

Newsletter

March 2007

Prison Reform - Extra-Budgetary Contributions -

In 2006, the Prison Reform Unit of the OSCE Mission to Serbia obtained financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for the reform of the Serbian prison system. In addition to its regular activities, the OSCE Prison Reform Unit launched three new projects on prison staff training, improvement of healthcare standards in Serbian prisons and education of prisoners in Sremska Mitrovica penitentiary. Staff engaged in these projects have demonstrated exceptional professionalism, enthusiasm and dedication in aiding the Prison Administration of the Ministry of Justice to conduct a sweeping reform of the whole system. The emphasis in this Newsletter has been placed on the most notable accomplishments realised so far.



Contents:

Prison Staff Training	3
Interview with Mr Christopher Ian Frost: Education of Inmates in Production Workshops	4
Strong Security Service - A Key to Success, Mr Randy Poltaruk: Canadian experience	6
Treatment Staff as Bearers of Prison Reform	7
Improving Healthcare Standards in Serbian Prisons	8
Prisons Without Drugs – An Unattainable Goal or Reality?	9
Train-the-Trainer Course for Prison Staff	10
OSCE Pioneer Activities: The First Drug Free Units in Serbia	10
Education of Inmates After 15 Years	13



Prepared by:
Tatjana Čosović

Editorial board:
Tatjana Nedeljković
Marija Petrović
Miroslav Kragić

Prison Staff Training

The cornerstone of a humane prison system is properly recruited and trained prison staff.
(CPT standards)

The “Prison Staff Training” Project aims at the introduction of continuous and sustainable training of prison staff at all levels. Adequate training will enable prison staff to reinforce their professional roles in terms of more humane treatment of prisoners, and will help them develop more effective correctional practice. Properly trained and competent staff will be able to tackle the causes of offending and incite prisoners to change their criminal behaviour and lead productive, law-abiding lives after release.

Since May 2006, the OSCE prison reform team has been assisting the Prison Administration in training of prison staff, with a view to ensuring full, long-term ownership of training programmes by the Ministry of Justice. The aim is to enable the Prison Administration to competently take over all duties exercised by the OSCE. The Project also envisages the finalisation of lesson plans and curricula for all categories of prison staff, as well as the purchase of necessary equipment for the Prison Training Centre.



Prison Training Centre in Niš, supported by the OSCE Mission since its foundation in 2004

Interview with Mr Christopher Ian Frost: Education of Inmates in Production Workshops

In November 2006, the OSCE Prison Reform team had the opportunity to work with Mr Christopher Ian Frost, a psychologist and educator from the UK “Her Majesty Prison Service”. Mr Frost stayed in Serbia for two weeks, visited 3 prisons and delivered training and several lectures to heads of the Prison Employment Service and work instructors. We interviewed Mr Frost on his impressions about the Serbian system, his ideas and proposals for future developments.

*Christopher Ian Frost
(second from the left) with heads of
the Prison Employment Service,
Požarevac, November 2006*



OSCE team: Is it possible to draw parallels between British and Serbian prison systems?

Christopher Ian Frost: Around 30 years ago, the UK prison system was similar to yours. We also had economic units that brought enormous profit to prisons. Likewise, the prison management were not willing to relinquish their advantageous position and to give up on benefits and financial clout that they enjoyed. However, it was not soon after that the Home Office and prison authorities realised the potential of economic units for training and education of inmates.

Could you explain this transformation in more detail?

The number of illiterate inmates was staggeringly high. Many inmates possessed no life, social or work skills either. Our prison officials understood that economic units could become places where inmates would learn new skills and be able to find employment after release. We engaged educational agencies from the community, established cooperation with our Department for Education and Skills, brought experienced teachers to the system and kickstarted the process of educating inmates within the work

process. All our inmates who undergo specific training receive certificates from the Learning and Skills Council and the City and Guilds College Association. People from the community and offenders alike receive the same type of certificates, depending on the type of course they attended.

How did the offenders react?

The majority of them were thrilled about the new possibility. They were able to opt between the traditional education in the classroom and real life learning in economic workshops. As the classroom-based learning style was too tedious and unexciting, almost all of them took up the new style. Prisons organised literacy and numeracy courses in workshops, as well as social skills training in team work, communication, budgeting on low income, preparing meals, mending domestic equipment, growing vegetables, as well as work skills such as: bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, welding.

When you say that inmates can gain literacy and numeracy skills in workshops, what do you mean?

