



SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION

BRNO – SOCIO-INFO CENTRE AND WEBSITE: BARRIER-FREE ACCESS TO ADVICE AND INFORMATION



Brno's innovative *Socio-info Centre* and the associated website provide citizens with easy access to up-to-date information and advice on social services in Brno.

During Brno's initial social services community planning phase, a general lack of awareness of the social services available in the city was highlighted. This was recognised as contributing to the risk of social exclusion for people most in need of assistance.

To help raise awareness of social services in Brno and how best to access them, an innovative two-part solution was developed: a drop-in centre and an interactive website.

Opened in Autumn 2009, the Socio-info Centre is sited at Brno's municipal offices in the middle of the city. The centre offers social services information and advice, both from the staff themselves, and also via telephone links, internet access, and referrals to other relevant organisations. The centre also offers professional help to help people resolve crisis situations.

The interactive Socio-info Website - www.socialnipece.brno.cz - was also launched in 2009. Designed to be attractive for all users, it provides regularly updated social services information. The website also serves as a platform for Brno's social services community planning process and enables close co-operation between public sector organisations and NGO social service providers. It includes a central database of all the social services organisations in Brno.

Right from the start, the information centre and website have been publicised in newspapers and magazines, on the street, and on public transport.

Cities for Active Inclusion is a dynamic network of nine European cities – Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Krakow, Lille Métropole - Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm – each with a local authority observatory (LAO) within its administration. Their aim is to share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of active inclusion strategies at the local level.

The observatories are co-ordinated by EURO CITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported by a partnership between the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and EURO CITIES.



Innovation

The initiative provides several examples of innovation:

- The community planning process represents an innovative approach for Brno, involving people from eight different groups of citizens, including: families with children, people with physical and mental disabilities, immigrants, senior citizens, and people who are socially excluded through unemployment or homelessness. Some 70 municipal social service organisations and NGOs also took part in the wide-ranging discussions about social service needs, priorities and solutions.
- The two strategic plans drawn up after the community planning consultations are a new departure, based on the views of the community as well as resource-availability, to ensure that the city's social services are responsive to, and are organised around, local needs.
- The Socio-info Centre is a first for the city: a drop-in centre that is barrier-free, with equipment such as an induction loop for people with impaired hearing, and an internet access booth with an adjustable table height.
- The interactive Socio-info Website takes a dynamic approach that is unusual for a public sector website, with attractive illustrations that draw the visitor into the site and keep them entertained while looking for the information they need.

Success

"Finally, a place where I received full assistance and where they really tried to help me."
Socio-info Centre client.

The Socio-info Centre has become an important and popular advice point, helping the citizens of Brno and the surrounding area to deal with difficult situations in their lives. It is now the primary place for people in Brno to go for up-to-date social services information and advice. The most frequent visitors to the centre have been retired senior citizens and people who have financial problems. Most clients prefer personal face-to-face contact rather than using the centre's telephones or internet access.

Since it opened, the centre has helped an increasing number of clients. During 2010, staff at the centre handled a total of 2,284 client enquiries. In 2011, a similar number of enquiries (2,118) were handled in just the first six months. The increasing interest in the centre and its services, together with the changes in social services legislation mean that staffing levels may rise from two people to four or five.

The Socio-info Website is also proving successful. The number of visits to the site is increasing, with an average of some 400 visits per month in 2009, to more than 600 visits a month during 2011.

Following a recent presentation on the centre's work, the city's politicians expressed appreciation of the centre's role in providing high quality information and advice.

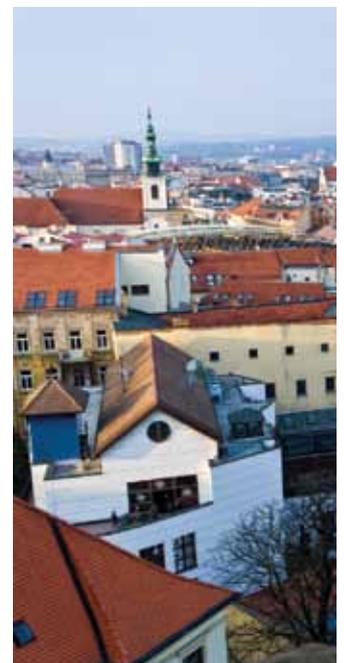
Dissemination and sustainability

Information about Brno's experiences in developing a successful community planning process, and in setting up the Socio-info Centre and Website could be shared with other cities across Europe wishing to consider a similar approach.

Brno municipality will continue to fund the Socio-info Centre and Website into the future. This will ensure that people in Brno and the surrounding area have access to the social services information and advice they need, thereby helping to increase social inclusion.

This publication is commissioned under the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme is managed by the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>.



Contact

Anna Michalkova
michalkova.anna@brno.cz
phone: +420 542173830
Jana Starkova
starkova.jana@brno.cz
phone: +420 542173820
www.socialnipeco.brno.cz