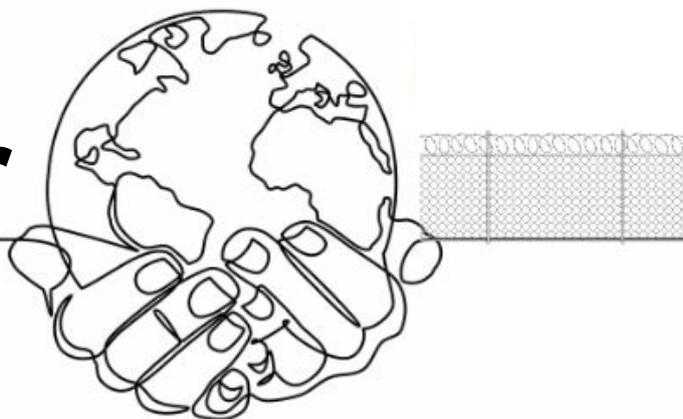




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# Newsletter

Special number within the COVID-19 context



## WHY Plus Dialog?

The penitentiary system represents a special social environment, where the pressure exerted on staff has consequences not only for employees but also for inmates. The objectives of the previous projects were directly connected to decent work and social dialogue, resulting also that an innovative approach of Health and Safety at Work in the penitentiary system is mandatory. This is what Plus Dialog project is all about.

It's aim is to address future workers on social dialogue and health and safety issues preparing them to become positive agents to improve health and safety conditions and well-being in prison environments, but also to promote the capacity building of the existent 47 health and safety committees throughout a set of activities that will introduce positive evolution in the current prison environments contributing to reduce the high risks and harmful contexts in which prison staff and inmates are.



to reduce the high risks and harmful contexts in which prison staff and inmates are.

IMPROVED SOCIAL DIALOGUE & COOPERATION | ENHANCED IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENT WORK AGENDA

## PARTNERSHIP as a team

The partners of the National Trade Union of Prisons' Policemen are Yrkesorganisasjonenes Sentralforbund (YS), EASI European Association for Social Innovation, the National Administration of Penitentiaries and the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

About

**Yrkesorganisasjonenes Sentralforbund** – confederation of Vocational Unions, established in 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1977, founded on the principle of full independence from political parties and ideologies, with 13 different unions with approximately 225.000 members, covering the entire Norwegian economy.

**EASI European Association for Social Innovation** – an European network, representing more than 30 organizations from 15 European countries which aim is the advancement of Social Innovation in Europe, by designing and implementing research and development and pilot projects, identification and dissemination of best practices and awarding grants and scholarships regarding social innovation practices, processes and systems developed in urban and rural areas, public services, third sector and the private sector.

**National Administration of Penitentiaries** – the public institution of national interest, with legal personality, subordinated to the Ministry of Justice, together with the subordinated units being part of the public institutions of defense, public order and national security of the state and constituting the system of penitentiary administration, named "penitentiary police" since 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2020.

**European Federation of Public Service Unions** – bringing together trade unions from across Europe, it represents 8 million public service workers, being a strong trade union voice that workers need, with the employers, the European Parliament, the Commission or the national governments, influencing the policies and decision of employers, governments and European institutions that affect public service workers, their families and communities, mobilizing for action and change, committed to achieve another social Europe.



WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF PREVIOUS COOPERATION, THE CURRENT PARTNERSHIP WILL BE A REAL SUCCESS

## Not a very fresh news, but still important to share SNLP became SNPP

Meanwhile, on 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, after exactly 15 years of existence, the National Trade Union of Prisons' Workers (SNLP), changed to a "modern outfit" adapted to the new name of the occupation within the penitentiary system with special status (according to the Law no. 145/2019) – prison police – the first concrete, dignified and correct identity of this profession with a long history. Decades have passed from the simple name of guard with military status to that of civil servant with special status in the penitentiary administration system, then it took another 15 years to become what we are now. Since 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, SNLP became SNPP (NTP) – **The National Trade Union of Prisons' Policemen**.

The National Trade Union of Prisons' Policemen was established in 2004, being the largest union in the penitentiary police, with approximately 6.500 members, with branches in 43 units out of 47 led locally by unit-level presidents.



THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION OF PRISONS' POLICEMEN CHANGED ITS NAME ON 14<sup>th</sup> OF OCTOBER 2019



### The Opening Conference... POSTPONED

Unfortunately, in the view of the current context regarding COVID-19, along with the OMS recommendations, European directives, the national decrees, ordinances and other specific laws regarding the establishment of the state of emergency as well as many other limitations, the management team of the Plus Dialog project was found in the position to reschedule, to reconfigure and to reprioritize the activities, events and other actions that were to take place in the current period.

So, the opening conference of the project is still in the "in progress" stage, and a date will be set for it to happen, but only after we will be able to return to a new normal. Until then ... stay tuned on our Facebook page, where we will keep you up to date with everything related to the good development of the project.

THE OPENING CONFERENCE OF THE PLUS DIALOG PROJECT IS POSTPONED UNTILL THE SITUATION CHANGES

### ONLINE sessions

Adapted to the recommendations regarding work at home where possible, the management team continues the smooth running of the activities provided within the project. All the updated details about the past & future activities can be found on the [Facebook Page](#). The working packages found in debates at this very moment are the one regarding the exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices, but also the one linked to evaluation.

