also Časovaná bota or 'time shoe', an event dedicated to the best street workers and street worker teams. Again, in Estonia, we have some similarities - every year the Education and Youth Board chooses the best youth worker.

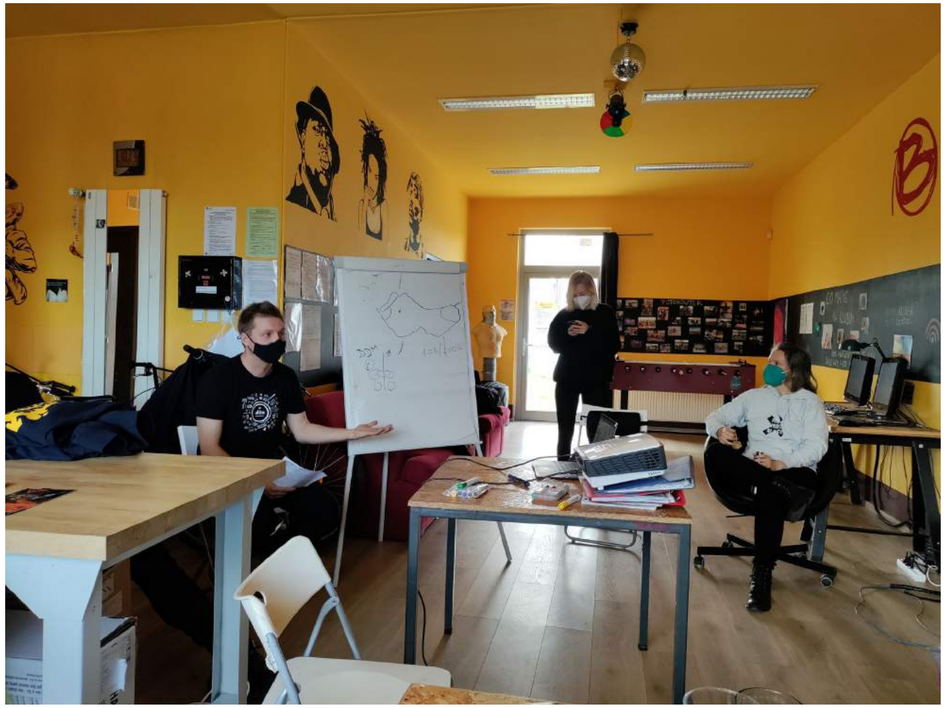
We would also like to highlight a discussion series called "ČAS OD ČASU". Through a series of meetings, well-known people try to change misunderstandings about people at risk of social exclusion, low-threshold social work and street work. Regular guests are prominent personalities who, through their work, eliminate prejudices and change the mental settings of the majority society.[3]

We had various questions about the system and found some things challenging to understand. At the same time, we found some similarities. In the end, we had a good overview of how everything works. Prevention is mostly organised by NGOs who work according to the Social Services Act. The building of relationships starts from the "bottom-up": connecting with schools and having discussions about street work services and preventive programs (these programs have been introduced in some schools during breaks – contact, monitoring, and working individually).

Beztíže

Beztíže is an organisation that joins together diverse approaches to bring social services to young people aged 6–26. Beztíže operates in Prague 2, Prague 3 and Prague 10. They work on the streets and in clubs (Beztíže and Beztíže2), providing services to all youngsters in difficult life situations, with unstable family backgrounds who might be against the social environment or social norms. The organisation runs two low-threshold clubs and three field programs for at-risk youngsters. The clubs are easily accessible places for all social groups of children and young people. Its services are provided free of charge and anonymously. The clubs offer an inviting place for their clients, a safe environment, various equipment and programs. In addition to entertainment and development activities, they also provide

[3] https://casodcasu.cz/



Ulita – Beztíže



Ulita – Beztíže

counseling, social services and an emphasis on the prevention of risky behaviors (skipping school, drug experimentation, high-risk sexual behavior, etc.). Youngsters from the surrounding area meet regularly in the clubs with their friends, they learn new skills and converse with the staff. Common themes for youngsters in Beztíže are a lack of motivation for school, aggression, fights and violence. The topic of drugs is not as paramount as it used to be, but it is still relevant. Beztíže organises regular and one-off workshops in their low-threshold clubs and directly on the streets, the best known are the rap workshops - many creators and groups have formed through these. Youngsters can find alternative perspectives and meet new and inspiring people.

In addition to the clubs and worskhops, there are other approaches. Beztíže has been organising preventive field trips outside Prague since 2009. During the trips they use methods of experiential pedagogy and the concept of The Hero's Journey, which was brought to the Czech Republic by the American psychologist Bret Stephenson. On the field trips youngsters can try, for example, art techniques, sports activities, group games, cooperative activities, group reflections, cooking together, cottage care, and more.[4]

Something else that we noticed were the sexual education-themed posters in the toilets. We could use this practice in the youth centres in Estonia, as it could be beneficial to our youngsters as well.

The staff in club Beztíže consists of three people, and it is the same in Beztíže[2]. Street workers cover three areas: Prague 2, Prague 10, and Žižkov, and they work in pairs. In our organisation we also work mainly like this, but we switch people and change our working areas while here it is the same area with the same people. It is an efficient method to gain youngsters' trust, but not necessary for us because our city is more compact. How the pair dynamic differs from ours is hard to say in such a brief time, but we felt that cooperation between workers was good. Beztíže works on the streets two or three times a week.

After the presentation, we split into three groups. One of our team went to Klub Cesta in Říčany, two of us went to do street work in the regions of Prague 2 and Prague 10, and one of us went to do street work in Žižkov.

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4 https://beztize.cz/co-delame__trashed/preventivni-vyjezdove-akce/

Klub Cesta

Říčany is a small town in the Prague-East District in the Central Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic. It has about 16,000 inhabitants. We learned that it is also one of the most expensive areas to live around Prague, as in recent years real estate prices have risen by a remarkable amount. Klub Cesta provides social help for people in need - youngsters, families and the elderly, but the focus in the club is on youngsters aged 7 to 26. During COVID they lost contact with many 16–17-year-old youngsters and now they are trying to reconnect with them.

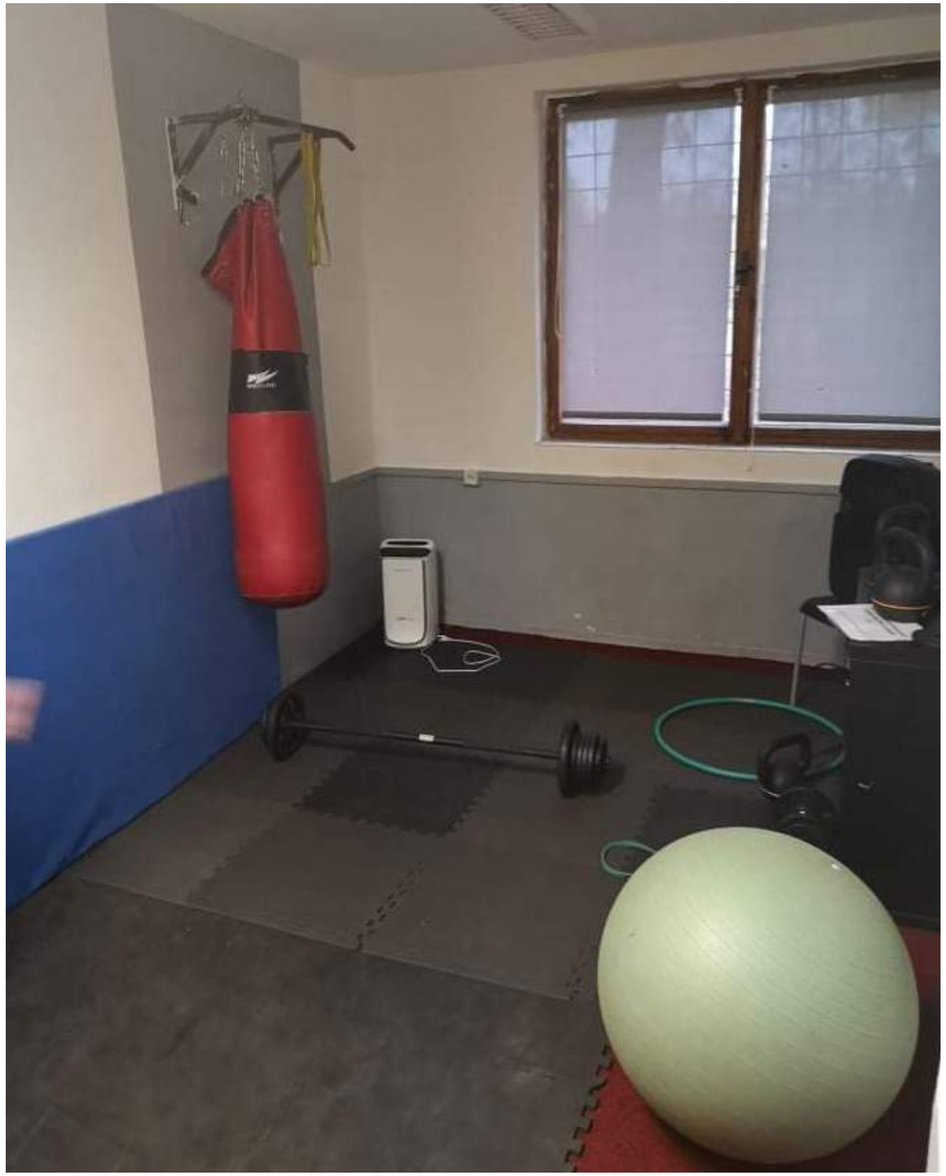
The club is part of Cesta integrace, a non-profit organisation. The general goal is to contribute to the growth of new and non-traditional approaches in social work, thereby helping vulnerable groups. The organisation has different methods of working with its clients. There is a club for youngsters, a mediation service, and legal advice for people in financial difficulties – debt, credit cards, court cases, etc. In cooperation with the police, the organisation started a project teaching children how to properly ride bikes and get a licence. The organisation is involved in the project "Together and professionally - support for cooperation and quality of low-threshold social services". It also has a food aid program comparable with the Toidupank program in Estonia, but we run it through the local government. Through Cesta integrace it goes directly to the people in need. They collect food from supermarkets and later distribute it to families in need. Additionally, Cesta cooperates with a local shop "KOLOBEH" where donated goods are sold. The money gained by selling the donated goods is used to support people in need via the social services of Cesta. Several community events take place each year to provide services for everyone – these are called family days.[5]

During our visit there were four workers there and some youngsters. In the club can be found opportunities to spend free time but also to get assistance with studying. There is a kitchen, a bar and other possibilities for leisure time - for example there is a small gym for the youngsters to use. We felt that there was a genuine bond between the youngsters and the staff.

[5] https://www.cestaintegrace.cz/



Klub Cesta



Klub Cesta

Back in the city, street work in Prague 10 was akin to our street work. Starting from the Eden Shopping Centre, we continued through small streets until we came to an old skatepark filled with graffiti - the kind of place where we would expect to meet youngsters, but we did not meet anyone that day. It is a known meeting place, and Beztíže has previously organised a skating workshop there, for example.

We met two teenage girls on a playground, but as there were four of us, we Estonians stayed behind because we all thought it might be a bit overwhelming for the girls to have four grownups approaching. Our Czech hosts had a short conversation and later said the girls were not talkative. We also went to see The Church of Saint Wenceslas, in front of which was a billboard providing information on Beztíže as well as photos of various activities organised by the club and folders about drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, and important contacts. As we understood, the church and the organisation also have a form of cooperation.

Afterwards, we met with another pair of street workers. In conclusion, it appears that the street workers in Prague face more severe issues than we do in Estonia. These are, naturally, related to themes like drugs, alcohol, problems at home or school. The limited encounters with youngsters and the conversations with the street workers gave us the impression that there are more financial problems with families, and marijuana is much more present or seen on the streets. We do not have a determined Romani community in Estonia. As Romani face discrimination and exclusion, it raises different concerns.

Neposeda

On the next day, we went to visit Neposeda. This is a community social service that has been operating for 22 years, during which they have helped over 3000 individuals and families who have found themselves in unexpected situations. They say that anyone can come and find help, regardless of the nature of the problem they are facing. They also organise community events to improve life on the outskirts of Prague. In 2018, the organisation offered financial assistance of up to CZK 20,000 which socially disadvantaged families could apply for to educate their children. This financial assistance has helped children finish school and increased their chances of finding

future employment. The funds have helped tutor children with special needs and purchase the study aids needed for admission to an apprenticeship or high school.[6]

Neposeda incorporates three projects - Autobus (youth club and street work), HOPO (youth club and street work), and a housing program. We started our day in HOPO, a youth club in Horní Počernice, also known as Prague 20 - a municipal district in the eastern part of Prague. It is a low-threshold club, and they also do street work. The target age group in the club is 9-18 and on the streets it is 9-26, with most of the clients being between 11–26-years-old. The club has a social worker and a methodologist, one addiction worker, and four people with a social work background. It offers various activities - sports events and camps, therapy, education, tutoring, etc. Opening hours are from Monday to Friday from 13:00 to 18:00. The club also collaborates with the housing program mentioned before.

The Housing Program was established at the beginning of 2020 as part of the Křižovatka Field Program, which operates in the eastern part of Prague. The program supports people in need of housing or those at risk of losing their homes. Clients are both individuals and families. They receive support in various phases, according to their current needs. It can be assistance with applying for a city or municipal apartment or the conclusion of a lease agreement, to comprehensive support once in housing to maintain it permanently. During 2020 the program supported 12 individuals and 16 families. There are eight people working on the program, who are mainly social workers. It can be challenging to find suitable accommodation for their clients as there is an affordability crisis in the Czech Republic - housing prices keep rising and, more than others, this affects young people and those with lower incomes. House prices have become dislocated from incomes. The program also provides material help (food, furniture, clothes) and assistance. Additionally, they organise events for homeless people - barbecues, Christmas events, and food collection.

