

Social Work in Immigration Detention

The experiences of helping services in Hungary



MENEDÉK

HUNGARIAN
ASSOCIATION
FOR MIGRANTS

This publication was developed in the scope of the project titled “Supportive Services for Third Country Nationals under Alien Policing Procedure” (MMIA-3.1.2-2015-00002), with the support of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union. The views expressed in this publication reflect the views of the authors and may in no circumstances be considered as being the official position of the European Commission or the Ministry of the Interior, and the European Commission or the Ministry of the Interior has no liability for them whatsoever.

The content of the publication may be used for the purpose of non-commercial research, studies and information, with indication of the source.

Title of the publication: Social work in immigration detention – The experiences of helping services in Hungary

Published by: Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants

Person responsible for publication: Antal Örkény

Address: H-1081 Budapest, Népszínház utca 16. III. em. 3.

Phone: +36-1-322-1502

Email: menedek@menedek.hu

Website: menedek.hu

Facebook: [fb.com/menedekegyesulet](https://www.facebook.com/menedekegyesulet)

Author: Ildikó Szász

Professional proofreaders: András Kovács, Katalin Bognár

Typesetting: Damuzi Bt.

Editing: Zsófia Borszéki

Translation and proofreading of the English version: Episztemon Bt.

“Our Association helps foreigners coming to Hungary find a new home in the country. Pursuant to Act LXXVI of 2017, Menedék qualifies as an organization supported from abroad. Our most important supporters are the approximately 400.000 foreigners who chose Hungary as their new home in the past decades.”

Budapest, 2018



Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose of the publication	5
Short description of the project	6
Environment and purpose of the service	9
The target group	14
Domestic situation	17
Age	19
Sex	20
Education	21
Financial situation, social status	22
Religion	23
Country of origin, cultural characteristics	23
Typical behaviors and characters – help with orientation	26
Social work at immigration detention centers	36
The tasks of social workers	37
The set of tools of social workers	38
Communication tools	39
The content and purpose of helping work	42
Afterword	69

Introduction

Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants has been providing services at immigration detention centers since 1 March 2011. The Association conducts this activity in partnership with the Police, initially supported by the European Return Fund and then the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The partnership was established at the request of the Hungarian National Police Headquarters.

In the first year, service provision commenced at the two major detention centers in Kiskunhalas and Nyírbátor, and then based on the positive experiences, the helping personnel of Menedék started to work at the two other minor detention centers in March 2012. In developing this professional material, we have almost 7 years of experience to build upon.

At the start of the partnership, the Police and Menedék set it as a joint goal to provide helping and support services for foreigners held at detention centers establishing conditions for humane detention and facilitating effective return, smooth proceedings with the authorities, beneficial use of the leisure time of the foreigners, dealing with their problems and the prevention of extraordinary incidents.

Purpose of the publication

This publication is mainly intended for people providing helping services for detained foreigners in Hungary or in other countries. We also intend to provide useful information to people working at detention centers in other roles, such as guards, physicians or medical assistants. The publication may help representatives of the immigration authorities to get to know the background, everyday life and behavior of their clients better. We hope it will prove to be an interesting read for anyone wishing to gain an outlook on the life, difficulties, challenges and possibilities of detention centers.

Our publication is not a fully developed, tested and standardized methodological guide. It does not lay down generally applicable statements regarding work performed with foreigners or in the course of the detention or regarding the work of helpers. It simply summarizes the professional experiences gathered by the professionals of Menedék Association in the course of their work done at immigration detention centers in the past seven years.

Having regard to the foregoing, we strove to develop criteria, recommendations and ideas that, on the one hand, help social workers working in similar environments to do their job better, more effectively and more consciously, and on the other hand, help any professionals who enter into contact with detainees held at immigration detention centers in any manner. By sharing our experiences, we wish to give them the opportunity to get to know and understand the detainees better and gain an outlook on their lives and difficulties; perhaps they will find some ideas in the material that will make their work easier.

Short description of the project

In most cases, the citizens of third countries not meeting the requirements of entry and residence arrive in Hungary after a difficult journey, having suffered traumas, and in poor physical and mental condition. Detention is another trauma for them, and it is particularly difficult to cope with for families with children. In many cases they have deficient or incorrect information regarding the procedures and have unrealistic expectations of the possibilities offered by the European Union. They find it particularly challenging to accept their situation, to understand and cooperate with the detention and immigration policy procedures and to make substantial decisions. The lack of continuously available, personalized information regarding the order and status of the procedure and the rules of detention, as well as of help with respect to processing the information and answers to their questions also generate tension in them.

The proportion of vulnerable individuals is high in the target group. Psychological and mental problems are common, and with no regular care provided by professionals, these remain undetected and untreated. During the detention, the foreigners' contact with the outside world and their family members is limited. The helplessness, boredom and idleness may lead to further deterioration of their physical and mental state. The deterioration of their condition may result in an increase of the number of extraordinary incidents (aggressive behavior, self-harm, hunger strikes).

The detention in Hungary is the first place where foreigners' previous unrealistic expectations are shattered; however, it takes hard work for them to be able to recognize the reality of the situation, cope with their failures, come to terms with returning and develop the creative mindset necessary for starting anew. It is difficult to envision successful reintegration without these. The mandate of the authority and security personnel only covers information provision by the authority conducting the procedure, providing for the exercising of rights, performance of the obligations and fulfilment of basic physical needs. In the absence of civil helping professionals having relevant language, social and multicultural skills and an efficient set of tools who are also independent of

the authorities, it is not possible to provide client-focused care meeting the special needs of the target group.

The Hungarian National Police Headquarters and Menedék Association have been providing helping and supporting professional services at immigration detention centers in order to promote sustainable returns since 2011, with the support of the European Return Fund.

We provide helping and support services facilitating humane authority proceedings from the time the individual enters the immigration procedure until the end of the detention. By the inclusion of a civilian presence, the employees of Menedék Association provide independent, accessible and client-focused information and counselling regarding the order of return procedures, the options, rights and obligations of the citizens of third countries, the order of detention and the status of personal issues and maintain regular contact with the authorities responsible for conducting the procedures.

In order to promote the beneficial use of time, helpers organize community and leisure programs at the detention centers, paying attention to the needs and interests of the foreigners. They pay special attention to families with underage children. Internet access makes it possible for people placed at detention centers to keep in contact with the outside world and their family members from whom they became separated and helps them obtain information and avoid segregation and hospitalization. We employ psychologists to provide professional help to people going through a crisis, who are at risk of self-harm or who can be diagnosed with personality disorders. By providing psychiatric care at the place of detention, the need for transportation to medical care with armed escort can be avoided and we can provide for trauma-free examinations, diagnose mental disorders, monitor their state in a regular manner and continuously control their medication. The helper, medical and security personnel are supported by psychologists and psychiatrists in providing appropriate treatment to foreigners suffering from psychological disorders.

The helping professionals working at detention centers provide information regarding the order of the detention center. They have supporting talks with the detainees in order to help them endure being held in detention and mitigate their internal tensions. They provide help in reaching out to options for the representation of their interests. They continuously consult with the foreigners regarding the course of the procedure and its possible outcomes.

After clarifying the situation of the client, they inform them regarding the option of returning home voluntarily. They help them come to terms with the inevitability of return, come up with strategies for coping and identify personal and social resources. They help detainees understand the conditions of returning home voluntarily, weigh their options in a realistic manner and make decisions that serve the interests of the individual concerned. They provide support in identifying the options facilitating reintegration.

In addition to consultancy and information, helping professionals conduct community, cultural, leisure and sports activities at the detention centers on each workday. They continuously

assess the interests of the target group and take them into account when organizing the programs. Thanks to this activity, the detainees use their time spent in detention in a sensible, active manner, their tensions and anxieties are alleviated to some extent and they can cope with being in detention better, which also results in fewer conflicts. We provide leisure and sports equipment, toys and other furniture to the target group as part of conducting these programs.

Helping professionals provide continuous support to the staff responsible for security and medical care in regard to the professional and humane treatment of foreigners and facilitate conflict-free communication between the clients and the police personnel.

Based on the indications made by the helping professionals, when necessary we provide auxiliary medical and mental health services at the place of detention in cases where the suspicion of acute crisis, self-harm or personality or mental disorders arises. The psychologist assesses the condition of the client, establishes a diagnosis and provides guidance in crises, referring the person to a psychiatrist when necessary. The psychiatrist diagnoses mental illnesses originating from physiological causes, makes suggestions for therapy, prescribes medicine and configures and monitors medication. Both professionals support the work of helping professionals and the medical and security staff in regard to establishing appropriate treatment with respect to the clients.

The local psychologists and psychiatrists working under a framework contract perform their tasks on an ad hoc basis, in person or – when applicable (e.g. consultation with helping professionals) – via phone. The staff of the detention center provides internet access for the foreigners held at the center.

Environment and purpose of the service

Detention centers hold third country citizens against whom the immigration authority ordered detention in preparation of expulsion¹ or immigration detention.²

Immigration procedures are initiated against people who do not fulfil the requirements that would entitle them to enter or stay in the country and who are not entitled to reside in Hungary, for which reason the immigration authority ordered their readmission to another country or deported them from the territory of the Member States of the EU and ordered that they be taken into immigration detention. The immigration authority may order immigration detention for a maximum of 72 hours; however, the District Court with territorial competence may extend this duration for a maximum of 30 days in the case of detention in preparation for deportation, or for a maximum of 60 days on each occasion in the case of immigration detention.

The maximum duration of the detention is 30 days for families with an underage child, 6 months for adults and 12 months if certain special conditions are met (the foreigner is uncooperative or the proceedings of the state obliged to readmit him are prolonged).

- 1 Section 55(1) of Act II of 2007. The immigration authority may, in order to conduct the immigration administration procedure, take into detention in preparation for expulsion a third country national whose identity or lawfulness of residence is unclear or against whom readmission to another Member State of the European Union is in progress based on a bilateral readmission agreement.
- 2 Section 54(1) of Act II of 2007. The immigration authority may, in order to ensure that deportation can be executed, take into immigration detention a third country national who:
 - a) has hidden from the authority or otherwise hindered execution of the deportation,
 - b) refuses to leave the country or regarding whom it can be reasonably suspected that he will delay or prevent execution of the deportation, or in regard to whom there is a risk of escape,
 - c) has seriously or repeatedly breached the rules of conduct set out at the designated mandatory place of residence,
 - d) did not comply with his obligation to appear before the authority as was prescribed to him despite having had been instructed thereto, thereby hindering the immigration procedure, or
 - e) was released from a custodial sentence imposed on him for an intentional offence.

During the time this professional material was under development, there have been changes in migration legislation, which also led to changes in the institutions of the support system.

In the beginning, there were four permanent immigration detention centers operating in Hungary. Single men could be placed in any of the four centers.

Kiskunhalas had capacity to accommodate 178 persons (in 3 buildings and 6 sectors), and a separate facility was created for women, families with children and vulnerable persons with a capacity to accommodate 46 persons. The Kiskunhalas center was shut down temporarily, however.

Currently Nyírbátor has a capacity to accommodate 160 persons (in a single building, in 3 sectors), Győr to accommodate 36 persons (in a single sector) and the Repülőtéri Rendőr Igazgatóság (Airport Police Directorate, hereinafter: RRI) to accommodate 18 persons in a single sector, with a 4-bed room designated for women.

The four accommodations had different functions before 2015. In Győr, the authority mostly placed foreigners captured at the Austrian border, as well as those who were offered for readmission to Austria based on a readmission agreement. Similarly, foreigners who were captured at the southern borders or had to be readmitted to the countries bordering Hungary in the south (Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia) were mostly placed in Kiskunhalas, while those to be readmitted to Romania, Ukraine and Slovakia were mostly placed in Nyírbátor. Previously, most residents of the detention centers were third country citizens illegally crossing the Serbian border. Thanks to the effective readmission agreement with Serbia, these people were only held in detention for a few days or, at most, 2-3 weeks, and as a general rule were placed in Kiskunhalas until their readmission. Foreigners expected to be held in detention for several months were placed in Nyírbátor by the authority when possible. The RRI detention center was originally designated for the one or two days of detention prior to deportation via plane. These criteria were never exclusive, however, and at times the place of detention was designated in divergence from the general rule and instead with regard to the number of people held, capacity and other factors.



Outdoor sports equipment in the Győr center's courtyard

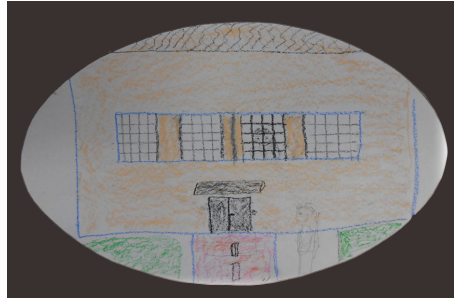
The temporary border protection device established in September 2015, the suspension of application of the readmission agreement concluded with Serbia, and then the legislative changes in the spring of 2017 resulted in fundamental changes to the detention system, the scope of detainees and the duration of detention.

At present, the number of foreigners detained is significantly lower as compared to the figures of previous years, but the average time spent in detention has significantly increased. The number of persons held in detention for more than 6 months has increased significantly. In regard to the duration of detention, the difference between the centers has decreased, and there are persons held in detention for a long term in each of them.

Another important change is that at the time of development of this methodology manual, as of 23 March 2017 operation of the unit of the Kiskunhalas center designated for single men has been temporarily suspended. On 7 June 2017, one of the sectors of the Nyírbátor center was designated instead of Kiskunhalas to accommodate vulnerable persons.

ORFK (National Police Headquarters) Order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.) defines the concept of a detention center as follows³: “a separate object operating under the police headquarters competent at the place of establishment of the detention center and the RRI, designated specifically for the purposes of detention ordered in the scope of immigration procedures, consisting of quarters accommodating the persons responsible for guarding, escorting, transporting and caring for the detainees, as well as the persons responsible for controlling the staff executing the foregoing tasks; an arrest room; an admission unit; the living compartment of the detainees; and a walking court bordered by a fence.” The living compartment is a “secure building or building part serving for the placement and secure guarding of detained third country citizens appropriate for long term human residence, including sleeping quarters, common rooms appropriate for eating and spending leisure time, restrooms, showers, toilets and segregation rooms.”⁴

The living compartment serving for the continuous guarding of detainees can be accessed via a lock-gate (a double grate). The windows also have bars on them. The walking court is bordered by a NATO fence furnished with barbed wire.

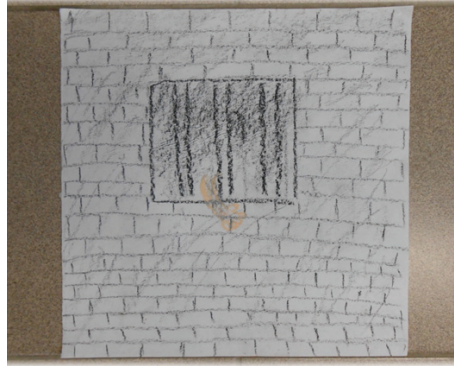


Drawing of a detainee made during an art therapy session

³ Section 2(i) of ORFK Order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.)

