



BRATISLAVA _ OSLO _ OSLO _ BRATISLAVA

examples of good practice in work with homeless people

2015

Vagus, civic association

HOW IT BEGINS

Civic association Vagus made use of the financing opportunity from opportunity from Norwegian Financial Mechanism for non-governmental organizations in the program Active citizenship and inclusion, which is administered by the Foundation of Socia and proposed a project of a Day Integration Centre for the Homeless in Bratislava. Granted funds were used for reconstruction and operating costs for one year. The Centre opened in December 2013 and serves daily more than seventy people in need. Services delivered cater to both basic needs and higher needs through the Integration Centre.

The project also allowed us to intern in Oslo, Norway with our partner, the Salvation Army. We learned about quality and working of Norwegian social services and had the opportunity to visit many of them. We gained new ideas and views and the long experience of these institutions were inspiring for our further work. Through this piece you're holding we'd like to bring this inspiration to your work and to that of your establishment.



VAGUS_TEAM
The picture of most of the civic association team.

VAGUS_CIVIC_ASSOCIATION

The Civic Association Vagus was founded in 2011 and it brings professional and inovatiove approach to work with homeless people and thanks to the effort of the operating team it was able to create and sustain numerous irreplaceble projects and activities aimed at combating extreme city poverty.

Every year of its existence the Civic Association Vagus has brought new pilot project, which is a part of the long-term vision of professional and at the same time human assistance to homeless people (Streetwork with homeless people, DOMEK - Daily Low-treshold Center, café DOBRE&DOBRÉ).

Except the direct help to homeless people CA Vagus works at the level of positive change of public opinion through several campaigns and activities e.g. Night outside, exhibitions, community work and so on. An important part of the work of the association is the activity in the field of legislative changes relating to homeless people in Slovakia.



SOUP_SOAP_SALVATION

Credo of Salvation Army - soup, soap and salvation.

SALVATION_ARMY_NORWAY

The Salvation Army branch in Norway called "Frelsesarmen" with its idea of three S (Soup, Soap, Salvation) was one of the first branches to come after the Salvation Army was founded in London in 1865. The Norwegian branch was founded in 1888. Over the years of its operation, a lot of congregations, schools, social initiatives, independently operating divisions, centres for volunteers and companies, including Fretex with a network of charity shops, have been created.

Frelsesarmen has become a significant public benefit organization that provides systems of social rehabilitation, housing, health services for addicts, support for families with children, and strive to fulfil the psychosocial and spiritual needs of those people.

Frelsesarmen plays an irreplaceable role in the field of social work in Norway. Due to the diversity and systemicity we decided to choose them as our partner.



STREETS_OF_OSLO

The social system does not reduce aid only to provide food and basic needs.

NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SYSTEM AND HOMELESSNESS

According to the definition of homelessness applied in Norway, the homeless are people having no roofed home, using hostels and dormitories, temporarily living in supported housing as well as people in the institutions and in custody who are to be released in a short time. The definition also includes people who can temporarily stay at their families or friends. It is identical to the pan-European FEANTSA definition, applied in Slovakia, too.

However, the Norwegian system to resolve homelessness is different from ours. The Norwegian national strategy in addressing the phenomena of homelessness and addiction is based on delegation of responsibilities to cities, towns and municipalities in particular that are responsible for the extent and funding of the services. The concepts applied in Oslo and Bratislava are nearly identical. What we perceive as a difference is the level of cooperation with non-profit organizations as partners which is better applied in Oslo.

In Oslo, there is a close cooperation between the government, the city, the police and the non-profit organizations. Leaders of all the interested parties meet in order to share the information necessary for further cooperation and discuss various topics every fourteen days on Monday. Also social workers involved in various projects meet in order to share information. In addition, there is a forum where medical staff involved in various nursing programs discuss topics related to their work.

We miss such cooperation in our country. There is no exchange of information either between State and non-profit sectors and the police or between the workers of individual existing projects. The result of such non-cooperation is that we are not seeking our joint solutions, we are not exchanging our valuable experience and we are not sharing our achievements.