From HOPO, two of us went to Autobus, which is the other club working under Neposeda. It is in Dolní Počernice - a municipal district in the eastern part of Prague. They are a low-threshold club that also does street work. They are also planning to do street work at schools. The target group is 9–18-year-olds, with individual work done with older youngsters, but street work with 11–26-year-olds. Four people work in the club: a social worker, an addiction worker, and two with social work backgrounds. The club runs from Monday

6 https://neposeda.org/

to Thursday from 13:00 to 18:00. It offers activities for youth activation, therapy, education, tutoring, and prevention. Working with the community is an integral part of their work.

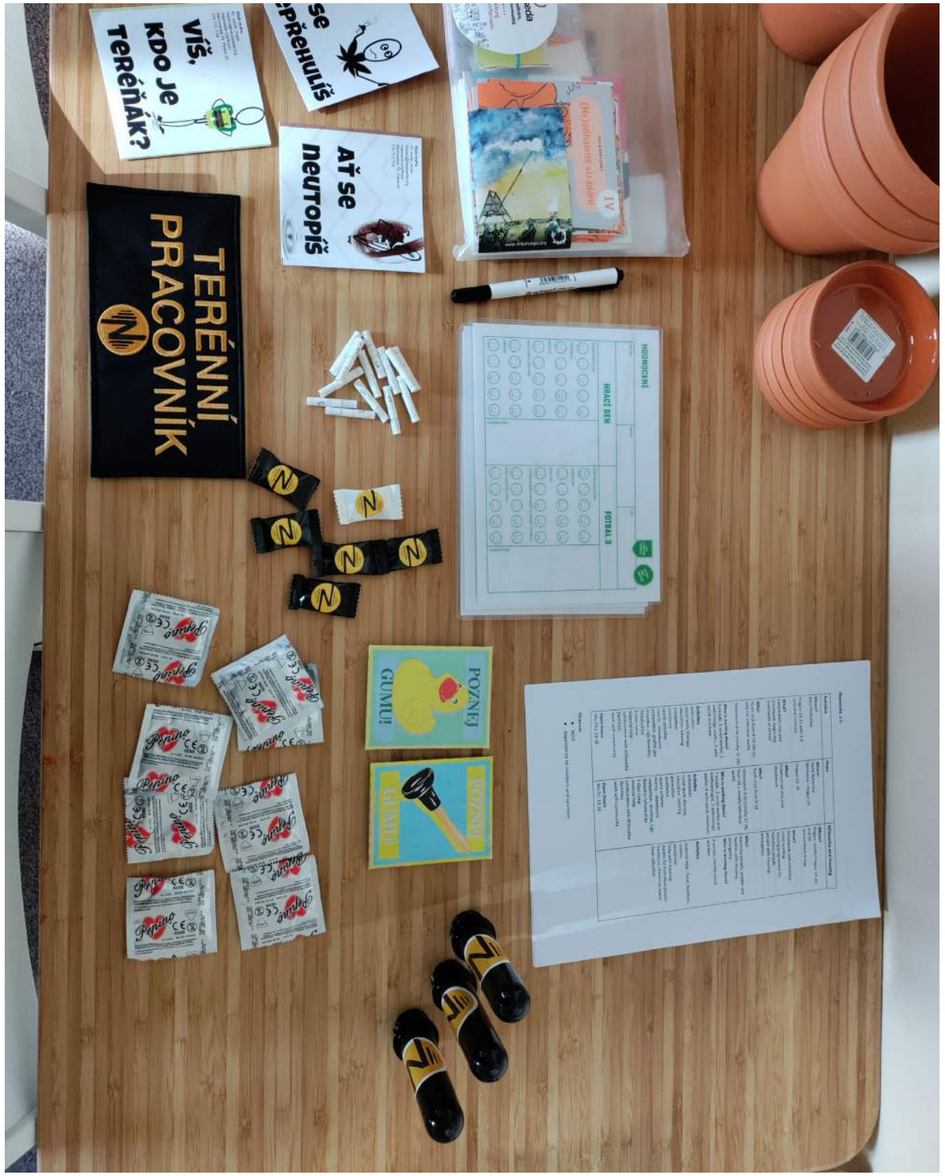
We spent a lovely afternoon at the club. They had planned to build birdhouses with some youngsters, and as we were there we also participated in the activity. We constructed multiple houses, which the youngsters later decorated. It was a good challenge, but we know how creative and resourceful young people are. Without previous experience, they built solid houses. At the same time, one of the team members tutored two youngsters - it was impressive how they managed the workflow.

The other part of our team went to do street work and visit Beztiže2 in Prague 2, near the Nusle bridge. They had prepared some notes about Estonia and hung them on a wall so that the youngsters could learn about their guests, which was lovely. The club is small and cosy, with a private corner for individual work, a kitchen, and an open space. The staff have their own space. Youngsters can use the computer and play board games, a tutor comes to the club regularly so the youngsters can receive help with studying. It is good to see a person specifically appointed for that job. There are two workers present whilst the club is open (the club team consists of three people) and once or twice a week the tutor is there to help children with schooling. We understood that people working on the street and in the club do not get together very often, although they all work under the same NGO. Our experience in Estonia is contrasting - we put much effort into networking. The club and the street workers work a lot with Romani youngsters. As mentioned before, the Romani face ongoing prejudice and negative perceptions in the Czech Republic, so it is crucial to work on involvement and integration. The club and street workers are an essential part of that dialogue.

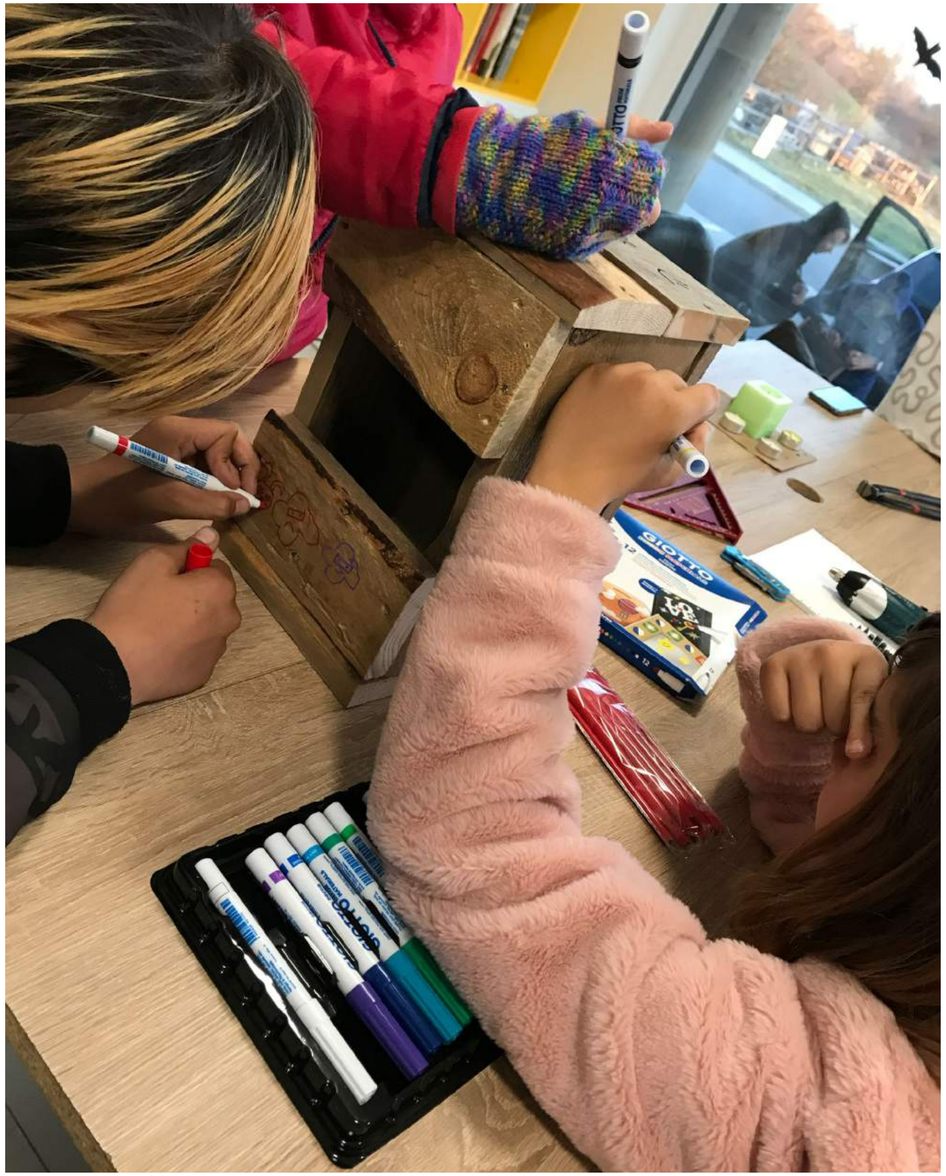
Our day ended with a social gathering in Bistro Střecha - a bar that is also an example of social entrepreneurship - people with experience of homelessness or those recently released from prison work at the bar. It was a lovely place with tasty food and a great atmosphere, and we had a delightful time. In addition to decent employment, the workers get advice on housing, debt relief, etc. After dinner we went to see the city and had some pleasant talks with each other.



Neposeda



Neposeda



Neposeda



Neposeda

Klub Běcho

The following day began with us having some free time in the morning, after which we travelled to the third club under Neposeda - Klub Běcho. This is the newest club, which opened at the beginning of September 2021. It is also a low-threshold club for children and youth. Located in Běchovice, a suburb of Prague, it is about 13 km east of the city centre, Klub Běcho is for children and young people to spend time with their peers and realise what they enjoy. The club organises leisure and educational activities for children and youngsters, keywords are meaningful and safe leisure time and providing a space to find new friends. Six people work in this club, and they also do street work in the area. We had the opportunity to join the team in street work and spend time in the club. So, splitting into two groups, two of us went to the streets, and two stayed in the club. The street work was an unusual experience because we went to a forest. We walked on a nature trail, saw a couple of horses, and headed to Klánovický les, which spans over 1000 ha. We walked through the forest without meeting anyone, but youngsters are known to spend time there. Eventually, we arrived at a school where we sat down and waited for youngsters to join us. It is an effective method, spending some time in one place, sitting, waiting for youngsters. We also use that practice sometimes in our street work. There was also a legal graffiti wall, something we have been trying to initiate in Tallinn.

We did not talk to any youngsters on our walk, but we discussed our working methods and found parallels in how we connect and what problems we face. It is honestly universal - drugs and alcohol, issues at school and home, and nothing to do with their time.

The club itself looks very cosy and new. Youngsters can play board games or air hockey, there is a small kitchenette and a separate room for tutoring or office work. They also have a hall for dance practice or other activities that require more space.

We spent some time with the kids, doing handicrafts, playing air hockey, and talking about their interests and life in general. Our experience in Prague has shown that youngsters aged 7-15 do not speak English very well. We interacted mainly through Google Translate. The staff also helped, and so did our knowledge of Russian. So we were able to communicate, and it was good to practice and a challenge as well. Club Běcho is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 13:00 to 18:00. When the closing time came, it was also time for us to head back to the hotel and enjoy our evening.



Klub Běcho – Streetwork



Klub Běcho – Streetwork

Fotbal pro rozvoj

On the last day, we gathered in Autobus to learn about Football3. This is a project inspired by the death of the Colombian footballer Andrés Escobar. He scored an own goal in the 1994 FIFA World Cup that led to the elimination of his team, eleven days later he was murdered. After that, Jürgen Griesback decided that it was time for football to be not only about winning but that it could also be a tool to unite people on the pitch. The methodology which emerged from this need for dialogue and understanding is called Football3, and it is now in use around the globe. Organisations that wish to use football for social change have adopted the approach. It is not about the skills of the game; it is about the skills of life and fair play. We saw a presentation on how the method works by the local organisation Fotbal pro rozvoj (Football for development).

The tournaments are played in three half-times:

1. a pre-tournament team debate when the rules of the game are agreed
2. the game itself
3. a post-game reflection – where the teams meet off the pitch to discuss how the game went and how well the values of fair play and respect were put into action.

But besides the game, we also learned that they work with more than 20 non-governmental organisations from all over the Czech Republic, using their concept in their daily work with youngsters. They organise Fair play football leagues in different regions, have workshops, training, presentations and other events. During June and July, the organisation travels around the Czech Republic with Czech and international volunteers from the network Streetfootballworld. They also participate in international projects and initiatives.
In Estonia, we also use football as a tool for development for youngsters. SPIN is a unique sport-based, scientifically proven youth development program. Sessions are held three times a week and consist of a football game and social workshops. It is still quite different from Football3. Both have their perks. After the presentation, two of us participated in a match. We tried to incorporate our brand-new



Autobus – Football3



Autobus – Football3

knowledge into the game, and it was a new experience. We felt that the discussion was a bit long, and it might diminish the interest to play. But overall it is a great tool to teach youngsters respect and other values.

