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“The Crystal Scales of Justice” Prize

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contributing to the quality of criminal justice

2009 Edition

Application form

Entry form

**(Please note that this file - without the attachments –
once completed should not exceed 6 pages)**

To be returned to the European Commission or Council of Europe by 1 March 2009	
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1. Details of applicant (institution/organisation)

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2. Represented by

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3. Scheme submitted

Title: Voluntary work of the convicts in Poland
 Date of introduction: 1998

4. Please attach to the entry form, preferably in English or in French or, where this is not possible, in one of the other official languages of the European Union:

- a. A description of the scheme (*maximum 1 page*)
- b. A description of the effects of the scheme on the workings of the court (*maximum 1 page*)
- c. Any possible future additions which might improve the results of the scheme (*maximum 1 page*)
- d. Any documents, press articles, evidence from members of the public etc. relating to the scheme (*with a brief summary in English or French*)

4a. A description of the scheme

Taking into account the necessity to help needful people that means handicapped, heavily sick persons, and taking into account regulations of Executive Penal Code stating that the aim of the imprisonment is to arouse by an inmate the will to co-operate in building of socially desired attitudes especially the sense of responsibility and the need to observe rule of law, to refrain from recidivism, directors and personnel of penitentiary facilities decided to support the noble aim and have begun an inventive form of co-operation with hospices and care homes for disabled people and people of advanced age. The first steps towards that activity has been taken in nineties years of the last century e.g. in prisons in Lubliniec, Kwidzyń and Żytkowice. Thanks to visible positive effects of the work of convicts and the impact which it had for the change of their attitudes the action of promotion of the noble idea of volunteer work of imprisoned persons has begun on the local and national level. The initiative has attracted very quickly many imitators and in 2008 it was conducted in over 60 penitentiary facilities in the whole country, the number of helping inmates was over 800. Furthermore, the project brought an

notable effect in form of a close co-operation of 15 penitentiary facilities with the Hospice Foundation with the seat in Gdańsk. This activity has been presented widely on the official web site of the Foundation.

Because of the overcoming of barriers by convicts as well as by persons working in hospices and care homes as well as by patients and their families the project firstly assumed the work of convicts only by refurbishment and cleaning-up works. Their aim was the support of the project and the strengthening of readiness to help needful people. The convicts have been working on the green areas, they have carried out keep-up works and have done small reparations refurbishment works. With time the range of their work was made wider by workers of hospices and care homes. The convicts were engaged for giving meals and keep-up works connected directly with ill persons. Convicts have shown a bigger interest and engagement in daily work. That resulted in involving them in help by preparation and organization of many charity actions and other initiatives organized by hospices and care homes. In penitentiary facilities, where the preparation of convict's employment for ill persons was performed, special courses were carried out. The purpose group consisted not only of the potential volunteers, but also of other convicts and of Prison Service officials. Accustoming with a daily life rhythm of hospices and first of all with hospices' patients, the convicts have begun to show interest for a direct help for needful people. The project evolved towards the help of volunteers-convicts in a medical care over patients. The convicts were trained by medical personnel in the range of education within the basic medical and nursing aid (first aid). A part of convicts completed professional vocational trainings with the focus point of palliative care and received appropriate certificates. The next step was the involvement of convicts in a direct help by care over patients in co-operation with nurses. The convicts helped feeding the patients, they assisted by walks and excursions, by preparation and carrying out of hygienical and nursing activities. The work of volunteers-convicts is appreciated and popularized via media. Many interesting tv and radio programs were created and many articles were published, what has an impact on the change of the image of convicts and on rehabilitation work led by Prison Service.

4b . A description of the effects of the scheme on the workings of the court

A voluntary work of convicts in the hospices and social work institutions has a huge influence of detainees and their families as well as workers of these institutions, patients and their families, prison system workers and last but not east – the society. Voluntary work in Poland is not as common as in Western European countries and that is why the initiative of convicts' work is so noble and useful. The hospices and social welfare institutions for disabled and people of advanced age contend with financial problems. Thanks to the voluntary work of the convicts they are able to complete a lot of renovation-constructing and maintenance works, which were not included in their budgets so far. Thanks to this unconventional solution of unpaid hiring of convicts, the stereotypes concerning tolerance, acceptance and the image of prisoners are broken. Thanks to a hard work and a big involvement of the convicts, the barriers on the side the team, patients' families and the society are broken. As a result, it leads to a change of Prison Service image and perceiving of convicts. The fear and sense of threat connected with hiring the prisoners are eliminated. By introducing new ideas and solutions, detainees contribute a fresh look to everyday life in the work of the hospices and social welfare institutions. Their hard and solid work as well as big involvement in entrusted tasks create an opportunity for building positive emotions and contacts between all parties. Long-time imprisonment can result with a

mental paralysis. That is why, it is so vital to fight with the deficits of convicts participating in the project in isolation conditions by equipping them with the skills such as: performing a profession, raising a self-assessment and competent work-searching. Thanks to so unconventional work, as the voluntary work is, the convicts learn not only tolerance for the patients but also respect for others and performed work. This work gives them a possibility to develop many social and cognitive skills as well as acquiring new professional qualifications. A very important aspect of voluntary work is a noticeable change of convicts' hierarchy of values and attitudes. This change is strengthened by penitentiary staff through a suitable diagnosis of the participants' deficits and directing them for professional trainings. As a result, these large-scale activities are contributing to social and professional reintegration of prisoners and at the same time this system leads to decrease of reoffending after being released. This is possible thanks to equipping the prisoners with the tools, such as new professional experiences, new social and cognitive competences, which teach the convicts how to solve their problems in a constructive way. It is noticed, that convicts working in the hospices and social welfare institutions are less aggressive and angry and there is a lower tendency to self-aggression among them. Visible changes of convicts' personality lead to a change in the relations with their families, and what is more – intensification of these relations.