- Inmates can be taught to read, write and calculate in production workshops. The instructor can ask them to read simple procedures or to write uncomplicated reports at the end of each day. He can also teach them to count tools, other inmates or to compile necessary documentation. With properly trained staff and professionals a lot can be done. Given the specific characteristics of prison population, it is essential that traditional teaching methods be abandoned and that offenders gain skills that can be used after release. In this sense, prisons have the potential to become learning points, and not inhumane incarceration places.

Do you think it is possible to introduce these changes in the Serbian Prison Service?

As I have said, the UK faced the very same problems that you are faced with today. The reform was painstaking and slow, but worthwhile and thorough. Some segments of the system opposed the change, while others embraced the new concept rather willingly. Prisoners are the same all over the world, and it takes only dedication and hard work to start transforming the system. Access to good quality education and training enables inmates to gain skills which can open up alternatives to crime and help them obtain and keep appropriate employment and play a positive role within the community. At the same time, the reoffending rate can be significantly reduced. The Serbian Prison Service certainly has the resources and expertise necessary to instigate and speed up this process.

Strong Security Service – A Key to Success

Mr Randy Poltaruk: Canadian experience

By end-February, the OSCE provided logistical support to a two-cycle training of senior security supervisors in Sokobanja. Mr Randy Poltaruk, a Canadian expert with considerable experience in training, helped the Prison Administration initiate the process of drafting policies and procedures for the Security Service. Asked to explain the purpose of written policies and procedures, Mr Poltaruk underscored the following:

- The Serbian correctional service needs to adopt a comprehensive, standardised system of written policies and procedures. Such a system does not exist today, which poses serious problems for the whole Service. Namely, supervisors lack a proper performance monitoring tool, whereas staff are not held accountable for possible breaches of discipline or failures to perform their duties accordingly. Procedures would enable both supervisors and security officers to act in line with firmly set rules. Writing of policies and procedures is a long-term and time consuming process, but its benefits are numerous and far-reaching. I worked for the OSCE in 2004, and I am well aware of all obstacles that hamper the work of the Service. The year I spent in Serbia was challenging and rewarding at the same time. I worked with a great OSCE team who helped me understand better the system and achieve the goals that we all aspired to. We did an excellent job in 2004, and despite the initial deliberation on the part of the Prison Administration, I hope that we would be equally successful this time. It's a pity that I'll be here only one month, but I will continue to support the OSCE team efforts in Canada as well, by sending my comments and helping security officers write procedures that would properly regulate their everyday activities.



Senior security supervisors training, Sokobanja, February 2007

Treatment Staff as Bearers of Prison Reform

Aiming to ensure the establishment of a well-coordinated treatment department, the OSCE team has organised five seminars for prison treatment staff so far. In July 2006, a seminar on *workshop activities, planning and reporting* was held in Valjevo, attended by 19 participants from 15 prisons. Two psychiatrists were engaged as lecturers – Ms Nevenka Čalovska and Ms Desa Nagulić, as well as Mr Damir Joka, Head of the Prison Administration Treatment Department and Mr Slobodan Arsenijević, Governor of the Valjevo juvenile prison.



Prison treatment and OSCE staff at the poet Desanka Maksimović's grave, Brankovina, Valjevo, July 2006

The venue of the second seminar was Sremski Karlovci, a small, picturesque town in the north of Serbia. There were 22 members of treatment staff who had the opportunity to learn more about the *psychological approach in treatment of prisoners*. Mr Martin Seddon, an acclaimed prison psychologist and educator from the UK, talked about the current practice in the UK prison system.

In November 2006, a seminar on the *basics of counselling* took place in Novi Sad. Twenty-one participants attended interactive sessions led by Mr Joka and Mr Arsenijević. The fourth and fifth seminars were held in Belgrade and Zaječar on topics: *systematic approach to counselling and functional families and informal inmate system*. During these seminars, treatment specialists showed enviable knowledge of the latest world trends in treatment practice and developed their potential to become true bearers of prison system reform.

Improving Healthcare Standards in Serbian Prisons

Serbian prisons lack resources, expertise and adequate equipment for the establishment of a proper healthcare service that would operate in line with valid European standards and recommendations. The primary objective of the Project “Improving Healthcare Standards in Serbian prisons” is to establish the same level and quality of medical assistance that exists in the community. Drug abusers, offenders infected with AIDS, HIV+, Hepatitis C and B, TBC, and prisoners at risk of suicide are specifically targeted at. At the same time, the project aims to set up an exhaustive programme for combating and reducing drug abuse in prisons. Drug free units represent an entirely new concept introduced in the Serbian prison system, designed to facilitate the prevention of drug distribution and to help those offenders who are willing to forsake the habit of drug abuse.