Use the hashtag **#PLUSDIALOG** !



HOW DO HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES AT WORK IMPACT THE PRISON STAFF?

### PROTECTED PRISON WORKERS - PROTECTED INMATES



Following the reports received from the organizations of the penitentiary system network, the European Public Service Union realized an updated situation of COVID-19 in prisons and detentions centers in Europe. Beside that, it developed five policy recommendations for the protection of employees.

- Distribution of personal protective equipment for staff (like masks, gloves, goggles, soap), other preventative measures.
- Respect working time and trade union rights.
- Reduction of incarceration for non-violent offenders.
- Good communication from management to workers and their trade unions

- Coordination and collaboration between health, justice and labor ministries

"Prison health is an integral part of public health. Like all workers, workers in prisons and detention centres have a right to a safe and healthy workplace and prisoners have the same right to healthcare as does the rest of the population. Global efforts to tackle the spread of the disease in society require proper attention to infection control inside prisons." ([epsu.org](#))

**Nadja Salson – policy staff central government and EU administration/TUNED coordinator**

“THE OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF THE PANDEMIC, NOT ONLY IN PRISON SERVICES, HAS BEEN CHARACTERISED BY SHORTAGES”



The Norwegian Correctional Service (KDI) and the unions of correctional and probation officers reacted pretty fast when they understood the possible serious consequences of a Covid-19 pandemic. And they were among the first in the Norwegian state sector to see those, and they reacted by establish a “covid-19 crisis staff” which as far as I understand has been/is the coordinating body of the KDI.

What they have done is to prepare the organization for the possibility of a major or minor outbreak of the Covid-19 among the inmates or/and the staff.

They have:

- released inmates early or transferred them to electronic bracelets monitoring/community sentences (especially inmates from the low security prisons), so now inmates have a single bed cell, and through those measurement reduced the number of inmates from approximately 3.800 down to approximately 2.800; the early release and/or transfer to electronic bracelet monitoring is related to paragraphs in The Execution of Sentences Act, and not due to some special emergency act

- cancelling all visits from friends and relatives for the inmates and also cancelled all unnecessary trips outside the prisons for the inmates. Instead KDI has bought app 800 iPads that inmates can use for skyping and they have also been allowed more time for telephoning.

- postponed calling up people for serving their sentences when possible
- reduced the general level of activity in the correctional and probation service
- those few inmates which have shown signs of a possible illness have been quarantined/the same goes for those among the staff which have shown signs of possible illness/or have family which have been ill/shown signs of illness (the staff was home quarantined)

- made changes in the shift plans when necessary and/or used overtime

- re-recruited prison officers that has left the service and used part time officers more when needed

So far, KDI is in cooperation with the unions and have the situation under control.

*Tore Leirfall – special advisor at YS*

“I THINK NOBODY WILL EVER SAY THEY HAVE ENOUGH PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, BUT IT WAS NOT A HOT TOPIC”

## NEW cross sector agreement on digitalisation



On 8<sup>th</sup> of May, after the consultation of the Executive Committee members, EPSU voted within ETUC for supporting a new cross-sector agreement on digitalization, covering public service workers. This agreement was the result of thousands of workers all over Europe, that started to telework in a very short time, most of them with no accurate procedures concerning the health and safety equipment. This fact is a real concern for trade unions, because there is a probability so that employers will make this a measure more permanent.

“The digitalisation agreement underlines that any new working arrangements, changes to working conditions or work relations linked to digitalisation should be subject to a joint process of assessment and action by employers and trade unions. It also confirms that action should taken in relation to any existing digital tools or processes “where

there are concerns about the impacts on working conditions and health and safety needing urgent attention.”

This agreement aims to avoid job losses and confirms that all public sector workers are covered. Some details about digital competences and securing employment emphasize the importance of the consultation and information processes in time, but also anticipating the needs of change and abilities. It is also mentioned the fact that it is a very important issue to have a preventative approach for health and safety, ensuring proper application of all relevant working time regulations and rules in collective agreements. This section includes even a formulation that focuses on minimizing out-of-hours contact and no obligation on the part of the worker to respond if contacted.

<https://www.epsu.org/>

## PORTUGAL | COVID-19

Through a short interview facilitated by Tiago Leitao, the representative of EASI European Association of Social Innovation, with Jorge Alves, the president of SNCGP (Sindicato Nacional do Corpo da Guarda Prisional), we found some insights about what's going on nowadays in Portugal, in the penitentiary system framework.

