



SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION

KRAKOW - RAKOWICKA 10: TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF STREET CHILDREN



Krakow's *Rakowicka 10* project provides a social work team to work with street children, plus a drop-in centre where they can enjoy a range of activities and receive help and advice.

Like many urban areas in Europe, Krakow has growing numbers of street children. They are under the age of 18 and they spend a high proportion of their waking hours unproductively in public places such as transport hubs, shopping centres and public squares. Although most of them attend school at least some of the time, and have a home where they sleep, many have multiple issues in their lives. Unsupervised by responsible adults, they are at high risk of developing dysfunctional behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse, begging and prostitution, and are therefore at high risk of social exclusion.

In 2006, *Rakowicka 10* was set up by PARASOL, a prevention and social education organisation in Krakow, to help street children overcome their problems.

Rakowicka 10 aims to:

- minimise street life among children and young people;
- reduce street children's consumption of substances such as alcohol, drugs and nicotine;
- raise the social skills of street children;
- help street children rebuild positive relationships with adults;
- represent the interests of street children (e.g. mediating with their families, residential home staff, school and police).

Central to the project is a team of highly trained social workers. They work on the street to establish and maintain contact with street children in their own environment. They also run the *Rakowicka 10* Centre. In the heart of Krakow, this opens three days a week and attracts some 20 street children a day.

Rakowicka 10 offers street children more constructive ways of spending time, such as creative workshops and sporting activities. They are also offered psychological help, meals if necessary, and information about other services and activities in the city.

The project can also help street children's families, for example, by helping parents to reduce domestic violence and overcome addictions such as alcoholism.

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

To ensure that Rakowicka 10 maximises its impact in transforming the lives of street children, it has a number of innovative aspects:

- the project actively focuses on addressing new problems such as begging and juvenile prostitution;
- a new holistic methodology ensures that all aspects of each child are considered together: relationships with their family, their school situation, and their psychological and emotional health;
- the project works with all those involved in each child's care: their families, guardians, care workers and school teachers;
- new partnerships with a wide range of local and international organisations help in sharing best practice and raising funds;
- the project is unusual in having a permanent facility that every street child can attend;
- the centre uses new methods of working with children through creative activities such as photography, jewellery-making and psychodrama techniques;
- the street children help run innovative new projects and events e.g. photographs taken by street children have been exhibited in a local store;
- Rakowicka 10 regularly evaluates the progress of each young person who takes part in the activities;
- the project's website has a dynamic interface, designed to be attractive to young people.



Success

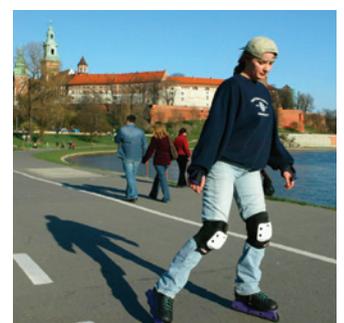
Rakowicka 10 changes the lives of an estimated 80% of young people who take part. It also benefits their families. In 2010, the field workers offered help to 424 street children: 366 of these joined in with Rakowicka 10 activities, 120 took part in relationship therapy, and 50 received individual therapy. These young people have benefited by gaining new social and practical skills, rebuilding their trust in adults and institutions, rebuilding their relationships with adults and family members, and improving their emotional health, economic situation and school attendance.

Dissemination and sustainability

Staff often share information about the Rakowicka 10 project with other interested professionals, by making presentations at local and international conferences. Information about the project is also disseminated in print and via the Rakowicka 10 project's website and Facebook page.

Funded mainly by the state, the municipality and the United Way NGO, Rakowicka10 is also supported by other sponsors such as the Krakow Lions Club, the International Women's Association and private companies.

The positive contribution made by Rakowicka 10 is underlined by the sponsors' constant support for the project. It is hoped that funding can be maintained, despite the economic situation, to continue to increase social inclusion for street children.



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

Contact:

Beata Sierocka,
Director of Rakowicka 10,
Krakow Municipality
Email:
bsierocka@parasol.org.pl
or info@rakowicka10.pl
www.rakowicka10.pl