

The Foreign Rough Sleepers

Project description, June 2010

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Background

Through the last 12 years, projekt UDENFOR has provided help to homeless persons who are living in the streets. Our help has been targeted particularly the group of homeless people, who are not capable of using or accepting the existing offers to homeless people. Projekt UDENFOR thus specialises in addressing and creating relations to those homeless, who often live isolated in the streets. Moreover, projekt UDENFOR looks into, documents and communicates mechanisms in the society that exclude homeless people, in order to prevent further exclusion and improve conditions for already excluded individuals and groups.

In recent years, projekt UDENFOR has noticed an increasing number of foreign homeless rough sleepers. Some of these homeless foreigners are citizens in the countries of the European Union, and because of this they can freely cross borders within the European Union. In our experience, this the group of homeless foreigners comprises citizens from Southern European countries, but the majority is made up by citizens from the Central and Eastern European countries that entered the European Union in 2004 and in 2007. Additionally, projekt UDENFOR has noticed that the group of foreign homeless people also include persons from Western Africa, whom we assume have come to Denmark through Southern Europe in search of jobs.

There are no valid numbers on how many homeless foreigners that are living in Copenhagen. The national survey of homelessness in Denmark in 2009, showed that 23 pct. of the persons, who slept in night cafes were foreigners – corresponding to 80 persons¹. However, the survey itself points out that this number is probably largely underestimated and organisations that are in contact with the group estimate that the number is much higher. One specific assessment says that in the Copenhagen area there are approximately 600 Eastern European homeless persons². In addition to this there are the homeless people with other nationalities.

The legal status of the foreign homeless people differs greatly depending on whether they are citizens in a Nordic country, EU-citizens or citizens in a non-EU country. However, the legislation is at the moment administered in such way that none of the unregistered foreigners have access to assistance from the public system. This means that they are not entitled to health care (other than emergency care), to join rehabilitation programmes or treatment for addictions. Nor are they allowed to stay in public funded shelters and night cafes. Thus, they do not have access to the various benefits offered to Danish homeless people, including support and assistance from the city's outreach workers and social workers³. At the same time, those homeless foreigners who are EU-citizens and cannot be deported. The EU-legislation protects them from this. This means that they end up in a gap, where they on the one hand cannot access the assistance they need and on the other hand cannot be forced to leave the country. They are left completely unassisted and are therefore some of the most marginalised and socially excluded people in Copenhagen. Many sleep rough all year round or sleep in one of the few privately funded shelters.

The situation of homeless foreigners have not been looked further into, and this is why projekt UDENFOR in accordance with the organisation's statutes and purpose will conduct a three-year project, which aims both at mitigating the direct distress of the most vulnerable homeless foreigners, and additionally seeks to identify and describe the condition of the homeless foreigners.

The purpose of the project

The overall purpose of the project is to mitigate the direct distress of the homeless foreigners and to communicate the gathered knowledge and experience to interested parties and stakeholders – both nationally and internationally.

The purpose can be divided into two parts:

1. To mitigate the direct distress of the most vulnerable homeless foreigners through individually based direct outreach work.
2. To determine and describe the conditions of the homeless foreigners through gathering and communication of knowledge about the lives and living conditions of the foreign homeless.

We aim to share the experiences from the locally based work in Copenhagen in order to secure a dissemination of knowledge to relevant institutions and partners to the greatest extent possible. A significant part of the homeless foreigners are as mentioned EU-citizens, who are using their right to free movement, but who have no social or

¹ The national survey of Homelessness in Denmark, p. 78.

² Anne-Mette Nyfos in the Danish newspaper "Information": <http://www.information.dk/189328>

³ Included in the Government's Homeless strategy there has been allocated 500 million DKK to reduce the number of homeless people during a period of 3 years (2009 – 2012). However, The Homeless Strategy is targeted exclusively at homeless people with a Danish Social Security Number.

financial safety net. To us the responsibility for finding adequate solutions to these challenges should be placed at EU-level.

The project's target group

The project is targeted the most excluded and marginalised homeless foreigners, who are not entitled to help from the public system and who are sleeping rough all year round. Hereafter mentioned as "foreign rough sleepers".

Characteristics and delimitation of the target group

There is a general lack of knowledge concerning the new groups of homeless foreigners – why they have ended up here, what kind of problems they are facing and how they can be supported in taking further care of themselves. There is also a lack of clarification of the rights of homeless EU-citizens according to both the Danish national legislation, the EU-legislation and the Conventions of Human Rights. Projekt UDENFOR does have some experiences concerning homeless people from other EU-countries: Casework with several homeless EU-citizens, good relations with one group of homeless EU-citizens through project UDENFORs so-called Mobile Café as well as preliminary research regarding the legal status of this group, have all provided us with preliminary knowledge. Furthermore, as partners in establishing and running a temporary, privately funded emergency night shelter for homeless foreigners during the winters of 2008 – 2010, we have been able to gather specific knowledge about this group and their most acute problems.

