

KOMPASSET KIRKENS KORSHÆR

OUTREACH with homeless migrants in
Copenhagen
2016-2019



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	4
REPORT METHODOLOGY	5
PROJECT BACKGROUND.....	5
TARGET GROUP	6
OUTREACH SOCIAL WORK WITH MIGRANTS IN COPENHAGEN	7
NATIONAL POLITICAL CONTEXT	10
MIGRANTS' IMAGE OF THE OUTREACH WORK	11
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE SOCIAL WORK ENVIRONMENT OF COPENHAGEN	15
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?	19
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUTREACH WORK.....	20

INTRODUCTION

A new outreach project for homeless migrants was launched in the streets of Copenhagen starting with October 2016 - **Outreach Kompasset**. It was the first initiative of the organization Kirkens Korshær¹ to place a team of counsellors to work in the field and approach homeless migrants directly in the streets. Furthermore, this also represented the only initiative in the city of Copenhagen to target primarily homeless EU-migrants, with the aim of connecting them with existing services. Outreach Kompasset developed its activities in the spaces where migrants spend much of their everyday life, such as the Vesterbro area and the Inner City of Copenhagen. It is in these areas that the team found it easier to move around on the streets, to approach and create relations with the migrants.

After three years, the Outreach team collected reflections and lessons from working in the field, as well as from partners and migrants themselves and elaborated this report. The report aims to:

- **bring insight on how and what it means to work with destitute migrants living in homelessness.**
- **present the methods used in the everyday work and the type of tasks the team tackled.**
- **present updated information about the situation of homeless migrants, as well as the specific needs of the groups that Outreach worked with.**

Finally, the document sums up the lessons learnt from working with homeless migrants directly in the field. The Outreach project functioned under the auspices of Kompasset², the service of Kirkens Korshær for homeless migrants without registration in Denmark. Kompasset represents an actual “compass” when referring to the work with the migrants. Here, the unregistered and homeless EU-citizens who exercise their right to free movement within the European Union and who come to Denmark to look for a job and a better life, can receive support and information about their rights. Since 2007, Kirkens Korshær’s social services in Copenhagen experienced an increase in marginalised users from abroad, from both Central and Eastern Europe. The increase could be explained by the fact that 2007 was the year when the Treaty of Lisbon opened up the EU significantly, and made free movement a possibility for all EU-citizens. Romania and Bulgaria also became member states. It was in this context of increased immigration that Kompasset was founded in 2012. When discussing the actual number of homeless migrants in Denmark, it is extremely important to keep in mind that **a big part of them will not be accounted for in the official statistics**. They are the migrants who upon arriving in Denmark end up living in destitution and in homelessness. At a national level, there is a lack of data collection about homeless migrants and the gap in information can only be filled in by using data available from organisations working in the field. This information is also inconsistent, as different organisations have different target groups and different methods of collecting information. For example, projekt UDENFOR concludes in 2012 that a number of 500 homeless migrants can be found in Copenhagen yearly³, while a report from the EU mentions that in 2010 there were 600 Eastern European homeless migrants in Denmark⁴. More recently, a Norwegian study conducted in 2015⁵ mentions interviewing 385 Romanians who lived in the streets of Copenhagen. A night count conducted in 2017 shows a number of 167⁶ migrants sleeping either in shelters or roughly in Copenhagen⁷. Kompasset had a total of 781 different visitors in 2018 (63% Romanians, 3% Polish and 2% Spanish migrants)⁸.

¹ Also known as the Dan Church Social, the organisation works among the most vulnerable people in Denmark with the aim of giving space to those who feel stigmatized and abandoned by the community because they live in poverty, loneliness, homelessness, psychological illness or substance abuse.

² In January 2013, Kirkens Korshær established a counselling centre for homeless foreigners in Denmark called Kompasset. For more information please refer to <https://kbh.kirkenskorshaer.dk/sted/kompasset/>

³ <https://udenfor.dk/report-on-homeless-migrants-in-copenhagen/?lang=en>

⁴ <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/internal-migration-homelessness.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.rockwoolfonden.dk/app/uploads/2016/02/When-poverty-meets-Affluence-WEB-VERSION.pdf>

⁶ This number represents unique individuals per evening.

⁷ https://kompasset.kirkenskorshaer.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/rapport_engelsk.pdf

⁸ Information from the 2018 statistics of Kompasset that include unique number of users from both the day shelter and the outreach service.

REPORT METHODOLOGY

Towards the end of the Outreach initiative, the team wanted to take a step back and look at the project from a different perspective, to look at the goals we set out to carry through and what were the means engaged in achieving them. To this end, the Outreach team, as well as an employee of Kompasset conducted interviews with the project's partners and some of the users with whom a longer contact was maintained since the initial phase of the project. Furthermore, the team used the information from the cases they attended in order to formulate lessons learnt and for summing up the methods and principles of doing outreach with this specific target group.

In conducting interviews, the team decided to follow a qualitative method over a quantitative method. The reasoning behind this choice was the fact that, for the purpose of this report, we were mostly interested in building an overview of how and why such a project can be efficient and productive in the work with vulnerable populations. Gathering numerical information about our users and the type of challenges they face most often, is important for us mostly as guidelines, to paint a bigger picture of the situation our users find themselves in.

The interviews, with both partners and users, were formulated according to the participatory Most Significant Change (MSC)⁹ technique, which is known to allow an illustration of people's stories of change resulting from their participation in a program. MSC allowed the interviewers to use open questions and to capture people's stories and to make their voices heard. This offered access to their thoughts and ideas about the activities they were involved in and about what kind of improvement, if any, appeared in their lives following these activities. The interviews with partners were conducted by the newest member of the team, as it was considered that this would allow for more objectivity from the partners.

