

CZ-JUSTICE

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2021: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Justice programme supports systemic measures in areas of penitentiary and post-penitentiary care and try to open the topic of alternative sentences in the Czech Republic. The main objective of the programme is to contribute to addressing the challenges of the Czech criminal justice and improve correctional system. This is significant for the sustainability and development of an effective criminal justice and social system in the Czech Republic.

Within the Justice Programme, there are in total three pre-defined projects. Although these projects have been in implementation since 2020, they are still struggling with measures against the ongoing epidemic of COVID-19. Moreover, not measures themselves, but also the unexpected consequences of the pandemic – especially turbulent changes on markets and restriction of travelling.

Addendum No. 3 to the Programme Agreement was submitted to the Financial Mechanism Office and approved via IS GrACE in December 2021. After very long negotiation process and many discussions, the *Outcome 2 Services for prisoners improved indicator: Percentage of prisoners involved in the mentoring programme who returned back to prison within 2 years after release*, was removed from the Framework (Annex II). Due to the delay in announcement of the open calls, there has not been possible to reach applicable and relevant data within the programme implementation period yet.

Pre-defined project no.1 “Common Education System – strengthening cooperation in the criminal justice and social system” has moved all education activities to an online environment. Although, they really try to foster the networking and sharing of experiences, even the gathering of people is very complicated. Pre-defined project no.2 “Strengthening the rehabilitation of prisoners through treatment” struggles especially with the restriction forbidding travelling and impossibility to implement bilateral activities – mainly job shadowing and sharing of experience with intervention programme, which are going to be introduced in the Czech Republic. Project Promoter and Donor Project Partners hope to meet in person during spring 2022. Pre-defined project no. 3 “Back to life” has been working hard on the reconstruction of the probation house, while there is a delay caused by the long administrative process of the public procurement and unexpected development on global market. Nevertheless, all programme centres are operational and offer individual and group programmes. Interest from clients is much higher than expected. Output 3.1. Capacity for alternative sentencing and conditional release developed: indicator Number of programme centres piloted was fulfilled.

Open Call and Small grant scheme were announced during the January 2021. After all necessary steps and evaluation commission meeting, there were four projects recommended (three of them in Norwegian partnerships) within the Small grant scheme. All projects has been in the implementation phase since the November 2021. Within the Open Call, there was one project recommended and it has been just at the beginning of the implementation phase since December 2021.

The pre-defined bilateral initiative “Study visit between open prisons Bastoy and Jiřice” was approved by the end of October 2021 to be organized in 2022. The aim of the initiative is to deepen the knowledge and compare the systems of treatment of convicts in the conditions of the Jiřice and the Bastoy open prisons.

However, despite another complicated year, important news in the programme contexts occurred. On 25 May 2021, the Chamber of Deputies approved Parliamentary Print 624, which concerned, Act No. 257/2000 Coll. on the Probation and Mediation Service. The amendment aims to bring positive changes to the practice of probation officers. It will enter into force on 1 January 2022 and will be focused on fostering competencies in the exercise of supervision and alternative sentences.

The biggest obstacle of smooth implementation were the measures against spreading of Covid-19 pandemic. This is clearly the biggest risk factor. All pre-defined projects have done the best to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. Programme Operator supported them in acceptance of some deviation in time schedules, planned activities, acceptance of the modification of projects and participated in some extra meetings. The key factor to stay flexible and capable to do changes according to the new and very fast changing reality is good communication with all stakeholders. This is the main lesson learned from this monitoring period