Klub cesta street work in Kunice secondary school of crafts

On the same day, one of us also returned to Říčany to see Klub Cesta working with a local school. Kunice Secondary School of Crafts is a secondary school that provides education with an apprenticeship certificate to pupils from practical primary schools, special primary schools or primary schools where the pedagogical-psychological counselling centre or special pedagogical centre diagnoses a reason for education in a special secondary school. It is possible to learn five vocations: pastry chef, florist, cook, salesperson, or caregiver. There are 53 students in the school. The ages of the students vary, but they all are special needs youngsters. The school is in a scenic location, in the middle of a forest. As we arrived, the youngsters came to greet us. Klub Cesta workers visit this school once a week and they know the youngsters well. We brought board games with us. The main thing is communicating, of course. The youngsters spend an entire week at the school, leaving only at weekends, so talking to someone from outside is like a breath of fresh air for them. The location somewhat limits the youngster's life – they cannot spend an evening with their friends at a café or a park. Klub Cesta does necessary work with the youngsters, giving them an alternative to their everyday routine.

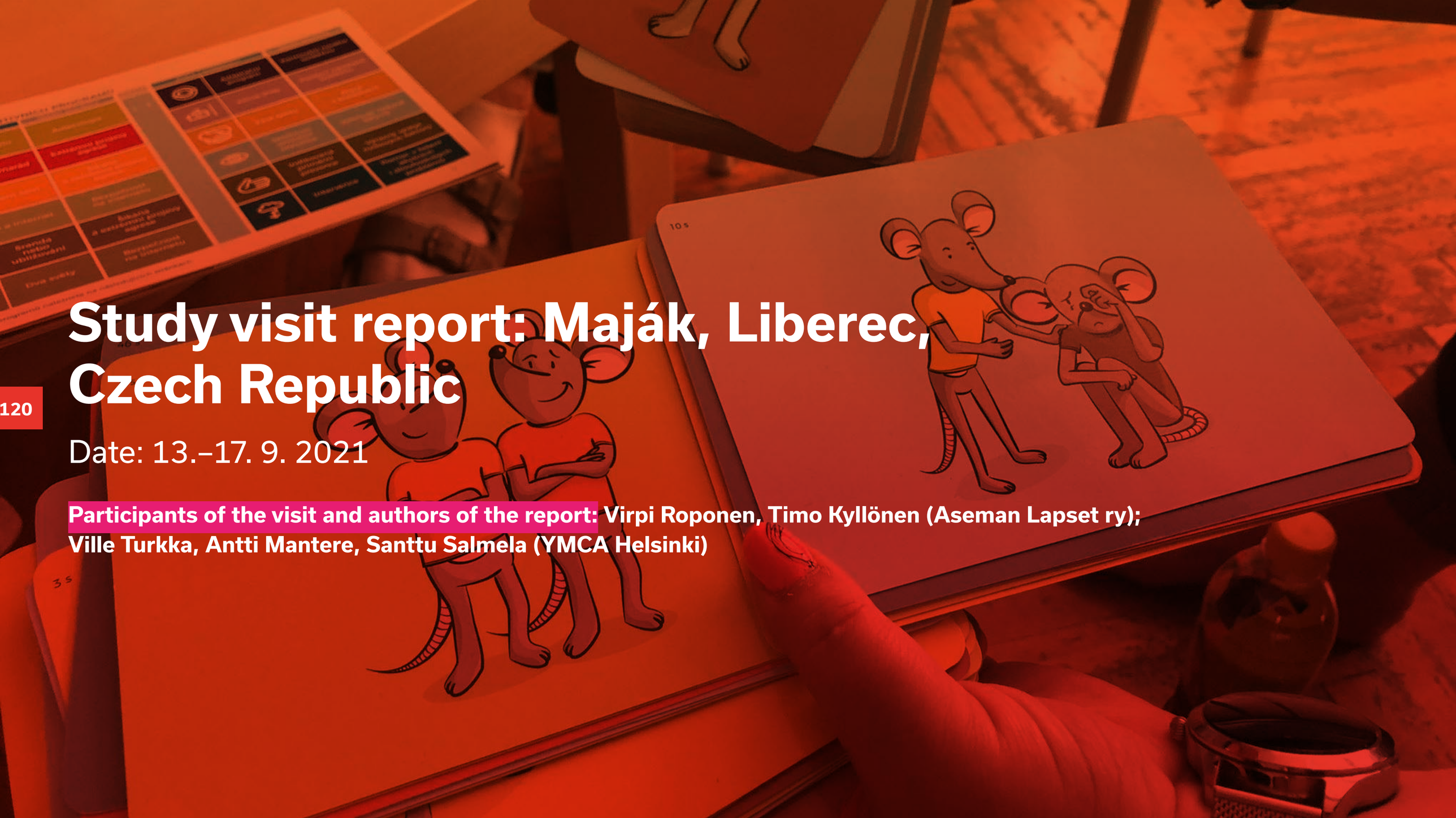
As we arrived, the school was celebrating Halloween. The youngsters were all in costumes that were creative and amusing and we were happy to let them paint our faces as well. They were also trying to speak in English, but mostly the questions got translated back and forth so that we had the chance to communicate. We talked for a while about drugs and life in school. Later, an unplanned dance party occurred, which started with a few youngsters impersonating their favourite entertainers and escalated into a big party in a hall. The food served was made by the youngsters. Then we all chose the best costumes. The head of the school also partook, and we had a chance to talk for a short time. We also had a tour of the school.

To modernise and improve education, the Kunice Secondary School of Crafts continuously submits applications for financial support from various extra-budgetary sources, including European funds.[7] The people working there seemed enthusiastic, and it felt like they were working with their hearts. The youngsters seemed to be enjoying their time at the Halloween party a lot, all of them were cheerful and talkative, even if it was a bit chaotic. Klub Cesta workers appear to have a good relationship with the school and the youngsters, it seemed to be a solid cooperation. The conversations we had showed a need for additional members of the workforce, Klub Cesta has many assignments and staff burnout could be an issue.

In conclusion, we had an informative and inspirational week gathering lots of knowledge. We felt welcomed, and every question we had got answered. There was so much information that, at times, it was overwhelming, but this intensive learning gave us some new ideas. There are a few significant differences between Estonian and Czech street working methods. They generally do not approach youngsters they already have contact with when in a group[8] or with parents, but we do. They believe that youngsters might not want their peers or parents to know about their association with the organisations. We always presume it is okay. We also hug and shake hands with youngsters, but they do not. Also, we do not call youngsters clients. There are also some differences in the issues we face on the streets. We loved the dynamic in the teams - it was warm, considerate and light, with some good laughs. The experience was an inspiring opportunity to share good practises, and we are very grateful.

7 https://www.ssrkunice.cz/

8 NOTE FROM NEPOSEDA: In Neposeda we don't approach youngsters who are alone or in a pair, but those that are in a group we do approach.



Study visit report: Maják, Liberec, Czech Republic

120

Date: 13.–17. 9. 2021

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Virpi Roponen, Timo Kyllönen (Aseman Lapset ry); Ville Turkka, Antti Mantere, Santtu Salmela (YMCA Helsinki)

Background – how on Earth did we end up visiting Liberec...

HNMKY (YMCA Helsinki) and Aseman Lapset ry (The Children of the Station) are both Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working closely together; there is a long and - as we might say - a successful cooperation between the two organisations. Both NGOs are situated in Helsinki and work with the same target group. Therefore, it was quite nice that YMCA Helsinki made us an offer to join them on a study trip / exchange programme to Liberec.

Aseman Lapset was established in 1990. The starting point was the situation at the time in Helsinki City Centre – where relatively large numbers of young people were gathering in the surroundings of the Helsinki Railway Station and amongst them some disturbing phenomena were arising – violence, use of intoxicants etc. Therefore, it was seen as important to bring in some ordinary, safe adults among the youngsters. That soon developed into the Jeep café (serving coffee from the back of an old Land Rover) and further into a Youth Café – a simple solution of social outreach of Youth Work was implemented. That was the starting point of the Aseman Lapset.

Since then, the organisation has developed quite a lot and new ways of working have been implemented among new projects. The Friends Programme (enhancing mental well-being and battling anxiety and depression), Outreach Youth Work, Walkers Bus and Cars (mobile Youth Café's), Street Mediation (mediation for conflicts involving juveniles), K-0 (for bullying / conflicts in schools), the Pasila project (working with young people having committed several / serious crime) and the Ripa project (the use of experts by experience in Youth Work).

Monday September 13th

The visit programme started with a meeting with the hosting organisations; The Czech Street Work Association represented by Karolina Panuskova and Majak / Majak + represented by Petr Hampacher.

The meeting took place in the Konopna Community Centre. The centre is a former kindergarten and it offers relatively good premises for the programmes carried out by Majak +. It also is a centre for the residential area around it. They have a large yard with different activities: a basketball-court, swings, all types of toys for children and even a camp-fire area.

We started with a conversation about the study visit, the goals set to it and the overall context and situation in which CAS and Majak are at the moment.

CAS

The Czech Streetwork Association (CAS) is a network of street social workers supporting each other. They offer low-threshold services in the street environment - outreach work, working with rough sleepers and people in vulnerable situations etc. They aim to keep up good quality standards for the work done on the street to guarantee that street work will have the value it deserves and to strengthen its legitimacy. They organize conferences and seminars, offer education and study visits etc. to workers and cooperation networks among others. All in all, there are approximately 30 educational programmes approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and carried out by CAS.

CAS also runs innovative projects such as Street Work online, training jobs (the Restart Shop), the campaign CAS OD CASU (Time to Time) to make street work more visible and to raise awareness. The low-threshold clubs are made more visible through awards for the clubs / street work teams – each year they nominate a street work team to receive the annual award which is called “Casovana bota”.

As we talked about the contradiction between the school system and NGO's and the reasons behind it all, it became apparent that different ministries are not working according to the common plan – they have their own points of interest and ambitions. This means that at the grass roots level it is not easy to have a common approach and plan. The clients and goals are the same but at times the structure does not support the holistic approach at all.

Majak

Majak is an NGO which runs several programmes. It was formerly a regional organisation which was then divided into local organisations, but they have continued working closely together. Now the focus is more on the local level.

The organisation is funded by the state, but they need to apply for funding annually. There is no big risk of losing the funding, but it takes a lot of effort to carry out the applications, and the system does not take into account whether you are doing your job outstandingly or on a less perfect level. They need to register as a service provider and apply for funding and all the service providers are granted in accordingly.

Majak is divided into two teams; in the Primary Prevention team there are seven employees and in Majak + there are four employees. In addition to that there is an office worker to help the teams.

Prevention programmes provide school visits with different subjects carrying out 10-12 different programmes for pupils between the 4th and 9th grades. In 2009 the focus was also put on pupils who needed support after preventive programmes, such as working with young people who have just started high school. Also, the teachers are (or at least should be) in attendance during the visits. Learning clubs were established to meet the needs of those youngsters who are not so well off.

Now they have a holistic approach when working with young people. The work is done according to the needs of the service users and their families. The target group extends from 10 to 26 year-olds. Their work could be described as process management – the overall holistic approach means that there are no referrals unless there is a case of specific needs.

Petr told us that there can be said to be two subgroups. (Petr worked earlier with young people acting violently who have been placed in correctional institutes):

1. Young people involved in crime / criminal processes and the justice system and child protection services.
2. Young people needing support for behavioural and / or psychological issues. These youngsters are kind of on the border line; for example, young people suffering from eating disorders or anxiety who have not yet been diagnosed.

Working with these young people is about the case management and working with all those involved. What causes problems at times is that there are different rules for professionals working in different organisations and different fields, where some of them might have a confidentiality obligation.

In the afternoon we had the opportunity to talk with Petr accompanied by Petra from the Primary Prevention team. It was made clear that the support given in schools and the social work conflict slightly. Student welfare was originally focused pretty much on learning difficulties but nowadays the focus is more on behavioural issues etc.

Preventive work is about mapping the situation, making recommendations and referrals. They run preventive programs for people having issues with alcohol, smoking, health issues etc. Members of the prevention team work regionally which means that they travel a lot. They visit 70-80 schools in a school year, having two visits in each school. Visits normally last up to three hours and the classroom teacher also attends.

Primary prevention starts at the age of 7 or 8. It is strictly planned and there is a certified curriculum by the ministry of education. In addition to holding the lessons, the preventive team workers also prepare reports and evaluations after each class. Any issues that come up are reported. The work is not just about the individual's difficulties, but also about their families. This needs a lot of multi-professional cooperation.

Petra also showed us the "Majak Mice" cards which we found really useful – they are cards which help to express and discuss emotions. They also work well for family relationships and social peer situations.

Konopna Community Centre

In the afternoon we had a chance to visit the Konopna Community Centre and see the activities they run. They have a family club and parents with small children can come there. They offer the possibility to spend time with children since they have room for children to play both inside and outside. The workers can offer counselling for parents and work with families, family relationships and dynamics both from the point of view of the parents own relationships but also parent – child counselling and support. The vital thing is that parents also receive peer support from people in a similar situation.

There is also a secondhand shop named Krokous in the centre. They sell clothes, shoes, toys etc. They get their products as donations from the community members: people living in the area. The outcome is giving back to the local community - renovating the premises, food support and such for local people. The shop also acts as a training field for young people. They hire young people to work there as clerks serving the customers visiting the shop. This offers opportunities for young people to develop their working life skills in a real setting.

Trip to Jested Mountain

After the day's work Petr and Dan from the Community Centre had organized the chance for us to visit the Jested Mountain by cable car. It was a nice idea to be able to see something else after having travelled and been in meetings all day. Spending time together in less formal surroundings gave us an opportunity to get to know each other a little better – great fun!!!



Konopna Community Centre



Konopna Community Centre



Trip to Jested Mountain



Trip to Jested Mountain

About the first day

In the evening we had a brief reflection about the day. All in all it was a slow, relaxed start to the visit. The beginning was good and it helped us with creating the context and understanding the realities in which the work is carried out. We discovered lots of similarities with our own system.