Additionally, reports from other organizations that work with homeless migrants have been consulted, in order to have a broader overview of the situation.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2015, Kompasset, together with colleagues in Mariatjenesten¹⁰ decided to pilot a project aimed at reaching out to EU-migrants living in the central streets of Copenhagen. The pilot project *Outreach Vesterbro* was implemented between December 2015 – March 2016 with the objective ***to reach out to the young Romanian citizens arriving in Copenhagen to pursue a better life and seek for jobs***. The project came naturally in a context where there was an increase in the number of EU-migrants who needed information and guidance. Regular visits were done in the area and time was spent at Maria Church on Istedgade where discussions were held with homeless migrants. The pilot project showed that most of the migrants were willing and open to talk about their situation. Kompasset has taken on the responsibility to continue the outreach project and, in 2016, with financial support from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived¹¹, Outreach continued its activities in the streets, as part of the new Kompasset in Kæmnervej 1.

The renewed version of the Outreach project aimed at building relationships with marginalised homeless migrants by interacting with them, listening, observing and identifying their needs and connect them with services that could offer support. The Outreach functioned as a mobile unit that informed and accompanied migrants to night shelters, health clinics and hospitals, counselling and legal assistance organisations, the police or the courthouse. This enabled people's access to and communication with these services and created connections between migrants and the public authorities. The main point of referral however, remained Kompasset in Nordvest, where destitute homeless migrants could reach basic services like shower, rest and storage as well as counselling.

⁹ Davies, R. and Dart, J., 2005. The 'most significant change' (MSC) technique. *A guide to its use*.

¹⁰ <https://kbh.kirkenskorshaer.dk/sted/mariatjenesten/>

¹¹ The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089>

TARGET GROUP

The target group was defined as 'homeless EU-migrants'. However, it turned out to be varied, including homeless groups from Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Albania (though not in the EU they could travel to Denmark without a visa, due to the Schengen Agreement). A big part was represented by different Roma minorities across Romania and Bulgaria, as well as a Hungarian-speaking Romanian minority. Affected by poverty at home, many arrive in Denmark with the intention of supporting their families left behind. Education and formal training levels are low and for many the only option is to engage into seasonal work such as collecting bottles during the big festivals, selling Strada magazines or scavenging through garbage¹². Overall, Outreach Kompasset reached a number of 610 people during the three years of activity, out of which 140 were considered close contacts and the other 470 were only briefly met in the streets. The main nationality registered in the Outreach journals was Romanian, in an overwhelming percentage of almost 90%, followed by Bulgarians (2,6%), Albanians (2,6%) and Polish (2%). Romanian citizens seem to be the largest and most established group of rough sleeping migrants in Copenhagen (making up more than 50% of Kompasset's total users).

Within this broad target group, Outreach has established a focus on people of Roma background (though without explicitly asking) and women, as they occupied particularly vulnerable positions in the homeless pyramid. The focus on people of Roma background became strengthened after June 2017 when the parliament introduced the so-called 'Roma laws'¹³. Outreach users expressed awareness of anti-Roma sentiment. They felt prejudged because of their background, and could feel a change in people's attitudes towards them. There have been some who felt people were avoiding and even becoming aggressive towards them. This was coupled with pre-existing discrimination from within the Romanian/Hungarian/Bulgarian speaking groups of non-Roma background and from Danish homeless who felt that the Roma homeless people were 'taking over'.

Even though the majority of people approached were men, the outreach team noticed an increase in the number of couples and single women. Outreach maintained a closer attention on the women met for whom there were few targeted places – most social offers, including sleeping options, were shared with men. Furthermore, even the shelters which are specifically targeted at hosting women operate under a Service Law (Serviceloven §110) that implies women should have additional social problems (e.g. drug abuse, psychiatric problems, severe health problems, victims of domestic violence). Some of the women Outreach met on the streets might qualify, but most of them were not eligible as users of these shelters. Women themselves talked to Outreach about feeling in a more vulnerable position as rough sleepers, as they can be more easily attacked. Regarding the minors, they were met mostly during collaborations with organizations that had expertise in the field¹⁴ and who requested assistance from Outreach for translation and facilitation of contacting parents, as they were often users of Outreach. Because of a lack of experience with this particular target group, the team did not engage actively with searching for minors who lived in homelessness. People suffering from drug abuse, alcohol addiction and psychological issues, if EU citizens living on the street, were also a part of the target group.

In the following section, we will describe the type of work conducted with the homeless migrants - how it was implemented and how it was perceived in the field.

¹² For a more detailed situation of the bottle collectors of Roma background you can consult the PhD thesis *Bottle Hunters: An Ethnography of Law and Life Among Homeless Roma in Copenhagen*, Camilla Ida Ravnbøl - <https://anthropology.ku.dk/staff/phdstudents/?pure=en/persons/220922>

¹³ <http://www.bt.dk/danmark/koebenhavns-politi-bruger-ikke-ny-roma-lov-selv-om-romalejre-bliver-mere-og-mere>

¹⁴ Center Mod Menneskehandel and Sociale Døgnvagt

OUTREACH SOCIAL WORK WITH MIGRANTS IN COPENHAGEN

Principles of the Outreach work

The outreach work was based on

- a somewhat predefined target group,
- prior user-outreach worker relationships
- and on the pilot project experience described in a previous chapter

The Outreach team initially consisted of three persons, but throughout the three years the project employed 4 full-time workers who could assist migrants in five languages, including Romanian, English and Danish. Additionally, the team increased with volunteers and interns. All members of Outreach had been previously involved in other projects with



homeless migrants in Copenhagen, also as part of different Kirkens Korshær social services, which allowed for easier access to the field of work and easier contact to the migrants. This background was extremely valuable in the relationship building process and brought about a smooth process of acceptance and trust in the team.

