



Images © Photographee.eu/Shutterstock.com

Sweden – Church of Sweden

Digniti Omnia

WHY?

Many EU citizens come to Sweden in order to support their families back home. However, some of these people are poor, homeless and have little or no education. As a result, many are in a state of vulnerability and deprivation.

WHAT?

The aim of Digniti Omnia is the **self-empowerment and social inclusion** of vulnerable EU citizens. The project offers a variety of activities around the country that work to improve literacy levels, knowledge of life in Sweden or the EU (such as civil rights), digital competencies and knowledge of preventative care (such as CPR [basic life support] courses). The Church of Sweden may combine different sources of funding to address the needs of the target group, as the church also provides free meals and a place to safely wash and shower. More than 400 participants have been involved in different project activities so far.



WHO?

The project began in October 2015 and comprises five major partners: the Diocese of Västerås, as the lead partner, the parishes of Karlstad, Växjö and Umeå, and a social innovation NGO named Macken. However, there is no central 'geographic hub' as activities are held in different areas of Sweden. Overall, eight people work full-time on the project, with approximately 20 project volunteers and an additional 10-15 volunteers from the target group themselves. Furthermore, some volunteers that work in shelters also help with project activities as well. The project also includes the target group when developing its activities. In this way, **vulnerable EU citizens have an input** into what the activities are and how they are delivered. This inclusion can come in various forms, such as a consultation or an evaluation activity..

HOW?

Digniti Omnia is in an ideal position to offer these activities and services as several of the parishes and organisations involved in the project are already providing shelter and other support to vulnerable people. They have developed a positive standing among the target group and as a result, people often seek out help from the project.

The project operates with the understanding that an individual's **basic needs must be addressed holistically** and that support must be tailored in order to make a positive change in their lives.

Project activities can be centred around giving information, answering questions and teaching about topics such as preventive healthcare, rights in society and language. For example, in Växjö the FEAD social inclusion activities are carried out mainly in Växjö *Diakonicentrum* (a social meeting centre linked to the Church of Sweden), where there are also food and washing facilities provided for the target group. The project also arranges a language class, taught by someone who had previously been a vulnerable EU citizen themselves, one evening every week.

Digniti Omnia has already had several success stories, such as helping people to move from begging on the street to helping others in similar situations. The project finds it is effective to have **volunteers from the target group** themselves working in the project.

The project is now working on a website, which will be available in December 2018. The website will contain tools and information for both parishes and the target group, such as short videos that teach about personal health.

For more information regarding the project, contact **Fredrik Schirén** via:

E-Mail: fredrik.schiren@svenskakyrkan.se