What we liked was the viewpoint of quality. There are certificates granted according to certain criteria which helps and gives guidelines to the evaluation, even though this may mean quite a bit of work. What we were a bit confused by was the battle of different ministries. This is both weird and yet such a familiar phenomenon from Finland.

Another feature that we wondered or reflected upon was the boundaries. Why is it so difficult to get into schools? Is it the autonomy of the teachers? Maybe attitudes and fears? We also talked about the education - is it about bringing up or teaching the skills - which is more important? How much does it depend on teachers' or principals' personal values? Lack of time. Or is the time the most important asset... But as it seems, the number of programmes run in schools has risen which suggests that they have succeeded in their work.

This was also somewhat familiar to us even though there are good examples and ways to get around it – it means that we need to remind people about the basic values and meaning in their work. And we need to offer solutions – this means the creation of a win-win situation, the workers, institutions and most importantly the customers, young people and their families / peers.

What we liked was the systematic prevention programme at a very early age and we found it extremely important. We also liked that sex education was given during several years. Also, the notification of the meaning and importance of an outsider in assessing the needs of the children and the class was beneficial.

As a nice detail we liked the use of circles instead of the old-fashioned classroom structure when using the Majak Mice cards. On a broader level we appreciated the notification of the meaning and importance of trust. As a good practice we took up the whole community centre - providing services for all age groups inhabiting the local community.

We talked about how to enhance the development of services according to the local reality and individual needs versus the universal services.

Tuesday September 14th 2021

Prevention programme, Zakladni skola, Novy Bor

On Tuesday we paid a visit to Zakladni skola in Novy Bor. Novy Bor is a small town 45 kilometres west of Liberec with a population of 11,500 people. In Novy Bor we had an opportunity to attend the prevention programme classes held by Filip from Majak. Filip used the Majak Mice cards as a tool to talk about the issues. Filip has drawn the cards himself.

We attended a class for the 9th graders with approximately 20 students. The subject of the lesson was the effects of COVID-19 on the lives of pupils and their families.

The students shared their experiences surprisingly openly even though there were outsiders watching the class. The youngsters told very personal stories about divorces, loss of family members, conflicts within the family etc. They showed and talked about emotions related to the subjects and events.

The class teacher did participate in the lesson, but at the beginning she just watched from the back of the class – which we must say, caused us to raise some eyebrows - but she showed that she knew her class and participated and supported the young people when needed.

It was nice to see that the method really works. It must be a challenging situation because there is only one lesson twice or three times a year to make the effect. On the other hand, there is extra value in being in the position of an outbound actor. We must say that it demands a certain type of personality. Filip certainly proved that he is the right person for the task.

Afternoon, Konopna Community Centre

In the afternoon we had a chance to meet the young people at the community centre and have a chat with them. The staff had prepared some funny games and a quiz which helped us to get together, learn each other's names and maybe even learn a word or two of each other's language. There were some games and a campfire and chatting with a few local families and young volunteers.

Wednesday September 15th 2021

Office for Probation and Mediation Services

On Wednesday morning we had an opportunity to visit the Office for Probation and Mediation Services. They told us about the work they do with young people who are less than 15 years old and who have committed serious crimes. They work not just with the youngsters but also with their families.

The Office for Probation and Mediation is part of the state services and they work in the field of criminal justice. The mediation is about the alternative punishment, and they offer supervision, counselling and programmes for those who have committed crimes. In this sense the work has a lot of similarities to that carried out in Finland. They also support the victims of crime.

There are eight probation officers in Liberec, the difficulty being that sometimes it is not easy to keep a full staff because the wage is not high enough to support a family. The organisation said that they have a lot of cooperation with the NGO's – their existence is vital for the Office for Probation and Mediation Services.



Maják Mice Cards



Konopna Community Centre

OSPOD office for child protection

On this occasion we also had a chance to meet the staff from the OSPOD office for child protection. It is funded by the state, but the services are organized and carried out by the municipality.

We discussed the current issues that they are facing in their work, and they mentioned the most typical cases being young people with behavioural issues and suchlike. Due to COVID-19 child pregnancies and young people who are not attending schools are hot topics; a group of people vanished from schools during the pandemic. New current phenomena are petty thefts and street violence.

There is also a group of young people who need to escape from their homes. They want to get into the foster care system voluntarily and need crisis shelters. This situation has changed rapidly this year; during the spring of 2021 there were 10 young people who have been placed in foster care in Liberec. Previously the number was one or two per year.

In the beginning of the process there is a period of 20 days to evaluate the situation - a young person could be placed with a relative or someone trustworthy they already know instead of an institution.

There are 12 officers in OSPOD. The number of clients per officer should be 40 families according to the law, but in reality, there are approximately 60 children per officer. Quite often there are several children in each family, which creates the issue of it not being a single child but the entire family who needs help with their situation.

As we talked about the foster care and the coverage for acting as a foster parent, they brought up that the foster homes get between €500 - €1300 per month depending on the budget and the number of children. In comparison, the average wage is €1500 per month in the Czech Republic. For example, a teacher earns that €1500 per month at the beginning of their career, but after three years that can be raised by 30%.

We also talked about the prosecution of minors. OSPOD is a part of the criminal process – again this is similar to the Finnish system. We also talked about the problems in the system. Child protection stops offering services as the child turns 18 and the services after that are relatively limited.

They said that there is good cooperation between Majak, child protection and the probation officers – the municipality, the state and the NGO's can work together in beneficial ways at the grass roots level. There are specific judges just for children, juveniles, and adults. The work is solution orientated and there are professional mediation services available trying to find the best solution and decision / sentence for youngsters. They also do case management meetings and realize restorative family conferencing.

All in all, Majak is a great asset for probation services and other community services. As Majak works with the clients of OSPOD and the probation officers, they can offer two structured programmes for perpetrators and those acting violently. They go through very basic questions - what, where, when, why, who's affected - to help the clients break the vicious cycle. The number of these client last year was 40 which is 1/3 of the overall number of the clients (in Majak). They require intensive work and there are weekly meetings with the young person and their family.

What was interesting is that these programmes really work - the success rate is as high as 80-90%. If a young person is assessed to be needing specialized services like mental health care, psychiatric treatment etc. then they are referred to specialists.

So, at the grass roots level the work is fluent and successful. What causes some difficulties is that there is a contradiction between ministries - again. The police force is under the Ministry of the Interior, but social work & child protection services operate under the Ministry of Social Affairs. You could say that there are common clients and goals, but cooperation between the two has not been made easy.

On the way to the next target, we talked about the mindset related to the use of volunteers in social work. There some similarities in the way the weight of history affects today's reality. In Finland the role of the society is traditionally very strong which may lead some to thinking that voluntary participation is not needed in this field because the officials will take care of it. In the Czech Republic, the weight of history comes from the communist era – voluntary work and active participation was not seen as accepted. After discussing the past, we moved on to current, up to date issues. There will be elections organized in one month in the Czech Republic and the main themes in the elections are COVID-19, refugees and taxes.

Afternoon SVC Narnie, Community School, Free Time Clubs

On Wednesday afternoon we visited a community school and the free time clubs. The school and the clubs are funded by the church, but they are open to anyone. Approximately one third of the families are Christian.

Director Petr runs the free time clubs which offer activities such as sports, dancing, self-defence, drama, cooking, maths etc. There are 32 clubs in all. The youngest attendants are from the age of 4 years and up, but mainly they are targeted from the first class till the sixth, which means the target group is from six years-old upwards.

One of the issues is that obesity is a consequence of COVID-19 which raises a lot of concern among paediatricians and other officials. This is why the NGO's try to encourage physical activities to enhance the children's well-being and healthy way of living.

There are also free time clubs for just hanging out, but most of the clubs do have a certain topic or theme. The fourth and fifth graders can also get support with their homework.

The clubs follow a tight plan / curriculum which needs to be made in September for the upcoming school year.

There is a fee for each group of about €25 - €30 per half a year, but this only covers approximately 20% of the costs. If there are families with financial difficulties then they can apply for a discount.

The number of pupils in the school is 180, but the number of children who attend the clubs is approximately 300. Some attendees come from the surrounding communities.



OSPOD office for child protection



Afternoon SVC Narnie, Community School, Free Time Clubs



Afternoon SVC Narnie, Community School, Free Time Clubs

Thursday 16.9.2021

Class adaptation programme, Majak Community Centre

On Thursday we had an opportunity to monitor the class adaptation programme which was held at the Majak Community Centre by Petr and another worker from Majak. They were working with a class who were to become hairdressers and barbers, which was made up of 22 students and two teachers.

In the beginning they went through the rules and then moved on to playing a kind of Bingo. The point was to try and find the person for each feature mentioned on the paper (for example who has a teddy bear in their bed, who does not eat hamburgers, who can touch the tip of their nose with their tongue, who can play a guitar etc.). The purpose of the game was to get to know each other. Majak workers also took part in the game.

The group then moved on to asking questions from teachers about their personal life - hobbies, pets, what they do during the holidays, how they start their morning, what sports they like. The purpose is to share something about yourself - they are not just teachers but individuals with their own personal likings and characteristics. It will be easier to talk about personal issues and ask for help with studies when you feel like you know the person.

After a break the students were given the task to form a line according to their birth dates. They only had one shot and were not allowed to speak out loud. They got it right on the first attempt as they were able to communicate and act as a group with non-verbal communication. In this rehearsal the roles of the group were also revealed; the leader, the clown etc.

The next task was a relay race - how to take a marble ball to the other end of the room through short plastic pipes. The task was to develop cooperation and problem-solving skills. The focus of the workers was on how they cooperate and on the other hand how they tolerate failure and frustration.



Class adaptation programme, Majak Community Centre



Class adaptation programme, Majak Community Centre

The next rehearsal was about recognizing the roles in the group; how do the young people see each other's roles in the group - who's dominant, who's submissive etc. They went through five rounds and after that were divided into groups. For some of the students this appeared to be somewhat tough - it was made visible that their roles were not what they would have wanted them to be. At the end of the rehearsal the workers explained that all the roles are needed in the group, and they should work together to keep the group together and to avoid polarization.

From roles they went on to a rehearsal about cooperating as a big group. The task was to build a tower from wooden blocks by using ropes that were tied together with a hook hanging in the middle. What was interesting was that the roles started to change compared to the previous rehearsal. Some new young people took initiative and acted as leaders – they became the natural leaders as some of the more dominant youngsters got frustrated or did not have a similar understanding about the dynamics of the group.

All in all, the atmosphere was really nice and relaxed. There was a lot of laughter and none of the students appeared to be left out, but naturally some were more reserved and shyer than the others. For some the visualization or exposing of roles appeared to be somewhat challenging.

Afternoon DDM Vetrnik and the V-klub

On Thursday afternoon we visited the free time activity centre in which we were hosted by Mrs. Martha Kutova. DDM Vetrnik serves all age groups from 3 year-olds to adults. The number of adults attending the activities is rising. It was founded by the city of Liberec (municipality organisation).

The activities include different programmes in the daytime, afternoons and evenings and also during weekends. There are free time activities, camps, competitions (such as dancing) but also educational seminars etc. They have their own premises where events and camps can be organized. Private parties can also rent the premises.

They run some competitions between the schools in the Liberec area, for example in mathematics. Some of the clubs' events are also school subjects and are funded by the municipality. Families who are not able to attend clubs which are not paid for by the municipality,

due to their economic situation, are helped in finding the assets needed to ensure that activities are available for them. During the school year they arrange more than 100 clubs and in the summertime they have 50-60 camps. Approximately 1,500 children are involved in the ordinary clubs and more than 1,000 in the summer camps and hundreds of children have participated in other activities. The capacity of the camp sites varies from 15 to 50. They have two types of summer camps: day camps and overnight camps.

All that means a lot of paperwork and constant applications to organize low budget events. The number of full-time staff is approximately 20, of which 11 are pedagogues and 9 are administrative staff. They are specialized in certain subjects. In addition, there are part time workers; approximately 100 for the clubs, 100 for the summer camps and 200 for arranging the competitions. Petr told us that the activity has been developed hugely under Martha's management within the last 3-4 years.

After visiting the centre we moved on to V-klub which was located quite nearby. The V-klub is also run by Martha's organisation. They receive municipal funding, and there are four staff members.

The club is free for attendants and there is no need for youngsters to register. The clientele is young people between 12-18 years, with 25-30 young people attending the club every day.

They are an open club with several activities and some afternoon clubs. They offer help for homework and support the relationships in the classroom / group. They give individual support to young people and if needed they make referrals to other NGO's according to the needs of the young people if there is anything worrying them.

The V-klub is also open during the summer holidays. They host day camps and organize events, competitions, tournaments etc. During the school day some youngsters pop in in the middle of the day if there is a longer break. There are escape games for them, for example "Welcome to Hollywood".

The issues they work with are family issues, anxiety, relationships in school and bullying among others. They work with the youngsters families as well – the background of one of the workers is as a family therapist.

The last year has been exceptional. COVID-19 meant that schools were closed for almost a year, and this could be seen in the young people's well-being.



Afternoon DDM Vetrnik and the V-klub



Afternoon DDM Vetrnik and the V-klub

Friday September 17th 2021

Majak / Konopna Community Centre

On Friday there was time for some evaluation; it was not formal but more of a free chat.

What we came up with was that the hosts had set us a really high standard when it comes to a visit to Finland. They really did put a lot of time aside to be there for us.