As outreach work was the first initiative of this type in Kirkens Korshær, **flexibility** was essential. The team adjusted the work methodology as they continued to advance in the project implementation. In practice, this led to a large flexibility in the working hours, as continuous adjustment of the content of the work was needed, in order to answer the type of workload being taken on.

Besides flexibility, the principles that Outreach functioned by have been **availability, reliability and trust**. The team aimed at remaining available and reliable for people, as much as possible. Users could often reach out to the staff by phone and later, also through Facebook when a page of the team was made available. Many migrants use social media to communicate with family and friends from home or other countries. This made it easy to be approached and to communicate with people. Outreach also treated every issue that people would bring to the table seriously, and research was done to identify possible solutions. This contributed to bringing a sense of reliability, as people could see that there was interest from the team to find ways to answer their requests. Last but not least, the work conducted was based on **a non-judgemental approach** - one of understanding and support. In practice this meant that people were not pre-judged, for example, for being in a situation where they had to beg on the street even if the law made it illegal for them to do that in Denmark. The legislation was presented and if it came to the situation that people were given a fine or a court subpoena for begging, Outreach would assist with facilitating access to justice.

Implementation and types of services

The framework for the outreach service was defined broadly in the project description. The given framework, however allowed for further adaptation and development. The geographical area in which Outreach was based, Vesterbro and Indre By, attracted a concentration of the target group through: proximity to the (international) bus and train station; the social offers from the area (e.g. Maria Church, Istedgade 100);

proximity to the centre of Copenhagen where people earned money through collecting bottles, begging, playing music or selling magazines. Using a defined geographical area was also based on the limitations of the three-person team, meaning that the service could be available consistently to the local area. As the biggest part of the target group was mainly Romanian, the Outreach team quickly came to the decision to work in pairs, so that the Romanian speaker and one Danish speaker were available to the target group.

In order to establish an effective way to reach users (other than spending time at Maria Church), Outreach walked the streets offering people a hot tea, coffee or soup, delivered from a Christiania bike while remaining in the geographical area of the project. In this sense, users maintained a degree of certainty that they could always find the team somewhere close to the centre of the city. It also proved an effective mechanism for building relationships to new users – someone could be met numerous times before they eventually one day open up about an issue. Moreover, offering a coffee and serving of soup can be a humanizing way of acknowledging the presence of people, who often times go unnoticed in the city. The most frequent situations that people would need help with were:

- **Access to information:** basic counselling about EU-migrants's rights in Denmark and the system of employment and registration in the country; researching and informing about services available in the city to homeless migrants; contacting police on behalf of users to request information on a diverse range of issues (from information on private property to information about relatives that went missing); researching on possibilities of seasonal work (for example, drafting a list of the biggest festivals in Denmark for the bottle collectors).
- **Access to medical facilities** (Red Cross clinic, hospitals, health clinics): translation and connecting the different medical facilities.
- **Access to the legal system:** translation and interpretation of legal documents; assistance for contestation or reduction of fines or for submitting complaints on interactions with police; identification of lawyers to handle cases; facilitating communication with lawyer/courthouse/police; accompaniment and support at trials and meetings with lawyers.
- **Accompaniment:** showing people the physical locations of shelters in order to help them navigate better between services; taking people to the emergency rooms of the hospitals or to their medical appointments, as they were not able to find locations on their own for the first time; joining people to the police station for different issues (reporting loss or theft of IDs or reporting fake police officers); accompanying people to job centres to enquire for their rights as job seekers;
- **Developing the program for selling magazines by homeless migrants:** in collaboration with the organization Minoritet¹⁵, Outreach became part of organizing the selling of magazines by migrants, which became for many a primary source of income.
- **Home returns:** supporting people who asked for help to return to their home country. This involved finding financial support and further arranging for the purchase of the tickets. The financial help has been ensured from own funds of Kirkens Korshær and via public and private collaborations with specifically the Homeless Unit, Vesterbro Parish and Vor Frue Kirke.

Cases were often handled over a period of days or maybe weeks. From case to case, different authorities or services were involved which required constant follow-up. People were determined to solve their issues, so they contacted us regularly and maintained communication, even when leaving Denmark. Outreach has followed the methodology of the organization where everything is handled in confidentiality and with consent from users. The work involved a great flow of information within the team, which required coordination in order to set in place an effective system of documentation.

¹⁵ <http://minoritet.dk/>

Documentation

Due to a desire to prioritize fieldwork, the team encountered difficulties in gathering written information about cases, in the initial phase of the project. As a result, there was an inconsistent registration of encounters with users during the first period of the project. However, Outreach soon managed to implement use of Kompasnet's journal system DanJournal where all documentation is registered for ongoing case handling and general documentation about the homeless migrant users.

Outreach had two types of journal entries:

- a regular, individual journal registration, with consent and under a personal identification name or nickname (if the person wishes to stay anonymous), which would be available for the entire team of the organisation. This journal entry would be done for those persons who were closely attended with any of the services described above.
- a generalised quantitative entry, used to register the people that Outreach interacted with only shortly, in the streets or at the shelters. This type of entry was done one time only even if the person was met several times and at the end of each month, for the purpose of knowing how many new people Outreach would meet every month.

NATIONAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

The context in which Outreach began to operate was one of increasingly restrictive policies, two of which have been particularly relevant to the group Outreach interacted with:

- **The law regarding Public Order¹⁶ and the subsequent updates¹⁷**

The Danish Parliament approved, on 1st of April 2017, the update of the already existing law regarding sleeping outside and public order. The changes, which came into action on 1st of May 2017, prohibit to *establish and stay in a camp that creates insecurity*. Until 2017 people were given fines or time in prison if there was evidence of repeated incidents. The changes brought in 2017 made it possible for the police, to give those found sleeping outside an injunction on entering or remaining in the area where they were found sleeping of up to 500 m. The zone ban could have been expanded to 1000 m. Subsequently, in February 2018 a proposal was forwarded in the Parliament to expand the zone ban to the entire Municipality of Copenhagen for 3 months. This proposal was accepted and came into action on 1st July 2018.

- **The law regarding begging¹⁸**

The original law policing begging was also amended. Active begging in public areas has always been illegal in Denmark, but until April 2017 those accused of begging were first given a warning, then a fine. In cases of a repeated offence, they could be given a court date and a judgement of a conditional 7 days in prison. The changes in the law introduced the extra element of ‘insecurity’ and removed the requirement for giving a warning if the begging took place on footpaths, near stations, in or near supermarkets or public transport while also introducing a possible sentence of an unconditional 14 days in jail if the person was found guilty. In practice this resulted in police officers identifying a broad spectrum of activities as constituting ‘insecure’ begging if they took place in the above areas and led to a practice of direct invitations to court dates. In some of these cases the accused were given 20 days in prison and deported from the country with an entry ban of between 2 and 6 years.

Such laws, and the way they are implemented, raise questions regarding the disproportionate manner in which they affect a very specific group of homeless. The statistics provided by the Danish Police, which show that from 31 cases under the law against “insecurity and begging”, during July 2017 and June 2018, 20 cases were against Romanian citizens¹⁹. Moreover, under the law that prohibits setting up camps in public places for sleeping, from 389 people charged at the level of last summer, police say 300 were Romanians and 6 of them were Danes²⁰. Additionally, the spate of arrests has followed a very public and politicized debate about ‘Roma’ in Denmark, specifically in Copenhagen. Language has been emotive and discriminatory and resulted in the law above being called ‘the Roma law’.²¹

In this context, Outreach sought to assist people who were affected by these two laws by guiding them to lawyers and accompanying them to their court meetings, to make sure their case is heard and their access to the justice system would be maximized.

¹⁶ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=2113>

¹⁷ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=188528>

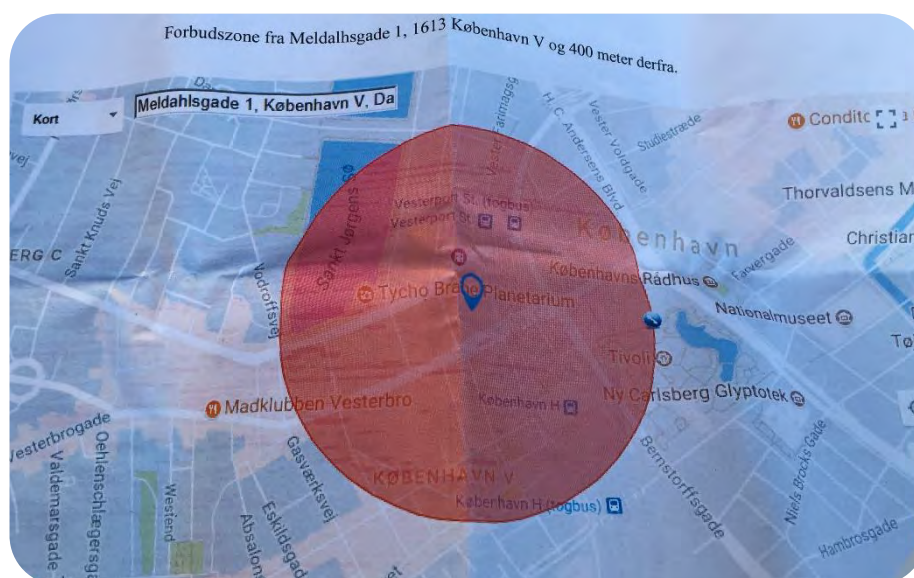
¹⁸ The old law can be found under chapter 22 of “Straffeloven” <https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/R0710.aspx?id=181992#id1cd07532-b0b2-4391-832a-c4b95c240f8a>

¹⁹ Information provided by the Danish Police to Kompasset in July 2018.

²⁰ <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/byret-frifinder-hjemlos-far-og-son-sla-lejr-pa-stroget>

²¹ <http://www.bt.dk/danmark/koebenhavns-politi-bruger-ikke-ny-roma-lov-selv-om-romalejre-bliver-mere-og-mere>

MIGRANTS' IMAGE OF THE OUTREACH WORK



As shown in the methodology section, a number of interviews were conducted with several migrants attended during Outreach. The team wanted to hear what people's perception of the project was and what impact Outreach had in the field. Several topics were identified as important, which will be presented in this chapter.

Contact, Recognition and Support

The homeless migrants are both highly visible and invisible at the same time. Anyone can see that they lead a daily existence in the streets, but their contact with the rest of society is extremely limited. An important issue that migrants spoke about in the interviews has to do with the need to be **recognized** and have regular **contact with a person or a place**. When living on the streets, even if one might have a network of friends or relatives, these are also often people who live in the same vulnerable situation. Having regular contact with someone outside these networks can **diminish the feeling of loneliness** that one might go through while living in the streets.

Outreach functioned as a **support network** for the homeless migrants they interacted with. People could turn to Outreach for help in relation to accessing information and services, as well as for a friendly chat, without worrying that they will be pre-judged or rejected. The Outreach project made contact to 610 people during three years, out of which 140 were considered close contacts and the other 470 were only briefly met in the streets, without attending them closely.