⁴ Chapter I, Section 2(i) of ORFK Order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.)

Only furniture fixed to the ground or the wall is allowed in the rooms used by the detainees. The furniture of the sleeping quarters (often simply called “rooms” in the daily work) consists of fixed beds, a table, chairs and shelves. The walls are white, the bars are gray, and the doors are either white or gray. The two colors are made somewhat more varied by the wooden parts of the furniture. As we can see, the detention centers are physically similar to prisons, but their visual design exudes power less than Hungarian prisons.



Drawing of a detainee made during an art therapy session

The number of persons the rooms can accommodate varies depending on the detention center. Rooms are designed to accommodate 9 persons in Győr and 4 persons in the RRI. Nyírbátor has rooms appropriate for holding 3-5 persons, while Kiskunhalas has rooms appropriate for holding 2-10 persons.

Each detention center’s living compartment has a prayer room, an internet room and a smoking room. Club rooms (except for Kiskunhalas) and gyms (except for the RRI) are also in operation. We implemented club rooms in the scope of the project in Győr and Nyírbátor. These can only be used under the supervision of the social workers, during community events. During the past few years, we have equipped these rooms with some friendly, comfortable “non-jail-like” pieces of furniture (e.g. colored beanbags, mobile chairs, coffee tables, etc.). We implemented a sensitive therapy room in one building of the Kiskunhalas center, and a room appropriate for children’s activities in the building section accommodating vulnerable persons.

The staff employed by the Police⁵ is responsible for operating the detention center. The detention center is managed by the Department Manager and their deputies. Guarding tasks are performed in each detention center by 4 service groups consisting of a service group leader, police assistants and armed security guards who have employee status. The service groups work around the clock. Continuous availability of medical care is provided by healthcare assistants. Administrative employees, economic consultants, janitors and vehicle drivers help in the performance of daily activities. To be able to work at a detention center as a guard, one must pass an exam in regard to the effective legislation relating to detention, as well as guarding and basic first aid skills, and must

5 Chapter III, Section 4.27 of ORFK Order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.)

also pass a medical, physical and psychological screening.⁶ Healthcare services are provided by a physician employed by the police or a person commissioned to provide such services (home medical service, contracted external physician). The head physician of the RRI or the county police headquarters are responsible for the direct professional supervision of healthcare.⁷

Menedék Association is continuously present at immigration detention centers on every workday as a civil professional service provider. Our independent, client-focused services are mainly targeted to foreigners held in detention, but we also strive to support the detention system at large – including its operators and all involved parties – in order to promote a humane, effective, smooth and conflict-free immigration administration practice.

The services of Menedék Association promote the sustainability of the return of third country nationals and the success of their post-return reintegration.

The authority does not detain foreigners as a kind of punishment: its purpose is to ensure that the person will be available to the authority – i.e. will not disappear – until the time of deportation. Detainees, however, experience the detention as a punishment. Detention is therefore necessary in order to organize and execute the deportation, but may be harmful for the detained person.

In the course of our everyday work, we strive to do everything in our power to reduce the harm suffered by the foreigners during the period of detention, mitigating both the short and long-term effects and striving to achieve positive impact. In regard to the persons concerned, our objective is to ensure that they are not in worse physical and mental condition at the time of termination of the detention than at the time of its commencement and, when possible, that they can take new skills with them that will help them deal with life after their release.



Arrest room in the RRI painted jointly with the detainees

6 Chapter III, Section 4.29 of ORFK order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.)

7 Chapter VIII, Section 22.124 of ORFK order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.)

The target group

The legal documents regulating immigration detention refer to the subjects of detention as “detainee” or “prisoner”. The decisions of the immigration authority and the competent authority supporting our services refer to our target group as “third country nationals”. Our social workers call the residents of detention centers “clients”, indicating that their relationship is official, that it is between two equal parties, and that it relates to a professional service. When we, as social workers, speak with police officers or immigration authority officials, we often use the term “foreigner”. In this publication, we use each expression in line with the contents of the subject matter discussed.

The ORFK order on the rules of service at police detention centers defines the concept of “detainee” as “a person whose detention in preparation for expulsion or deportation, or refugee detention has been ordered by the competent authority or whose detention has been extended by the court.”⁸ The legal criteria applicable to the subjects of immigration procedure has already been explained in the chapter titled “[Environment and purpose of the service](#)”.

In practice, the detainee may enter the system from several directions. They may be caught during a border check, after illegally crossing the border, or during a so-called “in-depth control” conducted within the country, and one may also be transferred to the detention center after serving a prison sentence. In some cases, a third country citizen lawfully staying in the country goes to the immigration office to apply for extension of their residence permit, but is rejected and detained after their *ex officio* arrest.

From a sociodemographic aspect, most detainees are single, young men between the ages of 18 and 35, but there is also a smaller number of older men, women and families with underage children. In regard to education, the detainees are typically undereducated, but foreigners with university education are also detained at a lower rate. The main countries of origin depend on international

8 Chapter I, Section 2(k) of ORFK Order No. 21/2014. (VII. 4.)

immigration processes and changes in Hungarian legislation. For example, in 2014, the most common country of origin was Kosovo. In 2015, a large number of Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis were detained. In early 2016, there was a sudden increase in those arriving from North African countries (Morocco, Algeria), and there was also a significant number of Pakistanis. In 2017, no one country produced an outstanding number of clients, but most detainees were Afghans, Indians, Pakistanis, Algerians and Iraqis. In addition, there are always a few clients from Serbia, Ukraine, Moldova, Vietnam and Sub-Saharan Africa.



Drawing of a detainee made during an art therapy session

From a psychological aspect, the most significant circumstance for the detainee is the lack of freedom and autonomy, the limitation of self-determination. In addition to not being allowed to exit the center at will, detainees may also not make decisions in the most basic things that free people consider to be a given. In addition to this lack of choices, the ability to provide for oneself is also eroded.

In the artificial, highly restraining and regulated environment of the center, a person can easily forget who they really are, and may question their own identity. The following is a frequently asked question in detention centers: "I am not a criminal. Why am I in prison?"

In detention, it is difficult to maintain the boundaries of one's privacy. (The detainee is held in a room together with other people, and in quarters with many other people.) There is not enough space for this at the smaller detention centers, while at the bigger ones it is the high number of detainees that does not allow it. They cannot choose the company they are to be held together with for a long time and to whom they must adapt 24 hours a day.

It is difficult to maintain contact with relatives and friends. There is limited time to use the internet, make phone calls and – in a controlled and supervised manner – to receive visitors.

The most depressing factor for the clients is uncertainty. They do not know what will happen to them, whether they will be taken home or released, and when. The court may extend detention for a maximum of 2 months. This limitation to a two-month period determines the dynamics of the detainees' mental state. Before the expiry of every second month, there is the hope that they may be released. After that the detention is extended for another two months (in the internal lingo they simply call this the "two-month paper") and with it comes the inevitable disappointment. Our experience is that the extension after the 4th and the 10th month are what the foreigners take the hardest, and they frequently hit rock bottom at those stages. The detainees often say that it

would be easier to endure knowing for certain that they would be held for an entire year than to live in constant uncertainty. They have no direct contact with their immigration officer and often have to move around in a vacuum, without knowing whether there has been any progress in their case or if the authority is even working on it.

Even the smallest piece of information regarding the steps taken in a detainee's case can provide some point of reference – for example if the consul identifies them, their *laissez passer* (one-way travel document) is issued or if the authority is already organizing their travel home. Information regarding the date of the journey home is very comforting in most cases – even when the detainee did not want to go home at all – considering that at least they do not have to live in uncertainty anymore.

It is common that after months of detention and objecting to returning home, a client learns about the date of the journey through an authority announcement, returns to the quarters, and half an hour later his face, which has been ash-gray for months, regains its color, and the client returns from his half-dead state and starts to make plans and preparations feverishly. The importance of information and concrete facts cannot be emphasized enough.

*

Foreigners taken into immigration detention can be sorted into groups along several criteria. The “typologies” developed in the course of the systematization of our experiences provide us with a more detailed picture of the social and domestic situation and age-specific characteristics of people held in detention centers, as well as whether they belong to vulnerable groups. If we pay attention to the characteristics of the clients and reflect on individual needs in a flexible manner, while taking into account the stereotypical nature of the categories and typologies, we can learn about important aspects that facilitate the planning of helping interventions applied with respect to foreigners and the mapping of needs.

In the following pages, we will sort our experiences based on the commonalities and differences identified in the course of our work that can be considered general. In creating typologies based on religious, regional and cultural differences, we summarized the main characteristics that are typically experienced at detention centers in relation to those coming from a specific region. We will focus on phenomena that, despite the many differences, can be considered as commonalities in the case of persons coming from a specific region and that either cause difficulties for the helpers or make the professional work conducted with the group easier.

The majority of those taken into immigration detention are single young men. Our methodological recommendations mostly provide help with respect to this target group. Besides them, there is also a smaller number of women, families, children and elderly people. We will deal with the needs of these “minorities” and the specificities of the helping work conducted with respect to them in this chapter.

Domestic situation

Single people

A person who is detained without family members is treated as a single person by the detention system. This is not always the person's real domestic status, however. In our experience, single people can be sorted into two groups.

Real singles

Most of them are men and are between the ages of 18 and 35. However, they may also have family members left home (elderly parent, sick brother) whom they wanted to support from Europe and regarding whom they have a heavy conscience due to the unsuccessful immigration attempt. Most of these people set out on their journey to work, study, earn money and build a better future.

This group of singles also includes people who ended up in Hungary by accident as a result of some psychological or social burden, who have wandered away and gotten lost, finding themselves in immigration detention in the end. These people are mostly from one of the neighboring or nearby European countries who had difficulties adapting back home.

Family people who are in detention alone

The rest of the family of these people is in their country of origin or a third country, or their location is unknown. Some of them have a child from a Hungarian girlfriend, partner or wife.

They are constantly concerned about their family. They take detention harder than people who are actually single because they feel that their place is with their family, that they are letting their family down and that they are being prevented from reuniting with them.

Some of the people who have families had already made it to Western Europe but their family got held up or in trouble somewhere in Turkey or Greece, so they set out to help them. They find it even harder to cope with their restricted situation.

Those who have a relationship or a child in Hungary can derive great strength from the possibility of personal meetings in the scope of visits. Besides causing worry, the feelings of obligation and responsibility towards a spouse or child can help these people keep themselves together. Self-harm is quite rare in this group. They also need frequent conversations about the family. During the helping work, the detainees must be given the chance to express their thoughts and feelings on this topic, whether via verbal, visual (drawing) or creative methods.

People with family

Married couples

If there are no underage children in the family, couples may be held in detention for up to 12 months. They are held together with families with children, and they often take it hard when they see them leave within a month one by one. Their situation is better than that of single people as they can rely on each other. However, at the same time, being locked together and held in an environment without stimulation can cause difficulties in a relationship. Intimacy is also more difficult to experience within the prison-like environment.

In the course of the helping work, the husband and the wife need to be supported both as individuals and as a couple. Both parties should be provided the opportunity of one-on-one conversations and to participate in activities for women and men separately (e.g., women's club, sports, table soccer), but there should also be common activities (e.g., cooking, language learning, crafts, competitions). When organizing the activities, it is important to allow these people the chance to experience their traditional roles as men and women.

Parents and children

In most cases, for parents it is an especially heavy burden to see their children behind bars and iron gates and not be able to protect them from it all. For the parents of babies, caring for their child in the detention center environment is a huge challenge. It is especially difficult to comply with the strict rules of detention with a small child who can walk and run around already but cannot yet follow rules, which is a constant cause of worry for the parents.

Fulfilling customary parental roles and taking care of parental tasks is hindered by numerous obstacles, which can easily make parents lose their confidence. Younger children mostly respond to the frustration and anxiety of the parents, while older children are aware of being in confinement and suffer from it. The monotone, highly restrictive environment providing no stimulation can be dangerous for children even if the term of the detention cannot exceed 30 days.



Playroom of the Nyirbátor center's quarters for vulnerable people

The most important task is to calm the parents as soon as possible after admission. They need regular and continuous emotional and mental support during the entire term of the detention.

When the parents see that their children feel good and that their basic needs are met, that they play, run around, laugh and learn, this affects them positively, which in turn also affects the children.

Regular activities appropriate for the children's age, sex and level of maturity are very important. Games that improve skills and promote learning, as well as exercise activities that allow for stress relief and promote the preservation of health, are both necessary. When designing the quarters where families with children will be placed, it is important to ensure not just compliance with the regulations but also that the environment be as friendly as possible and that attention be drawn away from the coercive nature of the detention. Toys with which kids can play at any time during the day – even when a social worker is not available to conduct activities for them – must also be provided. It must also be ensured that the toys do not pose a risk in regard to security and public health (i.e. it should not be possible to disassemble or swallow them, they should not incur a risk of injury, they should be cleanable, etc.). In order to strengthen children's ability to form bonds, each child should be given a toy (a doll, a stuffed animal, a toy car) that is only theirs and that they can take with themselves later.

For the service staff and the helping professionals, working with families with children held in detention is harder both professionally and emotionally.

Age

Minors

Needs vary on a wide scale between babies who are a few months old and 18 year-old young people, and therefore a wide set of tools must be provided for the purposes of activities conducted with minors, including materials, tools and the helpers' professional competences. It is important to ensure regular activities and development in accordance with the minors' age, which means that this age group requires a proportionally higher availability from helpers than the activities conducted with adults.

We should also take note of unaccompanied minors, who cannot be detained based on the law. Still, there are cases when a foreigner reports being a minor without being able to provide proof of this with an authentic document and is declared to be an adult by the medical expert of the authority. In some cases, young adults attempt to evade detention by reporting themselves to be of a lower age than they really are, while in other cases the authority may declare a person who is actually under the age of 18 to be an adult. There are also cases in which a foreigner reports themselves as an adult, but their companions state that they are in fact a minor and simply do not want to be separated from those with whom they made the journey to Hungary.

Social workers are not entitled to take a position in regard to the detainees' age, but they must pay special attention to clients who report themselves as minors or who seem to be minors based on their appearance or behavior. These clients' mood, behavior and position in the community must be monitored even more closely, and a larger emphasis must be put on developing a trusting relationship.

Young adults

People in this group make up the majority of detainees. In their case, the biggest challenge is the absence of opportunities for activities, the difficulties of anger management and sexual deprivation, which become even more accentuated in the case of long-term detention.

Elderly people

There are few people above the age of 50 among the detainees, given that the willingness of elderly people to emigrate is lower. In some cases, elderly foreigners end up in this situation due to social or psychological limitations (homelessness, a hobo lifestyle, psychiatric illnesses). Older clients are – when they have no serious mental illness – calmer and more even-tempered, handle confinement better and are less prone to anger issues than young people. Generally, they are also accepted by the other detainees – many cultures have a high degree of respect for elderly people and they are also supported by the community.

