

MAKING ACTIVE INCLUSION HAPPEN

EXIGO – Malmö/Sweden

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1. What is EXIGO?

EXIGO is a project in collaboration between the town of Malmö, the Employment agency and the regional authorities of Skåne. The target groups of EXIGO are unemployed persons that suffer from PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Many refugees come to Sweden with traumatic experiences, caused by wars and violent conflicts. Many of them will not be able to learn the language and get a job without qualified help. Traditionally, different authorities provide service for different needs. Often there is not so much coordination between public providers of health care, education and jobs.

Persons with a complex set of problems need a holistic approach, where they look for solutions based on their needs and interests. This demands an integrated strategy, a tailored approach from the service providers.

EXIGO is an initiative that started out as a project supported by the European Social Fund in 2006. Now it will be established as a part of the ordinary work of the public sector, working with 200 individuals who suffer from PTSD.

EXIGO works simultaneously in three areas:

1. Formation: language training, social competence, coaching, work training, support from the Employment agency.
2. Health care: counseling regarding sleep, stress, food, physical exercise, body balance and relaxation training.
3. Treatment: at the Red Cross centre for victims of torture and war, counseling for individuals and groups.

There is a staff of 20 people:

- 3 from the Employment agency
- 7 teachers
- 2 counselors
- 5 coordinators
- 50% health counselor
- 25% nurse
- 2 work training coordinators

The coordinators and the counselors have the main responsibility to look at the whole situation of the individual, and to plan together with her/him.

2. Integrated approach

This particular group (refugees) faces multiple and complex obstacles to social and professional participation. A refugee in the city of Malmö from Bosnia Herzegovina explains it in the following way:

“As we arrived in Sweden we were all terrified due to our experiences during the war. Then we had to jump into reality, just like nothing has happened. Integrated services are needed to overcome these barriers.”

Minimum income is provided through the Swedish social benefit system. You have a right to this support if you don't have personal resources such as a car, money on a bank account or a house/flat that you own.

For a single person the social benefit includes (SEK):

Food	1640
Clothing/shoes	530
Leisure time activities	400
Hygiene	260
News paper, telephone, TV	780
Consumables various	110
TOTAL	3720 (about 433 euro)

The benefit system additionally covers rent, health care, urgent dental treatment, electricity, travel costs to work, home insurance, costs for trade union membership and unemployment insurance.

Access to services and support towards decent employment is provided through the holistic service of the EXIGO staff.

3. Final reflections

EXIGO is an exception if we look at the work of the public sector. The structures of different independent public authorities tend to isolate one service from another. That is, for example, the case of health care and Employment agencies. Every sector has its own interests and “culture”. If you want to do an integrated work from a holistic perspective, there are many structural obstacles to overcome. There are not many projects such as EXIGO, to have reached the goal to become part of the ordinary work of the public sector. The fact that it was possible indicates the urgency of implementing holistic approaches, based on the needs and interests of individuals with a complex set of problems.

EXIGO focuses on formation, health care and treatment. Active Inclusion focuses on minimum income, access to services and support towards decent employment. Both of them express a concept based on a holistic approach.

If they are flexible enough to meet different groups and individuals where they are, adapting their work to the interests and needs expressed by them, then the work of EXIGO and EAPN can make a real difference. It can contribute to create hope for a better future for many individuals with horrible experiences from the past.

But this doesn't happen automatically. We have to look at the context and the political implications of the problem. The realization of holistic work and social integration needs a strong civic society, where vulnerable groups gain in power and influence. If organizations in the public, private or none governmental sector want to work in a holistic way, it has to be a collaboration based on power sharing and respectful dialogue with the organizations of the target groups. If this is not an essential part of the concept, the approach will be paternalistic, rather than holistic.

I am convinced that active inclusion, based on minimum income, access to services and support towards decent employment, will not succeed without strong organizations of the vulnerable target groups taking part in the process. The holistic model of EXIGO, focusing on formation, health care and treatment, will only succeed if there is a strong presence of organizations of refugees and immigrants in the Swedish society.

This is a big challenge, almost a provocation for the powerful groups of our societies. At the end of a regional EAPN conference on the different faces of poverty, one participant asked: "Does our society really want to eradicate poverty? Can our society *afford* not having people living in poverty?"

This is a very important question. If there were no strong groups in the Swedish society that resist the combat against poverty, we would have eradicated poverty a long time ago. Sweden is a very rich society. *Because of this resistance*, the work for social inclusion and holistic work has essentially to be political. Perhaps that is why we are in this Parliament today.

If social inclusion and holistic work don't include the political struggle for power for vulnerable groups of our societies, the risk is great that a *Present* Traumatic Stress Syndrome will be added to the *Post* Traumatic Stress Syndrome of the individuals coming to EXIGO.