Outreach was constantly present in the streets, as well as in the main shelters visited by the target group, and combined different means to strengthen relations with migrants and provide support. This has led to Outreach becoming more than a point of reference for some people and going as far as being identified with *family*, as one of the Roma women interviewed points out. Without exaggerating the role of the project, the staff from Outreach became very close to the people they worked for and managed to provide some of the familiarity

They come when you don't expect them and offer you a tea or a soup, coffee. No matter what the weather is like or the season, they are out, and it helps, because maybe some days I don't even have the 6 DKK to buy a cup of tea. It helped me because they understood me from all points of view. I knew my situation from home and that I couldn't help too much, as I was ill and couldn't send money home that much. But Outreach understood that I was ill, and they helped me to receive treatment and see the doctor. I am happy I met them and all of you from Kompasset.
(R., 32, Romanian Roma man)

needed in everyone's life. Listening and recognizing the struggles of the people met, while attempting to solve the issues they confronted with in the streets, were tools which allowed for an efficient and humanizing work relation.

Many times, because of limitations and barriers in the system, the needs of the migrants would stay unheard and unresolved, but the simple act of listening and showing efforts to try to come with solutions made a big difference in the Outreach work.

*"They are like family to me. They always listen to what I need, and they accompany me everywhere. It's really difficult to be a foreigner, we are alone here and when someone helps you and lends you their hand it's a huge help. I can't even describe how much they helped me. They were like my right hand.
(S., 46, Romanian Roma woman)*

Access and Accompaniment

*It helped that you could come with us, otherwise we wouldn't have been able to find places. And I felt more secure to have someone with me, I can't manage with the train even.
(G., 35, Romanian woman)*

People interviewed appreciate and value the **access to knowledge**, they are eager to find out about where/when/and how to access information and services. Navigating²² in a foreign country without understanding the language can be frustrating and disabling for people in many ways. Moreover, it can present the migrants as uncooperative or unfriendly.

What people mentioned to be especially important is **access to health services and to the legal justice system**. Many times, migrants who live in the streets of Copenhagen will find themselves in situations where they need medical assistance, or they are approached by authorities and they do not understand what is being communicated to them. Even when translators are provided, because of the hasty character of the situation, due to very specialised language (e.g.: the legislative language) or simply because of a lack of contact, recognition and support, people would leave from an encounter with the authorities or medical services without understanding what had happened or what they are supposed to do next. It is in this type of circumstances where Outreach, as a point of reference for migrants, intervened to clarify situations and ease access.

*I had a big wound in my foot, I could have had my leg cut eventually because I am diabetic, and I developed an ulcer with infection in my foot. They came with me to all the doctors and the hospitals, I didn't know where to go, but they helped me get my foot operated twice and they came to visit me at the hospital. They also took me to get pills from the doctor for my diabetes and came with me to meet the lawyer, everywhere they came with me. Now they made me appointments to go periodically to the doctor. They help everyone, not only me.
(S., 46, Romanian Roma woman)*

Ensuring **access to health services** for homeless migrants in a language they would understand played an important part in the Outreach work: in 258 occasions support was given to access health services, including mental, physical and addiction issues. Access meant everything from advice on where treatment could be found to translation and accompaniment to the facility. Additionally, Outreach has also communicated with the hospitals and assured that necessary information was available from one facility to another (for ex:

²² For more information about the "navigation" concept, please check Henrik Vigh "Motion Squared. A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation".

making sure that the Red Cross clinic for migrants receives the information regarding a person's admittance and treatment in the hospital for follow up treatment).

As the two vignettes tell, people appreciated the support and the accompaniment in receiving medical help and felt relieved to have someone by their side during the process. Without someone by their side, they may have neglected their health, as they need to prioritize work and gaining money. Due to a large flexibility of the project and working by the principle that the activities come from the needs of the people, it was possible for Outreach to assist migrants in a manner that has increased their access to health services.

They (Copenhagen Police) arrested us at Roskilde and we were innocent. They held us 12 days in prison without a reason and Outreach helped us contact a lawyer and ask for compensation, because we were innocent.

*They helped us with **bringing justice to our case**, because we were arrested for no reason, we were humiliated and kept without food... the simple fact that we were arrested without doing anything, they kept us for 12 days and they also wanted to give us an entry ban to Denmark...for nothing. But then they analysed and figured out that neither I nor my father were guilty. So, after we were released, we were offered 15 000 DKK as compensation and they said that if we want more we should appeal, but we were happy with this. Maybe we would have deserved more, but we were happy that justice was made and that we didn't receive the entry ban.*

(E., 42, Romanian Roma man)

Homeless migrants interact with representatives of police on a daily basis. Being checked and photographed (them personally as well as their IDs), is part of the routine. People do not question this, and rarely do they protest. On the other hand, the legal system is something not accessible to them, due to language barrier. After the implementation of the two laws described above, more and more migrants living in the streets have approached Outreach for support in connection with fines and zone bans, but also for support with subpoenas for begging related court cases. In these situations, Outreach acted as the connection between the migrants and the authorities' representatives, such as court, police and lawyers.

According to the documentation gathered during the project, in 116 occasions support was given to people related to their judicial cases and/or fines from the police. In 49 instances people were supported to complain regarding interactions with the police. This involved providing translation for fines and subpoenas to filing complaints with the police, contesting fines, physical

support in court and in the relation with lawyers.

The support Outreach provided for migrants has contributed to people better understanding the laws as well as increasing their **access to a quality defence**. They were able to attend meetings with their lawyers prior to the actual court meeting and prepare for the interrogation during the trial. Overall, as one of the men interviewed mentions, Outreach work contributed to **bringing more justice in people's lives**. By facilitating access to information, but also by contributing to holding accountable the authorities, a sense of *existence in their own right* was achieved for people. In the context where they are criminalized for sleeping or for begging in the street, and where, as immigrants, they are photographed and checked regularly, defending their rights as well as their presence in the streets becomes an important issue.

