

## Minutes of the Opava Meeting, 1 & 2 October 2009

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- Q&A

### 1. Presentation of the pilot project (strategy, memorandum, etc.)

Who does what in Opava? What is the cooperation like between partners? What type of strategy has been put in place?

#### The Strategy

A document “Crime recidivism Prevention Strategy and the implementation of measures designed by Social Welfare Service, Community Plan of the Statutory Town of Opava” has been issued. This Strategy is a concrete result of a partnership working gathering representatives of the City, the education department, social affairs, employment bureau, the Justice, probation and mediation service, municipal police and also non-profit organisations. A group of experts was gathered in prevision of this strategy, and met to work on knowledge and practices.

The goal was to describe the situation of Opava and focus on the criminality issues: find the key dates and statistic data, and make proposals to ensure that the Strategy is the most efficient possible. The concrete result of these meetings was the preparation of this Strategy during the year 2009.

There was a general agreement on the structure of the document:

- Detailed description of the situation
- Final objectives and specific objectives.
- Measures to be undertaken

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The main idea was to « know our enemy »: criminality is stable but re-offending is growing, so it is re-offending our enemy. We wanted to have a good knowledge of the problem. We defined the target group (youngsters until 18 years old and also young adults). In Opava, and the Czech Republic in general, the criminality rates are rather low, but we need prevention strategies in case these rates go up.

We put in place a “SWOT” analysis: Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats. We found that there are important problems around economics and financial issues. Also the judicial institution is not reactive because of a lack of funding. There is a lack of statistical data. The partnership is good for the time being, but it is based on people.

The general objective of the Strategy is a “decrease in crime recidivism in the Opava region”

Three specific objectives:

- Stabilisation of the target group services system in the Opava region
- Integration of clients in social ( For example measures to procure housing or employment)
- Project marketing (That is a long term dissemination process, for example so that courts and prosecution know more about the program of social welfare that they have to impose progressively on clients. Communication with the citizens is important to have their support towards the strategy. Marketing towards potential finance providers. That motivation is important to get clients to re-socialize and integrate through the programme, find housing and employment.)

### **The Memorandum**

The Memorandum is one of the two outputs of the project. It is necessary to ensure cooperation in the future: if some partners change, it will not affect the partnership. We already have some signatures, and we are certain of further signatures.

The Memorandum ensures partnership and implementation of the strategy. It states that partners will meet once a year, that they will respect the Strategy. It also aims at ensuring financial funds for projects, and the promotion and support of the projects coming from the strategy.

### **The “Travel Maps”**

The “Travel map”’s goal is the development of the client’s life as it goes by contacts with law enforcement, prison and reaches out to the care. Questions are: who, when, will work at one point with the client? (Examples of “travel maps” can be found in the handout of the meeting)

<b>Question /Answers</b>
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### **Is the choice of entering the programme left to the client or the judge?**

Regarding these “travel maps” it has to be said that the client gets in the program only if he wants to reduce the sentence, and also the courts need to approve before the clients get into the resocialising programme. For the time being the courts take this into account, but don’t use it yet. It is too early because our meeting only started in spring.

**Do judges sign the cooperation contract, i.e. the memorandum?**

We invited the district court in Opava, and the chairman evaluates the strategy positively, he expressed his support and wants to engage in the strategy. After that we want to invite other courts in the Czech Republic. We think that the support of our local court will provoke interest of other courts in the country. Ideally all courts in Czech Republic should make it possible, but there is no financial strategy for this program.

**Concerning the lack of statistical data: is there evaluation in progress, and when does the project start?**

We need to develop the Strategy in more detail; there is no time framework available yet, but it is one of the issues that were discussed in the spring.

Concerning the lack of data, it has to be said that monitoring systems are not yet ready in the Czech Republic in general. For this project, we need to know if the Strategy is effective. Today we can say that the plan is a general success as we did achieve some agreement with partners and we will talk more about further evaluation next year.

We have given input to the local media on this strategy, to persuade public that it is important. A minority thinks that this money is not being cost effective. In countries like France, Germany or Italy, concerning marketing they have strategy that functions, as it has been proved by earlier field visits. We need to put the focus on the fact that marginalizing the client is not a solution.

As a promotion action of the strategy, we want to say to the public that we are ready for the future; we can expect negative developments in the future regarding crime and re-offending.

**Is prevention of re-offending supported on a National level?**

There is support on the national level: alternative sentences could be increased in number, new criminal court are becoming effective in which probation services will be much more used. It's not about support or not support it's about financial needs. At present we don't know if we will have finances from central government? Will the new legislation be accompanied with funds? We do not have the answer to that question. Next year, there will probably be a general provider for prisons at national level. What we remember it that at national level they give orders but no money.