The city regularly announces tenders which non-profit organizations may apply for. This kind of tenders presents a certainty for the organizations, but on the other hand it is very little flexible and sometimes the organization's vision and long-term strategy cannot meet the criteria. The city describes its expectations within the tender in advance and the organizations try to set their programmes according to the city's requirements. Finally, the city decides to purchase services from the organization which has presented the best offer. Sometimes it may happen that some of the organizations withdraw due to incompatibility of their values with the city's requirements. For the Salvation Army, it is particularly important that the budget is compatible with professional quality.

The organization which wins the tender becomes the city's partner in addressing the issue. **Uteseksjonen** is the main and largest part of the office for Social and Public Benefit Services.

In our environment, we also often try to meet the criteria; however, it is mostly about the private sector which announces grants. The city cannot guarantee a stable amount taken from the budget on yearly basis to be invested in the issue.

Our partner, the Salvation Army, is funded by the city only partially. The programme of the **Fyrllyset** contact centre is covered by the city in 45%, while the rest of the Salvation Army budget is covered using donations provided by companies as well as individuals. The project **Jobben** is basically fully covered by the city. However, after five years of funding the project has to enter the tender and compete other organizations again in order to prolong the contract. **Uteseksjonen** is covered by the city and provides social streetwork and health care aimed at vulnerable individuals and groups in the centre of Oslo. It is responsible for reducing crime and health risks associated with abuse of addictive substances.

In the 1980s and early 1990s they recorded around 100 - 150 people sleeping outside. Most of them were Norwegian citizens, many of them addicted to alcohol or drugs. The number of people sleeping outside changed during the 1990s, when the city in cooperation with major non-profit organizations created more functioning programmes and hired competent social workers. At the same time, the dormitories where large number of people slept in one room were replaced by more differentiated housing programmes. Currently, there are not many people sleeping directly in the streets.



FIELD_WORK

The field social work unit in Oslo, operated by the city.

SOCIAL_WELFARE

Norway may be seen as a safe country to live in. The Norwegian social security system considers situations such as illnesses, childbirths or pensions. Costs related to these situations are covered by the Norwegian national insurance. When you find yourself in a difficult situation, social insurance benefits are always considered individually, since there are no national standards. Funding is permissible following the review of individual case by local social workers acting in compliance with national/political directives.

The amount of material need benefit in Norway is a double-edged sword, since it leads a lot of Norwegians to passivity. People living in Oslo, who are under the social security law awarded the material need benefit, receive EUR 745 monthly for nutrition. In addition, they can even be awarded further support for housing. People with limited or no rights under the social security law do not receive the above-mentioned nutrition contribution.

The citizens of Norway are not required to possess an ID card and thus there are neither penalties nor other consequences if you have no ID card. The police may ask a person to submit their ID card if there is a suspicion you have no residence permit to stay in Norway. A lot of the Norwegians having no ID card try to get a passport. It costs you about EUR 50 to get a passport. In Norway, there are several types of cards used for identification.

They have separate cards such as birth identification card, permanent residence card or bank card which can also be used as a kind of ID card, since it includes your photo. It is quite difficult to get an ID card if you have never had a card before. In most of cases you are required to have a card if you want to get an ID card. This principle works in a similar way as our birth certificates and permanent residences.

The city cannot force anyone to leave, but it recommends and helps, even financially, homeless people and addicts to return to their place of permanent residence. Services in Norway are distributed evenly and they are not centralized in the capital city only, therefore the people who return to their place of permanent residence wherever within Norway do not suffer from lower quality of provided services. If they are staying in a place which is not their place of permanent residence, they cannot use the entire range of services as they can in their place of permanent residence. Basic support and assistance to return is provided by low-threshold centres such as **Fyrlyset**; however, the rest of public organizations do not provide much support.

We perceive the emphasis on primary prevention in the issue of foreclosures. In the case of debts both in Norway and the rest of Nordic countries, the State assumes payment of the mortgage for one year. Within this period, persons who are in debt have the time and room to get engaged in retraining programs, for example, which make it easier for such persons to find steady employment and subsequently repay their debts to the State. The Nordic countries are aware that it is worth to invest more in costs such persons incur than to let them fall down and subsequently provide them with help when they become homeless.



