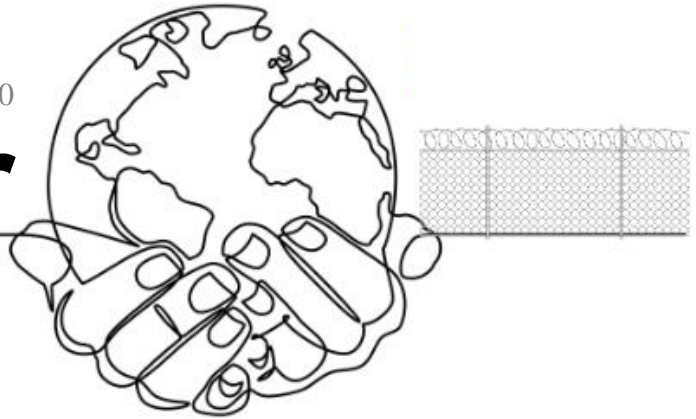




No. 3 | December | 2020

Newsletter



CURRENT STATUS

PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES



Furthermore, the current context regarding COVID-19 did not allow the organization of activities in an offline, classic, standard format, with projectors and notebooks on desks, with flipcharts, sponge and markers, with physical interaction somewhat necessary and specific to us, human beings. Therefore, the National Trade Union of Prisons' Policemen, together with the partners involved in the Plus Dialog project, have adapted to the current conditions and restrictions, but keeping unattended the objectives provided, as well as their quality. The events initially planned changed only the "location", but not the established objectives or topics, participants or materials presented.

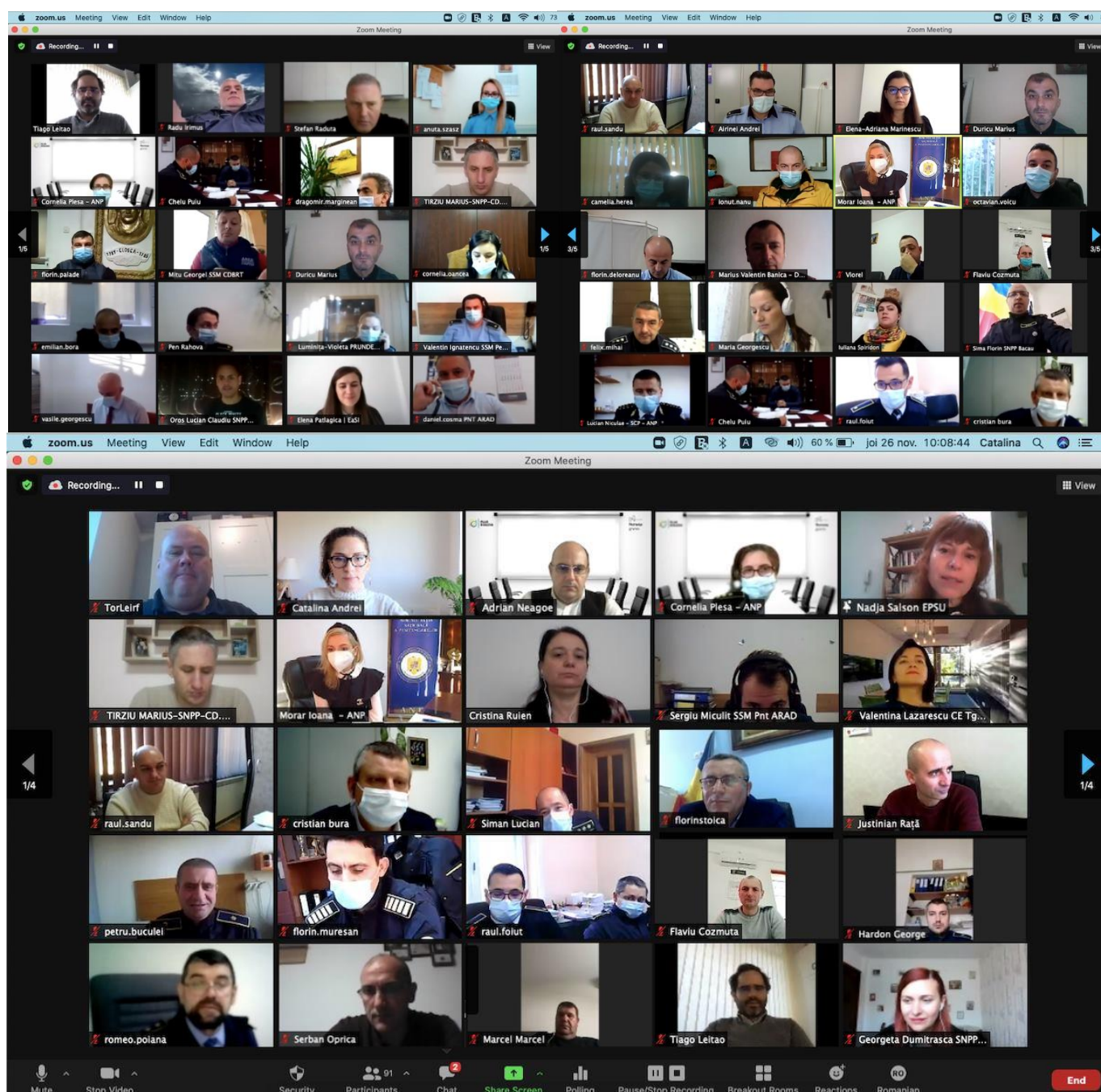
During this period, there were numerous meetings, like management meetings, operational meetings, focus groups and finally, the intermediate conference (sucessfully replacing the opening conference). We present below a short retrospective of the last 4 months:

