

Center for Human Rights - Nis
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The Centre for Human Rights - Nis (CHR-Nis) is a non-profit non-governmental organization founded in 1998 in Nis, Serbia. The goals and tasks of the organization are the promotion of human rights, the realization, improvement and development of human rights, the popularization of the basic values of civil society, the fight against discrimination, intolerance, and racism.

CHR-Nis advocates for the full integration of Serbia into the EU, the building of democratic institutions, the rule of law, the reform of the prison system in Serbia, the decentralization of institutions, good information and the participation of citizens in public life. CHR-Nis implements its activities through projects in the field of education (seminars, panels, lectures, workshops), research work and drafting of proposals for the improvement of legislation, policies, and practices in the field of human rights, publishing activities, supervision of respect for and reporting on the state of human rights and fostering cooperation and volunteerism among young people.

CHR-Nis cooperates with a large number of experts, domestic and international organizations and institutions, and implements its projects in Serbia and neighbouring countries. In September 14, 2002, CHR-Nis adopted a Code of ethics, not because it was a donor requirement, but because considered it needed.

Since its establishment, the Center for Human Rights - Niš has implemented numerous projects, among which we would like to present to you:

I/ Two author's programs

Program “Suicide, suicide attempts and self-injury prevention system in penal conditions”

The author's program *“Suicide, suicide attempts and self-injury prevention system in penal conditions”* is intended for use by employees in Correctional institutions and prisons in order to reduce the number of suicides and self-injury of convicts.

The program is a complex mechanism that combines the synchronized operation of two types of prison services (according to the criteria of responsibility in the program): (1.1.) Services that should recognize the symptoms of a person at risk of suicide and suicide attempts and can do so since they are in daily contact with them such as security service, treatment service, health and employment service, (1.2) the treatment service in its second role, which then works with the person at risk until their recovery.

Two types of program activities are determined by time: recognizing a person at risk is limited to the shortest possible time (about 48 hours), while the time of working with a person at risk until its recovery is at least 10 weeks

The employee training project has three components: (a) Education of employees in different services, appropriate to their area of responsibilities in the implementation of the Program and specially created training tools; (b) Development of General and Specialized Procedures, coordinated with the specifics of each institution individually; The General procedure regulates in detail the responsibilities, directions and type of communication, by which the program is implemented, while the Specialized procedure defines the work of the treatment service on the recovery of a person at risk; (c) Monitoring and assistance during the implementation of the program, after the completion of the training, (a) until the equalization of the implementation practice and the content of the procedures, and (b) the system implementation that uses the existing infrastructure.

It is a guided, and non-random, process designed to deliver the result at the level of the person at risk of suicide or self-injury, respecting the right based (r/b) bottom up (b/u) approach. Assistance during implementation is a key activity for the successful installation of the program in the system, which makes it self-sustaining.

The program was successfully installed in Valjevo Penitentiary (2017 – 2021) and its independent implementation continues. The program was not successfully installed in Nis Penitentiary due to mainly treatment service representatives resistance. Installation started 3 months after Valjevo Penitentiary and lasted up to 2021. Installation of the program in VPD Krusevac is underway.

Program: Categorical ('peer') education of convicts for anger control and acquisition of desirable and functional social skills

The program "Categorical ("peer") education of convicts for anger control and acquisition of desirable and functional social skills" consists of 5 units (project of installation) that were implemented in Penitentiary Nis, Serbia. Independent implementation of the Program by prison is in progress.

Program is an innovative, author's program of an NGO, the Center for Human Rights Nis, Serbia. Innovation is reflected in the fact that previously trained convicts-trainers independently conduct and administer the realization of the program, with groups of participants, also convicts, during the period of 12 weeks i.e., 12 workshops.

The program (12 workshops) provides an understanding of the sources of aggression in humans and concrete answers on how to resolve aggression in a socially acceptable way. The content of the Program is contemporary; it is designed to meet the challenges of today's world. For example, it also contains exercises/ knowledge/ on recognizing fake news; for this part of the training the scheme "How to spot when news is fake" was used, created by the expert service of the European Parliament (EP, EU Parliament) and published in February 2019 (EPRS / European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 599.386 - February 2019).

The realization of the program lasts at least 12 weeks. The group consists of 12 participants and between each two workshops the participants write homework on a specific insight about themselves, derived from the content of the previous workshop.

The realization of each workshop is attended by 1 to 2 treatment officers, in the role of observers, without the right to interfere in the workshop process. Treatment officers monitor **the progress** of attendees, for which they were previously trained, in pre-defined categories and under equal conditions for all participants. The information on progress, recorded during the workshops, later becomes part of the dossier of each of the convicted participants.

This component contributes to the transparency of the treatment service work and gives the program anti-corruption potential.

Project of "installation" in existing system for enforcement of prison sanctions consists of five units, as follows:

(1) Training Convicts as Program Implementers; (2) Internship of Potential Coaches and Audit; (3) Training Treatment Officers; (4) Creating Preconditions for Systemic Implementation; (5) Assisting Treatment Services: The final phase involves supporting treatment services until they can independently organize program cycles. Each cycle includes the implementation of 12 workshops, the evaluation of outcomes, and the selection and preparation of participants for the next cycle.

