



FORMAT FOR PROJECT'S DESCRIPTION

The described project belongs with the topic:

- Domestic violence
- Public private partnership
- Young prolific offenders¹

MEMBERSTATE: Slovakia

NAME OF THE PROJECT: Lowering the threshold for youth

IN USE SINCE: 2002

INFO ON THE WEB: www.nadacianms.sk

INFORMANT FOR THE NETWORK: Ms. Zuzana Behrikova, programme coordinator of the Slovak Youth Foundation, Ms. Rut Erdelyiova, Jr.,

ADDRESS: Nadacia mladeze Slovenska, Prazska 11, 831 03 Bratislava, Slovakia

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 004521 / 905 772 447
00421/2/ 57 297 118

Please answer the questions on the following pages in English and in no more than the given six pages. This way the information will be as comparable as possible.

To process your contribution, we ask you to return the completed form by e-mail no later than October 1st.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact:

Ms Nadia van den Berg
Ministry of Justice
The Netherlands

E-mail n.van.den.berg@minjus.nl

We look forward to receiving your best practice!

¹ Please tick the appropriate topic.



PROBLEM (intelligence)

Give a short description of the problem?

Slovakia has inherited a legacy from the communist regime: prefabricated housing estates designed for working class families, usually located in larger towns. These housing estates have become notorious for their problems with youth delinquency, high rates of unemployment and crime in general. Projects targetting crime based on repression and high police presence have proven only partially effective and very costly. The housing estates provide little more but low standard housing and few opportunities for effective and stimulating free time activities, that would help keep the young people from engaging into criminal activities.

Since when is it a problem?

The system of after-school care failed to address the needs of children and youngsters, who are unable to take advantage of highly structured activities offered by relevant institutions for continually rising tuition, since revolution in 1989. Inability to take advantage of these services is usually due to economic, cultural and social problems.

Is it possible to give any data regarding the problem?

According to estimates, 90 percent of the Slovak population in school age are not involved in any structured free time activity or program. The number of unemployed young people is the second highest out of the EU member states. Only in the past 3 month, minors committed over 1600 crimes.

Describe the type of offenders?

The young offenders are most typically involved in destruction of public property, theft, robbery, dealing with illegal substances, violent crimes and prostitution.

What is their modus operandi?

They usually form informal groups and engage in criminal activities in their free time within the vicinity of their home communities. All social classes are affected, with highest crime rates reported from socially secluded communities, low income housing estates and inner cities.

Who are the victims?

The victims are the young people themselves, deprived of a safe and stimulating environment, left alone with their unmet needs and problems. In turn, their victims are usually other vulnerable groups, including their peers, the elderly, ethnic minorities as well as the public in general, in the case of destruction to public property.

What are the causes?

Young people have limited access to services addressing their current needs. High unemployment rates, lack of accessible after-school programmes, social exclusion based on ethnicity (esp. the Roma), exposure to drugs and alcohol and low socio-economic status contribute to the high occurrence of crimes committed by and against young people in Slovakia.

Do's

- involvement of partners at different level, including local NGOs, selfgovernment and other relevant service providers is a crucial precondition for success at solving problems related to crime
- participation of the communities concerned already at the stage of SWOT analysis and problem identification is crucial for the realisation of preventive programmes
- asking the final recipients of the assistance about what they themselves see as the problems that need to be addressed, while respecting the sociocultural reality of the recipient community improves effectiveness of intervention

Dont's

prevention strategies implemented from outside of the community have failed.



WHAT (intervention)

Give a short description of the project.

In order to address the needs of the children and young people within the context of their home communities a program was established at a local level. The project consists of the creation of low threshold youth centres, located in a specific communities, which provide a combination of interesting free time activities combined with professional social services and counselling with emphasis on crime prevention, designed with the aim to eliminate all obstacles usually preventing access of young people to necessary services. The services are fully adjusted to the specific needs of the clients and are provided free of charge.

What is the short, medium and long term objective of the project?

The short term objective was to provide a safe space for young people within the context of their home communities, where they can enjoy a stimulating environment, form safe relationships with adults and receive a variety of social services adjusted to their needs. The long term is focusing on crime prevention, development of community youth work.

What are the activities in the project?

The project established a network of open clubs in marginal communities all over the country, created conditions for their development, launched a sustainable educational programme for their staff and an informational campaign and opened a platform for private and public institutions to join in a support.

Is the project to address

- situational
- offender or
- victim

orientated causes? Namely,

providing services to actual and potential youth perpetrators of crime, as well as to actual and potential victims among the children and young people of the community. The project is adapted to the needs of its clients and thus every club established within the program is unique.

Do's

- An indepth SWOT analysis has been carried out at the planning stage in order to identify problems, perceived as burdensome by the potential recipients of the services. These were given priority over problems perceived by authorities and evaluation has shown that by addressing current needs we were able to influence many of the crime related problems seen as most prevalent
- While creating a safe space for youngsters it has proven to be crucial to provide space for client initiative but also an unstructured environment where the youngsters can just rest inside a safe space without being involved in structured activities. This has proven a great success.

Dont's

- The unnecessary registration of clients names and insignia is contraproductive in preventive programmes of this type
- Anything beyond the most basic rules necessary for ensuring safety of clients has been considered as an obstacle by clients, decreasing their willingness to use provided services



HOW (implementation)

Give a short description of the history of the project?