Data	Intalnire
5th of August	Management meeting
6th of August	Operational meeting
1st of September	Management meeting
15th of September	Focus group no. 6
17th of September	Focus group no. 7
24th of September	Management meeting
16th of October	Management meeting
30th of October	National focus group
4th of November	Management meeting
11th of November	Management meeting
26th of November	Intermediate conference

Through these focus groups, the aim was to disseminate the results of the research activity carried out in the previous period, as well as to discuss with the participants the main aspects that must be taken into account in the Health and Safety at Work activity. These activities were attended by representatives of the SNPP branches (presidents or vice-presidents), as well as those responsible for the health and safety at work activity within the units. The national focus group, which closed the series of 7 regional focus groups, followed the debate of the observations collected during the research activity, as well as those from previous focus groups.

THE INTERMEDIATE CONFERENCE (EX. THE OPENING CONFERENCE)

In order to comply with the contractual provisions of the Plus Dialog project, the activities and results obtained must be disseminated at the level of stakeholders. Such an event would be represented by the Opening Conference of the project, initially scheduled for April 2020, but impossible to be organized due to the situation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it was postponed for the end of the year, but in the form of an intermediate conference to present the results, hoping that it could be organized face to face, in a meeting room, with microphones and projectors. However, the situation did not allow this not even now, at the end of the year. Therefore, the Intermediate Conference took place in an online format, through the Zoom platform, which was attended by almost 100 people: representatives of the project partners, presidents of SNPP branches, unit directors and representatives of the health and safety directions at the local level. During the meeting, the project and the results obtained so far were presented, aspects regarding the approaches at European Union level / penitentiary context were discussed and of course aspects regarding health and safety at work in the Norwegian penitentiary system and also in the penitentiary police from Romania. We dare to say that it was a successful event, reaching our expectations, a very important role being certainly played by the participants, whom we thank in this way for the fact that they honored the invitation to this conference.



THE RISKS IN THE NORWAY PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

“WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON RISK REGARDING HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK WITHIN THE PENITENTIARY SYSTEM IN NORWAY?”



The most common risk regarding health and safety in the Norwegian penitentiary system is a growing number of threats and violence from the inmates towards the employees.

Those who work in "first line" eg prison officers, officers working in the workshops with the inmates, and other such categories of employees has experienced an increase of such incidents over the last years.

It's difficult to pinpoint for sure, one and only one reason for this, but the reduction of funding for the correctional service is for sure, one significantly reason.

Due to the decrease of funding the staff ratio vs the inmates have worsened, there are fewer officers/employees working with more inmates, most likely with longer prison sentence due to coarser crimes.

