

# THE LOCAL HELP NETWORK TO THE HOMELESS: CASE STUDY OF THE CITY OF KOPER, SLOVENIA

## LOKALNA MREŽA POMOČI BREZDOMNIM: PRIKAZ PRIMERA MESTA KOPER, SLOVENIJA

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### Abstract

**Aim:** To present the work of professionals and volunteers of the local help network that revolves around trying to help the homeless and to stimulate readers to critically assess the possible methods aimed towards the successful integration of those people into society.

**Methods:** In the city of Koper, we visited five governmental (GOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Red Cross Koper, Daybreak Association, Center for Social Work Koper, Diocesan Caritas Koper and Koper Prison; and interviewed 3-10 staff members at each organisation.

**Results:** For each organisation, we described its duties and activities, including its interconnection with other organisations, methods of integrating the homeless into the society and the personal thoughts of its staff members.

**Conclusions:** Both GOs and NGOs are necessary for providing effective assistance to people in need. NGOs excel at quickly responding to immediate needs. Their programs are usually implemented only as short-term resolutions. GOs on the other hand require a longer time to implement their concepts. Nonetheless, in contrast to NGO projects, they provide long-term stability. Even though people from remote parts of the society usually cooperate, the efforts of those who work with them are nothing short of exerting. They strive to achieve a general social acceptance of their ward population, which is the one thing those people need the most. Since only the society is truly capable of offering them a firm stepping stone towards escaping from the vicious circle in which they stray.

**Key words:** homelessness, social integration, support services, qualitative study

Izvirni znanstveni članek  
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### Izvleček

**Cilj:** Predstaviti delo strokovnega osebja in prostovoljcev lokalne mreže pomoči brezdomnim ter spodbuditi bralce h kritičnemu razmišljanju o mogočih načinih reševanja problema vključitve teh ljudi v družbo.

**Metode:** V Kopru smo obiskali pet vladnih in nevladnih organizacij: Rdeči križ Koper, Društvo Svít, Center za socialno delo Koper, Škofijsko Karitas Koper in Zavod za prestajanje kazni zapora Koper; pri vsaki organizaciji smo izvedli intervju z od 3 do 10 strokovnimi sodelavci ali prostovoljci.

**Rezultati:** Za vsako organizacijo smo opisali, katere naloge in dejavnosti opravlja, vključno s tem, kako se povezuje z drugimi organizacijami, kakšni so njeni načini vključitve brezdomnih v družbo ter kakšna so osebna opažanja njenega osebja o dejavnostih organizacije in uspešnosti dela, ki ga opravlja.

**Zaključki:** Vladne in nevladne organizacije so potrebne za učinkovito pomoč ljudem v stiski. Nevladne se odzovejo takoj; njihovi programi so ponavadi uporabljeni le kot kratkotrajne rešitve težav. Vladne organizacije pa se v primerjavi z nevladnimi odzovejo z zamikom; njihovi projekti z dlje časa trajajočim delovanjem ustvarjajo dolgotrajno stabilnost. Kljub sodelovanju ljudi iz obrobja družbe je delo posameznikov, ki z njimi delajo, zelo naporno in izčrpno. Stremijo k temu, da bi ogroženo populacijo družba bolje sprejela, kar je nekaj, kar ti ljudje najbolj potrebujejo. Samo družba je namreč tista, ki jim lahko nudi učinkovit izhod iz začaranega kroga, v katerem blodijo.

**Ključne besede:** brezdomstvo, socialna integracija, podporne storitve, kvalitativna študija

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Every social system limits some people the access to important socioeconomic resources. It also denotes their feeble efforts to counter the abysmal luck as their own wrong decisions. Stressing the importance of one's own choices that direct the life of a poor man therefore equals uttermost blindness of the ignorant observer and a twisted understanding of the issue of homelessness [1].

