

Study visit PROSTOR PRO Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

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"Collaboration of schools and street work"



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PREFACE

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

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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 rich¹ 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.

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

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

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 made². 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.

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.

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

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 responsibility 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 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 appropriate 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 maternity 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.

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 trust³.

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
- 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.

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.

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 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.
- 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.

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.