Some of the professional highlights we came up with were:

CAS and the work they are doing to develop and maintain the high quality of the work through standards and recommendations. It sounds like a lot of work and somewhat bureaucratic but it is seen in the quality of work, it pays off.

The primary prevention programme in action - Filip was amazing. This really pinpointed the importance that the worker really knows what the purpose of the programme is and how to achieve it. The importance of trust, confidentiality and how to support the class as a group but also to take the individual situations and the needs of the youth into account. The young people we met really did put themselves out there and talked about really deep stories and experiences that they had gone through, but the atmosphere appeared to be respectful and safe.

The class adaption programme appeared to be very functional, but the professional skills of the workers cannot be highlighted too much. The way they handled the somewhat challenging questions concerning the roles in the group was very convincing. And on the other hand, these are the issues that come up every time a group is being formed – in this way the issues were handled in safe surroundings, the situation was facilitated by a safe adult and there was a mutual trust that all young people with their individual appearances were needed to form a working group.

The things mentioned above also brought up the need to adapt quickly to changing situations. There is not too much time since there are only four hours for each group and in that time the workers need to make an impact. The workers must be constantly aware of the situation and ready to adapt to the needs of the young people / group. Also, the importance of training the teachers / lecturers must be taken into account since in everyday encounters the presence and awareness of staff is utterly important.

Our visit to the Child Protection Services & Probation Services showed us that there are a lot of similarities between the Czech Republic and Finland. Of course there are some differences as well, but for example "the battle of the ministries" sounded very familiar.

The Community School, the free time clubs and the visit to DDM Veternik also brought up something that we had to admire both in terms of the people working there and the focus put on the premises. The attitude of the teachers was really nice – they didn't mind too much about less important things, were not constantly telling the young people what they should not do, but were focused on being there for the children. Also, as said, the focus put on the premises was really nice – the use of colours, paintings on the walls - the surroundings are inviting and inspirational for the children.

One more interesting topic was brought up during the last evaluation discussion. We were thinking about what kind of message the society and the culture is sending to young people about their rights and value. Are we aware of the hidden values that marketing, fashion, commercial services etc. carries with it? As an example - according to the most recent annual school welfare survey published, half of Finnish girls have experienced sexual harassment during the last year.

The teachers / other personnel working with youngsters should show that they like their work, young people and teaching by setting an example to the young about how we should treat each other.

This brought us to discuss the tasks of schools / teachers / educational personnel. To educate- that is to 1) bring up the youngsters 2) give them the skills and knowledge needed in life, and this should happen in this order. Teacher education in the Czech Republic takes five years and out of that only 25% is about psychology and pedagogy on a theoretical level. There is very little practical training. So how do we ensure that our future teachers etc. have an opportunity to learn how to cope with children? This also has to do with the approach of the people in power (ministries, municipalities) who plan and manage the work carried out in the field. Do they understand the situation at the grass roots level?

Conclusions / best practices:

The best things we took with us from the Study visit in short were:

- The certification and the work done to ensure the high quality of the work undertaken on the street / other premises.
- Prevention Programme – it started at an early stage and was consistent and well planned.
- The Majak Mice cards.
- The good cooperation between the NGO's and the public services, even if there are some structural difficulties due to the divergent guidelines coming from the ministries.
- The emphasis they put on cosiness – for example the use of colours. It appeared to us that the children and the young people (that is the service users!) would find that the premises were built for them.
- Our hosts were very friendly and put a lot of effort into welcoming us.
- The Primary Prevention Programme seemed like a very good and effective idea, even though much is up to the team leader and teacher. Filip, who we met, was an expert and a great example of this.
- It was great to see different organisations working together to achieve a common goal. Places like Majak would be great and much needed in Finland, even though there might be something similar somewhere.
- One notable thing is the communication with the police forces, which is a lot more friendly and fluent in Finland than in the Czech Republic based on what we saw.

Study visit report: Ratolest Brno, PVC Klub Blansko and Klub Lavina, Brno, Czech Republic

144

Date: 8.–12. 11. 2021

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Hüsniye Sagirmahmutoglu, Manuela Schade, Katharina Westphal, Andreas Karrer, Peter Bachmann (Gangway, e.V.)

Introduction

The following report is the summary of the exchange of professionals between colleagues from Gangway e. V. in Berlin and from Brno and Blansko. Some of them had already visited Gangway e.V. in Berlin a month before.

The main topic of our exchange was the cooperation between street social work and schools. During our one-week stay in Brno, we visited various institutions, including youth clubs with outreach street social work, school social work and a centre for crime prevention and resocialization. With this report we want to give an insight into the work on site and present our exchange of experiences.

Blansko, PVC Klub

In Blansko, a smaller town that still belongs to the Brno region, we visited the Nizkoprahovy Klub, or “PVC Klub”. This youth club belongs to the organisation Podané ruce (the meaning is close to “helping hands”), which offers support for abusive substance use and addiction for adults as well as facilities for working with “youth at risk”. The organisation now has about 200 employees, making it one of the largest in the Czech Republic. Podané ruce started with drug prevention programmes and then expanded into youth work and youth social work. In addition, the organisation has also been offering testing and vaccination stations since the pandemic period.

In addition to youth street social work, Blansko also has street workers (who only work as such) with a focus on addiction prevention and safer use.

The PVC Club is one of the oldest youth clubs in the Czech Republic and also the only one in Blansko. When we arrived there, many young people were on site taking advantage of the different rooms and activities the club had to offer.

The target group consists of teenagers and young adults aged 13 to 26. However, most visitors to the youth club are between 14 and 18 years old. Every day, about 30 young people visit the club, for whom the staff have to make “individual plans” - if they visit the club regularly. These “individual plans” include both the reason why someone is considered a “youth at risk” and a goal that is set together

with the young person. In addition, new counselling contents and changes are constantly documented, which, apart from a high bureaucratic effort, can also offer the advantage that important information about visitors can easily be looked up and remembered. This can be an advantage for the relationship work, as the colleagues can retrieve important information and follow it up with conversations. At the same time, however, the documentation system bears the danger of suggesting that the effectiveness of social work can be verified in all areas. This ignores the fact that, for example, the effectiveness of the relationship work cannot be recorded well in this system and that the process of relationship work in particular can sometimes take a very long time. This system can also create a certain pressure on social workers to justify themselves and shift attention from the young people to the office during working hours.

In contrast to Berlin, where the work in the youth clubs and the street work are separated from each other, the work of the colleagues in the Czech Republic includes both street work and support in the youth clubs. The street work area is still quite new and is currently being developed and expanded. So far, there are no fixed times for patrols, as it depends on when the club's workload and staffing allow it. The combination of street work and youth club requires a lot of capacity and organisation. However, it also seems very advantageous to have a combination of work in a public space and the possibility of offering a meeting place, a counselling area, or a place of retreat in the work. For the relationship work especially it can be very advantageous if young people, with whom a first contact was made on the street, come to the club and spend time there. In our work, this possibility is missing because our offices are not places for young people to stay. However, since the club and street work mean a lot of work, there is no time in the combination for excursions or the like, which is possible in our work.

"Ratolest Brno" Youth Club Likusák

The youth club "Likusák" is part of the association "Ratolest Brno", which is active in various areas of youth social work in Brno.

The club is located in the outskirts of the city, which is characterised by typical prefabricated buildings from the CSSR era. The residents are very mixed in terms of social and economic situation. The club building is located in the middle of the prefabricated

buildings, relatively central and easily accessible for the young people. The district “Lizano” is the most densely populated in Brno with about 25,000 inhabitants. However, the Likusák club is the only youth club in this district!

The concept of the work includes the “location-based structure” as a classic offer of a youth club, as well as outreach work in the form of street social work.

The target group includes adolescents and young adults aged 12 to 14. If the work with the young people goes beyond an initial meeting, contracts have to be made between the social workers and the young people, which are a prerequisite for public funding of the services.

This type of contract does not exist in Gangway’s work in Berlin. The advantages can be that a certain commitment is established with the young people, whilst the disadvantages can be that the work is evaluated and financed on the basis of quantitative contracts and not on the basis of qualitative and content-related criteria.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, many visitors to the club have stayed away. The social workers are trying to establish or maintain contact with the young people through an online presence on social media such as Instagram. This is only partially successful, as youth work thrives on actual relationships. The great advantage of the concept of outreach work can be seen well in this situation. The social workers can meet many of the young people they already know, but also “new” young people on their regular rounds, and thus continue to offer the relationship work and the offers of open youth work. Before the pandemic, the club had an average of 250 clients on contract every year. Currently there are a maximum of 140 per year.

Many youth clubs in Berlin are currently hearing similar things. Young people are staying away as visitors because the regulations due to the pandemic have considerably reduced the attractiveness of the offers on site.



Blansko, PVC Klub



“Ratolest Brno” Youth Club Likusák

Brno, Základní škola a mateřská škola

The day started well, as we took the wrong entrance and ended up in the school canteen. While we were there trying to explain our request - nobody spoke English, we didn't speak Czech - a school employee who had already observed us taking the wrong entrance followed us and escorted us to the school entrance. Andrea, Janča and their intern from the youth centre Lavina were already waiting for us. Andrea was already known to us from the Czech delegation's visit to Berlin in September. Together we then met with Vaclav, the school's social worker. In his office, Vaclav told us about his work over coffee and biscuits:

The school is a kind of primary school, covering grades one to eight. A total of about 400 pupils are educated there. The average class size is about 15 pupils. Vaclav offers his office hours almost every day. There are problems especially in the areas of school absenteeism, gang formation, theft and increased propensity to violence. Although they attend secondary school, only a few of the students are likeley to go on to graduate. This is partly becasuse many girls get pregnant early and as a result drop out of school.

Afterwards, Vaclav took us on a tour of the school and we were allowed to have a brief look at the lessons in progress.

As street workers from a diverse city like Berlin, it was important for us to ask many questions about the diversity of the students. According to Vaclav, about 95% of the students are from so-called "socially excluded areas" and are predominantly Roma and Sinti. One percent of the student body comes from Ukraine.

Brno, Klub Lavina

The Lavina Club is a low-threshold children's and youth centre in Brno whose services are aimed at children and young people between the ages of six and 16. The club is run by the Salvation Army, which began its work with homeless people and other marginalised groups in what was then Czechoslovakia in 1919. In September 2013, the Armáda spásy (Salvation Army) was registered as a church by the Ministry of Culture.

This connection to church history is directly visible in the Lavina Club, because the building not only houses offices for the social workers, a canteen kitchen, a music room and several common rooms with games, table football, table tennis and computers, but also a chapel.

Masses and church events are held here several times a year, to which the children and young people of the club are cordially invited. Although such gatherings are integrated into the concept of the club, they are not an everyday part of the social work with the children and young people, who can visit the club free of charge.

During their visits they have the opportunity to relax on the sofas available, play table tennis or table football, or play various instruments (including drums and guitar) in the music room. In addition, support is offered for homework to be done and the use of three computers for school or play purposes. There are always two social workers on duty, so that the children and young people have the opportunity to address issues that concern them emotionally. To maintain privacy, more intensive conversations often take place in a room furnished with comfortable cushions and many plants.

A special feature of the concept of Klub Lavina is the combination of location-based social work in the club and street social work.

In addition to the fixed opening hours of the club, regular rounds are made in certain neighbourhoods to invite children and young people to the club and to draw their attention to the existing services.

There is also cooperation with one of the local schools, Základní škola a mateřská škola.

Within the framework of this cooperation, teachers and social workers exchange information about the children and young people for whom the club offers appropriate services, and about the needs of the pupils.

The time we were able to spend at Klub Lavina during our visit was stimulating and pleasant.

By staying in the club during opening hours, we came into contact with a primary school pupil who invited us to play table football and listened to the music created by three young people in the music room.

Brno, Centrum prevence a resocializace

At another meeting at the Ratolest headquarters we got to know the “Centrum prevence a resocializace”, the centre for prevention and resocialisation. The focus of this project is on “conspicuous” young people or those who have already committed a crime.

We were welcomed by the social worker Anna Krchňavá, who gave us a deeper insight into her work.

The programme presented to us consists of two parts. One is aimed at young people under the age of 15 who have not yet committed a crime but have already become conspicuous. It is a prevention programme for this target group. The other part is a probation programme for 15 to 18-year-olds who have already committed a crime.

If young people have already committed offences, the programme can be mandated by the courts. In cases where it is to be applied preventively, youth welfare offices, for example, can arrange for admission. However, the programme is not aimed at juveniles who have already committed serious offences.

A special feature of both programmes is the voluntary nature of participation. Although a court or the youth welfare office can suggest participation, the participants are free to drop out of the programme. And if the young people decide to start again at a later date, they are usually given a second chance.

The programme includes two appointments a week. This includes therapeutically oriented group and individual discussions, excursions, sports, art and educational work. Parents are also involved whenever possible.

In groups or individually, the young people are to learn how to react better in conflict situations and which resources they can use to avoid becoming delinquents. Individual goals are formulated and evaluated at the end of the programme. For example, did the young people pursue their hobbies as they intended? And if not, what prevented them from doing so?

Highlights of the three- to four-month programme are the outdoor weekend and the training with a Czech Muay Thai world champion. Both push them to the limits of their physical endurance and are also a lot of fun.

However, it also happens that prosecutors take part in the sessions and visits to detention centres are organised in order to apparently scare the young people a bit.



Brno, Klub Lavina



Brno, Centrum prevence a resocializace

We considered the latter to be very critical, because it gave us the impression of a raised index finger, showing the consequences for young people without looking at their causes.

In the end, however, we all left the meeting with the feeling that very meaningful work is being done here with young people.