The homeless are people without any economic possessions or a place of residence legally considered their own [2]. According to European Classification of homelessness (ETHOS, 2004), four fundamental categories of homelessness exist. Those are: a) shelterlessness / rooflessness (sleeping under the open sky), b) houselessness (sleeping rough or using public or private shelters), c) insecure housing (risk of houselessness) and d) living in concealed houselessness / inadequate housing (at a relative's or friend's place; applicable also to otherwise homeless inmates temporarily residing in a correctional facility) or substandard housing situations [3].

The first two categories represent visible or street homelessness. The second two categories fall into concealed or less visible homelessness. Distinguishing between the two forms and understanding them is of towering importance as concealed frequently leads to visible homelessness [1].

In Slovenia, the problem of homelessness does exist, and the government began facing the issue primarily after Slovenia's independence in 1991. Nonetheless, a negligible amount of reliable data concerning this topic exists [4, 5]. It is estimated that the occurrence of homelessness in the population is about 4-5 per 10000 [6]. With the economic crisis that has arisen in the last few years, the occurrence of new-found homelessness

began to increase rapidly. Unfortunately, according to FEANTSA – European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless – Slovenia is one of the EU members that has not yet begun to develop strategic policies regarding homelessness, and as such the services aimed at counteracting it are as of yet not well developed [5].

It is estimated that the concentration of homeless individuals [7] and families living in substandard conditions [8] on the coast of Slovenia is considerably higher than the national average. Concurrently, a relatively high number of different organisations, the work of which either focuses on or includes homeless individuals and families, is acting in this same geographical and organisational area (Koper - the main seaport of Slovenia, located near the border with Italy; population 50,700 in year 2008).

The goal of our study was to analyse all measures implemented by the help network to the homeless in the city of Koper, with the purpose of preparing solid methodological foundations for later evaluation of the effectiveness (results) of those measures.

## 2 METHODS

The study was designed as an ethnographic, qualitative study [9]. We analysed the work of the professional staff as well as volunteers of the local help network to the homeless in the city of Koper. We visited the network of organisations the work of which revolves around trying to help the homeless (and other people in need). The focus of our analysis was the duties and activities of each of these organisations.

We analysed 5 organisations that among other aims aspire to reintegrate homeless individuals back into the broader society (Table 1).

*Table 1. The five studied organisations.*

*Tabela 1. Pet v študiji preučenih organizacij.*

| Organisation/<br>Organizacija                 | Brief description/<br>Kratek opis                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Govern-<br>mental/<br>Državna | Parent<br>organisation/<br>Starševska<br>organizacija               | Funding/<br>Financiranje                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Staff/<br>Osebe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Red Cross<br>Koper (RCK)/<br>Rdeči križ Koper | central local institution to<br>which the homeless can<br>turn to for social help or<br>financial assistance/<br>centralna lokalna<br>inštitucija, na katero se<br>lahko brezdomni obrnejo<br>za socialno pomoč ali<br>finančno podporo | no/<br>ne                     | Red Cross<br>Association of<br>Slovenia/<br>Rdeči Križ<br>Slovenije | voluntary donations,<br>various activities and campaigns of<br>RCK are fundamentally supported<br>also by the Koper municipality/<br>prostovoljne donacije,<br>različne aktivnosti in kampanije<br>Rdečega Križa Koper so temeljno<br>podprte tudi s strani Mestne občine<br>Koper | one salaried regularly<br>employed activities and<br>finances organizer,<br>varying number of unpaid<br>volunteers/<br>en plačan, redno zaposlen<br>organizator aktivnosti in<br>financiranja,<br>spremenljivo število<br>neplačanih prostovoljcev |