Increased attention must be paid to these people's medical condition.

Sex

Men

Considering that it is mostly men who attempt to cross the border or stay in the country unlawfully, they also make up the majority of the detainees held at immigration detention centers.

The presence of female social workers among male detainees is often a cause of concern for the security guards. From a professional perspective, however, the presence of women has a high added value. It is indisputable that female helpers must act with a higher degree of care when working with male detainees in order to maintain the boundaries of the helping relationship. At the same time, however, the opportunity to connect with a woman can be very motivating for men who are locked together with other men. It is particularly when a new female social worker comes to the center that the clients are visibly filled with positive energy. They get out of bed with more momentum, spend less time sleeping and take better care of their appearance. These dynamics have huge significance in promoting healthy activity and preventing hospitalization and depression. As one detainee put it: "We men live for the women, they are the reason

we get out of bed in the morning, why we do our job. If it was all men locked together here, we would go mad.”

It should not be ignored either that detainees can open up regarding different topics towards female and male helpers and can connect with them in different ways. For this reason, ideally the helping team should include both male and female helpers.

Women

In most cases, single women are transferred to immigration detention from prisons or are detained because of invalid or fake travel documents. While the number of female detainees is lower, supporting them requires more work than is the case for men, regardless of whether they are single, married or have a family.

Women are much more sensitive and find it harder to cope with confinement, the restrictive environment and being separated from their loved ones. Depression and claustrophobic symptoms come to the surface in detention more frequently in their case. It is also much more difficult to calm them and motivate them than men. Generally, women are supportive of each other and are easy to involve in common programs. Cultural differences can generate conflicts more frequently for women than for men. In regard to mothers, differing views on child-rearing may lead to difficulties. These tensions should be identified in due time and solutions acceptable to everyone should be developed together with the people concerned.

It is important to have both male and female helpers working with this target group, too. Women find it easier to confide in and open up to female social workers, and their help is particularly important in matters specific to women. At the same time, the presence of a male social worker makes them hold themselves together and less prone to mood swings. When working with women, increased attention must be paid to cultural differences and to respecting customs.

Education

Among the detainees held at detention centers, the proportion of foreigners having a low level of education is high. This is partly because the highly educated citizens of the countries of origin represented at the detention centers have a good chance of entering the country legally and it is rare that they attempt to cross the green border. It is typically impossible to enter Hungary from war-stricken countries in a lawful manner, and people arriving from such territories are rarely taken into detention.

Depending on the current practice of the Immigration and Asylum Office regarding refugees, from time to time there is a higher number of Iraqis (mainly Kurds) and Afghans, including people with university degrees. The criminality rate among highly educated foreigners lawfully staying in

Hungary is lower, and as a result it is less often that we meet educated clients transferred to the detention center from a prison.

Sometimes foreigners who came to Hungary with a student visa in order to continue their studies and have been unable to renew their residence permit in time – becoming illegal residents – are also detained.

It may be difficult for social workers to help uneducated people understand the procedure.

There are also a few illiterate detainees. The long duration of detention provides a good opportunity to learn how to read and write, as well as to learn languages. Low education does not mean that someone also has weak mental abilities. Cognitive abilities can be improved via developing games in the course of the helping work.

Financial situation, social status

The financial situation of detainees held at detention centers is varied. There are people who have nothing but the clothes they wear and have no connections who could support them from the outside, but there are also people who are detained with multiple credit cards and a significant amount of cash on them. Between these two extremes, we can see a varied picture.

One's background has a huge significance in regard to coping with detention. People whose family or friends can send them money or packages can spend their days at the center more comfortably, just as they can outside detention. Detainees who always have cigarettes and coffee generally enjoy a higher status in the community. At the same time, we frequently see the more well-to-do detainees support those who have nothing, sometimes selflessly, and sometimes for some kind of compensation (the most common currency being internet time).

The social connections one can mobilize in order to assist with one's case before the immigration authority are also important. If one has connections at the consulate, they can accelerate the process of obtaining the travel documents required for the journey home. People from countries where the consul can be bribed can, if they have the financial means to do so, even arrange that they not be identified by the embassy.

In the case of Indians and Pakistanis, the differences between different castes are also present inside the detention centers. People of a higher rank expect those from lower castes to defer to and serve them just as they do outside detention.

Mitigation of the power differences often requires additional effort from the helper. They must act diligently to ensure that the principle of equal treatment is implemented in the course of their professional work and to avoid facilitating the inequalities. A social worker with a keen eye can detect when the same people who always clean the floor during the community cleaning activities are never the ones to take from the plate first after common cooking events.

They are not, of course, able to erase social differences, but they can work to ensure that poorer or lower-ranking foreigners be provided equal benefits, opportunities and services during their time spent at the detention center.

Religion

The proportion of Muslim detainees held at the detention centers is high. In a smaller proportion, there are also Christians, in particular from South and West African countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ghana and the post-Soviet states (such as Georgia, Armenia and Russia). The Hindu religion is represented by the small number of Indians present. There is also the occasional detainee from West or Central Africa who has a tribal religion. There is also a significant number of non-religious detainees.

The detention centers must provide the conditions for exercising the freedom of religion. For this reason, taking into account the needs of Muslims, every center has a separate prayer room, detainees may request meals without pork, and during the Ramadan Muslims may eat and pray according to a different schedule. The centers are in contact with Christian churches, and if the detainees so request, the religious representatives of the city in which the detention center is located can regularly visit Christian detainees.

Detainees' religious beliefs do not affect how the helpers treat the detainees. The individual differences between those who do and don't practice religion are more significant. In general, religious clients are more stable regardless of their faith. The long-term cohabitation of people having different religious beliefs is generally smooth. They learn about each other's customs and they – and in particular the religious detainees – are generally open-minded with respect to the religious customs of the other detainees. We will provide more details on how social workers can support the clients' practice of religion later.

Country of origin, cultural characteristics

People from South Asia

For Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and Afghans, community is very important and they like to do everything in groups. They support each other, share their possessions and tend to place the interests of the community above their own. The older members of the community are well-respected and are often viewed as leaders. They tend to be of a calm, quiet and respectful demeanor and therefore rarely engage in conflicts. They are very reserved and do not like to talk about their problems. It is difficult to know what is going on in their minds. They often conceal their difficulties with a smile or simply deny them, which can mislead helpers – their culture does not allow them to say

“no” or admit their problems openly. They are easy to instruct with respect to cohabitation and compliance with the rules, and developing a relationship of trust with the leader opens up an avenue to the entire community for the helper. They like to engage in crafts, as well as creative and artistic activities.

North Africans

The Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians and Egyptians taken to the detention centers are great survivors. They are resourceful and have a good ability to defend their interests. They are vehement, impulsive, like to talk loudly and be in the foreground, and their communication is often theatrical. They are individual players, they like to be visible and generally do not even trust each other, so they are difficult to work with when building a community. They rarely join forces, but when they do, they can be very efficient. They are often very adverse towards people from other countries, even if they are from the same region.

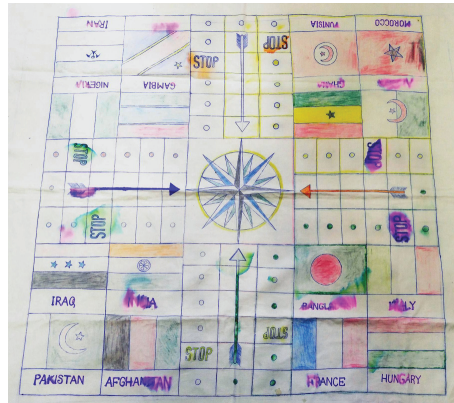
Many of them have drug problems, are afflicted by self-harm, have manipulative intentions or play games.

Their individualistic tendencies can be satisfied by creating competitive situations and setting up challenges for them. They are easily motivated by any activity where they can play a prominent role, which is a good way to direct their energies in a positive direction. It is important to earn their respect by being confident, calm, consistent, straightforward and maintaining fair boundaries.

East Asians

Most detainees from this region are from Vietnam and China. In general, they are calm, soft-spoken and are always smiling. They have a strong community spirit and support each other. They respect elderly people, follow the rules and are respectful. They generally have good connections and their countrymen living in Hungary support them financially. They tend to be accepting and cooperative in regard to their deportation.

They live in a closed world, and it is difficult for the helpers to get close to them, get to know them and earn their trust. With those who do not speak Hungarian, the communication problems also make forming a connection more difficult. They also do not require the help of social workers as much as other detainees. The helpers must visit them regularly, pay attention to the formalities that they deem very important, and show respect in order to develop a good relationship.



Parcheesi – played on a sheet, Indian style

Sub-Saharan Africans

Most detainees from this region are Christians, and come from Niger, Cameroon or Congo. They are good at defending their interests and are aware of their rights. They often feel discriminated against because of the color of their skin. They are proud and easily offended, and they spend a lot of effort on themselves. It is not rare for them to communicate in a condescending manner. They care for formalities and rules and like it when things are put in writing. They tend to occupy themselves easily. They have a huge need for exercise and are easy to involve in sports activities. They have a strong belief in God, which makes it easier for them to cope with difficult periods.

They require regular attention. The basis of an effective helping relationship is providing regular opportunity for one-on-one conversations, interviews and the opportunity to express themselves, even to vent.

Middle Easterners

Most detainees from this region are Iraqi Arabs, Iraqi Kurds, Iranians, Syrians and Palestinians. This region has the most pronounced cultural and attitude-related differences. There are, however, some similarities between them, and listing them may help the helper's work.

Those from different cultures of the region do not like to be together. They do, however, speak multiple languages, which helps in everyday cohabitation. When there are only a few of them in the center, they tend to depend on each other, and in such situations they help each other despite their differences.

Family is important to them and they require regular conversations on this topic. They are hospitable and take it well when we visit them in their room. Their direct physical environment is important to them and they like to keep it clean and in order and to decorate it, so they like to participate in related community activities. They view the older members of their community as leaders, so they are the ones the helpers should mainly get close to.

People from the Balkans

Detainees from Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia are in many aspects similar to North Africans. They are temperamental, loud, have a confident demeanor and are good at defending their interests. They are controlling types and are solution-focused, they tend to hold their own in any situation and they take being helpless hard. Patience and showing respect to others are not among their strengths. They are, however, very proud, so we must take care not to offend them, because we will get no second chance.

They are easy to involve in exercise and competitive activities, which is a good way of channeling their energy. However, we should also not expect them to attach much importance to rules. It is essential to earn their respect: our best chance is being consistent, honest, straightforward and reasonable.

Detainees from post-Soviet states

Most Ukrainian, Georgian, Russian and Armenian detainees are deeply religious and it is difficult for them to accept the company of Muslims. They do not, as a rule, speak foreign languages, only Russian and their native language. They seek connection, and even though a lack of Russian language skills will hinder the helper's work, they can be won over with a few Russian expressions. They are open to help but not demanding. They like to read and eagerly join sports activities. They tend to follow the rules strictly. They release tension in a spectacular manner.

Due to our good diplomatic relationships with these countries, in most cases these detainees are only held at the detention center for a few days or weeks.

Typical behaviors and characters – help with orientation

Among detainees held in immigration detention, some typical behaviors can be identified along certain criteria. Classification may help social workers find their way in the community of the detention center and to identify effective work methods.

We recommend that those set out below be treated and used in everyday work with a degree of reservation and care, considering that these characters do not appear in the world as clear, independent, exclusive archetypes. Despite their similarities, every human being is an individual, so we must also find an individual way to reach each and every person. Our aim is to provide help in finding an effective work method for specific difficult and challenging behaviors and to exploit the possibilities of certain behaviors, making the helper's work easier.



"Gingerbread perspective" – changing perspectives can help in difficult situations

If the client...

...is loud and is very clearly and loudly present in every situation. They are dissatisfied with everything. They regularly report various problems to the guards and the social workers. They often make threats (in most cases of self-harming or causing other problems). They continuously force other detainees into the background. They often play games. They find it difficult to control their impulses. They are always trying to draw the social worker's attention to themselves. Sometimes they make condescending comments to the social worker about how they should do their job.

What could help?

We should communicate with them in a calm, quiet but also confident manner. It is important to recognize and handle situations where the detainee tries to play games. Attention-seeking behavior should be differentiated from actual problems, and we should offer them roles and put them in situations where they can appear in a positive role. These roles should be regularly strengthened. When they act in accordance with the rules, it is important to notice this and reward them (with praise and feedback). They should be supported in displaying those of their qualities that are beneficial for the community.

*

If the client...

...sleeps a lot, turns inward and pulls the blanket over their head. They rarely come out of their room. They are passive towards the community and the social worker. They try to remain invisible and avoid the possibility of conflict. They do not participate in any activity. They never request help, and because of this, it is difficult to determine whether they need professional help. They are likely to find it difficult to find their way back to real life after being released from the detention center.

What could help?

It is good to pay some extra attention to such clients. They should be visited regularly and offered participation in various activities. They should be approached carefully, with small steps; we should take care to avoid being aggressive. We must attempt to find out what they like, what they are interested in, what they are good at. It is important to make them feel cared for and looked after. This kind of “discreet care” can make them feel safe.

*

If the client...

...does not engage in open fights. They control the other detainees and the events from the background. They try to serve only their own interests, disregarding the interests of others. They generate tension and restlessness around themselves. They are cooperative towards the management of the detention center and the social workers, shower them with praise and regularly assure them of their respect and loyalty towards them. They report the problematic behavior of others from time to time. They generate cliques in the quarters with their conduct.

What could help?

Upon identifying the manipulative intentions, we should make it clear for the client in a calm, confident manner that we see their motives and will not be party to their games. We must “take the wind out of their sails”. We should weaken their position in the course of working with the community. We should strengthen other detainees’ leadership positions and deal individually with the detainees who are used as puppets by the client concerned. We should attempt to keep away from such clients those detainees who are weak or helpless and who could therefore easily become tools and fall victim to their manipulative intentions. We should also put them in roles where they can appear as positive figures and strengthen them in these roles.

*

If the client...

...uses their skills and environment to persuade the authorities that their detention should be terminated due to their health and/or mental condition. A simpler goal may be to obtain addictive drugs. They display various physical and behavioral symptoms (e.g., bladder control problems, attempts at self-harm or suicide by hanging, paralysis, depressive symptoms, apathy, loss of connection to the outside world, etc.) in order to achieve their goal. Their persuasiveness varies based on intellect and ability. Less resourceful clients only produce the symptoms when there is an audience or before cameras, but others remain in the role at all times and may even produce real symptoms, i.e., the role may result in actual illness.

What could help?