Serbian prison and OSCE staff visit the Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Addiction, Ljubljana, October 2006

Prisons Without Drugs – An Unattainable Goal or Reality?

In October 2006, the OSCE team and 3 prison representatives visited Slovenia, one of the first countries in the region that introduced the drug free concept in its prisons. The delegation was hosted by doctor Andrej Kastelic, a distinguished Slovenian expert on harm reduction, methadone maintenance and the development of clinical programmes for addiction. The team visited three adult correctional centres and two juvenile institutions and gained valuable insight into the Slovenian drug free zones model. The team also took part in training in HIV prevention and treatment in prison settings.



Correctional facility for the rehabilitation of juveniles, Višnja Gora, Slovenia

The methadone maintenance programme is well developed and coordinated at the level of whole Slovenia. Mr Kastelic explained the manner of functioning of the model and helped Serbian prison representatives better understand the history of introduction of the methadone maintenance programme in Slovenia. Such a comprehensive and all-embracing programme is currently non-existent in Serbian correctional institutions.

In the course of the second half of 2006, Mr Kastelic paid several visits to Serbia with a view to helping educate prison staff who will work in drug free units. The OSCE team and doctor Kastelic organised 5-cycle training of selected Serbian prison staff from the Belgrade Special Prison Hospital and the Niš prison. Ten persons were trained in the Hospital and 7 of them in Niš. The training was attended by medical staff, members of treatment and security services. With the aid of Mr Kastelic, the Rulebook on Activities of Drug Free Units was prepared, whereby foundations for the establishment of drug free units in Serbia have been laid.

Train-the-Trainer Course for Prison Staff

In November 2006, the OSCE Prison Healthcare Team, assisted by Mr Jörg Pont, a medical consultant of the Austrian Ministry of Justice, organised a 5-day train-the-trainers course for 6 selected prison staff (3 doctors and 3 representatives of security and treatment services). The train-the-trainer course ensued after five-day assessment meetings with the same staff.

Mr Pont helped draft the curricula for 12 topics that future trainers will use for educating their colleagues: general practitioners, psychiatrists, nurses, security officers and educators. It is indispensable that proper treatment practice be established in Serbian prisons so as to ensure a continuity with civilian healthcare systems, and raise awareness of risks related to drug abuse and possible avenues for detoxification and drug substitution.



*Training of medical staff,
Sokobanja, February 2007*

By end-February 2007, new trainers held 3-day training of medical staff in prison pathology such as: infectious diseases, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide and self-mutilation, urgent interventions. Educated staff will be able to contribute to better rehabilitation and enhanced security of the institution with the aim of reducing trafficking, curbing temptation and eventually bringing about the complete resettlement of individuals.

OSCE Pioneer Activities: The First Drug Free Units in Serbia

Having signed Implementing Agency Agreements with the Special Prison Hospital and the Niš prison, the OSCE healthcare team provided financial funds for the establishment of the first drug free units in Serbia. The two institutions engaged in the construction and installation of new facilities and

complete overhaul of the existing premises. Drug free units will accommodate offenders who have committed themselves not to proceed with drug abuse and who wish to start with proper rehabilitation. The rationale behind the existence of drug free units is the reduction in the supply and demand of drugs, identification of offenders who have drug-related problems and their positive segregation, as well as reduction of harm caused by drug abuse. Twenty-five persons who voluntarily wish to undergo the process of drug substitution will be accommodated in each drug free unit.

Drug free unit in Niš prison before reconstruction



Drug free unit in Niš prison after reconstruction



Education of Inmates After 15 Years

Since 1991, no vocational training or primary education has existed in Serbian prisons. Owing to CIDA funds, the OSCE prison reform team, within the project “Education of Prisoners in Sremska Mitrovica Penitentiary”, invested substantial funds in the reconstruction of school facilities in Sremska Mitrovica prison, one of the biggest penitentiaries in Serbia. Necessary technical and teaching equipment has been provided and a significant number of inmates have enrolled in classes. Education being a critical element in the resocialisation of offenders, the long-term objective of the project is to assist the Prison Administration in designing a viable strategy for the introduction of offender education programmes at the level of the whole system. Education in prisons can help inmates to become more self-confident, productive and successful in employment, to the benefit of individuals, their families and the wider society.



Equipment in Sremska Mitrovica prison purchased by the OSCE Prison Reform Unit



School in Sremska Mitrovica prison