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daybreak Association (Društvo Svit in slovenian; abbrev. Daybreak)/ Društvo Svit | independent humanitarian organization acting in the field of drug addiction since 1992/<br>neodvisna humanitarna organizacija, delujoča na področju odvisnosti od drog od leta 1992                                                                                                                                                            | no/<br>ne  | none/<br>nobena                                                                                                                                                                         | Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of health (80%),<br>Koper municipality (20%)/<br>Republika Slovenija, Ministrstvo za zdravje (80%),<br>Mestna občina Koper (20%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 6 regularly employed salaried main team members,<br>3 additional team members paid by the Employment Service of Slovenia (public works),<br>varying number of unpaid volunteers/<br><br>6 redno zaposlenih, plačanih članov glavne ekipe,<br>3 dodatni člani ekipe, plačani s strani Zavoda Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje (javna dela),<br>spremenljivo število neplačanih prostovoljcev |
| Center for Social Work Koper (CSWK)/<br>Center za socialno delo Koper            | organization that focuses on the abolishment of regional socioeconomic distress and execution of preventive measures aimed at diminution of the causation leading to it/<br>organizacija, ki se osredotoča na izkoreninjanje regionalnih socioekonomskih stisk ljudi ter izvršbo preventivnih ukrepov, usmerjenih v zmanjševanje vzrokov zanje | yes/<br>da | Republic of Slovenia,<br>Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities/<br>Republika Slovenija,<br>Ministrstvo za delo, družino, socialne zadeve in enake možnosti | parent organization/<br>starševska organizacija                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | varying number of administrative staff members and social workers/<br>spremenljivo število članov administrativnega osebja in socialnih delavcev                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Diocesan Caritas Koper (DCK)/<br>Škofijska Karitas Koper                         | regional Caritas unit with the mission of working to build a better world in any way necessary, especially for the poor and oppressed/<br>regionalna enota Karitasa, naloga katere je izgradnja boljšega sveta na kakršenkoli način, posebno za revne in zatirane                                                                              | no/<br>ne  | Caritas Internationalis/<br>Mednarodna Karitas                                                                                                                                          | direct financing from the Vatican, larger charity grants from governments of countries in which it acts,<br>lotteries and charity projects organized by various parties, smaller humanitarian donations from local sources (individuals, smaller companies)/<br>neposredno financiranje iz Vatikana,<br>večji dobrodelni skladi iz proračuna držav, kjer organizacija deluje, loterije in dobrodelni projekti, izvedeni s strani različnih organizatorjev,<br>manjše humanitarne donacije iz lokalnih virov (posamezniki, manjša podjetja) | varying number of Catholic church officials,<br>varying number of volunteers/<br>spremenljivo število uradnikov Katoliške cerkve,<br>spremenljivo število prostovoljcev                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Koper Prison (KP)/<br>Zapor Koper | national competent agency which executes the punishment of imprisonment, mainly specializing in economic sentences/<br>nacionalna kompetentna agencija, ki izvršuje kazni zapora, predvsem osredotočena na ekonomnske obsodbe | yes/<br>da | Republic of Slovenia,<br>Ministry of Justice/<br>Republika Slovenija,<br>Ministrstvo za pravosodje | parent organization/<br>starševska organizacija | varying number of staff members, comprising the: administrative staff, security personnel, kitchen staff, psychologists, social workers, medical cadre/<br>spremenljivo število članov osebja, vključujoč: administrativno osebje, varnostno osebje, zaposlene v kuhinji, psihologe, socialne delavce, medicinski kader |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 1: References – RCK [10], Daybreak [11], CSWK [12], DCK [13, 14, 15], KP [16, 17].

At each of the institutions, we orally interviewed from 3 to 10 hand-picked professional workers or volunteers whose work is directly related to the homeless under their jurisdiction and acquired information about: a) the duties and activities of each individual organisation, including its interconnection with other organisations, b) the organisation's methods of integrating the homeless into society, c) the personal thoughts and opinions of its staff regarding the duties they are attending to and d) the staff's personal opinions about how successful the organisation's methods of social reintegration are.

All interviews were semi-structured and conducted orally. The three article authors were the interviewers. At RCK, Daybreak and CSWK, all interviewees belonging to the same organisation were interviewed together, as a group. At DCK, Catholic church officials were interviewed together as one group and the volunteers as a second group due to the interviewees' timetable-related reasons. At KP, the warden, the security guards, the psychologists and the social workers were interviewed together as one group and the nurses together as a second group, because the nurses were attending to their duties during the course of the interview with the rest of the staff. Each group interview lasted from 1 to 1.5 hours, save for the interview with the nurses at KP, which lasted half an hour. All interviews took place during the period between May 2010 and March 2013.