Moreover, protecting their rights is important from the point of view of the **stigmatization processes** that vulnerable groups have been exposed to during their lives. A clear example is the one of the Roma minority, whose image across Europe has been culturally and mistakenly connected to criminality, misery and begging²³. Following up on cases and taking seriously the situations where people felt their rights have been infringed, contributes to empowering migrants living in homelessness. This also helps them gain back some of the integrity that experiences such as being wrongfully arrested can diminish in a person.

²³ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/705-Roma_Movement_Comparative-final_en.pdf

Last, but not less important, people mention being happy, having moments of happiness in the midst of a life lived in destitution, in the cold streets of a rainy city. They are happy to talk in Romanian, as well as talking to someone that can represent their needs, their rights and argue their case:

*If you don't know about your children...
it's very difficult, as a mother.
But when you receive help and someone tells you
where they are and you can understand how they are
you feel better... you are the **happiest**.*
(C., 47, Roma Romanian woman)

Language

*We feel very, very good that we have someone to help us.
Even if we don't speak the language,
but we can explain to you and then you translate.
Language is very important,
I can understand a bit, but I can't speak.*
(C., 47, Romanian Roma woman)

The level of schooling among the groups of people that Outreach interacted with can be described in general as being low, which is also reflected in a low level of knowledge of foreign languages. Especially migrants from e.g. Romania and Bulgaria, have difficulties in communicating with the social services, as other workers in the field have also remarked²⁴. The experience of Outreach is that migrants coming from these countries, as well as Albanians, are able to communicate by using basic Italian, French or Spanish, having lived and worked in these countries. The need for information and services in a **language that people understand is prevalent**.

As it also comes across from the pages above, the possibility of talking in your own language to someone that can help untangle certain situations is crucial in the way migrants navigate the streets and access services. It also allows for migrants to unload their worries and feel comforting. Through a **multilingual team**, Outreach has managed to build close relations with the migrants.

However, even if access has been facilitated to public health services and the legal system, or other shelters and facilities, the issue of language remains a challenge when it comes to accessing the labour market. As

many migrants cannot speak and understand Danish or English, their possibilities of accessing the formal employment system remain scarce and rarely do they manage to obtain a work contract.

*They also came to the shelters with me and talked to them
on my behalf and for everyone they talk. They are doing
God's work. I can't speak to people here, I don't know
where to go.*
(S., 46, Roma Romanian woman)

²⁴ <http://udenfor.dk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/report-on-homeless-migrants-in-copenhagen.pdf>



The main aim of the outreach work was to meet those who are homeless and live in the street. As much as possible, Outreach stayed on the front line - to meet people as soon as possible after their arrival in Copenhagen, learn and provide for their immediate needs, and where possible, refer them to relevant services. That could be a shelter, places where they can get free medical assistance, legal guidance or general counselling etc. During this process, a wide array of barriers could be observed with which migrants struggled. Among the challenges that homeless migrants encountered when trying to make contact with mainstream services can be mentioned:

- **Language barrier.**
- **Cultural differences between social service providers and migrants.**
- **Individual fear and apprehension towards bureaucratic institutions and procedures.**
- **Prior negative experiences of discrimination.**

As a means of maximizing equality of access, Outreach's work was to communicate, mediate and build a bridge between users and the available social services or mainstream institutions. In doing so, partnerships were built and strengthened with some of the already existing social services that work with the same target group. These partnerships have been extremely important in the Outreach work, as they allowed the team to step into already established avenues, where people hang out and start building rapport with Outreach users.

Furthermore, this made it possible to have at least two fixed locations where the team could be present a couple of times per week. This made it easier for people to know where to meet Outreach.

Mariatjenesten:

A part of Kirkens Korshær, *Mariatjenesten* assists all socially vulnerable people, homeless and lonely people. Their work is mainly based in Maria Church as well as in the day centre *Værested Istedgade 100*. *Maria Church* also functions as a night shelter between December and March every year, for

up to 25 people. *Istedgade 100* is a day shelter, where people can buy cheap clothes, do laundry, take a shower and receive general counselling. *Maria Church* has been Outreach's main base from the very beginning of the project. The Outreach team was offered their space to prepare practicalities for the daily tours in the city with coffee, tea and soup. In the beginning, Outreach would also start the shifts by reaching out to the migrants inside the church or in front, where people would gather and hang out. Shortly after, *Maria Church* became a point of reference for people to come and ask about Outreach. Through the courtesy of the staff at the church, it was also possible to have a private space to conduct one-on-one counselling when needed. The fact that the church was in the middle of Vesterbro provided us with a convenient base location, right in the middle of our target work area. The vicar of *Maria Church*, Anita Rohwer, also talks about most of the guests who come at the church being Romanian.

Because of the language barrier it is hard for all the staff members to get to know users, even though they come there every day. The cultural and linguistic barriers are challenges that affect their work, but they have found it difficult to find volunteers who speak Romanian and are willing to work with this specific target group. This is another example of the added stigma and marginalization many of our users are met with on a daily basis.

"You know a lot more about what is going on in the streets and what is going on within this group of people. And they also come to Kompasset. You learn from their questions there and what kind of help they need. And of course, you speak the language, of course many of them speak Romanian. You can help them in so many ways that we cannot. We are able to help them with practical things and giving them a place where to relax, making a no-stress zone for them. There would be so many frustrations for us and the people if you were not there. [...] You are more up to date with the legislation." (employee Lene Rindal Nielsen, *Værested Istedgade 100*)

Additionally, while the staff could help users with practical tasks and general information, users often reached out to Outreach for help in other matters of which the staff might not be able to help otherwise.