Brno, Youth drop-in club Pavlač and tour of the surrounding district

Where the three Brno districts of Sever, Stred and Židenice meet is one of the poorest and at the same time one of the most rapidly changing residential areas in the city centre.

In this area, described as a “socially excluded area”, Roma families are sometimes already in their fifth generation.

Life there does not seem to be easy.

It was exciting for us to visit the Pavlač youth club there and then to explore the neighbourhood on a tour. Outreach work is also part of the repertoire of the Pavlač Club.

First, we met in the premises of Club Pavlač, where Martin introduced us to their work. The target group of the club are children and young people from this “socially excluded area”, who are mostly children from Roma families. The age range is from six to 18, with different visiting times for six to ten year olds than for eleven to 18 year olds.

The aim of the work at Pavlač is to try to compensate for the poor social conditions of the children from this area. This includes developing social skills, a healthy self-confidence, activating their own resources, dealing with conflict situations and trying to systematically reduce social risks. Last but not least, this also means creating a safe space for children who are otherwise discriminated against in many places. Every day, about 25 children and young people are guests at the Pavlač.

During the subsequent tour with Martin, we were able to get a direct impression of the surrounding neighbourhood. Along our way, the progressive gentrification of these residential quarters was brought directly to our attention. Unrenovated house fronts seem to be gradually replaced by new and renovated buildings, leading to the displacement of the long-established Roma population. On this tour,

we had the opportunity to get to know a local drug education project. In a car park, we met a minibus in which two social workers were collecting used syringes from addicts and handing out new ones. Coffee, tea and social counselling were available on site if needed.

A hostel for homeless people, opened during the Coronavirus period and now apparently to be permanently installed, was the last port of call on this extremely exciting tour of the heart of Brno.

Conclusion

In summary, we were able to spend a week in Brno with a wide variety of impressions and many encounters. We recognised many parallels to our work, such as the relationship work with young people, the low-threshold approach, the work at eye level and the partiality for young people.

We also found similarities with regard to the current pandemic situation: both in terms of the distribution of young people in clubs and on the streets, as well as in terms of the psychological stress and economic consequences for young people.

It was very exciting for us to get to know the outreach approach, which does not exist in this form at Gangway. The project for crime prevention and resocialisation was also a new and interesting concept for us.

The obligation for detailed documentation in youth clubs stimulated a critical discussion about the measurability of the effect of social work and the accompanying pressure to justify it.

We noted with regret that social work in the Czech Republic is held in lower esteem both in politics and in society, which is reflected in both pay and social reputation. We hope that this will change in the future to make the field of work attractive for young people for a longer period of time.

This exchange has once again shown how important professional encounters are not only on a national but also on a European level. We were able to broaden our perspectives, gather new ideas and establish further networks.

We look forward to future cooperation.


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156

Study visit to Vrtule, Pacific, Jedna Trojka and Jizni Pol – Prague, Czech Republic

Date: 10.–14. 2. 2020

Participants of the visit and authors of the report: Zavod Bob street based youth workers Amar Toplić, Anja Manja Segulin, Katja Rakovec, Nežka Agnes Vodeb, Matjaž Vodeb

Translated by: Jaša Lategano

CAS – description of the organisation, target service users, and conditions

Czech Association of Streetwork (CAS) is the national umbrella organisation for streetwork with youngsters and youth and other target groups. It brings together programmes and organisations that carry out social work with service users in different parts of the Czech Republic (youngsters and youth in public spaces, youth clubs, mobile facilities and so on). CAS' services extend to areas of education, counselling, combating social issues, and international cooperation. CAS connects 90 organisations and programmes of various sizes.

The Restart Shop is a project founded by CAS in 2014. It targets young people with lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are unable to find employment. They offer young people a 'reintegration-oriented form of employment' on a temporary basis (half a year with the possibility of extension). Any potential surplus funds are directed towards low-threshold youth clubs. CAS is funded largely by cohesion funds (through a national agency) from Erasmus+ programmes, private donations (e.g. Velux), and membership fees.

Given the information we were presented, we can conclude that the participation of state and local stakeholders in funding and other forms of support is extremely weak, which may consequently affect the quality and potential scope of the services.

Our meeting with CAS

We visited CAS at the start and end of our job shadowing.

On our first visit to the organisation headquarters, we met our hostess (Karolína Panušková) and went through the weekly schedule and our reporting duties. Since we already knew the organisation from our previous collaborations, and a member of our group, Anja Manja, had spent a year in Prague as an exchange student, we already knew the logistic details. Our meeting was short (one hour), as we were already due to visit our first organisation (Vrtule) at 2 p.m.

On the last day of our job shadowing, we had a reflection meeting with the host organisation. We discussed the next steps in our project, as we will be hosting a Czech team in Slovenia in September 2020.

Karolína encouraged us to be critical during our evaluation and identify practices which we think could (with better funding etc.) offer young people even more support in entering adulthood and active citizenship.

Our impressions of CAS are largely positive, as we lack such a national association in Slovenia. We recognise the importance of an umbrella organisation, especially in the possibilities offered by a centralised transfer of knowledge and experience, networking possibilities for social workers, and the exchange of good practices.

We want to draw attention to the potential that a strong stakeholder like CAS can realise in a democratic social system with the support of national and local communities. First and foremost, we want to emphasise the importance of collecting data, e.g., for understanding the effects of services on the target group, comparing the specifics of local communities, etc. Another potential benefit is in the organisation of training courses, with CAS' participation in several international networks and the accumulated experience of many veteran street workers representing excellent possibilities for knowledge transfer. With such resources we could eliminate the large differences in our approaches and transfer good practices and experience into other environments more quickly and efficiently.

Our meeting with the Restart Shop

On the last day of our study visit, we learned about the Restart Shop, an employment-focused solution aimed at helping people from vulnerable social groups gain their first work experience. We certainly applaud the model of this social service, but during the presentation we realised that systemic support for it is completely negligible. On the one hand, the local community doesn't provide free facilities (which we consider to be the minimum-basic contribution of the local community); on the other hand, the government (in this case, the Ministry of Social Affairs) doesn't provide financial support for the employment of 'vulnerable service users'.

During the presentation, we recognised another important role that CAS plays, namely in including vulnerable groups in social life, as well as its importance in providing funds. The Velux donations provide many services in various fields with at least the minimum funds for operation.

Note:

Throughout the text we refer to participants in social and street work activities, i.e. the young people that workers meet during their work in the field (CAS calls them ‘clients’), as service users.

Vrtule

We spent the first three days of our visit at the Vrtule Youth Club, which operates within the Salesian Youth Centre.1 The youth centre hosts various services for children, youngsters, youth, families, and others. In addition to the Vrtule Youth Club, the large building contains the youth centre itself, a family centre, several classrooms, a chapel, an apartment for priests, an auditorium, a playground, a climbing wall, ramps for scooters and skateboards, and more. All of the services are based on the Don Bosco education system, and the spaces, with the exception of the Vrtule Youth Club, all contain Catholic symbols (e.g., crosses, iconography, Bible quotes).

The entrance to Vrtule is separate from the other services and leads directly out onto the street. We followed some stairs down to a pleasant semi-basement area with a small stage, some sofas and bean bags, a surprising number of table football tables, and a bar where we got our coffee. The atmosphere was very homely and reassuring. We sat down on the sofas with two other social workers and began the presentation. The presentation itself was interactive, we exchanged realities, compared the context of our work, our target groups, our approaches. We spent the next three days with the social workers of Vrtule. We got to know the organisational structure, as well as the concrete work practices, the field work, the cooperation with schools. Before describing the concrete practices, we will highlight the most important insights from the introductory presentation, which we think will help the reader understand our experience.

The Vrtule youth club runs low-threshold programmes. A low threshold means service users have easy access to the services and is based on four main principles:

1 For more information, visit https://www.strediskokobylisy.cz/klub-vrtule.

Anonymity means that they don't need to collect service users' personal information; e.g., individuals' nicknames are sufficient for keeping records. In contrast, the Salesian Youth Centre keeps track of the personal information of every service user, including their photograph, residence information, information about their parents, etc. Our own practice is somewhere in between. Funders oblige us to report the age structure of our participants, and the latter have to sign an attendance list, but they can use nicknames instead of their given names and surnames.

Accessibility means easy and unrestricted access to the club. Each individual can decide when to participate in activities and how long to stay in the club; they can be there for five minutes or for as long as the club is open. They also don't have to plan or announce their participation in advance.

Free service is also a principle of low-threshold programmes. Again, we noticed a different approach at the youth centre, which collects an annual fee—a small one, but nevertheless—for access to the various materials and requisites, such as board games, scooters, and rollerblades.

Voluntary participation means that service users aren't referred to a service, but decide to participate voluntarily and autonomously.

The services offered by the Vrtule Youth Club are considered social services and are funded primarily by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Other sources of funding are the City of Prague and private donors, though the former reduced its funding by ¾ at the start of 2020. Programmes funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs are required to be low-threshold. Conversely, this does not apply to the youth centre, since it is funded by the Ministry of Education, which has a higher threshold, requires collection of more of the participants' personal information, etc. This distribution of services is interesting when compared to the situation in Slovenia, which is somewhat reversed. Programmes funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Education are normally based on voluntary participation and do not require gathering information or reporting on the participants. Social programmes, on the other hand, require extensive reporting on the participants, who are often processed beforehand and referred to the services by other institutions, such as social centres; therefore, they are not based on voluntary participation.

The team at Vrtule consists of five social workers, four of whom are employed full-time and one part-time. This team of five carries out the youth club's programme and street work, which covers both of the mobile units described below (Vrtulka and Heliport), as well as

outreach work (patrolling the neighbourhoods, establishing and maintaining contact, encouraging participation in activities, etc.). One team member acts as a leader/manager, coordinating the various activities and providing administrative support. Some team members are more “grounded” in the youth club, while others mostly work in the streets.

There is a major difference compared to the practices we know in Slovenia, where such services tend to be project-based, fragmented and unconnected. Vrtule offers a continuous service, overseen by a single team with regular meetings and supervisions. The service they provide is more cohesive, with more consistency in the activities as well as user treatment.

In 2019 they engaged 111 service users, about half of them through the youth club and half through street work. Some participants engage in both forms of their services, which we were able to see in practice. Engagement is based on an oral agreement with the service user, a contract prescribed by the law, which defines the user’s rights as well as what they can expect from social workers. This marks, perhaps, another important difference from Slovenian practices, where youth centres primarily keep track of participation on an activity basis, which results in significantly higher numbers (i.e., a participant in a single short activity already counts as a service user). The amount of time spent on each user speaks significantly to the continuity and comprehensive approach of the Vrtule team: in 2019, they spent more than 3000 hours in direct contact with young people, which adds up to just under 30 hours per individual.

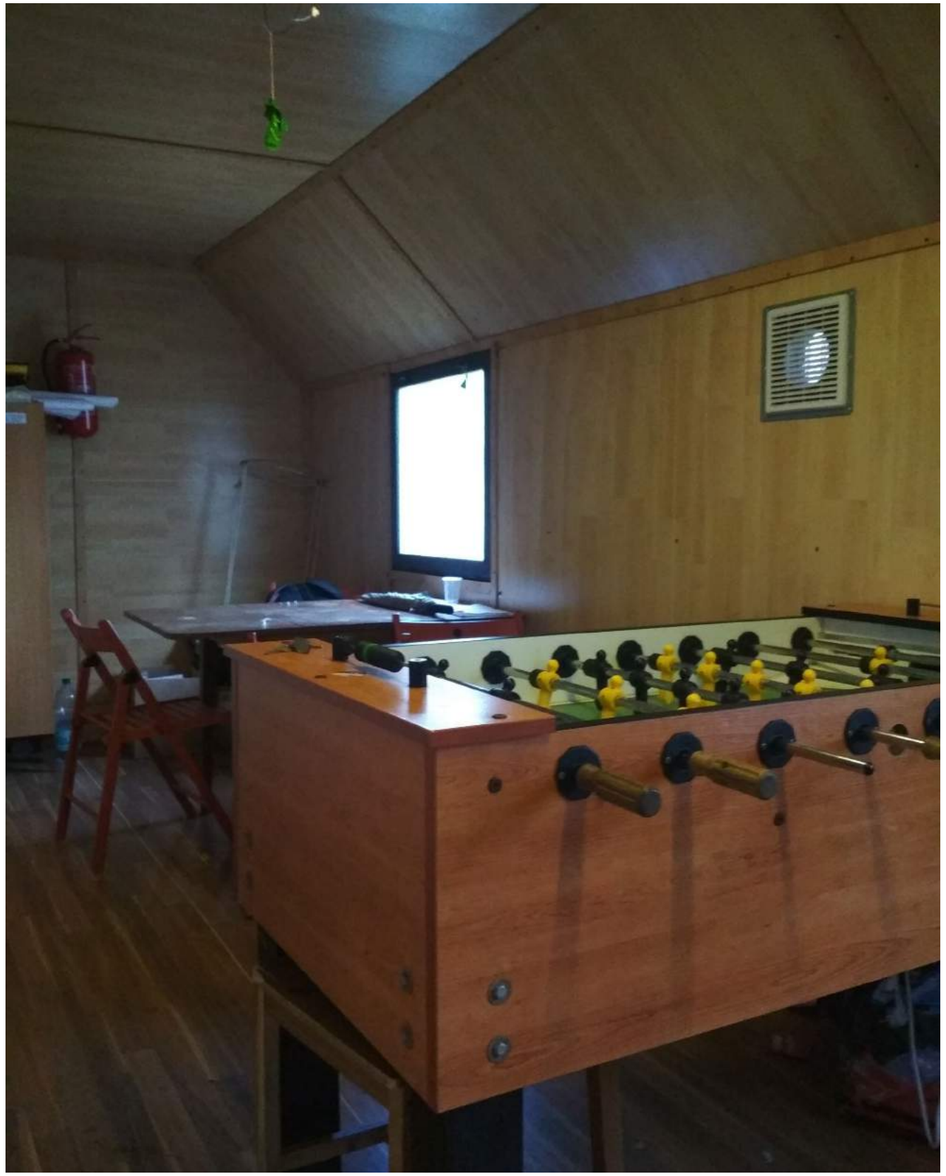
The youth club is open to service users four days a week in the afternoon, from Monday to Thursday, with Friday being their ‘office day’. Opening hours are spent socialising, playing table football, hanging out, as well as having structured conversations (e.g., on the topic of the month) and individual counselling (for this purpose they also have a room where a social worker and young service user can talk one on one). In the following sections we describe Vrtulka and Heliport, and the part of our programme that was more related to street work and cooperation with schools.