It is very important to be able to tell such clients apart from those who are actually in poor mental condition. Not every client who wets his or her bed or who is apathetic is a malingerer. Besides malingerers, there are also those with real illnesses, whose condition may be deteriorating, and it is the helping professional’s responsibility to identify these persons and provide for their care and appropriate treatment. Constant, continuous monitoring, the involvement of a psychologist and psychiatrist in the process, and regular comparison of the helping professionals’ own individual experiences can make it easier to distinguish between malingerers and people who are actually ill. It is important to assess each phase in the changes to a person’s condition, starting from the moment of admission to the detention center. One-on-one conversations and other detainees in the same sector may also help in assessing the actual condition of the “patient”.

If the expert group unanimously reaches the conclusion that the illness is not real and is only a tool for manipulation, it must be made clear to the client that displaying the symptoms will not lead to the desired goal. The manager of the detention center should also participate in such clarifying discussions, due to the fact that their commanding authority will lend additional weight to the futility of the malingering.

*

If the client...

...has high social, cognitive and emotional intelligence. They evaluate their situation and options realistically. They show respect towards the officials, the support staff and the social workers. They strive to prevent conflicts and direct others towards amicable solutions. They are accepted and held in high esteem by the other detainees, and their word has weight. They help those in need of support and stay away from troublemakers. Sometimes they tire mentally, at which times they become closed off or more irritable than usual. They can accept and process the situation and come up with a strategy for the future, whether it is returning home or staying in detention for a year. They are able to develop during their time in detention and reach conclusions from their experiences that they can use for their benefit.

What could help?

The presence of such a person can be a huge resource for a social worker in communicating and cooperating with the other detainees. They can help in better understanding and managing situations, the community, and its internal dynamics. They often have a role as interpreters, cultural mediators and helpers. This gives them a daily responsibility but is also a huge mental burden. Even though they do not cause problems for their environment due to their intelligence, it takes a lot of energy for them to survive everyday life.

It is important that they be provided continuous mental support from professionals via regular supportive talks. We must recognize when they hit a low and increased attention must be paid to them in these difficult periods. They have every chance to get their life and future in order after being released from the detention center, particularly if the helping professionals assist them in developing a strategy for the future. In addition, if appropriate support is provided to them, they can multiply the effects of the work of helping professionals within the detention center.

*

In the course of our work, we encounter various strategies in regard to how clients experience their detention. In the section below, we will explain various types of client strategies in relation to the immigration administration procedure.

If the client...

...wants to go home immediately. They want everything immediately. They do all in their power in order to mobilize any available actors to facilitate their return home. They cooperate with the authority, request their family's help in identification and obtaining travel documents, maintain

regular contact with the consulate (or if their return is voluntary, the International Organization for Migration; “IOM”). They are frequently impatient. They ask their social worker daily (or even multiple times a day) whether there has been any progress in their case, sometimes even questioning them about what they have done to facilitate their return home. Sometimes they speak about urgent family problems, such as a serious, sudden illness of their mother, the death and imminent burial of a close relative or another urgent matter that needs to be taken care of at home. It is possible that they fall into a spiral, focusing on nothing but their return home, their thinking becomes impaired, they do not participate in any activity, they get segregated from the community, they lose a significant amount of weight, etc. As soon as they learn about the date of their return, their mind opens up again and they start to prepare for the journey enthusiastically.

What could help?

Continuous information regarding the progress of the organization of their return and the minimum time requirements involved is very important. We should inform the client of every little step and element of progress in their case so that they feel that they are really cared for. The client must be assured in the scope of regular conversations with the helper that it is in everyone’s interest that they get home as soon as possible.

Waiting can be made easier if the client’s attention is directed to preparing for the time after their return and to developing detailed plans for the future, in which we should provide support. Regular and persistent attempts to involve the client in community activities (even in spite of their objections) and to direct their attention to other matters are also important. This task requires a good amount of patience and perseverance from the social worker. If the client’s scope of awareness is narrowed down to an extreme degree and their conduct is becoming self-endangering, it is important to draw the attention of the authorities, the consulate, the IOM, etc. to the urgency of the matter.

During the days before their return, these clients only need practical help in preparing for the journey home (e.g., providing for a haircut and, when possible, providing them with clothing, shoes and a bag).

*

If the client...

...wants to be released as soon as possible but does not actually intend to return home. They often ask, “What about my human rights?”

They have a lawyer and many official documents. In many cases they have a child who is a Hungarian or an EU citizen. They utilize every possibility provided by the system, and continuously supply their legal counsel, social worker and the authorities with work. They often request a hearing from the authority or the court that ordered their detention. They frequently submit various

requests to the manager of the detention center. They have a predilection to evoke rights laid down in international conventions.

They approach everyone in the center (new helpers, prosecutors, monitoring personnel of international organizations), presenting their well-rehearsed story to them, the final conclusion of which is that they are being held in detention unlawfully. They contact Hungarian or international organizations via email and request their help. They frequently question their social worker regarding what exactly they are doing in order to end the infringement of their rights.

They are rarely released, and in most cases they are deported by the authorities, which they tend to accept.

What could help?

Clients wanting to be released attempt to involve everyone they can in the game they play in order to achieve their goal. It is important for the social worker to notice this and avoid taking up the role offered to them.

The exact scope of the social worker's competence should be clarified to them, and this will be necessary on more than one occasion. During subsequent conversations on the topic, they may be calmly told the following: "As you already know, and as we have already discussed several times, I cannot help you with this and that, but I can help you with this and that". That their legal representative is certainly doing his/her best to further their interests should also be hinted at.

It is particularly important in such cases that we not give in to the continuous pressure and not do them small favors outside the scope of our competence, because then they will mercilessly exploit us. We must make sure that we remain consistent, and if we work in a team, the members should consult with each other so that every one of them can take the same position towards the client. This way, we can prevent the client from playing the helpers against each other.

Such behavior should not be confused with cases in which a helper has real doubts regarding the lawfulness of a client's detention. In such cases, the helper must forward the information to their professional supervisor and the manager of the detention center without delay.

*

If the client...

...intends to stay in detention for the maximum term of one year without being deported. They do not cooperate with the authorities or only seem to cooperate with them. They often state their identity falsely, or on occasion provide a false country of origin. They avoid contact with their consulate or attempt to get the consul on their side. They generally do not contact their social worker in regard to their case after they find out that no news is good news. However, they are generally active in the life of the community, given that they intend to survive there for a year.

They typically hit a low when the term of their detention is extended for another two months, but they tend to get over it in a few days. If they have no background or concrete plan, they start to become tense around the tenth month of detention, waiting for their release at times excitedly, at times nervously, and become frustrated and uncertain regarding their future. If they are certain that they will be released and that they have a place to go, they calm down around the tenth month and do not care about anything anymore.

What could help?

We should support them in setting goals that can be achieved within a year (e.g., learning a language) and in taking a part in the community. When they hit a low around the time of the two-month extensions, we should pay extra attention to them and have supportive conversations with them.

In the meantime, we should be on the lookout for times when they become uncertain regarding the future. At these times, we should try to motivate them to return home (identify their connections and resources back home and the reasons why they left their home, think about solutions, etc.). It is important to continuously remind them that they could be deported at any time, even just a few days before the end of the detention.

Upon reaching the tenth month, it is important to discuss with them their exact goals and think about practical issues.

*

The attitude and situation of the clients can also be influenced by the manner in which they ended up in detention. The detainees' experiences with Hungarian institutions can significantly affect their coping strategies and how they relate to the conditions of detention.

If the client...

...is detained during an inspection of personal or travel documents or after an administrative procedure at the immigration office. The initial period is characterized by an "initial shock". The client does not understand why they are in "prison" when they are not a criminal. They do not understand the procedure, and despite having been provided official information, they have no idea what is happening to them. The place, the system, the options and obligations, the daily schedule and the internal rules are unknown to them. They may have a wide range of reactions, such as feeling scared or angry, or experiencing despair, panic, mistrust, etc. Adaptation takes time for them.

What could help?

It is important to calm them down and inform them that a social worker will help them in finding their way. When a new detainee is oriented, the overall situation – where they are, why they are

in detention, what the purpose of the detention is, what the order of operation of the institution is, what services they can use and how – must be explained to them in a clear manner. Helping them to interpret the Hungarian-language documents provided to them in the course of the official procedure (orders, decisions) and discussing these documents with them can help them understand where the procedure stands. They should not be expected to process all the information at once, and therefore they must be provided the opportunity to ask questions regularly. Showing patience can be very helpful in earning their trust.

*

If the client...

...came from a guarded refugee center and therefore, even though the environment is new for them, the situation is not. They understand the procedure to some extent. They adapt relatively easily, though there may be extreme emotional reactions during the first days, which result from their disappointment over not being recognized as a refugee. They integrate into the life of the detention center relatively quickly after learning about the differences between the two secure institutions.

In our experience, the proportion of people using addictive substances is high among those coming from asylum detention centers. They have specific requirements (and often demands) regarding the doses they want to be provided of certain drugs.

What could help?

It should be made clear to them how their case may be advanced and in what manner the life, rules and operation of the detention center are different from that of the asylum detention center. We should strive to secure their cooperation involving the manager, doctor and psychiatrist of the detention center in order to reduce the amount of sedatives and/or sleeping pills being taken – if there is no mental illness that would require their application.

*

If the client...

...was transferred from a prison and got used to the prison conditions. They are often surprised by the fact that they are not released after serving their prison sentence but instead transferred to “another prison”. Typically, they just “observe” things for a few days and then easily integrate and move around comfortably. They soon realize that this is a looser system than that of the prison.

They have well developed strategies for survival that they learned in the prison, but most of these do not work in the detention center. They expect to be compensated for telling on others. They use their Hungarian language skills to cooperate with the guard staff, and often hope to be

provided privileges in exchange. In most cases, they understand the internal communication of the guard staff.

They use the methods for advancing their position that they learned in prison to survive, which leads to game-playing and internal conflicts. It is important to emphasize that not all clients who have previously been in prison display these traits.

What could help?

They must be made aware in the scope of continuous helping conversations that the methods they brought with them from prison do not promote their integration and they do not need to display power in order to be safe. As they generally respect uniforms and rank, involving the manager of the detention center in the cooperation with such a client may mitigate the tensions caused by them among the detainees.

*

If the client...

...previously used light drugs, came from a drug-abusing subculture, or was perhaps even an addict at the time of detention or tries to cope with the stress resulting from detention conditions by using drugs. Their every thought and action is centered around drugs. They are knowledgeable on the topic and have a definite idea about their drug needs. They loudly express these ideas, attempt to get their way with everyone, often make threats of suicide, and have a tendency to self-harm. Some of these clients sleep a lot when on the drug, while others become overactive.

These clients often have a history of imprisonment in another country.

What could help?

It is important to set reduction of the drug doses as a goal. This reduction should be done in close cooperation between the manager of the detention center, the local physician, the psychiatrist, the medics, the guards and the helping professionals. Following the specialized doctors' recommendations regarding the reduction of drug doses, we can achieve significant successes, provided that everyone involved acts consistently. This, however, requires persistent care and support from the social worker.

The client's response to modification of the composition and amount of the drugs can be assessed by observing their behavior in the course of the daily work. This information can be used by the psychiatrist when setting the doses. In most cases, if the first symptoms of addiction have already appeared, we cannot reason with them. It is, however, important to continuously observe them in order to be able to detect when they can be reached on a rational level. This is when the real supportive work begins.

If the client...

...demands addictive drugs but instead of taking them, they use them as a commodity for trade within the quarters.

They do not swallow the drug given to them but instead hide it in their mouth, behind the gum, and later spit it out and gather it. This method is rarely used at the minor centers, as in those locations clients have a better chance to further their individual interests and so feel less of a need to create such a position in order to gain a sense of security. In addition, the actual use of the drugs can be tracked more easily, so there is not much of a chance for such abuse. However, this could be an issue in regard to those coming from a larger detention center.

What could help?

If the suspicion arises that a certain person is abusing the drugs, a psychiatrist must be consulted in all cases. In order for this to take place, we of course have to know the types and doses of the drugs the client is on and we have to regularly consult with the psychiatrist regarding what changes are expected to take place as a result of changing medication.

If a client regularly hides pills in their mouth, this often leads to stomatitis, which could be indicated by a swollen face. The situation becomes clear if the guards find pills in the client's room during a room inspection.

Unwanted trade can only be stopped in an effective manner via the continuous monitoring of the foreigners' behavior and through close cooperation between the manager of the detention center, the guards, the medical staff, the psychiatrist and the social workers.

Social work at immigration detention centers

Social work at detention centers includes individual case management, group work and community development.

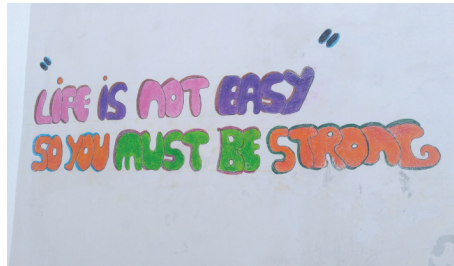
In the course of individual case management, the work is focused on the individual and their environment, i.e., the social worker deals with the problems, questions, personality and situation of the individual, but must also always consider both the narrow and the wider environment of the person. In

the course of group work, the focus is on a group of persons facing similar problems, and their interests, needs and goals, while the individual is viewed from the perspective of what role they play in the group. The central components of individual case management are the provision of information and consultation regarding immigration policy matters and the needs of the individual; group work is focused on organizing group activities, while community development concentrates mostly on organizing community life.

The purpose of this classification of the professional work is simply to provide some point of reference regarding either specific tasks that require a solution or the tasks of each social worker in general; but in everyday work there is – and must be – interoperability between these areas of focus.

The social worker working alone at the RRI conducts both individual case management and group work, and switches between the two forms of work as needed based on the situation and the plan. In Nyírbátor, different social workers conduct individual case management and group/community work, but even they will sometimes use the other forms of work in certain situations.

Social workers always display their own personality in the course of their work. In order for their work to be effective and efficient, they should be in good health, in good physical shape,



Graffiti on the wall of a cell

mentally balanced, have realistic self-knowledge, be aware of what tools fit their personality and know in what roles and situations they can act credibly. No person is equally at home in one-on-one conversations, leading larger groups, sports, music, movies, board games, crafts and other creative or artistic activities, mitigating tensions nearing the point of explosion and supporting depressed people who are in a crisis. It is, however, important for the social worker to be aware of which situations they work well in and also which situations do not match their personality. If they work with the tools and methods with which they can act credibly, they will be successful in the performance of their tasks even despite their deficiencies.

Social workers who work in a team should know not only themselves but also the abilities and deficiencies of each other, as an optimal division of work where everyone can feel effective, competent and confident can only be established if these are taken into account. When choosing a new team member, the skills and personality type the applicant can add to the team are very important to assess.

The tasks of social workers

Social workers perform various tasks in order to achieve the goals set forth. In the following, we present the most important ones.

