Unique collaboration will bring unique social innovation to end homelessness

The first meeting of a Central and Eastern European consortium of organisations working with people with the experience of homelessness in their regions to jointly pilot integrated social and health services took place in Košice recently.

Casa Ioana - Romania, **Health and Social Development Foundation** - Bulgaria, **Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta** (HCSOM) - Hungary, **Housing First Foundation** - Poland, **Metropolitan Research Institute Budapest** - Hungary, **DEDO Foundation** - Slovakia and **All for the Family** - Slovakia will thus pilot innovations in the field for the next three years.

This unique collaboration is supported by the European Commission, initiated and led by the **DEDO Foundation**, which will implement the **SOLACE CEE** project in two cities, Košice and Prešov. In total, the EC has supported 4 projects in the framework of the call for social innovation, in Slovakia a similarly large project and its support directly from Brussels has been received for the second time.

"Our goal is to create integrated social and health services in both cities, complementing the comprehensive approach to ending family homelessness - from housing to accompaniment and employment - that we are implementing in Eastern Slovakia," said Alena Vachnová.

"In our work, we try to use proven approaches that we bring and implement in Slovakia with the aim of ending homelessness, not just managing it," she added.

The Solace project seeks to pilot an innovative integrated health and social services initiative to address the complex needs of people with the experience of homelessness for this demographic. The project will embrace a holistic approach to homelessness, incorporating healthcare components within a continuum of care-from street outreach to housing solutions. This will be achieved by collaborating with dedicated and social specialist teams engaged in outreach fieldwork and medical clinics, supplemented by digital health and trauma-informed care elements. The resultant support services will integrate the humane values of the Housing First approach with a spectrum of health services (covering trust, physical, and mental health, including substance abuse), social care, employability services, social networking and support services. The overarching goal is to fully implement this innovative model in five countries within the Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Balkan region, specifically Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania.

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