NORWEGIAN _SOCIAL_SYSTEM

One of the most developed
welfare systems in the world.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Norwegian welfare system is synonymous with interconnectivity. It has fully developed all forms of social work, i.e. street, outreach and residential. These are further complemented by health care and integration services. Compared to the Slovak welfare system which aims to extinguish problems that have occurred, the Norwegian system is aimed at all levels of prevention. The welfare network in Norway significantly prevents people from falling down and ending up homeless.

According to the Salvation Army estimates, there are 15-20 Norwegian citizens in the capital city sleeping in the streets actually. These are mostly addicts and people suffering from mental disorders who are fully entitled to use social services, but they do not use them. Other Norwegian citizens without permanent residence use numerous social services, programmes and projects which provide overnight or extended accommodation and therefore they are no longer considered homeless. Capacity of such facilities in Oslo is set so that nobody has to sleep in the streets. This applies to the Norwegian citizens. These people are primarily dependant on social services mostly due to their addiction to addictive substances and their mental disorders. Another major group includes lonely people struggling with the system for whom it is difficult to adapt to the society's expectations. In Oslo, there are eight thousand addicts who present the majority of people using the services and programmes. Users from all around Norway come to the capital city because drugs in Oslo are available more easily and for lower prices.

Most of the people sleeping in the streets, in cars or at the central station come from abroad, mainly Eastern and Southern Europe and Eastern Africa. Their rights to use social welfare services are limited. It is illegal to sleep in the streets. These people are not registered in the welfare system, thus we do not know their actual numbers, while the Salvation Army estimates read 500 – 1000 persons. They have the opportunity to use the crisis facilities, low-cost accommodation and, in addition, services provided by the contact centre Fyrlýset once a week.

Compared to Norway, we do not come across this issue so much in Slovakia. Percentage of migrants living in the streets of Bratislava is too low and in practice we meet them very rarely. These are mostly the Czechs, Poles and Romanians.



FOLK_ER_FOLK
Street magazine intended for foreign Roma in Oslo.

STREET_PAPERS

The Roma's interests in Norway are advocated by the organization "Folk er Folk" (People are people) which issues a street magazine under the same title. Given that these Romas are the EU citizens, they are required to either find an employment within three months or leave the country. In the beginnings, the magazine was only an A4 sheet printed on both pages and presented a solution to find them a job which subsequently

allowed them to get residence permit. Currently, the magazine constitutes a source of income for them and thus they are not dependant on begging in the city centre which causes considerable resentment amongst the residents. At the same time, this projects assures that they are registered in the welfare system. The magazine aims to reduce both poverty as well as racism. It presents positive stories and focuses on Roma culture and their current difficult situation in the country of their origin.



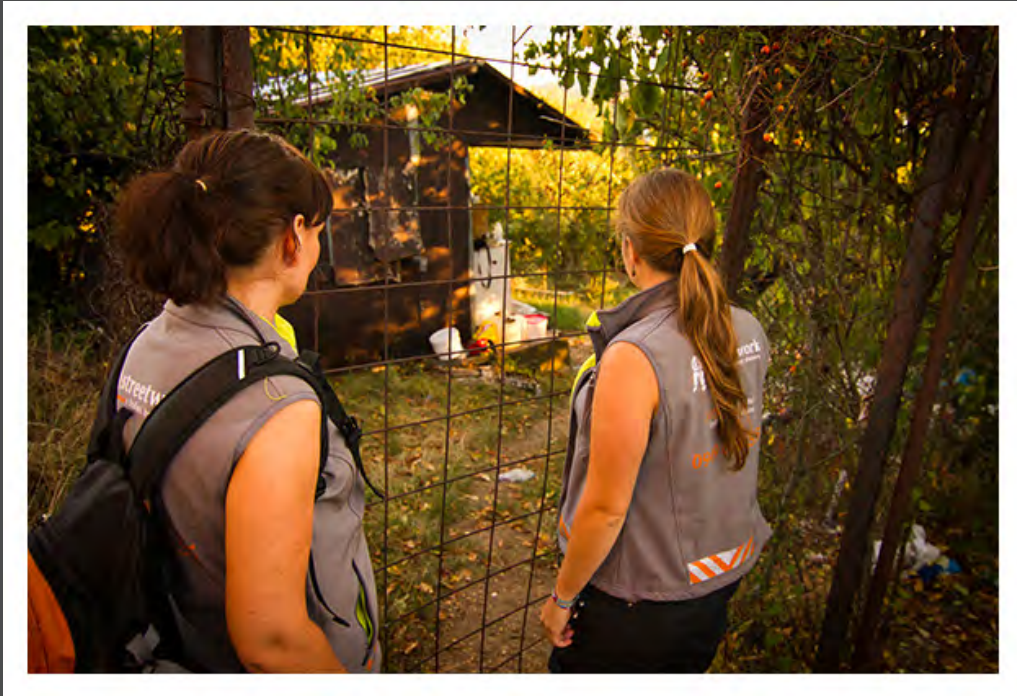
=OSLO
The most widespread street paper.