- Enhancement and improvement of the accommodation circumstances of foreigners. The more foreigners participate in the implementation of improvements, the more effective the method will be.
- Reduction of stress, release of tension, prevention and management of conflicts.
- Providing continuous support for the maintenance of mental and physical activities, promoting the active and beneficial use of leisure time, taking into consideration the needs and scope of interest of foreigners.
- Management and solution of individual problems.
- Enhancement of living together in a community, community formation.
- Ensuring continuous availability of reliable, independent, accessible, client-oriented information that is comprehensible for the clients on the return procedure, the possibilities, rights and obligations of third country nationals, the procedures of detention and the status of individual cases.
- The provision of individual consultation based on individual needs and circumstances.
- Provision of support and representation for third country nationals in the course of the entire immigration procedure.

- Promoting regular, effective and conflict-free communication between the authorities in charge of carrying out returning proceedings and foreigners.
- Providing continuous psychological and mental health support in order to mitigate the harm caused by being detained and in order to establish strategies for coping.
- Providing help in exploring both the individual and social resources available as well as the opportunities to advance reintegration.
- Enhancing the understanding of the conditions of voluntary return, the realistic consideration of individual opportunities and making a decision in line with the interests of the individual.
- Providing help at the request of the client in finding and accessing the possibilities for representation, in contacting domestic and international helping and supporting services and embassies.
- Identification of vulnerable persons and provision of special, humane and professional care in line with their needs, advancing their early access to necessary care.
- Ensuring that minors receive care in line with their age and individual needs, supporting parents.
- Supporting the staff in charge of detention and health care in providing professional and humane care for foreigners and in establishing conflict-free communication between clients and police staff.

The set of tools of social workers

In the course of their helping work, social workers should decide conscientiously what tools to apply in particular situations. There are numerous situations that could occur during everyday interactions, shaped by the particular place, the person and number of participants, the type of communication, the emotions, intentions and options of the participants as well as many other factors. Social workers may apply a wide variety of communication styles depending on what they consider to be the most effective in the given situation. The following aspects may provide guidance on which tool should be used in particular situations in the course of the work performed with the clients.

It is important to assess the **personality**, the current mental state of clients: What do they need? What works for them? What is the communication style which will allow us to reach them? The **personality of the helper** is also important: In which role can they be authentic and convincing? We need to take into consideration the **general purpose of the helping relationship**; we must, at all times, keep in mind what we would like to achieve in the long run during the helping work with the particular client. All interactions must be incorporated into this general system of goals.

- Does the particular interaction take place in private or in a group?
- What reaction or solution is necessitated by the particular situation or problem?
- What physical options are available in the particular situation (time, place, tool)?

Some communication/intervention strategies may contradict each other, and more than one strategy can be applied in a particular situation.

Well-chosen helping strategies advance effective cooperation. They facilitate the achievement of the goals set and strengthen the authenticity of social workers; they may also strengthen the positive behavior of foreigners, and they may allow social workers to manage and minimize conflicts between the clients and other participants (staff of detention centers, authorities) as well as the social workers.

Choosing the correct tool for intervention may be made more difficult by several factors, including:

- Incorrect situational awareness, ignoring the fact that the client is playing games;
- Exceeding the limits of the social worker's competence;
- Excessive emotional reaction, involvement;
- Losing objectivity;
- Fatigue, tense state of mind, lack of concentration;
- Burnout.

Communication tools

In the following, the most frequent communication tools and intervention approaches applied in the work of the social worker working in a detention center are presented.

Understanding, compassion

The helper reacts to the problem or inner conflict brought by the client and provides a space in which to vent. They listen to the difficult and painful problems of the client without making any judgments, the purpose being to reduce the inner tension of the client throughout the act of talking, thereby helping the client find a solution to their problem and cope with the difficult situation more easily.

Depending on the personality and the problem of the client, this role must be applied either on a regular or an occasional basis. This role is essential in building trust and getting to know the client better.

Connecting/mediating

The purpose of the application of the “bridge role” is to advance the establishment of an effective relationship between the client and the authorities, between two or more clients, between clients and the security staff, as well as between the clients and other organizations.

It is quite frequent that information gets lost between the two parties; information is transmitted in a distorted or fragmented manner or the parties place the available information in a different context, interpreting it differently. This may be the result of language problems, misunderstandings based on culture or based on the opposing interests of the parties. Insufficient or misunderstood communication may slow down the proceedings of the authorities, may cause severe conflicts in cohabitation in detention and may make the safe implementation of detention more difficult.

In order to avoid such situations, social workers aim to identify misunderstood or missing information as an outsider to the situation, to call this fact to the attention of the parties and to promote understanding of the perspective of the other party. In this role, social workers do not only interpret in order to bridge language barriers; they also help the parties interpret the situation, they coordinate the various parties’ different interests and finally they strive to bring the different perspectives of their clients closer to each other.

Motivation

In many cases, the mental and physical state of people being held in detention deteriorates. The risks of hospitalization, loss of interest, the closing off of the mind, the appearance and strengthening of negative behaviors and/or depressive, aggressive or regressive mental states are particularly high. In some cases, the mental and physical activity of detainees decreases to such an extent that they do not even get out of bed and only leave their room for meals.

In order to make the activity of the detainees adequate in the long run, it is essential that social workers motivate them on a continuous basis. This role is of utmost importance particularly in the case of detainees having been held for a long time. Active participation in any useful activity can help in preserving physical and mental health. If foreigners can feel useful during the activity, they experience success and this feeling might help reinstate the confidence lost during detention. The positive feedback of social workers regarding the abilities or actions of the foreigners does indeed have a strong motivating power.

Compliance with the rules, establishment of limits

The detention center is a residential institution organized around rules and requirements, forcing people from different cultures and having different personalities and needs to live together 24/7. The learning of and compliance with the rules, the development of awareness of the rules, the strengthening of adaptability and the transmission of behavioral norms are crucial for peaceful cohabitation.

Social workers play a significant role in the detainees' learning of these. It is not enough to present the rules or to display them in a printed format in an accessible spot in a language spoken by the detainee. The rules must be interpreted and compliance with them must be ensured on a continuous basis. Persons violating such rules must be warned, indicating that compliance with the rules is important. However, not every little moment of life in the detention center is regulated; therefore, many situations occur where there is no procedure for correct behavior right at our disposal. In these situations, social workers can help in reaching consensual agreement between the parties concerned. The skills established as a result of such educational work may be useful for the foreigners in their lives following detention.

Representation of reality

In many cases, foreigners have unrealistic ideas of their rights and options after having been detained. Some of them wish to go back to European countries where they have been before, not acknowledging the role of the authorities of the given country in the matter. Others hope that they will be able to give some information to the Hungarian authorities based on which they will be set free at once. The majority of those wishing to return home hope that they can depart right away. We meet many different ideas, concepts and illusions.

The "sobering up" of the client, which means the client coming to understand and accept reality, is essential for them to manage their matters and lives constructively. The role of social workers is important in this process: they help the foreigners understand the information received from the authorities, give them clear feedback on the reality of their ideas, and aim to flip them out from the thought-strategy structure that they operated in until then.

Social workers can perform well in this role if they communicate with their clients in a clear, comprehensible, simple, direct and firm manner and, at the same time, in a calm way without any tension and without judging the client. Excessive discretion, euphemisms and beating around the bush are not useful approaches in helping our clients assess their real situation and possibilities and thus be able to make decisions on issues affecting their lives.

Consultation

It is clear from the above that playing the role of the consultant is only useful if clients are familiar with their realistic possibilities. The helper, as a consultant, helps the clients make the decision that is best for them. Social workers cannot make decisions for the clients and cannot tell the clients what to do, what they consider to be the best route. Whatever decision the clients make, they must bear the consequences of it. As adults, they are responsible for their own lives. The social workers are responsible for making available all reliable information that could help in making the decision, for supporting their understanding, for helping them discover opportunities, limits, resources and pitfalls that the clients have not taken into consideration.

During the helping work, social workers are frequently asked what they would do in the place of the client. It is important that social workers make the clients acknowledge that the decision is theirs, and that such responsibility cannot be assigned to others.

Representation

Social workers represent the client(s) towards particular parties of the system, most frequently towards the manager and the staff of the detention center. This role should only be taken if the clients cannot represent themselves effectively in the particular matter. This may be the result of communication problems, or the clients cannot access the person in charge for technical reasons, or their capacity to promote their own interests is not sufficient.

Standing by the client's request or need may help to a great extent in building trust; however, this cannot be an end in itself. In this case also, one must consider whether the cooperation of social workers is necessary or not, whether their contribution to the process is necessary or the issue will be resolved in due time without the social worker. The help of social workers should not be involved in the process unnecessarily if it does not bring any real added value. The possibilities and limits of client representation will be elaborated further on.

The content and purpose of helping work

In this chapter, we summarize the activities and possible content of the helping work performed in detention centers.

Enhancement and improvement of the accommodation conditions of foreigners

The most important aspect when designing the furnishing of the detention centers is safety. The detention center, on account of its purpose, must create circumstances in which the detainees cannot harm themselves, others or the staff of the center. We believe that it is important that not only the physical, health-related and security-related safety of detainees be ensured, but that psychological and social aspects be taken into consideration as well.



Painting a room of the RRI in the scope of a community activity

The white (or, with time, grayish) walls, gray bars, iron doors, and the living space furnished in a minimalist style are hardly suitable for the persons living there to feel safe emotionally. In the course of our work, we strive to make the physical environment of the detention center more colorful and humane. We also try to involve the detainees in the implementation of improvements. Painting the rooms and common areas with the clients is not only a great leisure activity or active community program, but it helps the clients feel more at home to live in an environment decorated with their own hands.

Besides, we also strive to provide tools to foreigners that will help them spend their free time and that can be used in community programs and during sport activities.

Example

In the scope of a community action, the detainees started to paint some rooms of the sleeping quarters under the supervision of social workers. One of the foreigners was a qualified and experienced painter, and was more than enthusiastic to start the work and to oversee the process; he also taught his peers the correct techniques. This activity influenced both his mood and his relationship with his peers to the better.

The latter was particularly important since the foreigner was quite isolated from the other detainees on account of his home country and spoken languages. He was released before the painting work had been completed, but his peers still held in detention could continue decorating their sleeping quarters using the techniques learned from him.

The program, which lasted for weeks, was useful, important and entertaining for many detainees, while they also managed to learn and improve a lot.

Provision of information

On the one hand, the institution in charge of the operation of the detention center has an obligation under the law to inform the detainees regarding the daily schedule and internal rules of the detention center, and the competent immigration policy authority must also inform foreigners regarding its proceedings.

One of the most basic tasks of social workers is to inform their clients. This, however, cannot substitute for information received from the authorities. The helping worker can only provide information regarding particulars that are, theoretically, already available to the client, either because the competent authority has already released such information, or because it is information that is part of the public domain. The term “theoretically available” is of great importance, as the fact that the information has been made available to the detainee either orally or in writing does not necessarily mean that the client has understood the information.

Most tension in detainees is caused by the fact that they do not understand the information received during official proceedings, or they cannot interpret, memorize or process it for themselves.

When the officer or the judge releases an order or decision, an interpreter translates such information into the language of the foreigner orally. However, the majority of the information received orally is forgotten by the recipient almost immediately. The official language, the tension frequently experienced during such situations and the often complicated procedure do not facilitate understanding, either. After that, the client receives the legal document in Hungarian, which is not helpful for them at all. However, in many cases, even information given in their mother tongue is not sufficient, as there are significant differences in literacy for each person, culture and home country. For instance, the fact that the written house rules of the detention center are hung on the wall in the mother tongue of the detainee in a place accessible to them does not necessarily mean that the foreigner will actually have access to the information.

Social workers discuss the reason of detention, the procedures, the provisions of the laws, the order of the proceeding in practice, the realistic options of the client, as well as the content of official decisions and orders with each of their clients from time to time on a regular basis. Conversations regarding the daily schedule, internal rules, as well as the rights and obligations of detainees take place every day. The clients frequently ask for help identifying information that is available on the internet but that the clients do not know how to start looking for. Therefore, the provision of information by social workers is a never-ending process, based on information already available.

Supporting the return home

Third country nationals are taken into immigration detention because they have no authorization to stay in Hungary lawfully, and therefore the immigration authority strives to organize either their return to a country where they previously resided or their deportation to their country of origin. One of the first things the social worker must attempt to clarify for the client is as follows: "You are here because the Hungarian authorities intend to send you home/back. The authorities will do everything in its power in order for this to be successful."

A portion of the detainees already recognize at the time of detention that their quickest way to freedom is returning home, and therefore they cooperate with the authorities in every regard. Others, however, view detention in Hungary as an obstruction hindering them from achieving their goals and do everything they can to prevent organization of their deportation until the end of the 12th month, so that they can continue their journey – in most cases towards a Western European country. They try to achieve this using various methods, such as providing false data regarding their identity or country of origin, entering a marriage or trying to influence the embassy in order



Drawing of a detainee made during an art therapy session

to avoid identification. The degree of success depends highly on the method chosen and the country of origin. Most clients are unable to manage this, however. A common phenomenon is that the foreigner attempts to hinder organization of the deportation, but, in time, their intention changes, they accept the necessity of returning home, and eventually become cooperative.

As helping professionals, we are not entitled to take a position in regard to whether returning home would be beneficial or not for the client. The helping professional is not an immigration authority and may not take the position that the client should return home at all costs. Many clients fear – either rationally or irrationally – that they would not be safe if they were to return home. We have no mandate to assess whether their fears are justified. Nor may we encourage our client to hinder the authorities' proceedings or to mislead the authorities. Any of the foregoing would be in breach of the law and of ethical standards.

The social worker's responsibility is to help their client understand all the available information, based on which the foreigner can make a decision – being both aware of its possible consequences and for which the foreigner can take responsibility.

The outcome of the deportation procedure varies. In some cases, despite the best efforts of the authorities, the detainee spends an entire year in the center and is then released and makes it to the original destination. It is possible that they have family members waiting for them in the destination country and that they can legalize their residence in the end. Sometimes the foreigner is deported only a few days before the expiry of the 12 months. There are also cases where the detainee is granted refugee or protected status and leaves the detention center as a lawful resident. There was also a foreigner who did everything in his power in order to be able to return home from the beginning, and it still took almost a year until the requirements of return could be fulfilled.

It is important for the helper to be aware of the possibilities the client is facing in order to be able to support their return home. If the social worker knows that the client will almost certainly be deported despite their best efforts, they can do many things to help the client accept the fact that they will be deported once the time arrives. If, however, the chance of returning home is minimal, then – regardless of whether the client wants to go home or not – it would be a mistake to build up a longing in the client for their home.

If we deem it likely that a certain client will not be returned home, we should treat them the same way as everyone else. No matter where the client is taken from the detention center – whether to their country of origin, to Hungary or another European country – they should aim to integrate. This way, the work put into their development would not go to waste regardless of what the next stop is after the detention center.

The client's preparation for the return home should be approached based on their intentions.

If the client wants to go home themselves, the main task is to support the administrative process, facilitate communication between the authorities and the client and make information that is important for the client available to them. Foreigners who want to go home are in most cases

impatient and would travel immediately given the chance. The period of waiting can be made easier and their tensions can be alleviated if the social worker can help them understand the process and be able to track each step of their case.