Based on the uncertain and inadequate position of the homeless foreigners (both legally and socially), we estimate that they constitute a very marginalised and excluded group of people. In accordance with projekt UDENFOR's statutes this project addresses the most excluded people within that group – that is, the homeless rough sleepers who are living isolated in the streets, who often suffer from mental disorders or abuses, who are not capable of taking adequate care of themselves, and who are in need of an acute effort in order to meet their basic human needs.

Methods and activities

1. Mitigating direct distress or life-threatening conditions

Methods: the work will be based on outreach methods with focus on support and assistance targeted excluded, foreign rough sleepers. Through this we aim at mitigating the most pressing problems of each individual homeless person. These can be of social, legal or health related character. The work will focus on contact and harm reduction.

The long-standing experience with outreach work in projekt UDENFOR is the basis for the outreach work with the foreign rough sleepers. The keywords are time, patience and focus on contact and harm reduction. As mentioned, the foreign rough sleepers are different from the Danish rough sleepers in terms of legal status and thus access to public aid. This will restrict our possibilities to provide adequate help and we will thus only to a limited extent be able to offer the needed assistance. However, our experiences are that the most marginalised homeless people are in special need of contact, support and harm reduction. This is exactly

what we can offer through this project. The aid, which we can provide, will always be adjusted to the needs of the individual, and it will consist of both practical aid (e.g. warm clothes, a sleeping bag and/or access to health care and food) and of human contact. It is essential to establish a good relation between the homeless person and the outreach worker, and through this be able to support the homeless person in taking care of him- or herself. If the foreign rough sleeper wishes to seek rehabilitation in his or her home country, we will see to, that they are provided with the proper support for a journey home and contacts with relevant institutions in the home country.

Previous experiences in projekt UDENFOR show that the foreign rough sleepers can be different from the Danish rough sleepers from a cultural perspective as well. For instance, some of the foreign rough sleepers find it difficult to receive aid and support from social workers, because they are uncertain of the social workers' motives when providing help. This might be because they are not familiar with the concept of outreach social work or with receiving help. A basic social value in projekt UDENFOR is that all human beings want contact with and support from other human beings. It is thus our task in this project to develop new methods along with testing known methods in order to approach the target group. These new methods must be based on the experiences we gain concerning the needs of the foreign rough sleepers, and due to this all outreach work within this project will be exploratory. During the project period we will evaluate our work critically with the aim of securing that our assistance is in the best interest of the individual homeless person we work with in both a short-term and a long-term perspective. In this respect we will secure that our assistance does not contribute to maintaining the individual in a life as homeless, but instead supports the individual in improving his or her self reliance sufficiently to move on to a better life.

Interpreters will be used when needed.

2. Description of the foreign rough sleepers' conditions

- Gathering of knowledge

Methods: gathering of knowledge concerning the foreign rough sleepers, their living conditions and the methods most suitable in the acute and in the supporting casework. Through this we want to create a knowledge base, which can improve the direct outreach work and also be disseminated to relevant partners and stakeholders. Along with this we want to further ensure, that the relevant EU-rights regarding migrating job seekers are also affiliated to the poorer EU-citizens, who are at risk of losing their jobs.

The gathering of knowledge will be conducted through the following channels:

- We will through outreach work get an insight into the concrete challenges facing our target group. We will systematically document these challenges by keeping records and through progress meetings. Experiences gathered through projekt UDENFORs Mobile Café will also be included. In this project, we also to stay in contact with a group of homeless foreigners, who do not need intensive support, but who know us, and who we will provide sporadic assistance. Experiences from this work will also be included in the gathering of knowledge.
- The gathering of knowledge will also be conducted through an international cooperation with organisations in other European cities that are working with similar problems and challenges. We are interested in knowing how more experienced

organisations and outreach workers are working with this group of people and to know more about the conditions these people live under and what rights they have in other European cities. Additionally, we will cooperate with and visit specific organisations in the home countries of the foreign rough sleepers. This will provide us with a greater insight into the situations and conditions the foreign rough sleepers have left, and to establish contact with organisations that might receive those persons, who would want to return home. Visits from and to organisations abroad will create a foundation for an international network of outreach workers within this field. The network will secure an exchange of experiences and the development of methods.

- This project will gather knowledge from relevant professionals and institutions concerning the different aspects, which shape the living conditions of the target group. Regarding this we will conduct meetings and seminars with lawyers, politicians, anthropologists, scientific researchers, the police, Human Rights Organisations etc.
- It is a tradition in projekt UDENFOR to have master students affiliated, who are looking into issues of relevance to the organisation. This project will seek to engage one or more master students to look into the legal, social and/or health related circumstances of the foreign rough sleepers.

The gathered knowledge will contribute to ensuring that this project and projekt UDENFOR becomes a base of factual and well-founded knowledge concerning foreign homeless people. In relation to this we will also follow the development of certain rights especially regarding to what extent the EU is accepting guidelines for social, economic and health related aid to the most excluded migrating job seekers. We will also monitor the results of potential trials – both in Denmark and/or by the EU Court of Justice – regarding the foreign rough sleepers' right to public aid.