Vendors of the **Folk er Folk** magazine share the same rooms with the original homeless magazine titled =Oslo, issued by the non-profit organization of the same name. Clients has to buy the magazines and subsequently sell at an agreed spot. Prior to inclusion in the project, they have to attend a complete training programme. The vendors are labelled with an identification card and equipped with a vest and with a warm jacket in winter.

FIELD SOCIAL WORK

Oslo has a very strong base of social streetwork which forms one of the cornerstones of harm reduction. The largest organization operating streetwork programmes within Oslo is **Utseksjonen**. It is a welfare system agency of the city which daily sends several social street workers to the streets. They even work nights and weekends. Also the Salvation Army is involved in streetwork services through the **Fyrlyset** project and twice a week at nights their workers perform streetwork. They use a car, offer practical support in form of food and clothes as well as elementary advice.

The task of social street workers is to get in touch with potential clients who do not seek help themselves and direct them to social services which may be helpful in resolving their situation.



STREETWORK_BA
Field social workers when searching for clients in Bratislava.

In Bratislava, the only organization providing streetwork to homeless people is the civic association Vagus. The association operates streetwork six days weekly from 5:00PM to 10:00PM.

They provide clothes, hot tea and coffee, food, treatment, elementary social advice. When it comes to a crisis situation, they transport clients to dormitories or hospitals. Three times a week during winter months and twice a week during summer months, they give out hot food right under the Lafranconi Bridge. Financial resources gained through projects and contributions of the city and the city parts allow sending only two street workers to the streets. For such a large number of homeless people (approx 4500) it is not enough.

This project was an inspiration for Norwegian colleagues, too. After joining the Vagus street workers in the streets they shifted to the model used by Vagus – they use cars instead of walking and thus are more mobile and can do a larger area. In addition, they are better equipped, can take more clothes, food and treatment material.



SOUP_BUS

Withdrawn vehicle urban transport, which served the imaginative purpose.

NIGHT_BUS

Suppe, sape, frelse – it is the slogan of both the Salvation Army and one of the projects – **Night Bus**.

The night bus goes to the streets three times a week. Clients who enter the bus are provided with food, tea and coffee as well as talks and common prayer. It is a safe place where they can have a little rest. Recently, the bus has been used for campaigns and special events.

We do not have this kind of services in Bratislava, but we believe there will be some enthusiasts who will take this as an inspiration and create a “mobile low-threshold centre”. However, there is a similar project run by the civic association Prima whose target group includes addicts and people working in sex-business. They use a van and go to the streets three times a week in order to exchange used needles and syringes, provide medical supplies and condoms. They try to persuade the clients to act more safely (i.e. use drugs in a safer way, have safe sex).



FYRLYSET
Romanian Roma during the day center visit of Romanian ambassador.

DAY _CENTRES

There are several facilities run by the Salvation Army in Norway. The total number is five daily centres, while four of them are situated in Oslo. Most of the Norwegian towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants run a daily centre. We have visited the contact centre **Fyrllyset** (lighthouse) with the lowest threshold.