If the client does not want to go home but will probably or certainly be deported, their preparation requires continuous work. They must be made aware from the start that their return home is inevitable. The pace and manner of progress and what can be achieved depends on the individual. It is useless to talk about moving on and reintegration until it is clear for the client that they will in fact go home. To make the client understand and accept this, it may be helpful to discuss cases in which other detainees from the same country were deported despite their every effort. If, for example, the client has already been identified by the embassy, it is important to make them aware of this as soon as possible, as at that point the time of organization of the journey is very close. In many cases, after this we can start to actually work on what will happen after the client's return home.

It is a common occurrence that during the months spent in detention, the client objecting against their return home eventually becomes uncertain. It is important that the helper detect when this happens. Then, the helper can discuss the pros and cons of each possibility with the client, as well as what made them not want to go home, whether they can face these forces, whether they can overcome the difficulties and whether their fears are justified. This common work may help the client prepare for their return.

The key to effectively supporting the return home is therefore that the social worker must know their client and what goes on in their head, what their plans and fears are, what contacts and interpersonal relationships they have back home and how these can change. This can be ensured through regular helping conversations. The depth of this understanding and support is largely dependent upon how many clients the social worker in charge of individual case management has to deal with. In this regard, the ideal number of clients per social worker is at maximum 20 persons.

It is important that the client be informed regarding the time of their return home as soon as possible. The sooner the client learns this information prior to the date of leaving, the more time they have to prepare and the more time the social worker has to support them in this regard. If they are only informed a few days before they leave, there is a risk that they will not be able to process the fact of the return and to prepare for it in a satisfying manner. But if they have two or three weeks for this, they will have time to go through the phases of the trauma, accept the fact of returning, calm down, find a solution for alarming difficulties, and identify the positive factors awaiting them back home and the persons they are eager to meet again and who will be able to help them reintegrate. In this situation, the social worker and the psychologist can also facilitate the process of preparation. Upon announcing the date of the return home, there are several signs that can indicate how the client took the news. If they ask the social worker for a new bag or shoes, a haircut or help cutting their nails, that is a sure sign that they have accepted the fact that they will return home and are working towards making the most of this situation.

In a huge proportion of cases, we see the foreigner calm down after they are informed about the date of their return home. After several weeks or even months of uncertainty, during which the client does not know what will happen to them and how long they will be in detention and whether they would be allowed to stay or sent back home, the question is suddenly resolved and they learn what they can expect. This results in relief for many clients. They do not have to think about what will happen to them anymore, and they can instead think about how to solve the upcoming issues. In many cases, after the date is announced, the client turns from their previous passivity and lethargy into becoming active and energetic, starts to make phone calls, packs up and prepares for the journey, tying up loose ends at the detention center and planning and organizing the journey home.

For the foreigner, returning home is a failure regardless of whether they go voluntarily or are deported. They had plans and goals, and they put a lot of money and effort into their journey, intending to see it through, but in the end they failed. It was all in vain. The key to the success of returning home is whether the client can process this failure, whether they can stand before their loved ones with dignity and look them in the eye.

The most important element of returning home with dignity is the client's appearance. It is difficult to look at the outside world head held up high when someone is unkempt and is wearing worn, torn clothes. It is important that the staff of the detention center or the social worker provide the opportunity for the client to have their hair cut, shave and cut their nails. In addition, it is also important that if the client has no appropriate clothes, they be provided with clothes and shoes appropriate for the season. Further, the client carrying their belongings not in a plastic sack but in a normal looking bag will also make an entirely different impression. It is much easier to admit failure to the people back home if the client does not have to be ashamed of their appearance.

In most cultures, it is customary for travelers to bring gifts for those back home. If someone returns home empty-handed, it is clear that they were not successful in their wanderings. Many of our clients would like to take some kind of gift with them for their immediate family, considering the common assumption that someone who can give something has something and cannot therefore be a failed person, all of which can give the client strength, courage and a sense of dignity. Sometimes they take candy with them that they bought in the scope of the normal schedule of the detention center, and other times items that they have made during the community activities. If the community social worker is aware of the date of return of the foreigner, they can provide them the opportunity to make souvenirs. These material things may seem to be of little significance, but we see every day what a sense of relief and security they bring the clients returning home.

For the deported, there is a significant difference between being returned in the scope of partial deportation – where the authority only escorts them until they board the plane – and full deportation, where the police also escort them on the plane, and they are handcuffed. A full deportation can be a very humiliating experience. When this happens, it is important that the foreigner know every detail regarding the travel beforehand so that they know what to expect, can

prepare mentally and not be anxious about things that will not happen, and in order to avoid any inconveniences that might take place during the journey.

The way back home can also be made easier if the foreigner knows exactly when and where they will be taken and if they can inform their family and friends regarding these details.

In our experience, it is important that the authorities announce the date of the travel home at least 2-3 workdays before the journey (but, in any case, as soon as possible). The less time the client has to spend in uncertainty and the more time they have to prepare for returning home, the smoother the process will be. The client returning home has to go through the stages of understanding, acceptance, acquiescence, planning and preparation, and if they do not have sufficient time for this internal emotional process, this can pose a risk regarding the safe implementation of the deportation. The longer the time provided, the more opportunity the social workers and the psychologist have to guide the client through this internal process. The helpers can support the foreigner in facing their fears, finding tools for overcoming them, and, in many cases, they can even discuss what the client has learned about themselves in the period of detention and what they can use to their benefit from the negative and positive experiences they went through in the detention center. There are countless examples of foreigners who can come up with positive thoughts and experiences regarding what they have learned, what they have become stronger in and what longer term goals they have set based on their time at the detention center. It is unlikely that the negative experiences could be turned into positive ones without the daily work of the helping professionals.

The days before the return home also provide the opportunity for the social worker to observe where their client is in this process and whether their behavior and emotional state are changing for the better. In the course of the weeks or even months of working with the client, in most cases the helping professional can determine whether or not their client has accepted the fact that they need to return home. This knowledge can be very helpful for the escort guards in charge of the travel or deportation, who are responsible for safely handing over the deported person to the authority of the country receiving them, without problems and complications, in an unharmed condition. If the service conducting the deportation knows that the foreigner has made peace with returning home and is preparing/has properly prepared for the travel in a constructive manner instead of thinking up ways in which they could prevent it, and that they are not panicking because of what is awaiting them, this can also create a sense of security in the escort guards. The degree of calm of the deported person and that of the service responsible for conducting the deportation are interlinked.

After the client's return home, the social worker also has to deal with the grief felt by those left behind. Being locked up together, depending on each other, and sharing common experiences can lead to the formation of strong friendships, and separation can be hard for those who must continue living in detention, with whom the departed client lived in a relationship of mutual support. In most cases, these friendships do not end – they continue via social networks, and we frequently see that those leaving support those who had to stay, for example, by sending packages or money.

Representation of the client

The abilities and options of foreigners held at detention centers to further their interests vary. Language skills, intelligence, education, emotional and mental state, communication skills and knowledge regarding the local system, rules and legislation are determining factors. Our clients often have a poor ability to defend their interests. Beside their personal abilities, their options are also limited by their inferior position as detainees, and it is difficult for them to lend weight to their opinions and needs in relation to the authorities overseeing their case and the immigration service providers. The limitation of their freedom, the crashing of their hopes for Europe, the absence of a natural supporting environment and the prejudices they face harm their self-esteem, which also has a negative effect on their ability to further their interests.

Culturally determined factors should also be considered: people have different ways of effectively defending their interests in different cultures and subcultures, and what works can be different in each case. In certain countries that are severely affected by corruption, it is entirely evident that one can only achieve things in return for compensation. Clients will sometimes ask social workers to whom and how much they have to pay in order to take care of something. Among those transferred from prisons, sometimes we encounter “professional snitches” who attempt to gain benefits by providing (true or alleged) incriminating information regarding other detainees. The foreigners also need to know how they can achieve their goals in the system they are in and what strategies are counterproductive. Social workers also support their clients in this learning process.

The primary goal of the social worker in regard to representing the client is to ensure that the client is truly provided the rights they are entitled to. These include respecting their human dignity during the procedure or in relation to their treatment, access to basic healthcare, a right to communication, freedom of religion, etc. Detainees frequently complain to the social workers about infringements of their rights. It is the social worker’s responsibility to determine whether the suspicion of unlawful proceedings or conduct is reasonable. In order for this to take place, on the one hand it is essential to be aware of the relevant legislation, and on the other hand the social worker must determine whether the client’s complaints regarding being denied resources and services, discriminated against and/or having had their rights infringed are based on actual or distorted facts or indeed whether facts have been withheld. It is important that the social worker be able to make well-founded, realistic and objective decisions regarding such matters. They may not provide assistance in case of infringements, so if they detect that their client has been limited in their rights, they must indicate this to the person responsible for the infringement, without any further consideration. At the same time, by supporting fabricated stories, the social worker can easily lose their professional credibility in the eyes of the other actors in the system, which can lead to them being unable to further the rights of their clients effectively in matters that are actually real.

There are situations in which there is no legislation that obliges any authority or service provider to respond to the needs of the client, but the client still wants to have the need concerned fulfilled. In such cases, there are several questions that we have to consider:

- Can the need be fulfilled?
- If it can, can it be fulfilled on a systemic level, i.e., also on other occasions, for other clients?
- Does the request formulated by the client actually serve the interests of the client?
- Would fulfilling the need harm the interests of other clients?
- Would there be negative consequences to fulfilment of the need in regard to the client, other detainees, other actors in the system (security staff, healthcare staff, representatives of the authorities, etc.) or the social worker themselves?

This means that in such situations, the social worker may not assess the request solely from the perspective of the client, but must also assess it on a systemic level.

Concrete example of a dilemma

The guard staff transfers an Iranian detainee to another sector due to a conflict that has escalated to physical assault, but there are no Iranians in this sector and he has no one to talk to. The transferred person submits a request to the manager of the detention center, requesting to be transferred back to his previous sector. He requests the social worker to represent his interests with the manager of the detention center. After taking several factors into account, however, the social worker, when speaking with the manager of the detention center, argues against the client's transfer back to his previous sector, despite the client's request. His main argument is that he knows that the client's previous roommates are very angry at him and cannot wait for him to be transferred back so that they can teach him a lesson. In the social worker's opinion, taking into account the severity of the tension, the conflict cannot be handled through conversation and mediation between the parties at the moment, and the request should be denied in order to keep the peace and prevent a more serious conflict. In this case, the social worker thinks that it is not only in the interest of the other residents of the previous sector, and the security service, that the Iranian not be transferred back, but also his own, despite the fact that the Iranian thinks that his interests would be served by being transferred back.

If the social worker decides not to represent the client in a certain matter despite their request to do so, it is very important for the social worker to communicate this to the client in an objective manner as soon as possible, explaining their reasons. Open communication and discussion regarding the conflicting interests can prevent loss of the client's trust towards the social worker.

In addition to establishing legal certainty and improving the client's position, it is also our goal that the social worker be able to make their client capable of defending their own interests. In relation to the representation of interests, one of the most important tasks of the social worker is to distinguish between clients who are aware of their rights and can competently defend their interests on their own, and those who need help in enforcing their rights and having their needs met – or even formulating them.

It is important for the social worker to be careful not to take control away from the client, and to support the client only to the extent necessary for them to be able to defend their interests themselves. A typical mistake social workers tend to make is that they attempt to fight their own revolutionary war by backing a certain cause, without regard for either the short or the long-term interests of their client. It is true that it is a great feeling for the professional to stand up for a good cause and try to achieve what their sense of justice tells them is right. The representation of interests may never be self-serving, however. The social worker's goal cannot be to fix the world according to their own ideals. The goal is to improve the client's situation, while teaching them – as much as the situation and their abilities will allow – to be able to stand up for themselves.

In some cases, the social worker must not only represent a single client. They frequently represent an entire group of clients. Sometimes these two types intertwine, and by representing the case of a single client, they may gain access to services, benefits or care that can change the procedures and services relating to other clients in a similar position. Similarly, individuals may also benefit from the rights and services won for the group. For example, this may typically include discussion of the rules and options related to celebrating Ramadan prior to it, in the course of which the social worker mediates between the group intending to celebrate Ramadan and the manager of the detention center.

Mitigating tensions, handling conflicts

The most important responsibility of helpers is – as we have already mentioned several times – to prevent conflicts and to avert tensions in due time. Obviously, not every tense situation can be prevented from escalating. Social workers also have a huge role in handling the outbreak of conflicts. Below, we will provide an overview of situations where tensions may appear and how the social worker can help handle them.

There are many tools for alleviating the **internal tensions of an individual**: supportive discussions, exercise activities, sports and creative activities, attention-diverting games, community programs with a positive atmosphere, laughing together. The psychologists and psychiatrists of the helping team can do a lot to mitigate internal tensions. If we can successfully support clients in “blowing off steam”, the number of conflict situations involving multiple parties will also decrease.

Most frequently, **conflicts arise between detainees**. These may result from religious, linguistic or cultural differences, the use of a common infrastructure (phone calls, internet access, choosing TV programs) or different customs, behavior or rhythm of life (e.g., being noisy during rest time, listening to music). It also happens that detainees may damage (either accidentally or willfully) or take each other's property. Conflicts related to obtaining a position of power within the quarters are also not rare. Conflicts based on cultural and religious differences are rare in the case of long-term detention, where the parties have time to get to know each other's customs. In the case of longer-term cohabitation, personal and interest-based conflicts are much more frequent.

Facilitating communication between the parties in conflict, clarifying the rules of cohabitation, transfers between rooms or quarters, cooperating on various tasks, going through positive experiences, celebrating together and channeling competition into games or sports can mitigate tensions within the community.

The social worker can help settle preexisting conflicts between two foreigners by promoting effective communication, interpreting, clarifying situations arising from cultural/religious differences and interpreting the rules. As a mediator, the social worker can help the parties in conflict to understand each other better, clarify misunderstandings and find a solution acceptable to everyone.

In order for the social worker to be able to be an effective mediator between the parties concerned, they must have good situational awareness and communication skills, intercultural skills, a confident demeanor, deep knowledge of the rules, and must get to know their clients well. They must be able to detect immediately if they are unable to remain impartial in a conflict situation and if they become involved, or if they start to be guided by their emotions. In this case, they must exit the situation and their role as a mediator immediately. Appropriate self-knowledge and self-reflection are very important in order to be able to detect such situations.



A part of the wall of the smoking room in Nyirbátor



Preparing for the football championship

Social workers are only able to contribute to the handling of a conflict situation as long as it can be settled through communication. If either party loses control over their emotions and gets into a state in which they are momentarily unable to process the message and in which their consciousness is not open to communication, the social worker will not be able to help them any further with the tools available to them. The social worker has no competence to end the physical conflict, to separate and hold the parties apart from one another. There is only one thing they can do in such a situation: stay away in order not to interfere with security personnel. Considering the fact that the guards must also keep the social worker unharmed, their presence is not a help but a hindrance in an explosive situation.