*"What I see about your outreach is that you actually have these locations, such as "La suta¹", which is such a popular place[...]. It is the best conditions to make outreach work in these places. And the combination of having a very attractive place where people actually will go because there is something of value for them there - but at the same time, trying to help them where they are. I think that's what you've been doing, also using *Maria Kirke* - you used the places that are actually attractive, instead of using all your time on the street; that's the best way in which you could be working."* (Michael Lodberg Olsen - *Minoritet.dk* founder)

In the same way, Outreach has been present at Kirkens Korshær's **Værested Istedgade 100**. The cooperation started with using the space from *Istedgade 100* for the distribution of the *Strada* magazine²⁵. Outreach was present there twice per week for making the sellers' IDs. In time, it became a good venue to meet people and to do outreach tasks in an already known settled location. The collaboration with *Istedgade 100* and *Maria Church* has been especially effective in easing the communication between staff and the users.

"It's very helpful with all the translations, all the time, so all the misunderstanding is gone, because we have language difficulty. That is a very good help. And also trying to understand the needs, understand the problem." (employee Pernille Munch, *Mariatjenesten*)

²⁵ *La Strada* is a magazine sold by the street minorities, belonging to *Minoritet.dk*: <https://www.facebook.com/gademagasinetstrada/>

Minoritet.dk

Outreach developed a close partnership with Minoritet.dk²⁶, an NGO which among other social initiatives created the magazine “Strada”. The magazine was created with the idea of providing the street minorities with a possibility of making themselves seen, heard and not least as an avenue for them to create income in a decent, humane manner.

The team contributed to this project by facilitating the production of IDs. Outreach could also communicate information about the conditions under which the magazines are sold. Additionally, Outreach was often called by both sellers and managers of shops in front of which people sold the magazine when communication was difficult. In other words, Outreach took on the task of serving as a link between shops-users-minoritet.dk. It has been a means of better understanding the environment in which this type of social initiative can develop, function and serve the target group. Additionally, it provided the team with information about daily challenges which the sellers encountered as minorities in Denmark.

Last but not least, many sellers met Outreach for the first time because they heard from others of the possibility to sell “Strada” to make an income in Denmark. Therefore, making IDs for new sellers has also served as an opportunity to meet those who arrived recently in Copenhagen, or recently became homeless and were looking for means of navigating this new environment they found themselves in.

“When I started working with people who used drugs, they were called criminals by the police because they were doing criminal acts. Right now, the police have changed totally [on that issue], but now the people from Eastern Europe are looked at in the same way the drug users were looked at 20 years ago. The police arrest them, as if doing illegal stuff and it’s awful to see how we treat people [...]. So, we said, of course they are here and if they can earn some money to support their family in Romania, or their kids going to school - it’s fine. The main idea behind Strada is that we have to look at minorities as something positive. (...) and that is what we are trying to do with the magazines and the content. To flash small cultures that are making mainstream culture”. (Michael Lodberg Olsen, Minoritet.dk founder.)

The Red Cross Health Clinic

The Red Cross Health Clinic for undocumented migrants is a service that provides general medical care to people without registration in Denmark. While the public health system can provide assistance in hospitals for people with acute health problems, the Red Cross Clinic is the only place where the homeless migrants without registration can turn to. Here, people can consult a general practitioner as well as a midwife and specialised doctors (dentist, psychologist, physiotherapist, gynaecologist) on specific dates. Outreach also knows where or how to find a user and make them aware that there is a possibility to see the doctor they need. This is something the clinic would not have the resources to do.

Some of the barriers that migrants meet in accessing medical care include: cultural differences between the service providers and the patients, clinic hours which might not be suitable for the needs of the homeless patients, lack of a health card, difficulty in accessing medication, competing priorities: such as finding food and

“We also have special doctors here: eye doctors, psychiatrists etc. We sometimes contacted Outreach and said “This patient needs to be here” especially if they don’t have their own phone or if they don’t speak English and they cannot read our SMS. So, we contacted Outreach because they see them and they know where people are, where they hang out and they have told this patient that they have to be at the clinic on this day at this time etc. So, it’s been very important for a lot of people. (Lene, nurse at the Red Cross Clinic)”

²⁶ Minoritet.dk is the organisation that stands behind other projects such as “Sexalance”, “Fixelance” and a series of practical solutions to improve work conditions for bottles collectors (making bottles and cans collection cleaner, for example, by the placing of shelves on the public trash cans and the creation of re-usable green bags which the pant-collectors can use multiple times).

shelter. Working on a daily basis with many of the migrants, and building a trusting rapport means they often also trust us with helping them access the medical opportunities available.

Furthermore, it was extremely useful to keep a close collaboration with the clinic, especially when it came to homeless people who cannot speak English or Danish. The staff has been accommodating towards receiving supplementary information prior to a patient's visit. Additionally, if there were patients who needed to go back for further tests or investigations and we were in contact with them, the clinic could always contact us and ask us to pass the information on to the person of interest. In this manner, Outreach functioned often as a "next-of-kin" type of contact.

Gadejuristen²⁷

Many of the migrants who arrive in Denmark are not at first aware of the fact that sleeping outside and begging are illegal. Outreach has made a task from trying to keep people informed about their rights and obligations as well as the new laws. When meeting people who were fined, called to court or received a zone ban, they were often referred to Street Lawyers (Gadejuristen). The team followed up on the cases and attended individual meetings with lawyers.