The contact centre is located directly in a residential area and respected by the residents. The centre welcomes anyone to use its services without necessary registration. The clients can have a meal and a shower, shave, have a haircut, wash or exchange their clothes. Within leisure time, they can play table football, watch TV, attend worship or get access to the Internet. One of the rooms is used for rest and sleep during the day. The centre gets clothes through the Fretex network of containers where people give their clothes they do not tend to use anymore. One day weekly is reserved for migrants living in the streets.

There are two similar projects in Bratislava. The first one is run by the **Brothers of Mercy** in Slovakia in a building located at Hattalova Street. They have created a low-threshold daily centre, integration centre and personal hygiene centre. In addition, they run a low-capacity shelter for clients who have just been released from hospital. The Brothers of Mercy also use help of volunteers and nuns.



DAY_CENTRE_DOMEK
The only comprehensive services for homeless people in the center of Bratislava.

The other project is a low-threshold daily and integration centre **Domec** located at Mytna Street which is run by the civic association Vagus. Its professional social workers provide their clients with social advice, food, warm, shower, clean clothes and treatment. Integration services aim to improve their quality of life and social skills, including trainings focused on development of social skills, preparation for job interviews and writing CV as well as offering specific job opportunities.



HEIMEN

Jedinečné zariadenie, ktoré ponúka aj vlastný substitučný program pre závislých klientov.

NOČLAH_A_BÝVANIE

Within the premises where **Fyrliset** is located, there is a garden with benches where clients are allowed to spend pleasant moments. On the other side of the garden, there is an accommodation facility **Heimen** by the Salvation Army. It is a project which provides long-term accommodation under strict supervision. It includes 25 rooms for accommodation. 70% of Heimen clients are addicts.

Twice a week, they get a medical doctor right in the facility. The clients have the opportunity to join a supervised substitution programme. There are ten full-time workers who provide their clients with professional assistance and support and get them involved in various social activities which may increase their chances to integrate within the society.

In **Heimen**, they pay attention to nutritious and balanced diet which they consider very important in terms of health condition. Daily diet includes all the ingredients - vegetables, rice, pasta, meat, fish, milk, fruit, fruit juices, tea, coffee and cakes. The time to eat is considered as space for joint meeting at the table, including the employees, volunteers and clients. There is another facility run by the Salvation Army called **Den apne dor** which operates the same way.



LUNCH_AT_HEIMEN

Routine placemat during lunch at Heimen.

In total, the Salvation Army run five projects focused on provision of accommodation. These particularly designed for clients addicted to alcohol or drugs. Besides the two abovementioned facilities, they also run the low-threshold project **Fagerborg** where clients are allowed to stay for three months.

In this case, the low-threshold means that the clients may take their addictive substances directly in their rooms. During the three-month period, they are provided with opportunity and safe room to think over their future and find a better and more suitable place to live with help from one of the social workers. However, this is not always a success and a lot of the clients remain living in a low-threshold facility.

There is another project designed for clients released from custody – **Elevator**. The last of the projects providing accommodation is H25. Most of the social workers employed within these projects are university graduates.

Based on the experience gained, the Salvation Army prefer to invest in facilities with stricter supervision and higher number of workers. In addition, some of the clients who finally found housing and moved to flats with help from the Salvation Army are not fully able to do on their own and need social workers to supervise.



GATEHOSPITALET
Medical service, which is much better equipped than Slovak hospitals.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

Gatehospitalet (street hospital), a facility for clients whose health condition is not so serious and thus they do not need to be hospitalized, but on the other hand, their health condition does not allow them to cope with the difficult life conditions in the streets. The facility employs nurses and receives clients based on their application.

In Slovakia, the abovementioned project is substituted by shelters for homeless people, which are run by the organization DePaul and located at Krcmeryho Street and Ivanska Road within low-threshold dormitory premises. Another shelter is the Bethlehem of St. Mother Teresa located at Rovniankova Street. Moreover, there is a shelter Resoty led by Father Srholec; however, the fee in this one is quite high and thus only people with regular income in form of disability or retirement pensions can afford it. Nevertheless, its capacity is not sufficient.