Creating a space for venting, providing understanding care and articulating what lessons can be jointly learned from the matter can be helpful tools for the helper in bringing conflicts that have escalated to an end and alleviating tensions. They must assess whether the problem was settled in a satisfying manner or whether additional steps need to be taken in order to prevent the occurrence of another similar situation. If it seems that the parties cannot be brought to amicable terms, the social worker should initiate transfer to alternative quarters or, if that is not possible, to another center. If the reasons leading to the conflict are structural in nature, even regulatory changes may be necessary – these should be proposed to the manager of the detention center.

The majority of the problems arising between the detainees and the guards result from linguistic differences and communication problems, from not being able to understand each other or misunderstanding each other in a particular situation. Conflicting interests also frequently lead to conflicts. Enforcement of the rules and the manner, method and style of enforcement frequently result in conflict, and sometimes deep personal enmity. In such cases, one likely cause may be a lack of respect shown to the other person. Respectful behavior – both from the detainee and the guard – rarely leads to serious tensions.

Another likely cause is the differences in how each service group interprets the rules. If one service group establishes more lenient rules for the foreigners, this will certainly result in conflict for a stricter group, even if it is the more severe group that acts in accordance with the regulations. A non-unified system of rules is fertile ground for playing games, which is a frequent occurrence anyway. Detainees are quick to learn what they can ask from each service group, and how they can exploit them. The social worker can help to smooth these situations via interpretation, mediation between the parties and interpreting the situation.

The different service groups perform the same tasks with the same detainees in the same environments, but in everyday life they practically only meet when they hand/take over service. They communicate in several officially prescribed manners, but – just as in any other communication process – there are also breakdowns and misunderstandings. Social workers can track events in the process of daytime service and can facilitate communication between the service groups.

Most of the time, **conflicts between the clients and the helpers** result from conflicting individual interests, which tend to be related to the games clients play. A typical case is when a client, keeping their own interests in mind, articulates needs towards the helper that the helper cannot, for some reason, fulfill. By being consistent and straightforward, using open communication and calling the client out on playing games, the helping professional can easily cut such conflicts short.

Tensions can also arise **between the guards and the social worker, or even between the guards themselves**, due to many reasons. In order to ensure effective cooperation and because of these parties' dependence on each other, such problems cannot remain unresolved. Finding common goals and interests, being open to each other and strengthening trust between the parties can help to alleviate the conflicts.

It is important that these conflicts remain invisible to the detainees and thus that the parties involved handle them out of sight.

Example

In one of the detention centers, smoking outside the designated smoking area was a constant source of conflict between the detainees and the guards. Because of this, the social worker started to take action in order to promote the smoking area. First, he and some enterprising clients worked together to paint the walls – which were a seriously worn-down, gray color – white instead. After that, they started to decorate the walls with the supervision of a talented drawer.



A part of the wall of the smoking room in Nyirbátor

The process began with planning what should be drawn on the walls. With the supervision of the social worker, in the end they agreed to paint the walls with the portraits of famous persons who represent some kind of value and are acceptable to every culture. This is how Newton, Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth, Marilyn Monroe, Mother Theresa and others came to be depicted on the walls of the smoking room of the detention center. The planning was a long process, and it was only through many arguments and discussions that they could agree on persons who were acceptable to everyone. Everyone was welcome to contribute to the process, and sometimes even the guards joined the conversations regarding the choice of famous persons. In the end, the "artist" drew every portrait on the wall and everyone who contributed in some way could feel the renovated smoking room to be their own.

Because of this, and the fact that the room had become much more colorful compared to the empty, gray walls the group had started with, the smoking room became much more popular, which also made it easier for the guards to enforce appropriate smoking practice.

Structuring of time

Even a few hours or days spent in detention can feel like an eternity for the detainee. After a detention period spanning several months, one's concept of time changes. This is particularly true if the foreigner does not know when the detention will end: anything is possible, from a few hours to an entire year.

When the foreigner is admitted to a detention center, they immediately lose the chance to schedule their own time – they cannot follow the daily schedule they were used to prior to detention. They are simply informed of their daily and weekly tasks and options, the rules and the daily schedule they must follow.

The activities included in the daily schedule constitute the points of reference in the detainee's life: they are given breakfast, lunch and supper, can shower and can breathe some fresh air in the courtyard at the same time every day, and at centers where the detainees are locked in their rooms for the night, the iron doors are also closed at the same time every day.

Detainees lose practically all control over their own lives. Because of the unpredictability and the uncertainty of the date and outcome of their release or return home, the framework that generally holds a personality together becomes loose. Their physical and mental activity decrease and they can easily fall into a very low-energy state.

The clients may also get into a situation where their regular time schedule is turned upside down because of the conditions of placement, such as a snoring roommate, night-time room checks and loud neighbors.

Their biorhythm may also be confused by the absence of privacy and opportunities for being by themselves. In the daytime, they can only be alone if they lie down on their bed and pull the blanket over their head. This is the only place that is exclusively theirs, and this may encourage excessive daytime sleep. Sleeping through the day may also seem to be practical for the clients because then for the time spent sleeping they do not have to cope with their helpless, impossible situation, their tiresome mates, their failures and a multitude of other discomforts. Daytime sleeping always has a downside, given that it often results in sleepless nights. During the night, the center is completely



It is important to encourage regular exercise and to get everyone to go out to breathe some fresh air every day

calm and quiet, and there is nothing to divert one's attention from tormenting thoughts. The long, sleepless nights may seem even more insufferable if that center's rooms are locked for the night and the foreigner has no clock, so they do not know how much time they still have to endure locked up with their negative thoughts.

A calendar and a clock in the quarters, prayer times and a consistently followed daily schedule are fundamental aspects of maintaining a realistic relation to time. Tools that can be used freely for spending leisure time even in the absence of a social worker (e.g., board games, cards, ping-pong, table soccer, books, sports and gym equipment) must also be provided.

Social workers also have an important role to play in structuring the time of the detainees. Helping conversations may mitigate internal tension, and the social worker and detainee can also consider together what beneficial activities they could spend their surplus time doing while in detention.

Clients often put themselves in a childlike situation and want to be provided everything immediately by the social worker or the guards. "I want it and I want it only for myself." This is mainly rooted in a complete absence of a sense of security in the detainee. "The only thing certain is what I get right now." This is why so many lose the ability to endure delayed gratification, which a healthy individual acquires at an early stage in the development of their personality, as a young child.

It is important, however, that the helper not support this regression, but instead provide fixed points of reference, adherence to which is essential. Instead of responding instantly and running back and forth, the most beneficial thing for the helper to do for their client is to say: "I am doing something else right now, but I will see you half an hour from now/after lunch/tomorrow at 10 and we can discuss it." It is important that social workers always keep their promises. This way, the client will learn that they can in fact trust the social worker's word, and the social worker will indeed deal with their problem, which gives them something to rely on and strengthens their sense of security. Besides, the social worker would quickly get bogged down by their tasks if they wanted to fulfill every wish immediately. A tense helper rarely makes a good impression on the helped person and may strengthen their sense of uncertainty.

The organization of community programs has a very important role to play in the beneficial and pleasant use of leisure time. As long as the clients' attention is focused on something, they at least do not sleep or brood over their difficulties, and sometimes cannot even sense the passage of time, as they concentrate on a task to solve or some kind of challenge. Clients who tend to brood are difficult to persuade to do anything, such as to accept the social worker's invitation to a logical challenge. They often make excuses and say that they could not focus anyway because their head is so full. It is, however, especially important for them to have their attention diverted and to focus on something else.

If the client gives in to the continuous nudging and agrees to pay attention to a game requiring cognitive work for 20 minutes "for the sake of the social worker", the social worker can give them

feedback (“see, you can do it”), and it is likely that next time less time and effort will be needed to get them to participate.

One of the main goals of community programs is to fill leisure time with positive content and to systematize it. Establishment of an appropriate biorhythm can be effectively facilitated by organizing active morning programs (e.g., sports, coffee/tea club). Clients who oversleep may be woken up regularly, but this, of course, must be done tactfully, respecting their privacy.

In addition to adhering to the daily schedule of the detention center, predictability is also very important, which can be provided by ensuring that everyday life can be planned and by organizing community programs in a regular manner, on specific days and at specific times. For example, English lessons held each Tuesday after lunch or movie clubs each Friday morning give a structure not only to the day concerned but also the entire week, especially if the planned program is also displayed in the quarters on a notice board or a monthly planner. A transparent program schedule can also help in conversations where the social worker explains to an impatient client something like, “No, I cannot give you the hair clipper right now, because the haircut day will be tomorrow, see, it is in the program schedule”.

Community programs and the beneficial use of leisure time are also influenced by external factors. The social worker must organize and conduct programs adhering to the timeframes set out in the daily schedule. Participants may also participate in activities in accordance with the daily schedule, and there are events that may affect the planned program, such as office administration, court hearings, etc.

Development of individual abilities

The development of our clients is an important area of our work. We should promote:

- An increase in their autonomy and self-sufficiency so that they can take matters into their own hands, make decisions on their own, and then take responsibility for the consequences of those decisions.
- Development of their self-knowledge, so that they come to know better their own limits and boundaries, can identify the resources available to them and learn to exploit them.
- Strengthening their ability to further their interests.
- Their ability to formulate future goals.
- Improvement of their cognitive and mental abilities.

In the course of the individual consultation, the social worker must strive to ensure that the client takes on a more and more active role in dealing with their issues. The social worker should only handle things for the client if the client is not capable of doing so due to some internal or external factor. The helper has an important role to play in providing every important piece of information,

instruction and available tool necessary to the client so that they are able to take care of matters on their own; the social worker must also support them with feedback, encouragement and praise in this process.

Example

It is futile to tell a detainee who started a hunger strike to cease it because they will not achieve their intended goal this way. This is actually not certain, as there are situations in which the detainee has in fact no other tool to articulate their needs and problems and be heard. Of course, we also cannot encourage our clients to start a hunger strike.

Our job in such a situation is to explain to the client what safety measures the personnel of the detention center will implement in order to protect the client's health. After that, we should explain to them the phases of starvation and what – possibly permanent – health implications it may have, and what risks it involves. We can also discuss what the client hopes to achieve with the hunger strike, whether they can realistically expect to achieve their goal via this method and whether there are other options to achieve the same goal. We can also help the client think through whether they will have enough courage to admit the futility of their fight and cope with another failure if they become exhausted along the way and prove unable to achieve their goal. As long as the client continues the hunger strike, these questions will have to be revisited every day during the helping conversations.



Creative activity in Nyirbátor

Guiding the client in a specific direction is only acceptable (and is, in fact, mandatory) for the social worker if the client is planning to do something that would endanger themselves or others.

Apart from regular helping conversations and individual consultation, community programs, logical games, exercise, language learning, teaching each other, the organization of competitions and championships and creative activities also have an important role to play in development. The social worker must pay attention to what their client is good, skilled, or talented at, and must strive to get them into appropriate situations, to involve them in the organization and implementation of programs and work processes, and to assign personalized tasks to them. We will discuss this further in the next section.

Support for “internal volunteers”

Internal volunteers are detainees who, in the course of the helping work, are placed in an, as it were, prominent role by the social worker, who delegates certain tasks to them by way of which they can contribute to the organization of the life of the detention center or the helping work; the performance of these tasks is continuously supervised and supported by the social worker.

When choosing an internal volunteer, the ambition and additional skills of the client, things they can and are willing to teach, their organizational skills, how accepted and respected they are by others, common languages, their ability to take responsibility – both from a material and an ethical point of view – their sense of justice, fairness and their social skills should all be taken into consideration. Of course, a client does not have to have all of these skills in order to be an effective internal volunteer. Clients who are not very loud or active may also be given the opportunity to be internal volunteers. In addition, internal volunteering can also be a good tool to put troublemakers, “anti-heroes”, into a positive role and to direct them towards more positive behavior.

During a long-term detention, it is not impossible to find some kind of mission relating to the everyday life of the center for most of the detainees. We must be certain that the detainee we choose represents and conveys to the other detainees the same values we hold ourselves to. Clients who feel a specific cause their own, and who like to organize (e.g., competitions, movie clubs), coordinate and recruit can be involved in the organization of community life in an effective way. They can organize their activities by themselves, without the presence of the social worker. They may be provided assets, guidance and ideas by the professional.

Internal volunteering does, of course, not simply mean setting out tasks and appointing persons to perform them. Their work requires regular support from the social workers. It is important to provide both individual and group-level feedback regarding their activity. We also have to combat the difficulty posed by double expectations: internal volunteers must meet the expectations of both the other detainees and the social workers. Because of this, they must be provided the opportunity for regular conversations and the chance to speak their minds.



A part of the playroom of the Nyírbátor center's quarters for vulnerable people, designed and made by the youngsters residing there

The point of promoting internal volunteering is not to lighten the workload of the social worker or for them to be able to assign as many tasks as possible to a “free labor force”. Of course, if the human resources represented by the clients are utilized in the system, this can significantly increase the effectiveness of the helping work. Its real purpose, however, is to ensure that the foreigners spend their time in a useful manner and can feel like important and useful members of the community. Thus, they will be able to define themselves not simply as detainees, but as people who have a task, a responsibility and can do something for others. Internal volunteering is an important tool in helping work and can even help prevent hospitalization, depression and loss of confidence. With the social worker’s help, the client can become conscious of new abilities within themselves, or they can try out roles that were unknown to them previously; they can also develop, become more fulfilled, acquire new values and channel their energy into something positive instead of frustration. Their role in the community can also be strengthened in a constructive form, without games, violence and bartering.

Through internal volunteers, we can also gain a better outlook on the everyday life, the real problems and the conflicts of the clients.

The dangers of burning out and exhaustion must also be taken into account. An important criterion is that the volunteer must feel good in the role assigned to them and must have the opportunity to step out of it and rest every once in a while, or withdraw from it if it is too burdensome for them.

Example

Clients with a good grasp of English or Hungarian often fill a role as internal interpreters. There was one detainee who made it much further than that, however. This Arab former university student, who spoke English well and had good communication skills, was frequently requested by the individual social worker to help with communication with the other Arab clients, with mediation and dealing with matters in the quarters. Thanks to his intelligence, good social skills and respectable personality, the social worker involved him in more and more matters. As the client felt good in this role, after a while he practically worked as a “social assistant” of the helper. After a few months spent in detention, he was deported. Before he left, he told his social worker that the time spent in detention helped him to find a new life goal: after his return home, he wanted to study to be a social worker because he felt this is what his future calling was.

Backing and supporting the detainees’ initiatives – community development

Imprisonment has a negative effect on initiative. Listening to the ideas and suggestions of the detainees and backing promising initiatives may, however, have a positive effect on specific detainees or even the entire community. If someone is given the opportunity to have a say in the life of the detention center and to shape and alter the system they are in, they will feel less helpless. This has

a huge significance in life situations where everything that happens to the person is decided and determined by others (ordering and extension of detention, strictly regulated daily schedule and rules, etc.).