Some technical information (number of employees, financing, etc.) was initially obtained from the organisations' web pages and/or advertising documentation. Later, during the course of the interviews, all data collected in this manner has been orally confirmed.

### 3 RESULTS

Overall, we interviewed 27 professional workers and volunteers. 3 at RCK (1 activities and finances organiser, 2 volunteers), 7 at Daybreak (3 regularly employed team members, 1 medical doctor volunteer, 3 other volunteers), 3 at CSWK (3 social workers), 4 at DCK (2 Catholic church officials, 2 volunteers) and 10 at KP (1 warden, 3 security guards, 2 nurses, 2 psychologists, 2 social workers).

#### 3.1 Duties and activities

##### 3.1.1 Red Cross Koper

RCK, as the local division of the Red Cross Association of Slovenia, strives to: a) contemplate the everyday life of the local population and actively react to existential needs and powerlessness to actively stand up to both the causes and the consequences leading to them, b) ensure collegiality and respect between numerous members of the utterly heterogeneous community and try to persuade them to see the mutual benefits arising from sharing a part of their own well-being with the people deprived of it, c) stimulate humane solidarity inside the organisation itself and build genuine understanding of the needs of others, d) propagate and reaffirm the social values, concentrating on health and a healthy lifestyle, e) continually introduce the carefully drafted-up education and training programs into the community to elicit an ever-growing response from the local population capable of offering their assistance and f) spread information regarding past accomplishments and future plans of the Red Cross in general and make people acquainted with international humanitarian law.



Every day, numerous volunteers visit the head office of RCK, showing their will to contribute to the ideas and activities of the organisation.

Each day during the winter months, a nearby inn provides freshly-prepared lunch, which could pride itself for being the only warm meal of the day, to large numbers of homeless men and women. Both the food and services are financed by RCK.

Some volunteers also work in the field, thoroughly inspecting the surrounding countryside of Koper, trying to stay ahead in keeping as accurate and as recent an evaluation as possible of the probability of near-future manifestation of the various stages of homelessness and the appearance of socially endangered individuals.

### 3.1.2 Daybreak Association

The goals of Daybreak are mostly focused on greater social integration of drug abusers. Nonetheless, it is the only organisation that actively offers assistance to homeless addicts, a part of the homeless population normally being eschewed by other humanitarian organisations.

### 3.1.3 Center for social work Koper

Professionals working at CSWK are in the business of catering for a wide selection of distinct types of individuals: children, youth, the elderly, homeless people, families and others who are subjected to various social, emotional, economic, health-related and similar hardships and in need of proper support.

Activities of the center are based on impartiality towards all members of the society and are aimed at ensuring the basic necessities of decent life for those in need and at lessening of detrimental consequences experienced as a result of social class change. Namely, most measures are primarily directed towards a select group of people the socioeconomic state of whom is doubtlessly soon about to plunge them into an even more dire situation.

The aid-providing programs are carried out by CSWK on three levels: 1) first-hand support to individuals and families in distress, 2) identification of the needs of the socioeconomically handicapped population and 3) voicing the needs of the outcast population in mass media and at the political level.

### 3.1.4 Diocesan Caritas Koper

DCK's program aimed at helping the homeless is a low-threshold program, primarily focused on people who have already been driven to the edge of existence into visible homelessness. Secondly, it is meant to assist individuals and families living in concealed homelessness. Tertiarily, volunteers working on the project offer help to those in any kind of material, psychosocial or spiritual distress.