**Are the workers of the penitentiary system in Portugal seen as a #firstline?** *From what has been stated by the DGRSP (Portuguese Prison and Probation Services General Direction) and Government the first line of professionals are health and security forces in which CGP (Portuguese Correctional Officers) is included. For this end the CGP has priority in the access to supermarket and other first need services, the children are in school (schools are open to public servants that are not in distance work), and the Justice Minister publicized a decree to justify the absence of staff in case they don't have a place to leave their children or in case their husband/wife belongs to health of security forces professionals.*

**Are they protected?** *At the social level we can say yes, for instances in the case of schools and other protective measures. I'm afraid to say that in case of health the DGRSP didn't much concern in protecting effectively the professionals and we can mention some examples: the visits suspension was late, they forbid the use of protective masks until early April with the justification that could induce alarm to the inmates. Even today the masks management distributes to staff must endure the full length of the work program (8 hours - the masks have a 4 hours efficacy). The DGRSP is distributing masks produced in a Prison which are no certified and do not protect effectively. The hand sanitizer took too long to arrive and even at this point is not distributed in the necessary quantity.*

**Are they respected?** *Our understanding is that for the Justice Ministry and DGRSP the solely concern are the inmates. From the beginning of this pandemic the General Director wrote two letter to the inmates asking for excuse for the confinement situation (restriction to activities out of cells and absence of visits), forced directors to copy the letter and deliver one per inmate, but for the staff the GD didn't had the same gesture.*

**What would be your personal thought?** *Although I've an optimistic reasoning I must say more and more a felling of disillusion, anguish and revolt has grown because we don't see any recognition of the importance the professionals have been delivering and in here the correctional officers are obviously included. The management hasn't show any concern about workers safety. I could exemplify with the huge difference between the National Director of our Public Security Police, visiting and motivating all the time the police officers and the DGRSP General Director that not even once has visited staff or even expressed the gratitude publicly.*

*Furthermore, despite the approval of the contingency and contention plans there was no effort undertaken to provide training, monitor and enforce its implementation.*



“WE DON'T SEE ANY RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK THE PROFESSIONALS HAVE BEEN DELIVERING”

## ROMANIA | COVID-19 | PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

At the National Administration of Penitentiaries level, during the pandemic, measures were taken, gradually, to prevent and control the infection with the new coronavirus (SARS CoV-2).

Thus, the measures taken were the following:

- urgent response mechanisms at emergency situations and pandemic, in order to ensure the mitigation of SARS-CoV-2
- immediate isolation of symptomatic persons, suspected of SARS-CoV-2 or confirmed with SARS-CoV-2
- ensuring a special attention on risk groups (employees with comorbidities);
- ensuring, daily, an epidemiological triage at the institution's entry and exit of the employees, through a mini-interview on the health and contacts in the last 12 hours, as well as measuring the temperature of employees
- ensuring social distancing by avoiding crowded places, especially indoor places
- cancellation of mass activities, taking into account the scale of the event, the number of participants to be less than eight
- organizing meetings online or in spaces that ensure a distance of more than two meters between participants
- changes in the shifts' organization
- informing/training employees on the main measures needed to be taken during the pandemic (phone texts, dispatcher, posters and others)
- providing personal protective equipment (both for individual use and workspace disinfection)
- sanitation and disinfection of the NAP working spaces.

**Cornelia Plesa – occupational safety and health and environmental protection officer National Administration of Penitentiaries**



“WE AGREE THAT PROTECTED PRISON WORKERS MEANS PROTECTED INMATES”

## SOME FINAL NOTES about PLUS DIALOG



The project Plus Dialog, supported by Norway through the Norway Grants 2014-2021, in the frame of the Programme “Social Dialogue – Decent Work”, has the following envisaged outcomes of the program:

- Improved social dialogue and cooperation
- Enhanced implementation of the decent work agenda (fair and decent work conditions)
- Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme

According with the annual report of health and safety department of Romanian prison administration, in the last 7 years there were approximately 120 accidents/year, involving staff and/or inmates, being caused, among other cases, by insufficient training of the workers, and improper approach of the health and safety risks.

The project duration is 01.02.2020 – 31.01.2022 and it has a budget of 306.705 eur (with 10% co-financing). If this is the “numbers” paragraph, it also should be mentioned that, the outputs foreseen are: 47 health and safety committees supported, 400 people reached in the campaign, 94 policy papers and roadmaps, 200 people trained in 8 training sessions.

The work is organized in five working packages as follows:

### **WP0 Project management**

Aimed to manage the financing according to the requirements stipulated in the financing agreement, implemented by the management team

### **WP1 Research and Exchange of Knowledge, Experiences and Practice:**

- Research about health and safety
- Exchange of experiences, knowledge and practices
- Regional and national focus groups
- Awareness workshop - National School for prison officers

### **WP2 HSC Capacity Building**

- HSC Training Program
- Regional Workshops
- HSC plan and monitoring

### **WP3 Dissemination and embedding**

- Conferences
- Publicity

### **WP4 Evaluation**

Strictly linked to communication and dissemination, allowing to confirm & share outcomes achieved, completing the quality & suitability of foreseen outputs.

MAPPING THE ISSUES REGARDING HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK FACED BY THE STAFF WORKING IN THE ROMANIAN PENITENCIARY POLICE

[www.norwaygrants.org](http://www.norwaygrants.org)



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### **The National Trade Union of Prisons Policemen SNPP**

*within the PLUS DIALOG PROJECT - supported by Norway through the Norway Grants 2014-2021, in the frame of the Programme “Social Dialogue – Decent Work”*

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