The program is specifically, but not exclusively, intended for (1) Overcrowded and institutions in which educational groups per one treatment officer number more than 60 convicts; (2) Convicts with long sentences (as program leaders – meaningful activity is introduced into their lives); (3) As part of the preparation for release in any prison: convicts who are about to finish serving their sentences or meet other requirements for conditional release.

The program was successfully installed in Nis Penitentiary (2018 – 2022) and its independent implementation continues.

II/ Projects:

``Holistic Action against Torture``/2018/19/20 3, EU funded, partner/, International Aid Network lead applicant/ The action was a result of the joint initiative of three organisations engaged in improvement of human rights for almost 20 years, especially in fight against torture and rehabilitation of torture survivors – International Aid Network (IAN) and Centre for Human Rights-Nis (CHRN) from Serbia and Centre for Civic Initiative (CCI) from The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

``Psychological Support Program`` for convicts (long sentences, from penitentiary institutions, and short sentences, from district institutions) intending to start own small business after release: CHR-Niš has created a program for the empowerment of ex-convicts and their family members, the aim of which is to prepare them to successfully engage in their own private business and thus integrate into the community. The program combines workshop work, group therapy and uses GESTALT and REBT therapeutic approaches in certain parts; **``Toward better results of judicial reform``**: Monitoring the practice of the courts in the segment of requests for repeating the procedure (legal aid/ 30 cases: results, analysis and recommendations); Research/integrity test, results, analysis and recommendations; Education for NGOs;

``Towards full implementation of European standards in prison practice``- with following target groups: convicts (potential victims of torture or inhumane treatment, with a complaint of inappropriate treatment, those who report being asked for a bribe, convicts or members of sensitive groups), NGOs;

``Step by step through the prison system reform``, target groups: convicts who want to report corruption; convicts who are potential victims of torture and/or inhuman treatment; convicts on hunger strike; female convicts;

``Extended Coalition for the Prison System Reform``: Based on the analysis of the collected material during the monitoring of ten cases of hunger strikes, a comprehensive annual report was prepared, including the shortcomings of the existing practice in relation to the desired standard; **"Assistance to victims of torture"** project whose goal was to provide psychological support to prisoners, victims of torture in the three largest prisons in Serbia: Niš, Požarevac and Sremska Mitrovica;

"Coalition for the prison system reform" in terms of eradicating discrimination against minorities (national, ethnic and religious) and convicts with disabilities; **"Monitoring conditions in the Niš Penitentiary"**; **"School for Europe in Serbia"** education about the EU and training for writing projects for access to EU funds; "Anti-discrimination", an education project in the field of human rights; **"Citizens and Integrations"**, a project whose goal is to educate the citizens of Southeast Serbia about the functioning of the EU and present them with the content of the main legal documents, which are the core of EU legislation; **"Driving lessons in rush hour traffic"**, a project dedicated to social dialogue, its support and development in the City of Nis;

"Strategy for poverty reduction among citizens", a project implemented by CRS and the network for reducing poverty, of which the Center was a member; **"Monitoring and documenting human rights in Serbia"**, seminar, based on UN standards, for representatives of 12 organizations from Serbia; **"Restoring public trust into police"**, a project that aimed to restore communication and good relations between citizens and the police; **"Equal rights for all - Our future is Europe"**, the goal of the project was to raise the awareness of citizens through the evaluation of the work of the courts in Serbia; **"New age"**, a project focused on the education of students and young people interested in human rights, teamwork and project management; **"We can live together"**, a project developed in cooperation with partner organizations from Serbia and Montenegro, dedicated to tolerance and the promotion of minority rights;

``Use your rights!`` education of students on human rights, for which 5,000 guides were printed and distributed; **"School for Human Rights"** series of seminars on human rights for primary and secondary school teachers.

III/ List of reports, Proposals for Bylaws and analysis

1- Reports: Research on the professional integrity of public prosecutors and judges; Monitoring the work of courts in criminal proceedings (2000 - 2013); Research on self-harm in prisons; Research: Case law of the European Court of Justice in relation to aspects of confinement; Research: Individual Treatment Programs in Practice (2013); Research on the views of convicts on corruption and the fight against corruption within the system of execution of criminal sanctions in Serbia (second round - 2013); Monitoring the work of

health services in prisons; Research on the views of convicts on corruption and the fight against corruption within the system for the execution of criminal sanctions in Serbia; Representations in disciplinary proceedings - results and analysis of results; Filing of complaints - results of representation and analysis of results; Monitoring of the medical care of prisoners on hunger strike; Monitoring of a part of the prison conditions of prisoners belonging to minority groups (in a broader sense) in which their discrimination can potentially occur/April 2010; Monitoring conditions in the Niš Penitentiary (May 2007 - May 2008)/May 2008

2- Proposals for by-laws and analyzes that are the basis for drafting by-laws: Anti-corruption analysis of the law on the execution of criminal sanctions and corresponding regulations; The gender dimension of the rulebook in the area of enforcement of criminal sanctions; Regulations on the execution of criminal sanctions in Serbia from the point of view of gender equality: potential discrimination of female convicts; Proposal of the Protocol on the Treatment of Convicts on Hunger Strike in Institutions for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions (all services); Proposal of the Protocol on the actions of the health care service related to hunger strike in institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions; Proposals to amend and amend by-laws (related to the Rulebook on disciplinary offenses and the Rulebook on house rules) which bring convicts, members of minority groups in a broader sense (national communities, people with disabilities, small religious communities) to an equal position.