

# **The context of the Low Threshold Center Uzel in Šternberk**

## **Theoretical definition**

### **Social service**

Social service is an activity that is aimed at helping people in adverse social situations that they cannot solve on their own. The goal of social services is to ensure a dignified life, support social inclusion and prevent social exclusion.

In the Czech Republic, social services are defined by Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services. This law establishes the types of social services, the conditions for their provision, as well as the rights and obligations of providers and users of social services.

### **Charity of the Czech Republic**

Charity Czech Republic is the largest non-profit organization providing social and health services in the Czech Republic. It is part of the international Caritas network and operates under the auspices of the Catholic Church. Its main goal is to help people in need, regardless of their origin, religion or belief.

### **The Low-threshold Day Center for people without shelter**

The low-threshold day center is governed by Act No. 108/2006 Coll. of the Act on Social Services and Decree No. 505/2006 Coll. Decree implementing some provisions of the Act on Social Services. This law gives social service providers three basic activities that they must fulfill.

- a) help with personal hygiene or provision of conditions for personal hygiene,
- b) provision of food or assistance in providing food,
- c) assistance in exercising rights, legitimate interests and taking care of personal matters.

## **The city of Šternberk**

Šternberk is a town in the Olomouc Region in the Czech Republic. It has approximately 13,500 inhabitants and covers an area of approximately 48.73 km<sup>2</sup>. The city is known for its rich history, beautiful castle and traditional cultural events. Šternberk is located near the city of Olomouc.

## **The context of a small town in the Czech Republic**

In small towns in the Czech Republic, we often encounter smaller communities that have a characteristic atmosphere associated with a lower population density, a calmer pace of life and often with a greater emphasis on traditions and local community life. Small towns may have more limited resources and options compared to large cities, which may affect the availability of services and employment.

## **Housing capacities in the city of Šternberk**

People without shelter in the city of Šternberk face a significant limitation of accommodation options, as there are no hostels or shelters in the city. This situation leaves these individuals without any basic form of protection and support. For this reason, people without shelter are forced to look for alternative places to sleep (temporary shelters, garden cabins, benches in the park, a tent in a more remote part of the city).

## **The approach of the city of Šternberk to people without shelter**

The city of Šternberk relies mainly on the services provided by the Charity Šternberk to care for unhoused people. This organization runs the Low-threshold Day Center *Uzel*, which offers basic services such as warm meals, the possibility of showering and laundry. In this way, the city tries to provide basic help, but despite this, the situation of people without shelter in Šternberk remains complex.

Overall, the city of Šternberk's approach to the unhoused people is struggling with limited resources, which makes it difficult to achieve long-term and sustainable solutions for these people.

## **Management of the city of Šternberk**

There are no public declarations, strategies or plans that specifically address the needs of the unhoused.

## **Social services for unhoused people in Šternberk**

The *Uzel* Center serves as a place where unhoused people can get short-term relief and basic needs, however, the opportunities for long-term solutions of their situation are limited. The counseling and social assistance that the center offers is valuable, but the mere existence of these services does not address the deeper causes of homelessness, such as lack of affordable housing, chronic unemployment, or health problems.

In addition, Charity Counseling *Nedlužím* provides support in solving financial problems, which is crucial for people trying to break out of the cycle of homelessness. However, even this assistance is often not enough to permanently improve the living situation if adequate job opportunities and housing are not available.

### **The relationship of the Šternberk community to the unhoused people**

In the city of Šternberk, the community's relationship with the unsheltered people can be described as problematic. This relationship is influenced by several factors, including fear of crime, ignorance of issues, and lack of information about the unhoused themselves.

#### **Fear of crime**

Fear of crime is a common concern that affects the perception of the unhoused in many communities, including Šternberk. It is often believed that homelessness is associated with higher crime rates. This view may be supported by media coverage that often highlights negative events without providing a broader context. As a result, residents may perceive the unsheltered as a potential threat to their safety and property.

#### **Fear of the unknown**

Another important factor is the fear of the unknown, which can be classified as social phobia. People tend to fear what they don't know or understand. Homelessness is often shrouded in myths and stereotypes, leading to unhoused people being seen as "other" or "foreign". This fear is reinforced by the lack of direct interaction and communication between residents and the unhoused, which leads to the persistence of misunderstandings and the formation of prejudices.

#### **Ignorance of the problems and needs of the unhoused**

Many residents of Šternberk may not have enough information about the real problems and needs of the unhoused people. Homelessness is often seen as a personal failing, rather than a complex social problem influenced by factors such as unemployment, mental illness, addictions or insufficient social support. This ignorance contributes to the dehumanization of the unhoused and reduces the community's willingness to support integration programs and social services.

#### **Community impacts and options for solutions**

Fear and ignorance can lead to social isolation and stigmatization of the unhoused people, further complicating their situation and hindering their reintegration into society.

## **Charity Šternberk**

Charity Šternberk was established on the basis of a voluntary community of religious people from Šternberk. The Archbishop of Olomouc established it in 1991. Charity Šternberk is an ecclesiastical legal entity with its own legal subjectivity, it is registered with the Ministry of Culture pursuant to Act 3/2002 Coll. on freedom of religion and the status of churches and religious societies. At the same time, it forms a basic component of the Olomouc Archdiocesan Charity, which is part of the Charity of the Czech Republic and is a member of the international association Caritas Internationalis.

### **The relationship between the church and charity**

The Church and Charity are closely related, as the Church often establishes and supports charitable organizations. Today, however, Charity helps all people, regardless of their religion. In doing so, it follows values such as love and helping others, but at the same time pays attention to the principles of social work.

### **Material help**

Charity Šternberk provides material help to people in need with food and hygiene packages, clothing and furniture. This help is crucial for many individuals and families who find themselves in a difficult life situation.

### **Social services provided by Charity Šternberk**

Charity Šternberk offers a total of seven different services. These services include:

1. Home health care – Provision of health care in the home environment.
2. Home hospice care – Care of patients in the terminal stage of the disease in the home environment.
3. Charitable care service – Assistance in caring for the elderly and persons with disabilities.
4. Low-threshold day center *Uzel* – Support for unhoused people and in critical situations.
5. Social rehabilitation *Rozkvět* – Support for persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups.
6. SAS For the Family – Social assistance services for families.
7. *Nedlužím* Charity Counseling - Counseling for people with financial problems.