

*Spring Exchange 2008*

*29 May – 7 June 2008*

*Theme “Residents with unacceptable behaviour”*

Slovak Republic

Toolkit for the participants

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Day 1, 31st of May 2008

I arrived with my Belgian colleague about 14.00 hrs in Kosice airport. We were met there by employees of an NGO called the Goodwill Society and the director of the Humenné reception centre who had arranged our housing. From the airport we went first at the NGO Goodwill's office in Kosice and they offered us welcome refreshments after our journey. One hour later we left for Humenné (+/- 110 km). On the way, we stopped at a restaurant for our supper. We arrived at the Humenné centre at about 20.00 hrs and were briefly shown around.

Day 2 – 3, 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2008

On day 2 - 3, we were given a tour of the Humenné reception centre by the director Mr. Jan LASKODY and met with the staff. We were offered to join in all the aspects of the work and if possible, we did.

The Humenné camp is a reception centre, the first camp for refugees and foreigners who have applied for asylum. The centre is a facility of the Migration Bureau of Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic. On arrival at the centre, applicants are registered, photographed, given an initial interview and issued an asylum applicant identity card. In the centre, the applicant receives food and accommodation free of charge.

The applicant must abide by internal regulations. The applicant may leave the centre only after receiving a positive health check result, after ending quarantine (+/- 1 month, generally 21 days) and when spaces are available in open residence centres. The Humenné centre, the first reception centre, is a closed detention centre (during the quarantine). The asylum seeker is not allowed to go out of the centre during the quarantine, after which he can request a pass to leave the centre for 3 hours until the transfer to the open center. Exceptions can be made up to a period of 24 hours maximum.

The capacity of the centre : 524 places

Occupation during our visit: +/- 50 asylum seekers

The staff:

- 3 social assistants employees of the Migration office of Ministry of interior. Their work is exclusively administrative work and they are under the responsibility of the coordinator of the social team who is also an employee of the Migration Office.
- 1 employee of the Migration office who works only on registration of newcomers.
- Medical team (1 doctor + 1 nurse) also employee of Migration Office.

The daily social accompaniment for the residents is provided by 5 social workers employees of an N.G.O "Society of Goodwill". The NGO receives financial subsidies from the European

Refugee Fund via the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. The NGO signs a renewable contract annually with the Interior Ministry. The NGO has a President Mrs. Iveta LIBERKOVA, a director manager Mr. Julius Tasko, lawyers: Lenka PASARCIKOVA, KATARINA, HAMID Omed. The NGO also has one psychologist / psychiatrist at their service.

The NGO provides legal counselling, psychological assistance and limited medical assistance (for example: glasses, orthopaedic equipment) to asylum seekers free of charge.

The legal counselling provided by the NGO consists of:

- legal counselling of the initial asylum procedure (in front of the Migration Office), legal advice before the interview with the worker of the Migration Office, information about the asylum seeker's rights and obligations in asylum procedure and information about subsidiary protection.
- Assistance in writing an appeal against the decision of the Migration Office (decision regarding the denial of asylum or subsidiary protection) or legal representation in the appeal procedure at Regional Court in Kosice or Bratislava.
- Assistance in writing the appeal against the negative decision of the Regional Court or legal representation in the appeal procedure at the Supreme Court of Slovak Republic
- The NGO's lawyers can be present at the interview with the employee of the Migration Office or represent the asylum seeker for the whole procedure.
- Legal counselling in case of family reunification.
- Other legal help in questions connected with asylum procedure.

The asylum seeker can claim legal assistance of a lawyer of his own choosing.

### **On House Rules**

The Ministry of Interior has issued house rules which asylum seekers need to sign and uphold in order to receive accommodation within the reception and/or accommodation centres.

The house rules to be signed by the asylum seeker are legally binding. It is an official Act, common for all reception centres within the Slovak Republic.

Before signing, the house rules are read by the new admitted asylum seeker in his own language or are translated by an interpreter to the asylum seeker. The original house rules in the Slovak language need to be signed. A multilingual copy is available and is given to asylum seekers.