One of the main goals of the project is to constantly adapt to the current predicaments people find

themselves in and as such always have the necessary resources at hand to immediately lessen at least some of the burden that comes with them. Hence, the main duties set forth by the project are: a) providing the homeless with lodging, food and basic hygiene facilities, b) giving basic psychosocial and spiritual support to people that have as a result of various circumstances found themselves isolated from the broader community, c) organising activities the focus of which is to provide unemployed or socially isolated individuals a meaningful way to spend their time, d) providing professional aid to those applying for national social benefits and e) spreading general knowledge regarding the issue and occurrence of homelessness as well as enlightening people about the material and social needs of homeless individuals.

The project's activities are carried out at the organisation's day center (Center Caritas Bertoki) and can be separated into three components: a) everyday component, b) hygienic component and c) informative-consultation component.

### 3.1.5 Koper Prison

KP provides non-voluntary residence to persons in temporary detention and to convicts with a prison sentence up to one year and a half, rarely more. The two groups of individuals are completely segregated. In addition, convicts are separated into three wards based on the nature of their offence and their psychological evaluation. The open ward houses individuals who can be trusted to function in the best interest of the collective and require very little supervision. The semi-open and closed wards on the other hand require a more strict security detail lead by deputy security chiefs.

They are encouraged to participate in voluntary maintenance work, cleaning and even holiday-time decoration, which all present them with certain bonuses.

KP houses a small industrial plant (JGZ Emboplast) that processes plastic masses and manufactures products by injection moulding. Prisoners from the open and semi-open wards are allowed to work at the plant and so earn some much needed credits.

Spiritual life is also not left out. The local catholic priest regularly visits KP and provides religious guidance and unofficial psychotherapeutic aid to all prisoners who require it, not depending on their religious beliefs.

KP also houses a general outpatient sickroom and a dental dispensary. Both are manned by doctors normally employed at the Community Health Center Koper and two nurses permanently working in KP. Thus, inmates are offered the exact same medical services as they would be as regular citizens; moreover, the nurses are also in charge of distributing medication throughout the prison, as per doctors' orders.

## **3.2 Methods of integrating the homeless into the society**

### **3.2.1 Red Cross Koper**

RCK gives out basic food packages such as flour, milk, sugar and macaroni to people on relief. The staple food is usually donated by larger grocery enterprises and by the national food reserves. RCK volunteers also sort out any donated clothes that may appear too worn or otherwise damaged.

Another method aiming to integrate the homeless into society is to slow the on-going progression from concealed to visible homelessness. This is accomplished by RCK volunteers who anonymously pay the bills of families living in substandard socioeconomic conditions, either regularly or on demand. The anonymity of the families that are afforded this form of assistance itself on the other hand also contributes to alleviation from otherwise certain stigmatisation, further potentiating the method's beneficial influence on social integration.

RCK officials are trying hard to successfully convince the Koper municipality to start organising a local safe house for "shelterless" families. It would serve as an effective sanctuary for families thrown out of their homes and onto the streets.

### **3.2.2 Daybreak Association**

Two main programs aimed at successful social integration of current and former drug abusers are being carried out by the Association: the low-threshold and the high-threshold rehabilitation program.

Any addict in need of assistance (mostly homeless individuals) can enter the low-threshold program, for which a specialised center provide its users with a sort of shelter, elementary lodging where they are able to eat up, wash, clean their clothes, change their babies' diapers or simply sit down for a while without submitting to the pain-inciting distractions of the biased outside world.

In order to be admitted into the high-threshold program, the candidate is required to be physiologically free of addiction to any substance, including methadone. Those who meet this criterion are conceded entry into one of the therapeutic communes based on the professional evaluation of the individual in question. In spite of the fact that therapeutic communes focus on drug addicts in general, proper lodging represents a more than welcome luxury for those among them who live on the streets.

### **3.2.3 Center for social work Koper**

By coordinating efforts with several other philanthropic organisations (RCK, Caritas, healthcare institutions, safe houses, communes) and organising their cooperative ventures, CSWK aims to inform local people in need of their basic right to social support. They acquaint them with the existing charitable

organisations and urge them to make good use of the upkeep possibilities that those institutions present.