This also means that the officers on duty has less time to work with dynamic security, and even though this has been a topic for the correctional service and the unions, the cold facts tells us that the budgets are smaller than they used to be..and should have been.

The correctional service in Norway has closed down five units and this is, for the time being, maybe one of the greater challenges regarding psychosocial mental health vulnerability for people working for the correctional service. This together with and endless number of reorganizations (within the units, regions and the service), and an increase in threats and violence has done so those working with threatening/violent inmates, and at the same time worries that their job disappears is most vulnerable.

(explanation: Norway is a country with not so many residents, and with great geographical distances. That means if your prions closes down, you can get (or gets) a new job at another prison, but that can (in worst case) be almost 800 km! You'll have to take your family from where you live and relocate – and that can be real stressful. 800 km i worst case scenario, but 150 km one way is not uncommon.

Tore Leirfall – Special advisor within YS

...EUROPEAN UNION OF HEALTH?

www.epsu.org / www.ec.europa.eu



The European Commission plans to create a European Health Union, in which all EU member states can prepare, train or react together in similar situations of confronting with health crises, and also they can work together to improve disease prevention, treatment and monitoring, like, with innovative medical devices at affordable prices.

The objectives of this union would be:

- Protecting the health of citizens in the most effective way
- Equipping the Member States of the European Union with means to allow them to prevent and overcome much easier future pandemics
- Improving the resilience of health systems in Europe

Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU's general secretary, commented: "We believe that the increase in funding is a success for health workers who have mobilized across Europe to demand more investment in health systems, but it is not enough. Healthcare workers provide the medical care needed to deal with all health threats. Very few measures have been taken to ensure a coordinated effort to reduce staff shortages, to improve occupational health and safety and the working conditions of medical staff. "

PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH AND SECURITY IN THE PENITENTIARY POLICE in Romania

The psychosocial environment includes the organizational culture and attitudes, values, beliefs and daily practices of a unit, which affect the well-being, mental and physical condition of employees. Psychosocial risks are generated by poor conception, organization and management of the activity, as well as by an inappropriate social context at work and can have a negative effect on the psychological, physical or social level, such as stress at work, exhaustion or depression.

Working conditions that cause psychosocial risks include:

- excessive workload.
- the contradictory requirements and the lack of clarity regarding the role that the worker has to fulfill.
- lack of involvement in making decisions that affect the worker and lack of influence on how the activity is carried out.
- improperly managed organizational changes.
- inefficient communication, lack of support from management or colleagues.
- psychological and sexual harassment, violence from third parties.

Based on the psychological risks mentioned above, I consider that the most common factors in the penitentiary administration system, which affect the health and safety of workers, are the following:

- **work-dependent factors:** overwork of workers, given the context of staff shortages, and especially in the current pandemic context, when as many workers are infected with SARS-CoV-2, and their responsibilities are taken over by other colleagues, who are already exhausted and may be the cause of accidents at work.
- **factors of organization and management of activities:** poor consultation and participation in decision-making related to workers.
- **the factors of the physical environment**, which through the direct action on the organism can cause a series of negative effects on the body in general, both physically and mentally: the existence of the risk of injury and illness, in a pandemic context, creates a state of mental stress, especially for the operative personnel, who carry out their activity with the persons deprived of liberty.

Regarding to safety and health at work, some measures to improve health and psychosocial security at the level of the penitentiary administration system are the following:

- identification and evaluation of psychosocial risk factors, together with all actors involved in the work process (OSHC, psychologist, human resources, job leaders and workers);
- completing the prevention and protection plan, if it does not exist, with preventive and corrective measures to eliminate / reduce psychosocial risk factors.

I mention that, at the level of each penitentiary unit there is a prevention and protection plan which, before approval, is subject to consultation with the Occupational Safety and Health Committee (OSHC), thus, the consultation and participation of the workers in the decision-making regarding the elimination / reduction of the psychosocial risk factors is ensured.