- **Dissemination of knowledge**

Methods: dissemination of knowledge regarding the foreign rough sleepers, their living conditions and relevant methods in the daily casework. Through this we want to enhance the public knowledge of this group of people, of their situations and of the excluding mechanisms that shape the group's livelihood.

The gathered knowledge will be disseminated through the following channels:

- By giving presentations on relevant seminars and conferences – both nationally and internationally.
- Through articles, essays and statements in the media.
- Background information and inquiries targeted institutions and politicians in Denmark (locally and to the national government) and on a EU-level (Parliamentarians and the Commission).
- The projekt UDENFOR website.
- Annual reports. The project results and knowledge will be gathered in annual reports. These reports will be disseminated to relevant partners and other stakeholders.

Criteria for success

The project's criteria for success are to reach the two overall goals of project:

1. Mitigation of direct distress of the individual homeless via the direct outreach work and through individual casework.

2. Clarification of the situation of foreign rough sleepers via gathering and dissemination of knowledge about their lives and living conditions.

Outreach work: Based on the resources and employees in the project, we expect an ongoing intensive contact to a minimum of 7 persons and a maximum of 10 persons. It will thus be a criterion of success to have ongoing contact to 7-10 persons. Our work will include support and reduction of harm, which mean a redress of acute and urgent needs.

Gathering of knowledge: Regarding the gathering of knowledge it will be a criterion of success to make projekt UDENFOR a knowledge base for solid and factual knowledge of the foreign rough sleepers and their living conditions. This criterion will be met when professionals within the field of homelessness, scientific researchers and students, politicians and policymakers as well as the media address projekt UDENFOR in order to gain knowledge about the foreign rough sleepers and their living conditions. As a part of the gathering of knowledge we expect to have ongoing contact to approximately 30 citizens, whom we will support when necessary and who will contribute to the gathering of knowledge.

Dissemination of knowledge: The criterion of success regarding dissemination of knowledge is to ensure that our knowledge is passed on to those stakeholders, who can influence the living conditions of the rough sleepers. This means other professionals within the field of homelessness, politicians, policymakers and the media. We have met this criterion when we regularly occur in the national and pan-European debates, and when we can place our arguments on a solid and factual base of knowledge.

Organisational framework

Overall project responsibility

The legal and formal responsibility of the project lies with the President of the Board in projekt UDENFOR, Dr. med. Preben Brandt.

Daily project managers

Two outreach workers are employed full time and will manage the project. The first employee is Mr. Bo Heide-Jochimsen, trained pedagogue. Bo Heide-Jochimsen has 5 years of experience doing outreach work targeted mentally ill and very excluded rough sleepers, mainly Danes but also foreigners without any rights to receive social benefits in Denmark. The other employee is Ms. Maj Kastanje, who has a Master Degree in Social Science and wrote her final thesis about homeless people without the rights to social benefits in Russia. Maj Kastanje has practical experience of working with the homeless in Russia, and as social worker in a temporary, privately funded night shelter for homeless foreigners in Copenhagen, Denmark. In total, the two employees have the following language skills: English and German (excellent); Spanish and Russian (intermediate level).

The project will be carried out in cooperation with projekt UDENFOR's the Mobile Café. Besides this the project will draw on support from other employees in projekt UDENFOR, especially the Training Officer (in relation to keeping records and gathering of knowledge from these), the Communications Officer (in relation to dissemination of knowledge) and the Head of Secretariat (in relation to fundraising).

Funding for the project

This project will be funded entirely through private funding and grants.

Documentation of the project

The progress of the project will be documented through several channels:

- The outreach workers contact to the individual homeless people in the project will be documented through the keeping of records based on valid legal and ethic standards. The template used to keep records has been made in order to gather and document the special issues affiliated to outreach work with foreigners.
- Knowledge regarding the rough sleepers will also be gathered through a logbook, where observations from the streets are written down, in particular the number of foreigners sleeping rough and their sleeping places.
- Every three months a progress meeting will take place, where results are gathered and where the activities for the coming three months are planned. A short internal report from these meetings will be made, which also will be included in projekt UDEFOR's annual report.
- Every year we will publish an annual report, in which all achieved results will be described.
- The entire project will be evaluated at the end of the project period.
- The evaluation will be disseminated through a final report.

Stakeholders and sparring

We will include a group of stakeholders in the project, who will meet with the employees in the project approximately two times every year. These stakeholders will function as external supervisors, and the group will consist of practitioners, lawyers, scientific researchers, partners and others, who have interest in foreign rough sleepers, who have relevant knowledge about their living conditions and/or experiences with specific work within this field. The meetings with the group of stakeholders will deal with concrete and present issues and challenges in relation to the activities in the project, including legal, cultural and health related issues. The purpose is to ensure inspiration and qualified inputs to the project from the stakeholders. The stakeholders can also be consulted one at a time and on an ad hoc basis for guidance and sparring. The group of stakeholders will not have any decision-making authority in relation to the project.