CSWK's programs dealing with homeless people involve collaboration with RCK to provide those people with food and shelter. With mutual efforts, both organisations are striving to persuade the Koper municipality to invest in the construction of a crisis center that would be dedicated to providing immediate help to the homeless at times of food shortage and/or climatic extremes. If needed, it would also be used as a medical care facility for individuals lacking any kind of health insurance.

### **3.2.4 Diocesan Caritas Koper**

Social reintegration of the homeless is mostly accomplished by DCK's higher-threshold programs. Every individual included in one of these programs is encouraged to socialise, helped to find a job and constantly motivated into becoming self-sustaining and responsible for the course of their life, effectively transforming their homeless lifestyle into a more society-acceptable one.

Within availability of non-paid rooms or apartments (provided by various volunteers) or the scope of financial resources at DCK's disposal that can be used to pay rent, as many homeless individuals enrolled into one of these programs as possible are provided a temporary place of residence.

During the time enrolled, the homeless work with the help of DCK volunteers on seeking a permanent place of residence, obtaining one being one of the principal steps toward a successful social reintegration. Should they have become indebted during or before homelessness befell them, volunteers help them organise a way to pay off that debt by non-financial means, mostly through public works.

### **3.2.5 Koper Prison**

KP staff does not directly work on integrating homeless convicts back into the society when they have served their term. Instead, the entire cadre concentrates on trying to bestow upon them a stable groundwork on which they may begin anew.

A convenient way of ensuring at least a partially stable future for these homeless people is the aforementioned industrial plant that allows inmates to procure wages. In comparison to their fellow inmates, homeless convicts are even more decidedly suggested to continually keep saving until the day of their release.

Another option presented to them, aimed at overcoming the uncertainties of returning to the street without any stashed possessions, is to request sanctuary in a commune for the homeless; an option the desired end result of which is hardly ever reached in spite of KP staff's efforts to reserve each of the candidates a free space, since such communes are not particularly

in abundance and, moreover, are usually severely overcrowded.

Another technique used to facilitate active reintegration, not limited to homeless inmates only, is the provision of education. In their free time, numerous prisoners regularly study and a great many of them earn a degree in at least one profession of their choosing.

### **3.3 Personal thoughts and opinions of staff**

#### **3.3.1 Red Cross Koper**

According to the volunteers at RCK, the issue of homelessness exhibits constant expansion throughout the local community and a growing entanglement with other, generally considered more important nationwide problems such as the economic crisis. Today, a small number of the homeless can take refuge in the barracks right beside the General Hospital Isola. Construction of the barracks was financed by RCK, which also provides funds for its maintenance. This rather sorrowful option is short-lived nonetheless, because hospital officials aim towards making good use of the land on which the barracks is located in the near future.

RCK staff emphasises that they do not procure enough monetary resources to successfully bestow them upon the entire endangered population. When supplies do arrive, they quickly run out. On the other hand, the storage space at their disposal is inappropriate for adequate food preservation when it arrives from donors.

#### **3.3.2 Daybreak Association**

The Daybreakers stated that one of the principal impediments resulting in poorer success rates is the problem of stigmatisation - the general normal population perceives drug addicts, including homeless ones, as lower beings unable to cope with the roughness of everyday life, with a strong belief that such a fate could never have befallen themselves. As such, this is the cardinal reason why Daybreak's efforts are frequently condemned to futility and its employees are in essence forced to helplessly keep company the terminally disfigured and devastated addicts as their lives slowly decay.

For the very same reasons, concealment of parental identity of children born to addicted (and homeless) individuals from the general public is of utmost importance.

Thus, both regular employees and volunteers working for Daybreak are convinced that only strong-minded individuals should offer help to drug addicts and their families. A person working with stigmatised people is supposed to be able to endure the harsh reality of helplessness frequently bestowed upon him/her and at the same time have a firm belief that drug addicts are simply people who have had their share of bad

luck handed to them on an enormous platter. As far as homeless addicts are concerned, even more so.

An obstacle is also the lack of workspace. Services of both low- and high-threshold programs therefore take place in the same quarters, sometimes even simultaneously.