"...also with patients who are very sick for example and maybe they do not have the power to go down here alone; it can also be the case that they abuse substances of sorts and they don't think about the health as being the most important thing. So, they do not come here because a lot of other things are more important to them. And I experienced many times that if Outreach would come down here with these kind of patients - therefore the weakest kind of patients - and show them the place and say "this place is ok" then the patient would come down here. Because they say it is ok. And it means a lot." (Lene, nurse at The Red Cross Clinic)

In one particular instance, Outreach and the Street Lawyers collaborated in what came to be the first case heard in the Danish court in relation to the law

regarding public order. This was the case of a man who slept alone in the city centre and for this reason he received a zone ban and a fine. His case was taken to court by the Street Lawyers and was eventually heard in the High Court (Østre Landsret) in 2019. Here he was unanimously acquitted²⁸. This case has been paramount to the way in which the political debate turned, regarding what is an unsafe camp, who can be considered to be setting a camp, what kind of artefacts are those sleeping outside supposed to have or not have around them etc.

Though this case was a victory for the user, it goes without saying that many other people in the target group remain unheard and unassisted. Collaborations and knowledge sharing between social services and legal aid services, especially when done tactfully, have the potential to increase access to the legal system.

²⁷ Gadejuristen is a private organisation that offers legal counselling and representation to vulnerable and marginalised people. While their primary target group are people who suffer of substance abuse, they also assist homeless people and sex workers who might find themselves at crossroads within the legal system.

²⁸ <https://politiken.dk/indland/art7154233/Hjemløs-lavede-ikke-lejr-på-gaden>

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The analysis of the three years in the field and the data collected for this evaluation report, allows us to formulate several important findings:

- a significant part of the migrants who live in the streets wish to have **contact, access and information** to health services, to the legal system, to information in general and need support in the process.
- **Language is essential** – we encourage social services in Copenhagen to enrich their linguistic capacities by hiring people or attracting volunteers. The team also finds that migrants want to be able to learn new words in English or Danish in order to communicate with the Danes. Free Danish and English classes are not in a structured manner, readily available to unregistered migrants²⁹.
- **Familiarity and experience** in the field are important. Beside the access part which can be established much easier if there is a certain familiarity with the beneficiaries and their situation and background, it is important for the outreach workers to have been involved in this type of work previously. It makes it easier for people to open up about sensitive issues.
- Ensure that the **voices of people** are heard, and their needs addressed: the methods and activities conducted in outreach were generally steered by the needs identified.
- Working in **partnership** with other social services is also essential. Outreach's collaboration with the Red Cross Health Clinic, Istedgade 100, Mariatjenesten, Minoritet.dk provided the project with more avenues of support for migrants. It also helped partners to develop their activities as organizations and led to strengthening the overall services available for homeless migrants within the part of Copenhagen where Outreach was active. Collaboration opens up doors to approach new users.
- **Documentation** is important for assuring a fluid communication within the team and to gathering data for advocacy purpose.
- Though these issues might be obvious in this field of work, we want to make a special point on the **ethics** that one should adopt when working with vulnerable groups:
 - a) Trust, understanding and non-judgemental approach.
 - b) Availability, reliability, flexibility.
- Finally, **considering the political, social and historical context** is important in the work with migrants. In order to understand where people come from, what their situation is as immigrants, the staff should be knowledgeable, informed and documented on the background the various groups of people. Outreach acted as a tool in this process, offering translation as well as presentations and talks with the staff from other social services in the city. Furthermore, the political climate in which outreach was implemented had a great importance on the work done. Being informed and staying updated with the legislative changes or with the general discourse regarding the target groups of Outreach has been key to our work, as Outreach was many times the only source of information available for migrants. Lastly, we believe that knowing basic facts about people's history will contribute to a better understanding of the beneficiaries and of their life experiences which influence their current situation.

²⁹ There are at least two offers for Danish classes, Bethesda Church and Café Cadeau and sometimes local churches offer this. However, they cannot cover the need among homeless migrants. Other places like Kompasset also offer small Danish classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUTREACH WORK

- **Strong team capacity, both in numbers and skills:** a big team assures a broader geographical area and reaching a higher number of beneficiaries. Also, covering a diversity of languages is important (e.g.: Romanian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Italian, Hungarian). To ensure quality of work, trainings and experience exchanges should be organized for the staff.
- **Partnership** is important – a frequent presence of the Outreach staff in the homeless shelters from the city contributes to improving the services available for migrants, as connections and relations can be created easier.
- **Advocacy for migrants’s rights** in public and private spaces: through outreach work, an important quantity of information is collected, which is not otherwise available to the public or even to other organizations/services. This information should be used to advocate on behalf of migrants, support their cause and make their voices heard. A better representation in front of the authorities and support for an open dialogue with politicians should be strengthened. This was specifically asked by people who experienced exclusion and aggressive behaviour because of their presence in the street with different work activities (e.g. selling “Strada”, performing music/street art, sleeping or begging, collecting bottles or scrap, etc.).
- **Informative activities:**
 - cultural info meetings to be organized for involved staff and volunteers.
 - cultural mediation and interpretation: both the users and the service providers can encounter language and cultural barriers when working with each other. Communication can be improved through outreach activities.
 - organize new activities for migrants, through outreach (supporting people to learn English or Danish, workshops for working on drafting CVs and improving people’s skills regarding job search, etc.).
 - activities for women (workshops related to health issues specifically for women, empowerment through counselling and leisure, etc.).
 - preparing informative material on different health issues (skin conditions which can be easily contracted by living in crowded spaces and on the street, workshops about reproductive health and prevention).
 - relaxation activities (movie evenings, dinners, visits in the city at museums, parks, etc.).
- **Documentation** must be elaborated carefully:
 - Registration of journals for individual cases.
 - Documentation and research on legislation and topics of interest for people.