**We need to encourage your initiative, and underline that this approach in other countries is nearly always successful. But you need to put the cooperation in practice. In other countries, the key factor often relies on one person that coordinates all the other agencies, offer some support... It's the practical part of cooperation.**

That is one part of the memorandum: the agreement of cooperation implies that managers of different signatory agencies have given their support to ensure continuation of process. Any person that comes into the group will be enthusiastic about supporting the Strategy. If they sign the memorandum, partners are obliged to cooperate, because they have to meet regularly. It's the key. Due to financial problem, it will be difficult to meet regularly, so that is why we have to look for other sources of financing. The key role is held by the municipality of Opava.

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Also in the Memorandum, we have kept in mind that other partners will come in the future. For example, when the situation in the national police stabilizes (at present it is very complicated) they will enter the partnership.

**Two questions: Do the probation officer meet the prisoners before they are released? In what way do you motivated the client?**

- 1) Yes the probation officer starts his work inside the prison.
- 2) The information that we provide to clients must be different from manuals, the clients have basic or elementary education. There is one experience of a US communication officer that we want to copy. He used comics as a way of media. We will try to copy that, and make brochures in the way of comics. The key is to show the clients that it is really possible: even if they don't have education, it's possible to integrate into society.

<p><b>2. Opava Labour office – presentation of activities in the area of prevention of re-offending</b></p>
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There are 77 employment bureaus in the Czech Republic. The employment bureau (EB) has several duties and tasks, most important of all is to procure employment for clients. The present trend of development is to cooperate with employers. We produce services to employers, and initiate projects with Europe funding on a national scale. Another task is to cooperate with organisations as NGO's.

Who are the people that we deal with? They are disadvantaged on the market, with physical handicap, people under 20 with no education, or having just finished education, young mothers, children under 15 years, people older than 50 years. They are also people with special needs, in distressed conditions, homeless, persons of the Roma community having difficulties to integrate or person released from prison...

So the question is how to integrate persons getting out of prison? 65% are registered in the employment bureau, because the legislation sets the need to be registered so the can have social benefit.

There is a 3 phase approach of the services provided to this population:

- **1st phase:** we give lectures in Opava prison; mostly to people that will be released soon. We repeat the information for adults and youth. After they are released from prison, clients come to the employment bureau in Opava; we help them to fill the registration form. We also give counsels, try to motivate them: it is an individual help to find a job, we call it "self service procurement".

In the course of this first phase we try to fill the client's needs and requirements. We propose professional experts to help them work with computers and internet. We help them put up their CV on the national CV portal. Leaflets and manuals are given to clients to help them prepare interviews. A contract is signed between employment bureau and the client. The key is Empowerment, self motivation.

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- **2<sup>nd</sup> phase:** if clients are not employed after the first phase, we give them specialized consultancy. Several visits are aimed at summarising personal competence skills and abilities, and finding the best way into employment. Usually we find out what they are not able to achieve in labour market so we offer courses and training, mainly to prepare the clients for interviews.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> phase** we offer psychological examination, and provide crisis intervention if necessary. Unfortunately, this service is often not provided in time.

There is a special benefit system for employers when they create new jobs for people released from prison. The municipalities can also employ clients for tasks like caring for the environment (lawns in the city).

Overall we can say that there is a very good cooperation with all the partners that are in the memorandum.

<b>Questions/Answers</b>
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**Do you have statistical information on your activities related to prevention of re-offending?**

No. We do not have any statistical data concerning clients coming from prison, we are not allowed to make statistics about who comes from prison, or on another basis on who is Roma community. This comes from legislation.

**Maybe the probation officer has this information?**

Probation Officer: Yes. It comes to about a 100/year. 200 persons are conditionally released from Opava prison each year. 40 persons have probation officer supervision. If they are released on parole, we make sure that they have a promise of getting a job when they get out. On average, 15 persons loose their jobs, 75 person stay employed.

**Is the Employment Bureau allowed to work with persons when they are in prison?**

Yes, but when we make lectures in prison it is above the frame of regular duties ...it is an option to work with imprisoned client. It has to be mentioned that social workers inside the prison prepare clients to the period after the release. They talk about the employment bureau.

**Do you see a difference between before and after the memorandum?**

It's too early to say. We are just in the preparatory phase, so we can say more after a year. For the time being it's a theoretical phase. The next step is to actually perform the strategy.

What I want to stress is that education and training is possible inside the prison, the problem is the financing.

### 3. Community planning – presentation and discussion

The methods and aims of community planning in Opava were presented.

The Community plan (2008-2010) was approved in December 2008 by the municipality after an important consultation process. 5 different Groups meet once a month, they focus on different groups

- care for children and family 15 to 18 years, endangered children, handicapped children, etc...
- Care for persons with specific social problems.
- Care for national minorities
- Care for senior citizens (over 65)
- Care for persons with special needs, including re-offending persons

The financial allocation for the community planning in Opava is 300.000 Czech Crowns. (12.000€). 10% of this Budget comes from Opava municipality. The rest is EU regional funds and national budget.

The presentation then gave insight on projects and illustration with examples. The main problem is access to housing. A second community Plan will be implemented in 2012-2015.