### **Consequences (in case of braking the house rules)**

In the instance house rules are not respected, the social workers from the Migration Office can administer consequences by giving verbal warnings or reducing the amount of pocket money the asylum seeker receives normally. (The monthly allowance is approximately 12 Euros).

The asylum seeker can not appeal to this consequence. The notification of the financial deduction is an official document issued by the Migration Office.

### **On Unacceptable behaviour.**

After speaking with colleagues from the NGO Society of Good Will, it appears they use the same terminology to describe unacceptable behaviour as we do in the Netherlands. Every action which disrupts the normal life in the centre is deemed unacceptable behaviour. This ranges from aggression to a lack respect for personal hygiene, to a lack of cooperation and all behaviour that limits the quality of life of the centre and/or the life of the individual asylum seeker. Some colleagues from the Migration Office shared that where they cannot deal

with the situation through consequences, whether it be an act of aggression and/or psychiatric problems, for example, they redirect such asylum seekers towards a doctor or police outside of the center.

Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with by meeting initially with the social worker, consulting and/or intervention by the psychologist present (in service of the NGO Society of Good Will) and in the case of severe aggression, the assistance of police. Prevention is done (and done well) by the social workers on the ground (mostly Good Will) since they are in permanent contact with the asylum seekers. They are the ones most involved in the daily activities with the asylum seekers and are in the best position to signal problems when they arise. Their position also provides them with the possibility to provide psychological and medical assistance.

Groups of asylum seekers presenting unacceptable behaviour towards one other are separated in different accommodation centres and can also be given a fine for their behaviour.

Unacceptable behaviour are usually ethnic and/or culturally based. For example: former Russian Republics refugees sharing the toilet or kitchen with people from India often leads to misunderstanding about proper hygiene practices.

Unacceptable behaviour is categorized and often relates to cultural, ethnical, drug or/and alcohol related and psychiatric problems.

Special facilities or arrangements are limited for addressing unacceptable behaviour. The Migration Office does not provide for special arrangements, nor is the NGO Good Will Society able to do so. However, the NGO Goodwill Society seems to do a very good job in preventing unacceptable behaviour and coaching refugees that do show unacceptable behaviour.

Social workers from the Good Will Society are with the refugees from 7.30am to 22:00 pm. An independent psychologist is at their service. Social workers from the Migration Office are supposed to be aware of problems as well, but, since their job is much more administrative, they seem to have less opportunity to observe and intervene as the social workers of the NGO Good Will Society do. Their regular work hours are limited to Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 17:00 pm. NGO Good Will Society's social workers also need to have a university degree in social work to be hired for this job. The Migration Office does not require formal social work training in its hiring process for its social workers.

Between 22:00 pm and 7:30 am, a private security service guards the center and their job is to notify the director, the ambulance or the police if there is a problem.

## **On Training**

I do not believe that the employees (in service of the Migration Office) at the centres are well trained when it comes to social, ethnic and behaviour problems. The only actions taken presently are to talk with the individuals involved in the unacceptable behaviour. For grave situations, the NGO Goodwill Society social workers contact the social workers from the Migration Office and a formal decision is made by them with respect the deduction of their monthly allowance. In the case of violent altercations, the security guards contracted to guard the center call the police. This command and control mentality is the method used to maintain the security and control of the center . Other methods of dissuading unacceptable behaviour are not as well developed. The security guards have no social work training whatsoever. The staff are also not well supported to debrief and cope with difficult behavioural situations. It is my opinion that the personnel of the Society of Good Will is better trained. Incidents and observation moments are debriefed and feedback by colleagues is given, often supervised by Mrs. Liberkova and Mr. Tasko. It is my observation that the Good Will employees, Social Workers in particular, have a broad range of professional behaviour to intervene towards the

asylum seekers present. However, there is a lack of methodical 'Rules of Engagement' within the Social Work. Most interventions in Social Work I witnessed are based on Tacid Knowledge.