JOB BEN

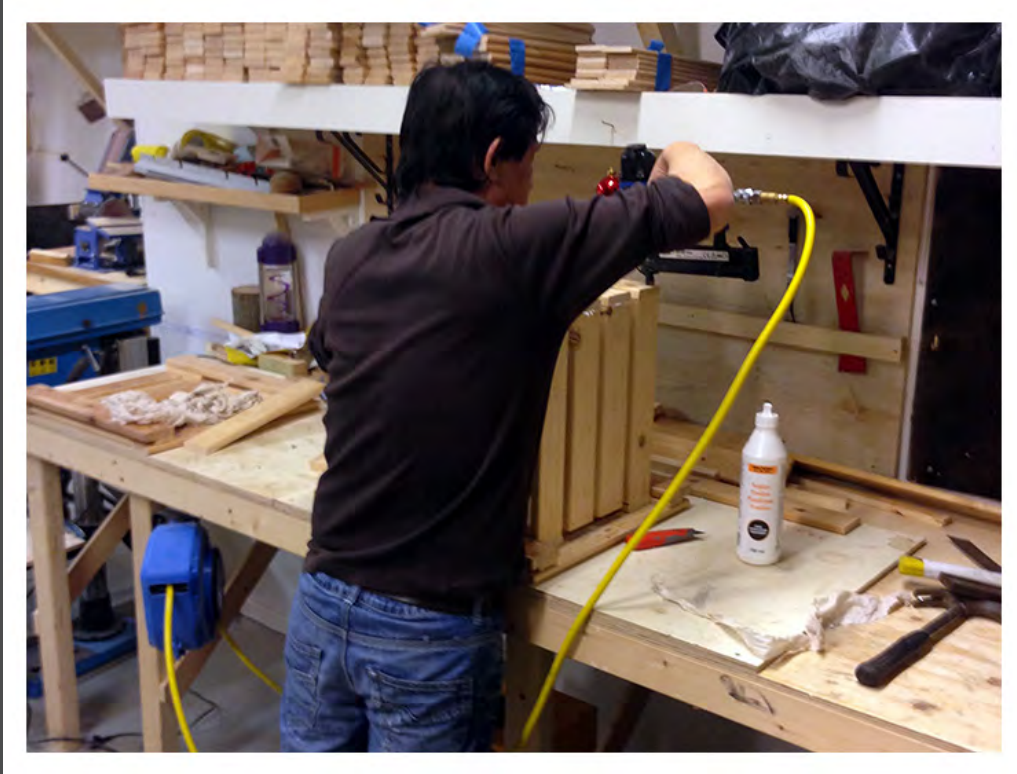
One part of the project is cleaning the center of Oslo.

JOB BEN _ INTEGRATION _ PROJECT

Jobben - the job centre employs clients in several separate programmes. Firstly, they have to attend an initial interview and after having passed they are included in a training programme. Addicts, too, may be included in the project, since the work is distributed so that they can do it. This way they can earn their own money and do not have to steal.

There are 700 people registered in the project and divided to shifts. Every day there are 80 of them working. The first of the projects is focused on tidying the Oslo city centre. They use carts equipped with a container to collect garbage, while for cleaning the beaches and islands they use boats. For the city, this project is less costly than if they hire a private company to do the job. That is one of the reasons why the project is fully funded by the city. Its added value is lower crime and thus more satisfied citizens.

There are other projects, too, where clients make gift bags, candles as well as blocks of wax and newspapers which are used when making fire. Further there are carpentry workshops where they restore old furniture and make designed furniture. All the things they produce are sold at a fair which is held twice a year.



JOBSEN_JOINERY _WORKSHOP

Production of wood products under the guidance of experienced designers and carpenters.

In Bratislava, there are several projects which employ homeless people, however, definitely not as many as in Oslo. They can participate in the project of sorting and recycling waste through the daily centre run by the Brother of Mercy at Hattalova Street. The civic association **Proti prudu** has launched the project of luggage carriers at the Central Station, while the civic association Vagus opened a café **DOBRE&DOBRE** where they employ clients as waiters. In addition, the latter engaged in the project of cleaning the streets in the city centre which subsequently had to be stopped after several months due to lack of funding resources.



Vagus

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examples of good practice in work with homeless people

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