### Questions/Answers

#### **How is the community planning activity linked with prevention of re-offending ?**

The strategy used in community planning has links with prevention of re-offending because we work on the same target groups. Community planning has to be seen as a basis, we are still doing some diplomatic work. Our goal is to persuade local government to engage in this solution, community planning is a way to get over the rivalry of central and local governments. Today, relations are complicated: the approaches to some problems are different in local government.

#### **Communication seems to have an important place in the project?**

As project managers, we have different tools to communicate. We need to be very persuasive to have private funding, and there are very willing companies. They see it as a part of their activities. Citizen should also not look at ex-prisoners as crime committing persons, but should see them as neighbours, normal persons. The convicted persons need to know that other persons see them as normal citizen.

### 4. Work of probation officer in Opava and Czech Rep

The probation officer has the task of a social worker: to put in place positive relationship with the clients and offer clients alternative strategies. He can help the client to make contact with social environment, trying to eliminate the “social gap”.

The probation officer implements psychological activities in order to restore relation between client and society. He can negotiate on behalf of the client, he can assist on request in

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negotiations; he can decide to put in place emergency help, he is authorized to pay for the client. He can give basic social counselling, information to solve adverse living conditions; intermediates contacts will social welfare services, give law advice...

Concerning prevention of re-offending, addressing the "first day crisis" is important to limit the risk of re-offending. The officer works with personal data that are sensible. He can transmit them via an electronic system. He has a role of link between the prison and the social services that work outside the prison: health services, employment bureau, municipal services.

<b>Questions/Answers</b>
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**The probation officer is the perfect transition manager between the inside and outside. Who is coordinating this work of the travel map?**

100 persons come back to Opava after a stay in prison. The consultation with the probation officer is voluntary: 90 persons really visit the probation officer. Some only come once for the first meeting and never again, some follow the cooperation a longer time.

**What are you doing with the statistical data? Who do you give it to?**

The statistical bureau gives the data to the ministry of social affairs.

**How long is the accompaniment process? Do you find accompaniment successful?**

The cooperation process with clients is voluntary. When they are willing to cooperate, the outcome can be good. Concerning housing or employment, we have no statistical data on the success of measures. If the client wants to give feedback then we have evidence, but he is not obliged to do so.

**What do you expect for future of the memorandum?**

The Employment Bureau and probation officer work together often, we have good relations. The memorandum has improved the general awareness of available information, it gives impulse on mutual cooperation. With the travel map, the client can be transported easily between institutions. The aim is to improve the work done with the clients.

<b>5. Contract between state police, Opava district and Opava local police</b>
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The presentation focused on the coordination between state police and municipal police. This coordination is fixed by contract: basically, the intervention will be given to the police force that arrives first on the scene. There are 65 agents of municipal police, plus two civilians and 96 agents of national police, plus two civilians.

On Fridays and Saturdays nights we do joined patrols: these nights are the most complicated because of alcohol related issues.

There is a good coordination of police forces on this aspect; the contract says who will patrol which area of the city. Our missions are totally joined.

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We have a great chance in Opava, we invite to the meetings the national police partners and they actually come since 2008. A common strategy has been put in place concerning media coverage, and it functions well. When the police forces reach some success, the media fallout must be common. A common media policy is fundamental.

<b>Questions/Answers/Conclusions of the meeting</b>
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**Ms Roxana Calfa**, EFUS project manager: There is a good communication strategy in the project, and that is very important. It's a good point for the project evaluation. Negative point is the lack of an existing time frame and indicators.

**Mr Jaroslav MACHOVSKY**, Opava International relations Officer To implement indicators before finding partners is too difficult. You have to remember that there is a 20 years difference between France and Czech Republic. We decided not to put indicators so as not to put out potential partners. After partnerships are all signed we will put indicators in place.

**Mr Richard SZOTOWSKI**, Head of the municipal Police : These last three months, we have worked with the municipality on the basis of this action plan. The problem today is the lack of funding. If the project is approved by the leaders of the council, we will get funding, but it has to be said, that in a context of crisis, the priority today lays in housing issues rather than prevention of re-offending.

We have a Strategy, and we need the political support to persuade the leaders of council that re-offending is a problem that they should focus on. Persuade them that using money on this matter is important. This situation is described in the Strategy, but we have political difficulties. The political situation in the Czech Republic is complex at the moment, there will be elections soon, and means everything stops for a while.

**Mr Jaroslav MACHOVSKY**: This is too pessimistic. The problem is lack of funding, but there is no political blockage. I am confident that we will have money next year.

**Mr Siegfried Löprick**, Göttingen: For me, the memorandum is an important step, it's a good achievement. I think that the main task relies on the so called "probation officer": he has to work on prevention of re-offending.

**Mr Jaroslav MACHOVSKY**: Yes it's an achievement. The memorandum says "we want to work together on this project". The network is created, the cooperation processes have begun. One year ago, the situation was different, it's hard to measure today, but we that live here, we see the difference every day.