The initiatives of the detainees may relate to alteration or optimization of the daily schedule and making daily processes more effective. We have received several suggestions made by foreigners in relation to operations which could be implemented without

difficulty in terms of changing previous habits and without generating extra work for the support staff and the guards, but which improved the quality of everyday life for the detainees. There have been many such changes implemented based on suggestions made by the clients. For example, in one of the centers the time for showering was changed, and the system according to which razors were handed out and the proportions of each type of food provided at meals (e.g., more savory and less sweet food for breakfast, more pasta and less stew for lunch) were also changed in a similar fashion. Without changes to the regular daily schedule of the center, the celebration of Ramadan would be impossible in several respects. It is general practice to harmonize the needs of Muslim detainees and what the detention center can handle before the holiday period.

The social worker has an active role in these processes. They listen to the suggestion and the reasons behind it, help the clients to articulate it towards the manager of the detention center, and moderate the negotiation process. They help both parties understand each other's point of view and display some flexibility in relation to establishing their own position. The purpose of this is to reach a consensual solution acceptable to everyone. In our experience, such solutions significantly improve the peace of the detention center.

Initiatives the detainees come up with may also relate to actions implemented by the group in order to achieve some change in the life of the community. Typical examples of this are self-organized community programs.

Example

In one of the detention centers, after the social worker had organized a few ping-pong championships, the clients came up with the idea of organizing a competition on their own.

They learned many tricks from the social workers during the organization of the previous championships, and they improved upon these, announcing the event by themselves and coming up with a method of lottery, the schedule and the rules on their own. They elected judges and established the rules of their operation by themselves. They invited the manager of the detention



Christians prepare Christmas gift packages for the other detainees in Nyirbátor

center and the social workers to the finals in a letter. They also provided for hospitality during a ceremony where the results were announced: they had made a shopping list some days prior, and everyone contributed something – sweets, soda, snacks – in accordance with their facilities. One of the more well-off detainees even offered a cash prize to the champion.

The social worker was only involved in the process as a consultant. He made suggestions for thinking certain matters over, provided guidance when questions or uncertainty arose, and helped to settle disputes. The planning and organizational tasks, however, were performed entirely by the clients. This multiple-day championship achieved a popularity never seen before, it mobilized everyone in the quarters, and everyone was continuously watching the games. Enthusiasm and positive energy filled the quarters. For those who came up with the idea and the main organizers, the huge success of the action was a great boost. They also grew a lot in the eyes of the manager of the detention center and the guards, having been able to organize the event in such a successful manner, which also had a long-term positive effect on the establishment of a cooperative relationship between the guards and the detainees.

Preservation of physical, emotional and mental health

In order to reduce the destructive effects of detention and confinement and prevent hospitalization, we strive to reduce the effects of the restrictions of the physical environment and to provide options for positive experiences and successes. We strive to make the environment look less like a “prison” by using colors and certain items. Remaining active is very important both physically and mentally. We strive to organize as many sports programs as possible and provide equipment and sporting options that are available even in the absence of the social worker. (Such equipment includes ping-pong tables, table soccer, indoor and outdoor gym equipment, punching bags, foot-balls and medicine balls.)

We like to use logic games that make the foreigners work their minds. In addition to improving thinking, logic and cognitive ability, board games also strengthen one’s predisposition to following rules and cooperating, provide a community experience and, last but not least, help to divert the client’s thoughts from their difficulties. During the implementation of the project, we continuously collect new equipment and games, always offering new community activities.

We can do a lot for the clients’ mental health if we treat them not simply as



Sports room in Nyirbátor, decorated with drawings of the detainees

“detainees”, but first and foremost as “people”, if we allow them to keep their human dignity and to experience human interactions. In this regard, one of our most important assets is the respect and care we show towards each other, which we can demonstrate by looking into the client’s eyes, smiling expressly at them, calling them by their name when saying hello, asking some questions and providing feedback and gestures.

Conveying values, establishing the standards of peaceful cohabitation

Promoting appropriate habits in relation to hygiene is important for many reasons: it has a positive effect on the preservation of health, as well as on a person’s emotional state, self-esteem and cohabitation in the community, just to mention a few. Getting a haircut is a regular program, for which we provide the tools and space required, as well as their safe use.

The personnel of the detention center clean the quarters daily. At the same time, however, we deem it important that the foreigners themselves also be active in maintaining order and cleanliness. We regularly encourage them to collect garbage and clean their rooms, for which we provide tools and cleaning solutions. With the support of the social worker, the detainees can be made to acquire the habit of cleaning and disinfecting their rooms every week quickly, and after a while they start to come up with their own ideas, such as cleaning their windows and the common showers by themselves.

Social workers must show an example with their own behavior, while teaching their clients the communication tools that facilitate peaceful cohabitation. These include forms of politeness (both in Hungarian and English), listening to each other, refraining from swearing and shouting, and using an appropriate volume when speaking. Cultural differences most commonly manifest in relation to the volume of speech. While some clients explicitly prefer quiet communication, others like to express themselves loudly and passionately. As the clients have to make do within the conditions of the detention center during the period they reside there, and if possible establish conflict-free relations with the guards, the physician, the immigration authority officer, the judge, etc., the social worker should use the volume of speech accepted in Hungary and help the clients to adopt it.

Respecting private property is not only a legal requirement but also one of the foundations of peaceful cohabitation. Minor thefts and abuses of property between the detainees may occur. The helper has a significant role in identifying the “perpetrators” and ensuring that the conflicts arising from such events are settled.

In the course of their “educational” work, social workers can mitigate harmful social effects by conveying the following values:

- respect towards other people (listening to what the other person has to say, personal space, patience)
- respect for food

- responsibility
- ability to bond with and care for others
- acceptance of differences
- religious tolerance
- controlling one's relationship to time (structuring time, accuracy, biorhythms)
- anger management

Maintaining religious and cultural norms

Religious and cultural customs and traditions are often difficult to distinguish between; they are also often interconnected and appear together.

It is important that the social worker be neutral in relation to values at all times. They must never side with a specific religion or attempt to convert others even if their own religious beliefs would require this. They must be aware of the main customs and respect them. They must help their clients in practicing their religion in a satisfying manner. They may, when possible, get them a Bible or Quran, help them get in contact with churches or print a sheet with prayer times and the order of holidays.



Painting Easter eggs at the RRI

We have already mentioned that conflicts of a religious nature are generally rare in detention due to close cohabitation. Religious detainees respect each other's religious customs. The social worker can promote peaceful cohabitation by helping the detainees become familiar with each other's religion. Cultural conflicts generally reach a breaking point if they are also coupled with personal antipathy. The helper can mitigate these by mediating between the parties, identifying common values and attempting to find a solution jointly, as we have already explained above regarding handling conflicts.

The need for the preservation of cultural customs appears strongest in relation to the holidays of different cultures. Celebrating these is particularly important for foreigners who are far from their home and are separated from their family. We must make room for this when organizing community programs. We should strive to help ensure that there are appropriate conditions and tools for celebrating holidays in an intimate manner, in accordance with the traditions. Our experiences show that clients take it well when a program organized in relation to a certain religious holiday can involve others besides those directly concerned. The holiday program should be organized in a manner that allows those concerned to experience the atmosphere of the holiday and

conduct the traditional activities, while providing the opportunity for the others to get to know the meaning and customs of the holiday and take part in certain parts of the program. How deeply felt the celebration and common experience of a specific holiday can be depends on the number, composition and dynamics of the detainees. If there is a low number of detainees, even a full-day program can be easily coordinated in such a manner that everyone is actively involved and both those concerned and the “outsiders” feel comfortable. If there is a higher number of detainees, they should be distinguished between and programs should be provided both to the wider and the narrower community.

Supporting the daily routine

It is in the interest of the detainees, the guards and the social workers that everyday activities (e.g., shopping, handling of requests and submissions, receiving money and packages, etc.) go smoothly. Social workers help the detainees in familiarizing themselves with and understanding everyday processes and learning to operate independently and effectively in these processes. During these daily activities, they support the establishment and improvement of awareness and compliance with the rules. If the client has any difficulties, they help them. They facilitate the optimization of the daily routine, helping the management of the detention center and the guard service continuously adapt everyday tasks and the daily schedule to the present needs and possibilities in a feasible, client-friendly, unified, conflict-free, and effective manner.

Helpers often only mediate between the parties, facilitating better understanding between the detainees and the actors operating the system, assisting in both the joint processing of information and finding solutions acceptable to everyone.

Social workers may not undertake tasks the performance of which another actor is responsible for based on legislation. Their activity may only be of an auxiliary nature, something that contributes to the basic service and makes the system better, more effective and more humane. Each actor has a different scope of work, different tasks and competences. We should learn about what is expected of “colleagues” working with us who are in another role. At the same time, however, no one can be expected to be fully aware of the rules of every job function. The social worker must know what their tasks as a helper are, where the boundaries of their competence lie, and what limits are imposed on them in an ethical sense. In each situation they have to assess how far they can go; in turn, they must indicate these limits to their colleagues working in other roles.

Improvements in cooperation with the guard service and other support staff are an important tool in the work of helping professionals; they are indirectly essential for maintaining an effective system. Daily communication is key.

Example

In one of the major centers, difficulties continuously arose in establishing and ensuring compliance with an equal and fair system for internet use. Foreigners regularly abused the system, and this resulted in conflicts between the guards and the detainees. In the end, the problem was solved through implementation of a system based on internal volunteers.

The social worker designated “internet group leaders” in accordance with the number of computers located in each quarters. The other residents of the quarters were assigned to groups of identical size, each under the authority of a group leader. While establishing the teams, the social worker strove to put together persons who were in cooperative relations and to assign leaders who were respected by the group.

After that, he had a discussion with the group leaders, in the scope of which they clarified the common rules such as how much internet time each person would have, that everyone must be provided the same amount of time, that the groups would use computers of differing quality in turn, that conflicts would result in the internet room being locked down for an entire day, etc. They also discussed how the day should be split between the members of each group. The group leaders were given headphones, for the use of which they were responsible. After that, they implemented the new system, and after a minimal amount of initial conflict, it soon started to operate effectively.

Since then, the social worker’s task has been to monitor people leaving, the assignment of new entrants to the groups, and whether the groups actually operate under equal conditions; he also works to continuously support and monitor the organizational and supervisory work of the group leaders. In the case of holdups, he organizes discussions between the group leaders and if he detects any abuse, he replaces the group leader who acted unfairly.

This new system based on internal resources minimized conflicts and visibly improved relations between the guards and the detainees.

Cooperation with partner organizations

In order for helping work within the detention center to be effective, regular communication and cooperation with the organizations responsible for security, healthcare services, conducting immigration procedures and other services is essential. There is daily contact with the management of the detention center, the police officers and armed security guards on guard duty, the authority ordering immigration procedures (the regional bodies of the immigration office or the county units of the police), the authority responsible for organizing deportation and the International Organization for Migration. Upon our clients’ written request, we establish contact with their embassies, legal representatives and monitoring international organizations. We support charitable organizations in helping the residents of detention centers in a useful manner.

In the course of our cooperation with these organizations, our main goal is to facilitate smooth proceedings, humane treatment, legal security and maintenance of a problem-free detention system.

In the course of our work, we encourage the smooth execution of administrative processes. We assist in the rapid flow of information in agreement with and with the consent of the parties concerned. In our experience, our contribution can help the representatives of other organizations save a lot of time spent on unnecessary work, and in some cases the time necessary for conducting the procedure can be shortened by weeks.

There are many processes that we have to deal with jointly with other organizations, and in many cases we jointly plan and develop the best approach for implementation. In the course of joint work, we always have to take into account the roles, options and limits applicable to us and the other party.

We strive to establish a network of contacts that can be involved in special cases and can be operated as a signaling system.

Our activity conveys value. Our goal is never to make our cooperating partners think in accordance with the values of our association, but to make the system work better, in a more humane and optimal manner.

Security measures

Detention centers are subject to special security rules defined by decrees and police orders. The helpers must know these rules well, adhere to them and facilitate the detainees' compliance with them. If they become aware of a violation, they must inform the guard service immediately. In the quarters, the detainees may not keep mobile phones, devices that record video and/or audio, valuables, or tools that pose a risk of accident or fire or are appropriate for killing.

In the scope of their work, the social worker may, subject to the approval of the manager of the detention center, seek to use tools that, according to detention center regulations, may not normally be brought into the area of the quarters. The social worker is fully responsible for these tools. When using such tools, they always have to consider whether the tool concerned can be used safely in the present situation and atmosphere and at the present time, and whether they can confidently supervise its use. If they have any doubts in this regard, they may not bring the tool into the quarters or must remove it immediately. If the guard service considers an otherwise regularly used tool to be unsafe in a given situation, we must accept this and refrain from bringing the object with us into the quarters.

The social workers of Menedék move around and work in the quarters without a guard escort. During the past six years, none of our workers have been harmed in the slightest. However, we must also be aware of the possibility of tensions escalating to the point where they cannot be handled through communication. The social worker has to be able to identify situations where one or

more clients may lose their self-control and an explosion of tensions can no longer be prevented. In such a situation, they have to leave the quarters immediately in order not to hinder the guards in taking appropriate action. If the helper does not feel safe in a given situation, they must listen to their instincts and exit the situation as quickly as possible. If this happens too often, the social worker should think about this and talk to the professional supervisor.

It is possible that it is not the foreigners' tensions that are too high but the helper's uncertainty. This should be taken very seriously, as in these cases the social worker may very well create the situation they are afraid of. If you are unable to attain a sense of security even with the help of your manager and supervisor, you should look for another job before it comes to this.

Afterword

There are numerous topics and aspects that could not be covered in this publication due to the limitations resulting from its scope and nature. In the course of the process of compiling this material, in time more and more useful material was collected.

The life of detention centers changes dynamically, and the present situation, the difficulties therein and the challenges posed thereby are influenced to a huge extent by the number of the detainees and their composition by country of origin, history and many other factors. Newer challenges always lead to new opportunities, tools, methods and experiences. Therefore, continuous learning is necessary in order to be able to respond to changes. This publication could remain in development indefinitely, but this is of course not possible.

We would like to offer special thanks to the social workers of Menedék Association who participated in compiling this publication. This publication could not have been created without their ideas, suggestions and the experience they accumulated at detention centers. To name them: **Éva Adóba, Judit Berta, Orsolya Farkas, Glória Horváth, Orsolya Jenei, István Kiss, Krisztina Kovács, Vivien Orosz, Zsuzsanna Perák, Tamás Pesty, György Pisák, Kornél Sándor, Borbála Szük, Judit Tóth.**

We hope that by collecting our experiences and putting them on paper, we can provide a useful resource for helpers and other professionals working with foreigners in immigration detention, providing them a perspective that can help them overcome the challenges that arise in their everyday work better and more easily.