Vrtulka

On the first day of our visit to the Vrtule Youth Club, the social workers invited us to do street work with them. Together with two other social workers, we made our way to the nearest bus station, rode three stops and got off in a neighbourhood densely packed with gigantic apartment blocks. This residential neighbourhood is one of the most densely populated in Prague and is also home to its longest apartment block. The Vrtule Youth Club has a small branch here called Vrtulka. Vrtulka is an old circus wagon, converted into a youth room. It is located on a small playground surrounded by blocks in the immediate vicinity of the bus stop. A sign hanging from the wagon announces that Vrtulka is open twice a week for four hours.

One the of social workers set off by himself on a circular route through the neighbourhood, while the other waited for participants in the small mobile base. Vrtulka is equipped with folding chairs, a couch, table football, and a board game or two. The social workers also bring some of their own materials with them when they go there. The walls are covered in informational posters about homelessness, the theme of the month in Vrtule, Vrtulka, and Heliport (another small centre located on a school playground). The best thing—though this may be subjective since we were there during the winter—is a small gas stove heating up the whole space. The place is small and pleasant, and young people like to hang out there. The day of our visit was no exception. The work that the social workers do there is based primarily on conversations and discussions with the youth. We introduced some of our own activities, which brought us closer together despite the language barrier. When opening hours ended and Vrtulka closed, the young people were invited to the youth club, and some of them responded to the invitation.

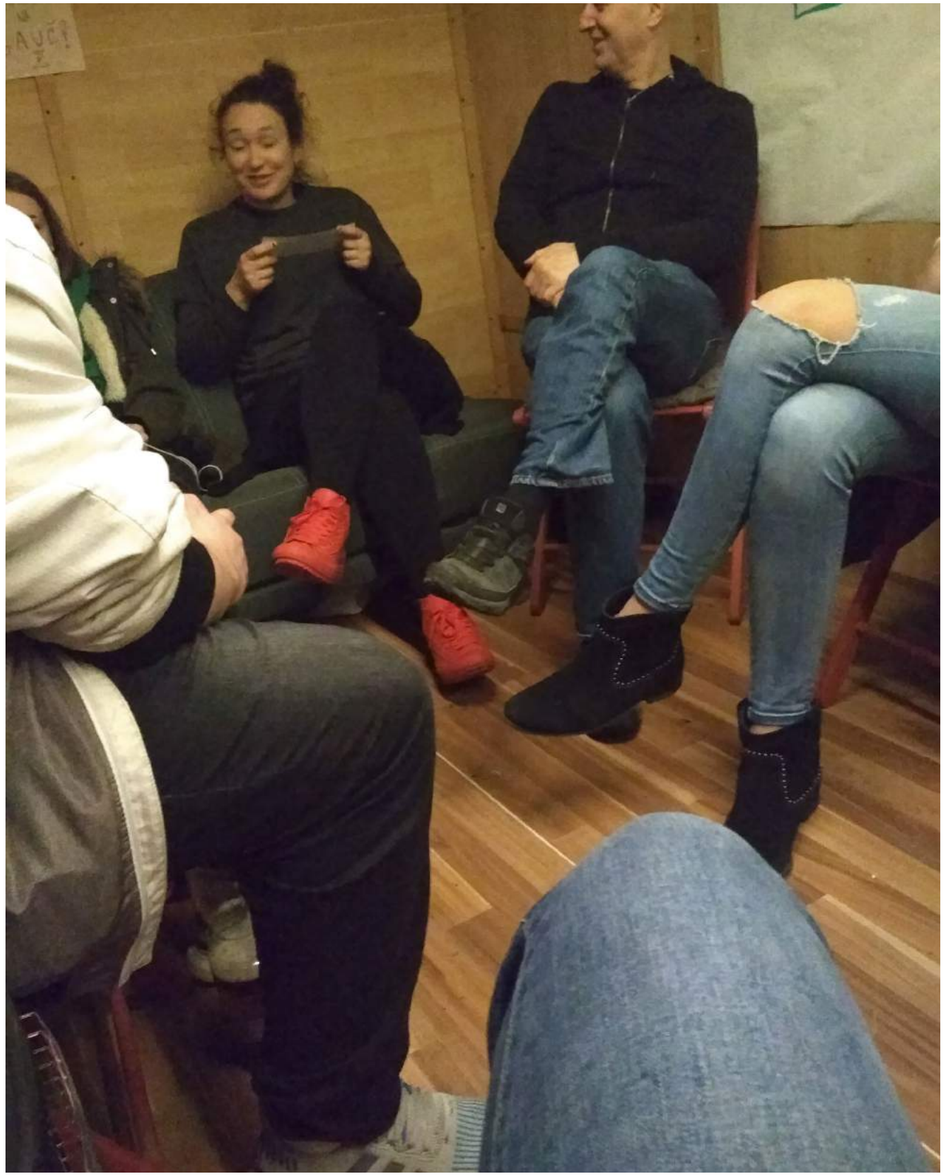
We were impressed by the Vrtule Club's practice of doing street work out of a field base, i.e. Vrtulka, and we think it is transferable to our own environment. Vrtulka itself doesn't have the latest equipment, but it is warm, comfortable, and relaxed, and we can see why young people like being there. We also think it's an excellent opportunity to address certain topics with the youth, particularly in neighbourhoods with no other infrastructure for young people.



Vrtulka



Vrtulka



Vrtulka



Heliport

Heliport

On the second day of our visit to Vrtule, we attended the opening of their second field base, Heliport – a small, mobile wooden house set up in the grounds of a primary school. The school itself is a good 10–15 minutes' walk from the Vrtule Club and is therefore suitable as a second field base. The small wooden house contains a sofa, chairs and a table, and is divided into two sections by an interior door, which also enables individual work. Setting up Heliport is seen as a great success by the Vrtule team, as having a streetwork base in a school area isn't common practice in the Czech Republic. They attribute the realisation of this arrangement to the persistent networking of their director, as well as the good connections he has with district and school officials. The director told us that they are very lucky to be met with approval for their work, as well as an understanding of the importance of field work with youth in general. The goal behind Heliport is to provide a base where social workers and young people can hang out even in colder weather or when they need a place for more private conversation.

The Vrtule team hope that this new base will strengthen their outreach work by increasing their reach among the youth of the school. Like Vrtulka, the mobile house will have its own opening hours, presumably twice a week. The youth will eventually be invited to join the Vrtule Club. Significantly, a girl we had met the day before in Vrtulka also attended the Heliport opening and, after speaking with a social worker, followed us back to the Vrtule Club. Gathering young people in the field and going back to the club with them is something we don't yet do in Slovenia, but it seems to be good practice. We also find that their habit of having a pair of workers in the field, while another pair stays at the club, works very well. Just like in the club, the social workers in the field already seemed to have a constructive relationship with many of the youth. The opening of Heliport was attended mostly by regular participants, as well as some reporters, school officials, and the entire Vrtule team. The latter brought snacks and warm tea, a table football table and a grill, though the wind made it too cold for a barbecue. After an hour or so, we decided to play a game of table football with the youth and social workers, but a snowstorm prevented us from finishing. Wet and cold, we hid in Heliport and chatted for another hour or so.

The setting up of Heliport is a practice that could potentially be implemented in the Slovenian context, especially considering the fact that we tend to work in districts with a severe lack of infrastructure and leisure activities for young people. In this sense, it can be an alternative to a youth centre. It is also affordable (10,000 eur) and, as a mobile house, doesn't require various building permits, etc.

Pacific

On the fourth day of our visit we split into three smaller groups and visited three different organisations. One of them is the low-threshold Pacific Club, located in the Praha 14 district. The neighbourhood itself is close to the metro station Rajska Zahrada, which was built as an extension of the B metro line in 1998, so it is well connected to the rest of the city. At first glance, the view of the neighbourhood is dominated by apartment blocks, built in the 1970s and 80s, with the occasional shop here and there, and not much else in terms of infrastructure. The apartments there are relatively affordable.

Upon arrival, the social workers explained that the neighbourhood has a somewhat socially disadvantaged population, and there is also a comparatively large proportion of immigrants and Roma. The average composition of the visitors of their club reflects this. As a low-threshold club, they are intended for people who are socially vulnerable, come from dysfunctional families, display or are developing patterns of risky behaviour, and consequently have little opportunity for quality leisure time. Their target group of service users is limited between the ages of 6 and 18. We were told that the upper age limit used to be set at 20 years, but they found that there was an excessive age difference between their service users which also resulted in too much variety in their needs, so they lowered it down to 18 years.

Despite the fact that they address a more vulnerable population, their promotional leaflets and posters display well-posed questions that encourage people to visit the club, e.g.: Do you want to talk, but have no one to talk to? Are you bored and want to experience something? Are you looking for a place where you can express your views and opinions? Do you need advice or support in dealing with your parents, school, doctor…? Beyond the requirements of low-threshold programmes, they follow the principles of respect, dignity, an individual approach and independence of social workers.

The club itself is situated inside the building of the Motylek Community Centre, which is dedicated to children with health problems and also runs a social activation service. The building is in the geographical heart of the neighbourhood, in the immediate vicinity of the local primary school. The names of the services make it clear that this is a place for the socially disadvantaged. It’s hard to say whether this effectively attaches a stigma to the building. The infrastructure is fairly modern and the building has its own small courtyard and playground. The inside of the Pacific Club isn’t very spacious, but they do have access to a larger space for group activities, accessible

bathrooms for disabled users, a hallway, and an office which doubles as a room for individual consultations with service users. They also have lockers in the hallway where service users can store their outdoor clothes and personal belongings while they're at the club. Having lockers for service users is a practice we noticed at every organisation we visited, but which we are not familiar with in Slovenia.

The Pacific Club itself was closed on the day of our visit, as the team were doing field work at the nearby school, which was also the focus of our interest. The club's cooperation with the school is a relatively new practice—they have been doing it for a little over a year—which became apparent as we were left waiting for a good ten minutes before someone came and opened the door for us. In the meantime, several school employees had walked around us indifferently, uninterested in why we were waiting around. This was in spite of the fact that the social workers from Pacific visit the school regularly, every Thursday at the same hour. Our hosts were aware that the school's attitude towards them was inappropriate at this point, and the waiting made them visibly uncomfortable, especially because of our visit. In any case, we arrived at the school around noon, during classes so that we had time prepare for the longer break ahead. Despite the bad first impression, we were impressed by the fact that they managed to get a room at the school, which is dedicated exclusively to individual work with service users who go to school there. The room is bright and pleasant, equipped with hammocks, didactic material and creative props. Its purpose is to serve as a place for private individual conversations with service users, always at the users' initiative. We talked about the many difficulties and negotiations the club went through to get a dedicated room at the school, and we agreed that such things always require individual arrangements with school representatives, as well as a good deal of understanding about this kind of work on their part. It is a similar situation when introducing collaborations between street-based youth workers and schools in Slovenia. Such collaborations are almost exclusively based on mutually understanding relationships between the individuals involved, as well as a readiness on the part of school officials to work with outside service providers. In other words, we are far from a systemic arrangement.