Homeless addicts represent an even greater challenge, since Daybreak does not possess the required facilities needed to provide any kind of permanent housing solution. In addition, governing parties are reluctant to provide Daybreak with such infrastructure due to the fact that the majority of homeless addicts are not homeless on a permanent basis; rather, they have either been thrown onto the street by their families or they cannot afford to pay rent regularly.

Lastly, Daybreak's employees put emphasis on teamwork and interconnection with other organisations as them being a kind of a stepping stone crucial for Daybreak's activities.

#### **3.3.3 Center for social work Koper**

Families or individuals who earn less than the administratively defined threshold value per month per person living in the household by definition live in a state of complete poverty and are as such entitled to receiving monetary socioeconomic support.

However, social workers working at CSWK emphasised that people who exceed the aforementioned threshold value even slightly are on the other hand not subject to receiving such supplements and are consequently forced to dwell in even poorer conditions than their fellow indigent brethren who the circumstances have shown mercy to, thus hindering social reintegration. Evidently, those just above the line are continually seeking diverse ways and sprouting ingenious methods of lowering their income to a value below the cutoff point and so becoming entitled to obtaining the monthly bonus.

#### **3.3.4 Diocesan Caritas Koper**

DCK statistics shows that in years 2011 and 2012, the number of people that sought any kind of assistance increased by approximately 15% in comparison with the previous year. DCK volunteers stressed that people in socioeconomic distress more often than nutrition require a safe place to come to where they can let go of the struggle against the pressures of everyday world and relax, talk about their problems with other people and find out that they are not the only ones who are isolated and suffering as victims of socioeconomic distress.

DCK's Catholic Church officials told us that they are satisfied with the organisation's impact on the homeless population in the area as well as its methods. They told us that in the year 2012, a total of 36 individuals decided to enrol in a high-threshold program.



### 3.3.5 Koper Prison

It is the guards' opinion that a certain measure of strictness is required in order to keep the inmates at bay and at a safe psychological distance. At the same time, guards genuinely enjoy group sport activities and chess tournaments in which both inmates and the security detail can participate.

On the other hand, the two nurses were considerably less willing to comment on their feelings towards the overall atmosphere in the correctional facility. The sole thought was that their work is abundant in the variety of tasks they are required to complete each day.

The social workers employed at KP stressed that homeless convicts represent a unique constituent of the prison's population, because after they have served out their punishment, they simply have no place to go to and are so subtly coerced into returning to their abysmal former everyday life under open sky.

Therefore, most are unusually glad to be living in the correctional facility where they are afforded comfortable lodgings and warm meals. Consequently, a fair number of those who are released intentionally commit another criminal act that warrants imprisonment in order to ensure themselves a stable home for an additional few months. Therefore, the success of their social reintegration largely depends on their degree of homelessness.

## 4 DISCUSSION

In our study, we presented the work of five organisations acting in the city of Koper and its surroundings, each of which at least partly concentrates on offering support to the homeless.

Due to the fact that these five organisations represent the entire local workforce engaged in trying to solve or at least abate the matter of homelessness, all the relevant information that therefore could be collected regarding professional work in this field originated from these five institutions.

Having composed the three basic questions while keeping in mind that they should be of an open type, not overly structured, we allowed the employees of our target institutions to experience greater freedom while conveying fundamental information. The open form of our conversations, however, has not allowed us to perform a statistical analysis of the amassed data.

At the same time, an interview was chosen as the research method of choice because an oral examination technique allowed us to promptly raise additional, more detailed inquiries about our interviewees' thoughts regarding the nature of their work and supplementary questions to entice more hidden opinions concerning the difficulties they are required to handle.

In our study, we questioned a great number of professionals and volunteers, which provided us with a holistic insight into the lives of those having in common the desire to assist people in need.

On the other hand, we received no recurrent information from any of the individuals being offered supportive services. Therefore, additional research would be needed to fully accredit the efficiency of the chosen organisations' humanitarian programs from the viewpoint of their target population.