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

DECIZII. COVID-19. POLITIA PENITENCIARA. ROMANIA

On December 3rd, the decision of the General Director of the National Administration of Penitentiaries was issued, following the current legislative provisions, the existing context and recommendations, and informed regarding the start of the application of the Methodology for COVID-19 rapid testing of persons deprived of liberty and staff, with the mention that it can be permanently updated, depending on the subsequent legislative changes, the evolution of the operative situation and of the existing epidemiological situations.

DECIZIA

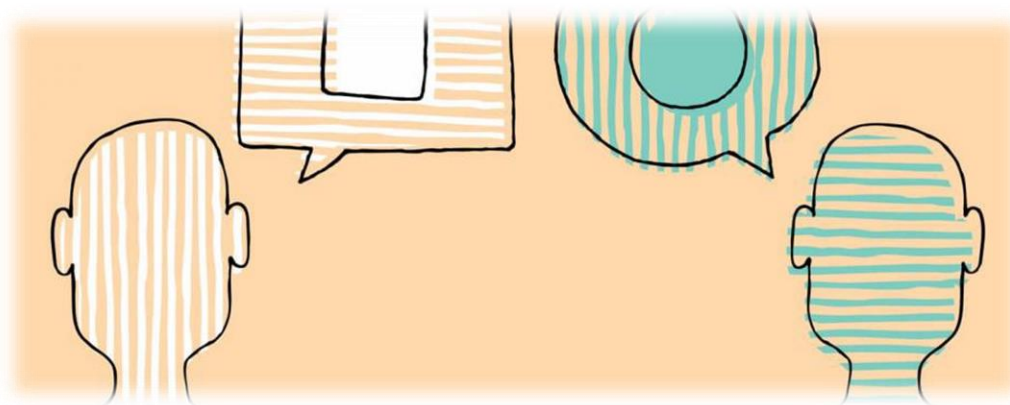
Nr. 4/9 din 03.12.2020

Directorului general al Administrației Naționale a Penitenciarelor

FOLLOW-UP - OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The representatives of SSM and the representatives of the trade unions

In the last months, 84 prison staff connected to the Health and Safety Committees have participated in 8 focus groups (7 at the regional levels and 1 at the national level).



The aim of the focus groups was the understanding of the main challenges and needs of the health & safety within prison services.

EaSI explored the health & safety subject during 2 or 3 sessions where the main questions addressed the functioning of the Health & Safety Committee, how

the employee - decision makers chain does it work, and which areas are deficient in the optimal functioning of the committee. Working conditions were not excluded from the research considering the global penitentiary system challenges: derelict buildings, overcrowding, violence and absenteeism, COVID-19 pressure.

During these sessions, the medical and psychological services subjects were tackled and the way these internal services can optimize the prison staff well-being and job satisfaction. The third session was focused on the job progression aspect and it highlighted the weaknesses of the existing annual training programs, H&S instructions and the annual training on H&S available for the union leaders.

The research team admits that this research is not exhaustive but it can redirect the attention on some subjects where the participants disagreed and their opinions were divergent. For example, the opinions regarding the independence of Labor Inspection from the NAP highlighted different approaches: some of them considering relevant the dependence to the penitentiary system or to be under the supervision of the H&S department; other participants mentioned total independence, with a coercive function of this control body would solve the problems that occur in the units.

By contrary, some topics showed a stronger convergence between the participants, for instance, that one regarding psychological counselling. Many studies and testimonies refer to the psychological pressure of the prison staff asking for more attention in this matter but it is still a sensitive aspect, considering the fact that asking for psychological support it is seen in the prison system as a vulnerability and a way to admit that somebody holds a problem.

A short review of the discussions from the focus-groups shows that it would be useful to exist a psychologist in each penitentiary unit since the confidentiality might not be assured with a psychologist from National Administration of Penitentiary, due to the perceived risk to be exposed and their problems to be known by the Director, managers or the colleagues. This fear asks for optional counselling services that can be settled outside the system but even so it's also recognized the necessity to have a psychologist inside the units. This subject brought together the H&S representatives and union leaders and their opinions converge to the same conclusions: it's necessary more investment and awareness of the importance of psychological counselling in the penitentiary system.



EaSI Team – The European Association for Social Innovation

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PLUS
DIALOG

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The National Trade Union of Prisons' Policemen

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