Before the break, the social workers set up small bean bags in the hall and put up a poster with information about Pacific. The two of us kept our distance during the break, so as not to negatively surprise the approaching children and youngsters with our presence. The students gathered freely and a group formed immediately at the start of the break. They already seemed to know both of the social workers, even by name, and most of the youngsters already seemed to have a relationship with them. Despite the successful turnout, we couldn't help noticing the somewhat awkward layout of the meeting, with the social workers' bean bags being much larger than

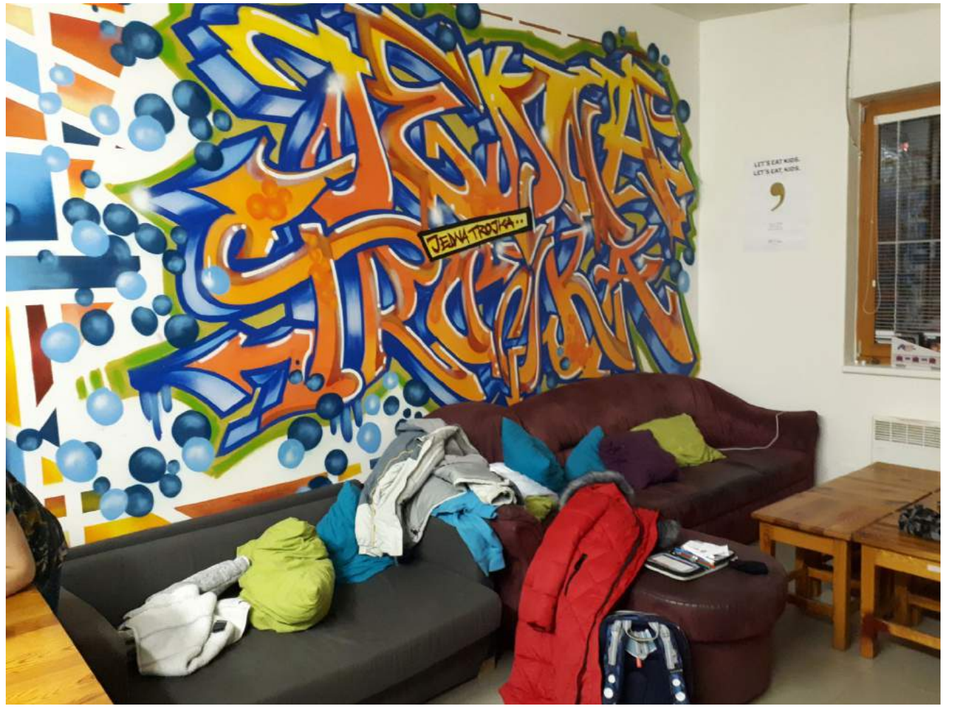
the ones meant for service users and placed in the centre with the others surrounding them. This placement emphasised the sense of hierarchy and power imbalance that we as youth workers should want to avoid as much as possible. Nevertheless, another group of children gathered during the next break and took up all the available seating, and soon one of the students asked to have an individual conversation with a social worker inside the room. While they talked, the other social worker continued working with the group outside. He also managed to direct three of the students to us. Because they were immigrant children who spoke English much more confidently than their peers, we had a chance to interact with them directly. The service users stayed with us and the social workers till the end of the break, when they had to leave. Afterwards, the social workers filled out their reports, where they noted with whom they were in contact that day, what they spoke about, as well as any professional observations. They explained that this was a good example of an outreach approach, where they make contact and build a relationship with a vulnerable target group in the school, and then encourage them to follow up by visiting the Pacific Club.

The practice we observed is an upgrade from the practices of youth workers during school breaks that we know from the Netherlands, because they have access to their own space in the school. This model is interesting to us and potentially transferable to locations where we do field work in and around school areas, though we believe it would be better implemented as an outreach approach, i.e. when the base institution, in our case the youth centre, is geographically close to the school. We began a similar process last year, though less focused on targeting vulnerable groups, when we visited a secondary school in which we also hope to get a room that can act as a partially autonomous space, where the students will be able to dictate what goes on and what activities are held.

We visited Pacific again on the last day of our visit, where we hung out with children and youngsters during opening hours. Together we decorated cookies and rewarded the best three with symbolic presents. We recognised some of the service users from the individual meetings that the social workers held after the field work at the school, which made our interaction somewhat easier since we already knew some background, though our communication was still made difficult by the language barrier.



Pacific



JednaTrojka Club

JednaTrojka Club

JednaTrojka is a low-threshold centre located in Prague's thirteenth district. It is an organisational unit of Proxima Sociale. Its main target group is young people aged 11 to 19 who live in the district. JednaTrojka employs two social workers and one educational worker. They work directly with service users, with administrative support from the Proxima Sociale headquarters. They cooperate closely with the district office in Prague 13, though the funding for their services mostly comes from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Additionally, JednaTrojka has a good working relationship with several schools, shopping centres and libraries in the district.

We were hosted by two social workers. During our visit we had the opportunity to explore the streets and other public spaces of Prague 13. We also got to see how the youth centre works. Multiple times per week, the JednaTrojka team does outreach work in a district library for two hours and street work for five hours. The youth centre itself is open four times a week for five hours, and once a week exclusively for individual counselling. They also run educational workshops at schools, as well as an emergency assistance residence programme, though we didn't have the opportunity to see those programmes in action. At the beginning of our visit, we took a moment to discuss our roles and expectations, which ended up being very helpful later on.

During the first part of our visit, we went out with the social worker to explore the neighbourhood. In Prague's district 13, many youngsters spend their time outside on the streets, in the parks, and in the shopping centres. Therefore, the social workers head out into these spaces several times a week, where they spend up to five hours a day. The street worker we were with wasn't wearing a uniform or carrying any educational materials. The neighbourhood consists of huge living complexes, inhabited, in the social worker's words, by middle class families. Most of those families have an immigration background, mostly from Russia and Ukraine. During our walk, the street worker told us about a case where the residents were being bothered by the noise and music coming from the youngsters who gathered in public spaces in the neighbourhood. The residents' council reacted by removing the benches, which is bad practice. Thus the street workers often mediate between the council and the youngsters, which is commendable.

We also joined a social worker in the public library, which is located inside a shopping centre and where the JednaTrojka team does outreach work several days a week. The social worker prepared info materials and some board games for the outreach work. A group of



JednaTrojka Club



Jižni pol

girls was already waiting for us at the library. The social worker addressed different topics during the conversations and while playing board games. However, we noticed that some topics were being treated as taboo. For example, while playing Life Game, a game with different coloured cards about different life topics and questions, the social worker removed the cards with the topic of sex from the deck. We think this is not a good practice, as it sends a message that talking about sex lives is not normal. By doing this, the social worker is also missing the chance to take on the role of an educator in cases where a topic provokes a mixed response.

After finishing with the outreach work, we returned to the JednaTrojka Club. The youngsters from the library came shortly after us. We find it great that the social workers from JednaTrojka managed to motivate and inspire youngsters from the library to join them in the club as well.

Jižni pol

Jižni Pol is a youth club, and it is also an organisational unit of Proxima Sociale. Proxima Sociale is one of the largest organisations in the field of social work with young people in Prague. Founded in 1993, its mission is to improve the quality of life of residents and empower them to overcome various life challenges. Jižni Pol is located in the Southern part of Prague, in a neighbourhood with a large number of apartment blocks. The neighbourhood itself doesn't have a bad reputation, on the contrary, the social workers describe it as a middle-class neighbourhood. After taking the metro to the last stop, we waited for a city bus and rode three more stops. Our phone navigation led us across a small park to a large old complex, located by the main road, yet surrounded by buildings. We then called Eva, a social worker, who guided us over the phone, past the local store and up the stairs of the complex. We were met by four young social workers, two women and two men, who gave us a warm welcome. We took the stairs to the top floor to find ourselves entering a different atmosphere. Although the top floor is outdoors and acts as a sort of terrace, the hustle and bustle of the city subsides once you reach it. We walked past the walls of graffiti and found ourselves at the entrance of the youth club, which we entered with curiosity. Inside, you can tell by the graffiti on the walls that it is a young people's space. We sat down on a large sofa and the social workers told us about Proxima Sociale.

We learned that they work in various fields of social work and provide social services, such as a residence programme that provides temporary family housing, an intervention centre, and a resocialisation-activation programme for families. They also have programmes for children and youth, specifically addressing dropouts and young offenders. They work with a probation office with the goal of resocialising young first-time offenders. In addition to these two programmes, they also have educational programmes in schools. They run workshops for youngsters and youth in primary and secondary schools, training sessions for professionals and teachers, and volunteer programmes. The employees are mostly social workers with experience working with young people, though one of them emphasised that he is a musician with an interest in social work and youth work, and is trying to gain experience.

The Jižni Pol Club itself acts as a low-threshold programme, meaning that participation is voluntary, anonymous, and free of charge. The club's users are young people between the ages of 11 and 20, while the target group for outreach street work is youngsters and youth between the ages of 11 and 26. As a club, they emphasise educational activities and including young people in processes of empowerment. They also organise an annual community event with up to 500 participants. The graffiti that surrounds the club has a special importance to them. They explain that graffiti art is a notable tradition in the Southern part of Prague where they operate. Thus the social workers also keep track of the graffiti on the designated surfaces where it is allowed. They also regularly post pictures of new graffiti on social media. The club itself is open four days a week, and the team also works in the field every day. Two social workers stay in the club in the afternoon, while the other two go into the field to do street work. They also have a presence in the local school, where they organise workshops for the students as well as doing street work during the main break. We had the opportunity of seeing all three practices in action.

After the presentation, we quickly made our way to the school. It was important not to miss the hour-long main break, when the youth could be caught as they were leaving the school. We wondered whether anyone would even show up outside the school, it was winter after all, but we were told that the school sends them out to wait for the next lessons, as it doesn't provide care during the main break. The social workers described their cooperation with the professional at the school as excellent. They told us that she was the key person who understood what they were trying to achieve with their work, and that they hadn't been met with this kind of understanding at a different school where they had worked before. They also have meetings with the school every 3 to 4 months, which allows regular

contact with the school professional. At the meetings, they go through their field work schedules, evaluate their work so far, and discuss how they could improve.

Out on the field, we split into two teams. One team went to the elementary-level grades while the other waited for the older students. We had some circus props and a frisbee with us. When the bell rang, the students poured out of the school. It was obvious that they already knew and trusted the social workers, because they approached us right away. We talked about various things, above all they were interested in where we come from and why we were there. One of the boys developed an intense relationship and agreed to visit us in the afternoon when the club opened. When the bell rang again, our work was finished and we headed out for lunch. Soon after lunch, the club opened and the workers went out into the field. The boy we met earlier at the school also came by.

Work in the club was relaxed. It was apparent that the participants were regulars at the club and felt good there. They were mostly young boys, though later on some older participants, and one girl, also came in. The social worker connected with them mainly over board games that she knew well and was able to adapt to the participants. We also use board games in our work, and we stick to the principle that you need to know a game well enough to know how to adapt it. A group of youngsters played Fifa on the Playstation, one of the social workers played the guitar, a young service user sang along.

We also went out with the field team. We discovered that they walk quite a long path, around 12 km, during which they try to engage the youth. Unfortunately, because it was winter, there weren't many young people out. They also have a rule not to engage couples and larger groups. This was different from our approach, as we tend to engage anyone and everyone we feel we can approach. We talked about another aspect of our own approach, which is to have only one social worker go up to a pair of participants, while the other keeps their distance.

Our path takes us through the park to the neighbourhood school, where the social worker tells us that they often find used needles lying around. In such cases they call the police, who come to remove the needles. After walking in the park, we made our way towards the largest shopping mall in Central Europe. On the way, we talked about how they could improve their approach to outreach street work. We suggested that street work aimed at engaging young people over such a large area might not be the most effective way of reaching the target group. We also pointed out that we couldn't really tell what the purpose of their street work was. During their street work, they

tend to also address older people that can't be invited back to the club, and we suggested that it might be a good idea to set up a mobile base to work out of. This would mean spending the first two hours of their street work walking around the neighbourhood, encouraging the youth to join the activities taking place at a certain location outside (at the mobile base). This way, their activities would be more focused on detached street work and less on outreach. This could allow them to establish deeper and more regular connections with the young people in the area. They would also be more visible if they wore a recognisable uniform.

Our path led us from the park to the metro station. We took the metro to the shopping centre. The management of this shopping centre had designated a special area for young people, which was being rented by a Czech music TV station. The social workers have an agreement with the management, who gave them permission to be there. When we arrived, however, all we saw was lots of young people hanging out in a room full of videogames and arcade games, and a hostess at the door whose job was to warn them that eating, drinking and smoking were forbidden inside. Unfortunately, the TV network and shopping centre management haven't shown much interest in letting the social workers organise activities that would address young people hanging out there, and wouldn't just be directed conversation. We hope that these stakeholders will pay attention to the social workers before serious problems arise. We see that room as a great opportunity for engaging the youth. A lot of young people hang out there, they feel good, and yet they are left to themselves despite being in a shopping mall and not in an outdoor public space. We went over to the side entrance, where lots of young people smoke cigarettes. We approached two of them and the social workers engaged them. They were willing to answer a questionnaire about alcohol use among young people. We also asked them about substances and what tends to be used at parties, and they mentioned synthetic substances and soft drugs. When we left, the social worker told them to use substances responsibly. On the way back to the club, we did a final evaluation of our visit. We exchanged impressions and parted with the mutual satisfaction of having gained something new.

Our general impression of Jižni Pol is that it is run by a fairly young and inexperienced team who are eager to learn, improve, and try out various approaches. Because they are young themselves, they tend to favour a peer approach to participants. Fundamentally, this makes it easier for them to develop a relationship, but also that much harder to set boundaries. We also noticed a lack of professional support from the superiors in the organisation. They reported being heavily overloaded with administrative duties and not being able to

find time for additional education and training. With additional training in the field of outreach street work, they could establish a system of street work that would reach the target group more effectively. We were very impressed with the practice of working in the school. We hope to establish a similar practice of field work during main breaks, though we are limited by the fact that the main break in Ljubljana schools usually takes place inside and only lasts up to 25 minutes. We do meet with our partner school more often than they do with theirs, however, and we also bring our youth work activities into regular classes. In general, there are differences between Zavod Bob and Jižni Pol in the starting points of our work vs. theirs. Because our background is in youth work, everything we do is based on empowering and activating young people. We try to include them in all the processes that take place at our youth centre. Jižni Pol, on the other hand, is grounded in social work, and run by social workers who spend more time with participants one on one, and focus more on vulnerable youth and their problems. Furthermore, we are a small organisation where the employees all know each other well, whereas Jižni Pol is a unit of a much larger organisation, which also brings along with it a more rigid structure of work.

Our visit left us with mixed feelings. We are glad that the team welcomed us with open arms and was willing to include us into their regular work process and share information with us. We gained very valuable insights into our own organisational practices, street work approaches and partnerships with schools. We would have liked to spend even more time with this team, include them in our own work process and explore with them what they could change in the way they do street work, so that they could find something that better suits them as an organisation, the environment they work in and, above all, their service users.

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