

ODYSEUS

CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY

K2 CENTRE – CONTACT WITH COMMUNITY

One of the most famous neighbourhoods in Bratislava. Pentagon on Stavbárska street. It is known for open drug scene and mess. The Odysseus civic association has been carrying out outreach work in this area since 2001. Once in a week, C.A. Odysseus has been providing syringe exchange and professional help for people who use drugs. However, problems between users, Pentagon residents and police escalated. It was necessary to create a dialogue between the parties and look for solutions to problems in the Pentagon, which concerned everyone. C.A. Odysseus also realized that operating in Pentagon one a week is not enough for a comprehensive solution to the problem. Therefore, thanks to the centre it gets closer to the community and can participate in improving the living conditions and security of everyone in the Pentagon.

Harm reduction services in Slovakia are facing endangerment. At present, three organizations of this type operate in western Slovakia. Central and Eastern Slovakia are without coverage. There is no systematic funding of such programs. In this context such success is even bigger. Within the center, Odysseus can operate on the Pentagon 4 times a week, disposes of 3 times more needles per month, and provides 4 times more expert consultations compared to pre-centre period.

What is innovative about this project is its engagement and cooperation with the wider community. Odysseus cooperates not only with people who use drugs, but also with residents and the city. The active and, above all, meaningful engagement of drug users themselves in solving Pentagon problems is also key. Drug users regularly clean the Pentagon area and also work as community volunteers distributing sterile syringes and other medical supplies at times when the center is closed and they are educated by the Odysseus team. C.A. Odysseus tries to directly employ people from the community and currently Odysseus employs 2 people from the community.

OBJECTIVE

To protect public health and to improve the quality of life in the Pentagon.

PARTIAL GOALS

- To build a cooperation between all mentioned parties.
- To contribute to the social integration of people who use drugs into society
- To engage actively the target group in problem solving

KEY POINTS

1. Innovation of the Project Idea – New Dimension

- **Expansion of services – not only for people who use drugs but also for the wider community – cooperation with the Pentagon residents and the representatives of the city district.**
- We have moved from outreach work to social work in the centre - greater opportunity for individual approach, development of social and psychological counseling.
- Developing the idea of community organizing in the centre.
- We are the only one who deals with the social aspects of the problems in Pentagon.
- We are working with a stigmatized group of people who have media attention but little political interest.

2. Innovation in approach to target groups - Engagement

- **Meaningful engagement of the drug users community in improving the quality of life in Pentagon.**
- Burying preconceptions, showing a stigmatized group in positive light by their engagement.
- Engaging all participated sides – an effort to create mutual dialogue.

3. Innovation in the way of implementation - Efficiency

- **Collaboration with Pentagon residents, the representatives of the city district and drug users themselves.**
- Working in the natural environment of the target group - the ability to contact more people.
- C.A. Odysseus is the only one who removes infectious waste in this locality.
- Expansion of the team by professionals from other professions.
- Training a team to meet the specific needs of the client.
- Education of the community of people who use drugs.

4. Innovation in Public Perception – Innovation as an Example or Pattern

- Odysseus cooperates with the organization Zelená hliadka, which has supplied trash bins to Odysseus.
- Informing about the activities of the centre using various channels - groups on Facebook, Odysseus's facebook page, posters, personal invitations to the Pentagon residents for discussion, door knocking and so on.

FINANCING

The K2 centre is operating in the Bratislava residential area on Stavbarska street under the project - Developing the measures focusing on drug and other addiction. This project is funded by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund under the Human Resources Operational Program. Also, the project is supported by a 2% tax asigination, thanks to foundations and individual donors and donations.



Collaboration with the Pentagon residents and the representatives of the city district

Odyseus actively cooperates with the Pentagon residents and the city. With the Pentagon's inhabitants, Odyseus actively picked up incentives to improve the Pentagon situation, personally invited them to a discussion, and there is also the opportunity to provide the center once a week for the Pentagon residents. With the city C.A. Odyseus works to solve problems and participates in the implementation of projects initiated by the city part, for example the launch of community patrols. One of the visions is to involve the city district in a long-term problem solving such as high occurrence of used syringes in the neighbourhood. Currently OZ Odyseus is negotiating with the city district representatives about the introduction of trash cans for used syringes.

Organizing facilitated discussions with Pentagon residents

During 2017 Odyseus managed to organize 2 facilitated discussions for the Pentagon residents, gathering incentives to improve the quality of life on Pentagon. At the organization of the second discussion, Odyseus also cooperated with the mayor of the city district.

Solving problems arising from the first discussion with the people

The collected stimuli from the Pentagon residents are also being addressed systematically by Odyseus. One of the stimuli was also the complete absence of trash bins in the area. Odyseus, in cooperation with the organization Zelená hliadka, has installed 2 trash bins in the area that are handled by drug users. Odyseus also negotiates with the city district representatives about the introduction of the trash bins for used syringes and the launching of community patrols.

Engagement of drug users as community volunteers

Odyseus works with 3 volunteers from the community who are regularly educated and provided by medical supplies and syringes for distribution to people who for some reason can not use the services of the centre and when the centre is not open. At the same time, together with the material, community volunteers are also able to provide advice and information to other drug users. In the future Odyseus plans to involve drug users into community patrols that will contribute to increasing security in the Pentagon. At present, Odyseus is working on preparation of the methodology in cooperation with the city district and is planning a pilot project.

Intensification of the cleaning in the Pentagon by drug users

Thanks to the centre, Odyseus has the opportunity to more actively involve drug users in cleaning the Pentagon. Before the opening of the centre, cleaning was organized once every 2 months, currently there is an organised cleaning of the area on a weekly basis. Clients are rewarded with purchase vouchers.

Needle exchange, distribution of medical supplies and provision of social and psychological counseling

Medical supplies and sterile syringes are often the first reason why our clients are searching for us. Sterile syringes and medical supplies are important for the health protection of not only drug users but also the whole society. Thanks to the material, workers in the centre can build a relationship with the target group and provide them with expert advice. The centre also offers the possibility of accompanying to medical facilities and assistance in obtaining documents, there is the possibility to write a resume, to solve exactions and debts or to use help finding accommodation. With the center, clients have more room to solve their problems that prevent them from social inclusion. Thanks to the centre Odyseus disposes 11 468 used syringes and provides 72 expert consultations monthly in Pentagon.