We presented the results of our study in a descriptive form, individually for each of the two base interview questions (duties and activities, methods of integration).

Duties and activities of both governmental (GOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are necessary for providing effective assistance to people in need. Each one of those endeavours and courses of action is clearly defined by each organisation independently [10–12, 16–21]. NGOs excel at quickly responding to immediate needs. Their programs are usually implemented only as short-term resolutions. GOs on the other hand require a longer time to implement their concepts, nonetheless they provide long-term stability.

The reasons for the observed differences lies in the fact that the material resources at the disposal of NGOs as well as their possibilities of organising active preventative and supportive measures are limited mostly to voluntary donations. Such donations are normally hardly abundant enough to guarantee the lasting well-being of the endangered population.

On the other hand, the difficulty hindering GOs in their attempts at giving instantaneous assistance is the fact that their methods are required to conform to specific national and international laws and regulations regarding humanitarian aid. Consequently, GOs mostly cannot respond to immediate needs as quickly as would optimally be needed due to bureaucratic deterrence, in spite of their continuing efforts to overcome that obstacle.

The only exception to the origin of financing is the NGO Daybreak, the bankroll of which is held up entirely from non-voluntary sources (Ministry of health, Koper municipality). That budget is in turn used by the Association itself to obtain the needed resources, effectively circumventing the need to rely on voluntary contributions or even leftover material from healthcare institutions.

In our study, we noticed several similarities between, on one hand the integrational methods being utilised for aiding the homeless and on the other hand those aimed at supporting homeless prisoners' longings to reinstate themselves into their former place in society.

The offered support vitally assists and is beyond any doubt an imperative necessity that aids the homeless in ultimately escaping the never-ending circle into which



they have been driven by reasons infinitely diversified. In contrast, at a first glance, prisoners significantly differ from the homeless in that within the confines of the correctional facility, inmates do not endlessly wander a vicious circle. Instead, they are simply coerced into an existence deprived of physical freedom. After a predefined time period, they are able to leave their encaged life without any likelihood of reintertwining themselves with criminal dealings.

While the above does hold water in regards to convicts not budgetarily endangered, it unquestionably does not bear any relevance as far as homeless inmates and those originating from an abysmal socioeconomic milieu are concerned. With the latter, the likelihood of reinstating themselves into the life of an outlaw is extremely high, the principal reason for this being the society itself. In its reluctance to offer them an honest occupation, the reasons being their low education, inadequate number of available workspaces and stigmatisation due to their criminal history (in spite of confidentiality precautions), the broader community facilitates the continuation of these individuals' established pattern of lawless behaviour.

Therefore, convicts from existentially imperilled social classes need to utilise enormous mental discipline to prevent the recurrence of their former habits upon release. Thus, these individuals' own initiative to work in the previously noted industrial plant and to study, providing them with a minimal monetary and educational stepping stone, represents an enormous leap towards successful legitimate social reintegration.

Even though people from remote parts of the society usually cooperate, the efforts of those who work with them are nothing short of exerting. They strive to achieve a general social acceptance of their ward population, which is the one thing those people need the most. Only the society truly is capable of offering them a firm stepping stone towards escaping from the vicious circle in which they stray.

Although not in scope of this study, in order to prepare sound methodological foundations for later evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures that the herein presented organisations utilise, it would be of great importance to continue similar research from the homeless people's point of view - gather their views and opinion on the effectiveness of the humanitarian efforts in question.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Both GOs and NGOs are necessary for providing effective assistance to people in need. NGOs excel at quickly responding to immediate needs. Their programs are usually implemented only as short-term resolutions. GOs on the other hand require a longer time to implement their concepts. Nonetheless in contrast to NGO projects, they provide long-term stability. Even though people from remote parts of the society usually cooperate, the efforts of those who work with them are nothing short of exerting. They strive to achieve a general social acceptance of their ward population, which is the one thing those people need the most. Only the society truly is capable of offering them a firm stepping stone towards escaping from the vicious circle in which they stray.

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