### **Client Information**

Client files comprise information gathered in formal interviews and also information gathered from the Goodwill Society social workers informal interaction with asylum seekers. Also, information gathered through a psychologist or a doctor has to be transmitted to the responsible Migration Office social worker.

### **Unaccompanied Minors**

There is no formal strategy for addressing the particular needs of unaccompanied minors in the Slovak Republic. There are organizations such as the Goodwill Society that are attempting to advocate for unaccompanied minors but so far these advocacy measures have not produced any changes.

Day 4, 4th of June 2008

### **Visit to Opatovska Center**

This was an open accommodation center, specializing in the reception of families with children. This center has a capacity of 150 persons. When we visited, only 23 individuals were living at the center. Of the 23 persons there, there were 3 families with children and the rest were single men.

Like all other centres in the country, this center is under the administration of the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior.

Day 5, 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2008

### **Visit to the Schengen Border**

I was able to see the way that border security is maintained and how individuals are caught in their attempt to cross the border illegally. We learned that many of those trying to get into the country were doing so in order to end up in other countries and were therefore using it as a point of transit to Austria, Belgium, Germany, Holland, England... Very very few individuals desire to stay in Slovakia.

Day 6, 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2008

### **Visit to the Tatra Mountain**

This was a day to relax and network with other social workers, they were so kind to show us a piece of Slovak culture and nature which we enjoyed very much.

Day 7, 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2008

### **Depart**

The end already of an interesting, sometimes challenging but always satisfying week of good work with our Slovakian colleagues. We will meet again and definitively stay in touch with each other.

**Staff Training for dealing with unacceptable behaviour**

Title	Not observed
Type of training:(soft skills, hard skills, coaching)	Not observed
Short description	Not observed
Material available: handbook, training manual, exercises, video etc.	Not observed
Contact person or organization	Contact not made

*Attachment to the Enaro Spring Exchange report 2008*

***On Unacceptable behaviour***

***Definition on Unacceptable Behaviour.***

It is my experience the Slovak colleagues have the same definition as my Dutch and Belgium colleagues do. Broadly every behaviour that intervenes and / or endangers the centre life is considered unacceptable. This ranges from aggression to a lack respect for personal hygiene, to a lack of cooperation any and all behaviour that limits the quality of life of the centre and/or the life of the individual asylum seeker.

**How to deal with U.B.**

U.B. is dealt with in the most adequate way possible for the facilities and employees. NGO social workers verbally intervene and offer mental support. In situation of fysical aggression police intervenes.

**Identification of U.B.**

U.B. is identified mostly by the NGO social workers as they monitor the asylum seekers troughout their stay. It can be identified as tension between ethnical groups, it can be an individual locking him / herself in the room, it can be acts of direct verbal or fysical aggression towards staff or asylum seekers.

**Special facilities and / or arrangements.**

Special facilities on coaching and / or assisting in the reception of asylum seekers with unaccaptable behaviour does not exist within the Slovakian Republic. Arrangements taken are transfers to another centre when possible.

## *Staff*

Staff is divided in the personell of the migration office and the personell in service of the NGO Society of Good Will. Social workers for the migration office do not require specialized training in order to achieve their position. NGO personell however have a university degree in social work, psychology or similar social – psychological studies.

## *Client information*

On each asylum seeker the reception centre keeps a file wich follows the asylum seeker from reception centre to reception centre. The officers and social workers for the migration office update the file on a frequent base. Social workers for the Society of Good Will are to pass any knowledge they have to the migration office personell but are not entiteld to get new information in return.

## *Good Practice*

The migration office seem to tolerate very little in unacceptable behaviour. Police quickly intervenes and as such I have no examples on interventions personell have made on unacceptable behaviour.

I did witness projects were asylum seekers did work on the centres ground: painting pictures on the centres wall; working as a carpenter refurbishing the centre etc. These projects try to bind the asylum seeker to his current centre. Having something to do and having a comitment to the centre limits the need for unacceptable behaviour.