

STOPA

We recently interviewed **Mr. Pavol Sabela** at the **NGO Stopa Slovensko**. STOPA Slovensko provides an integration center for homeless people and those at risk of extreme social exclusion and poverty. They support people that are looking to get off the streets of Bratislava.



They're an organization that's looking to help homeless people through several different practices including:

Housing

Providing housing systems and ending homelessness. They've been working to ensure that people who are at risk of losing their accommodation don't become homeless. The accommodation is co-financed and guests can stay for a maximum of one year.

Reconnection service

Preventing the continuation of homelessness in Bratislava or further migration to another country. They have experience in dealing with Slovak citizens who have found themselves homeless in another country. They help communicate and deal with the return of the individual back home.

Specialized consultancy

Physical homelessness is just one form of homelessness. Specialized social consultancy tries to solve the mental homelessness through expert advice to address past, trauma and difficult moments that pull homeless people into depression.

Integration center

Their work at the center is focused on providing support to people who ask for it. They can help with finding legal work, personal bankruptcy, contacting family, searching for housing etc. They also have work therapy where they focus on training their skills.

Rare Crew helped finalize a project for Stopa which we believe has great potential to succeed. We created a platform where a portfolio of Stopa's clients are listed so that they'll have a better chance at finding a job. You can view it here: [Home Page](#)

Hi Pavol, thanks for taking the time to answer a few questions for us. What was the inspiration behind Stopa Slovensko?

Our project was inspired by two things. One was a similar project which was focused on the Roma community, where people can change the color of their skin on their profile and use the equivalent of a Slovak name. It's awful that some people have to do this in order to get a job. The second was our reaction and preparation for the last phase of the pandemic. Many people on the streets who have lost their jobs have also lost their savings and are in a deep, unknown crisis of homelessness. We also heard from our partners in different parts of the EU that for many, this phase has already begun which meant we had to act.

What has been the biggest challenge in creating your own organization in Slovakia?

Establishing the organization wasn't that complicated, however maintaining and creating your own space was a whole different story. In Slovakia and especially in Bratislava, where we operate, it was and unfortunately is still difficult to push through the Western European approaches. We are so slow over here. Even today we feel that approaches which have already evolved in Europe are only now established in Slovakia. As we are part of an international movement called 'The European End Street Homelessness Campaign', we are in the process of creating and viewing strategies that are helping homeless people. We've been trying to promote these strategies in our country for years, but we face the 'Central European context' of non-admission.



What's been the hardest challenge you've faced dealing with homeless people?

When we started, we were unique. Our goal wasn't to hold these people by their hand and treat them like children. We started to treat people authentically and strengthen their potential, something they were not used to. But we continued to give these people the dignity they deserve. It should not be forgotten that many of them have been on the streets for years and 'learned helplessness' has engulfed them. Breaking these blocks is always the most important and difficult thing, but it works. The words 'you can end homelessness' aren't just a phrase.

What's been the most successful story you've had from a homeless person?

There are several success stories as we have more than 70 people who now live a happy life. Sometimes they'll write to us, especially during the holidays, and sometimes we'll see each other in a store so they'll wink at us (especially if they are with someone). Some of our former clients have also had weddings.

Is the situation with homelessness getting worse during the pandemic?

Yes, and we can even say the situation is worse than what it was before. The city and country have ignored this group of people for years. Many have died, been infected, and the health conditions of those who have been on the streets for a few days are getting worse. Many of us may be at risk of homelessness.

For what projects/services did your company hire Rare Crew, and what were your goals?

Our goal was to create a platform on the Internet where fair and social-minded employers could find potential employees amongst our clients, which are homeless people that are discriminated because of their social status. We believe that this project has great potential to succeed and we hope that this pilot project will be disseminated to our partner organizations within the EU.

How did you select Rare Crew and what were the deciding factors?

I'll admit that I didn't know about Rare Crew before. As a person outside of IT technology, I didn't know anyone in this area. I wrote a request on social media and a Rare Crew employee told me that they can help. After the initial online call, where I presented my ideas, I didn't hesitate to say yes to Rare Crew. I like their approach and how they perceive that they are going to do something different, something unordinary, something with a deeper meaning. I think they understood it very well.

What do you expect from a new client Portal which Rare Crew helped to create?

We expect a community of 'fair employers' around the portal. We believe that many employers realize that these people are homeless, but that they are extremely skillful, intelligent and want to change their situation. There are various forms to end homelessness and housing support is an integral part of that. That's why we named our page "three steps" - housing - work - stability. We also perceive that this pilot project is unique. If it works and we have results, we'll be sure to share this with our partner organizations within the EU.

Can you share any measurable outcomes of the project or general feedback about the deliverables?

If I look at the project, I can currently evaluate its preparatory phase before launch. I can say that the project was well prepared and everything is ready to go. In my opinion, there will be a request for this platform from other cities or countries. We think that the uniqueness of this project can help many individuals in crisis.

Describe their project management style, including communication tools and timelines.

I think that the communication was very effective, despite the fact that all communication had to take place online. Right at the beginning, a contact person was appointed with whom I could communicate and resolve issues with.

What did you find most impressive or unique about this company?

They understood the deeper meaning of the goal and therefore tried to make the website as good

and effective as possible. I also recognize the personal contribution as the creators tried to understand with the position of social service providers.

How can we all help?

Raising awareness is a basic way to help. This text, which you're currently reading, is also a form of help. It's the distribution of information that sensitizes and breaks down prejudices about homeless people.

"People who are homeless are not social inadequates. They are people without homes."