The project was introduced after a SWOT analysis in 2003. Info seminars were conducted all over the country, introducing the low threshold philosophy and partnerships formed with governmental and private institutions to prepare support services to the new centres. Then a grant programme was launched, with 63 projects registered in the first round. Ten centres were established within the 03 programme, with six centres following in 2004. An educational programme for their staff was launched. Local selfgovernments and other public and private institutions got involved in their further development.

Is there a projectplan?

Programm was introduced in 2003, final phase planned for 06, and has offered support to youth organisations who are willing to adopt the project philosophy and provide this type of services. They could present projects and receive financial and educational support to establish a low-threshold centre for youngsters at risk in a given community.

How is the project customised for the local situation and context?

Each centre is designed with the assistance of its future clients according to their needs. It is based in their home community, provides accessible services including street work which are designed to reflect the local needs and socio-cultural situation. The services are delivered by trusted NGOs known and valued by the communities.

Do's

- Public-private partnerships present one of the most important pillars in the course of introduction of new preventive systems. They are crucial for the establishment of multi-source financing, dissemination of information through various channels and provision of inter-institutional support necessary for the functioning of services operating in the community context.
- Involvement of local youth organisations, active in individual communities, as the institutions responsible for the operation of the centres has proven a great success. They already enjoyed the trust of the community, knew its problems, and given the necessary means found creative ways of addressing them.

Dont's

- The involvement on partners has to be carefully planned and harmonised with respect to the clients using the services, so that their presence and involvement is not considered threatening by clients and their families. This is especially the case with the media presence, which has to be harmonised with the needs and rights of the clients.



WHO (involvement)

Which –both public and private- partners are involved in each fase of the project?

The planning phase included public authorities and NGO oriented on youth. Implementation included non-governmental youth organisations and civic associations, self-governments, governmental institutions and a private foundations. Media has been actively involved in the info campaign and promotion of the philosophy of the programmes and of the individual centres.

What role and task does each partner have?

The Slovak Youth Foundation has created the programme and defined the implementation plan. It provides funds for the establishment and development of the centres.

The selfgovernments usually provide premises to the centres, help with specific needs and get involved in support networks and actively participate on the educational programme.

Who gave the input on the know-how?

The Slovak Youth Foundation has drown upon experiences from various countries, creating a programe adjusted to the sociocultural realities of Slovakia. The know-how has been transformed into standard methodology in cooperation with experts and the staff of the centres, providing the services and is now the basis of a long-term educ. programme.

How is the project financed?

Currently the project is being mainly funded by the Slovak Youth Foundation, which provides funds for the establishment and development of the low-threshold centres. The educational programme for their staff is financed from the EU Grant scheme for human resources development through the Slovak Ministry of Education.

Did the project effect them who it was ment to, or also others?

The centres attracted a wide variety of clients, an they are facing a demand exceeding their capacity. They found a way of answering needs of clients and entire communities. Especially in socially secluded areas they managed to provide a much needed alternative to the reality of apathy and crime. The positive resaults are attracting new partners.

Do's

- The wider the support network is, the easier it is to introduce a new service. It is important to involve natural stakeholders of a community in order to increase the status of the new service providers at the beginning.
- It has proven effective to provide financial and other forms of support at the same time. The involvement of partners in the development of individ. centres and the knowhow has served to reinforce their engagement in the project.
- The partnerships have proven to be crucial.

Dont's

- The involvement of repressive authorities (like the police) had an adverse effect on clients in some situations, and now is planned very carefully together with the youngters so their intimidation would be avoided.



EFFECT (impact)

Has the project been evaluated?

Continual monitoring of the project implementation is carried out by several institutions. On the level of the educational programme, it is carried out by the Slovak Ministry of Education. The development and quality of services provided by the individual centres are monitored by the Slovak Youth Foundations and the local selfgovernments.

What was evaluated?

Subject to evaluation is the relevance of the project philosophy in regard to the needs and its effectiveness in crime prevention, the quality of provided services, the methodology of services provision and the continual development of support networks enhancing the stability of the services in specific communities.

At what stage did the evaluation take place?

Evaluation is taking place at several levels, monitoring and evaluating several aspects, and since the program implementation is planned for another 3 years, it is continual and will be completed at the final stage of the project realisation.

Who did the evaluation?

The monitoring and evaluation of individual centres is carried out by the monitoring team of the Slovak Youth Foundation. The educational program is evaluated by the Slovak Ministry of Education. The issues related to crime prevention are monitored by local police offices.

What are the results?

16 centres have been established in two years, providing services to 2600 vulnerable minors. A partnerhips network was created, involving a range of support organisations. In specific communities, a significant decrease in school drouts and a decrease in the number of conflicts generated by youngsters (dealt with by the police) was recorded.

Are the goals of the project achieved?

The short-term goal of providing an effective alternative service to the young people, addressing their specific needs and contributing to crime prevention has been met. The proof lies in the successful multiplication of the system in many different communities, the number of clients and the positive benefits declared by the home communities.

Do's

- It has proved productive to involve the recipients of the services in the evaluation of their quality.
- The fact that the recipients define the scope of the services themselves within the context of their needs has had a great impact on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Dont's

- It is a mistake to expect immediate results in terms of crime reduction, without adressing specific needs of the local population