A very essential element in the work with the convicts is prevention of prisonisation process, which is a very good adaptation to prison conditions. This process, connected with the fear of life in a free world, significantly contributes to hindering a come back to a free society and easiness to take independent decisions. A participation in voluntary work program gives them a unique chance to change their attitude and eliminate a risk of prisonisation. Voluntary work gives them a chance to fulfill many needs, such as a need of self-realisation, help others, interpersonal relations, professional fulfillment or breaking some barriers.

Thanks to hiring the convicts as voluntary workers by the hospices and social welfare institutions, prisons have a lot of new forms of penitentiary influences. As a result of voluntary work program, a lot of the convicts continue their voluntary work after being released from prison. This situation creates suitable conditions which are in favour of individual treatment of the convicts. Introducing new forms of employment results with a change of education and training directions. There are also introduced new education programs as well as cultural-educative and sport activities. Everyday work of prison officers is focused on providing personal security for the convicts and prevention of harmful effects of demoralised prisoners. The aim of all these activities is increasing a chance for finding a job after prison, improve of social functioning, support of readaptation in open society and social reintegration. It should be underlined, that the work performed by the convicts for the aggrieved and those in need is very useful. The convicts participate in restorative justice, which aim is compensation and forgiveness. Projected behaviour shows also a social dimension and gives a new direction to a criminal politics in Poland.

4c. Any possible future additions which might improve the results of the scheme

Project is being extended towards the help for children being in childrens' homes, help for persons in care homes and for other group needing support.

4d. Any documents, press articles, evidence from members of the public etc. relating to the scheme

Source: Białystok – Municipal Information Portal, 23rd November 2008

Suwałki: the convicts help at the hospice

Twenty convicts from Remand Prison in Suwałki will help looking after ill people in a coming into existence hospice. The Public Complex of a Palliative Care started a cooperation with the Remand Prison. Both institutions took part in all-Poland programme, which promotes a voluntary work in hospice among the convicts. The Project is based mainly on the experience of the hospice in Gdańsk – as Piotr Kławsioń from the Hospice Foundation in Gdańsk informed Polish Radio Białystok. Working prisoners usually do renovation and maintenance work but some of them help with nursing of the ill. They get no salary for this work.

Source: Familia magazine

Prisoners in the hospice

A group of the convicts with short sentences for minor offences cooperate with the Priest Dutkiewicz Hospice in Gdańsk. As a part of a special program they help in maintenance works, in the garden and some of them as voluntary workers – help with nursing of ill patients.

Source: Express Bydgoski, 8th December 2008

Bydgoszcz is one of 15 Polish centres, which takes part in a Project „WHAT” – Voluntary Work of the Convicts in the Hospice as a tool to teach acceptance and tolerance for persons being released from prisons”. Convicts who wanted to participate in the Project were prepared for this work with ill people. They start with doing maintenance works, later they will work with the patients. Their duties will include: being with the patients, feeding them, reading for them or walking with them.

Gorzów Wielkopolski

The convicts from Gorzów Wielkopolski will help in the hospice in Wawrów. They under went a special training and had an interview with psychologists. The convicts will be treated as other voluntary workers. They will work in the hospice once a week for five hours.

Source: www.gk24.pl, 18th November 2008

Convicts from Kalisz will help ill people

Convicts who want to be voluntary workers in the hospice say: we have a chance. Our sentences will terminate. The patients in hospice don't have such a chance. We have done so much evil. It's high time we changed it.

A nurse from the Maksymilian Kolbe hospice in Szczecin, Monika Januszewska told the convicts „ We are waiting for you. We need you so much. We also want to convince the society that the hospice is not a place for dying but a place where people live intensive life”.

Source: www.gazeta.pl, 13th January 2009

Adrian repairs his mistakes by going to people

22-year-old Adrian is a favourite of ill patients from the hospice in Poznań. He spends with them eight hours a day. After that he comes back to the rem and prison where he is serving a 6-year sentence for smuggling. The hospice is for Adrian a substitute of a real life, which he needs very much. He made a mistake but now he wants to redress wrongs done in the past.

Source: www.gazetalubuska.pl, 25th October 2008

Convicts are looking after disabled patients

Not everyone deserves a right to be a voluntary worker. Of course they must be willing and have a good opinion of the prison staff. They also must be reliable, which means they worked outside the prison, were on a pass and behaved in a proper way. Being with disabled people gives the convicts an opportunity to think about their own lives and open for others.

5. Does the scheme have the support of the competent public authorities in your country? If so, please give details.

The project is supported by the state authorities. Institutions for which the convicts work are supported by other superior authorities. That results in creation of new projects such as the initiative of the Hospice Foundation from Gdańsk, which introduced in co-operation with 15 penitentiary facilities the project **WHAT – Hospice’s Volunteer as a tool for teaching the Acceptance and Tolerance** for people released from penitentiary facilities. Furthermore, the intended actions are the subject of reports and information submitted by the institutions (also Prison Service) to appropriate to them ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry for Work and Social Politics, Ministry of Justice). The volunteer work is supported and popularized by local government, representatives of churches and religious associations.

6. Do you believe the scheme to be usable in other courts in European states? Give your reasons.

The presented project can be used by other European countries. The initiative of volunteer work is universal and ageless. Furthermore, the law regulations implemented in other countries make such activity possible.

I, Agnieszka Bochniewicz, representing the aforementioned institution/organisation, declare that I am aware of the rules of the competition, with which I undertake to comply.

**Done at
On (date)**

26.02.2009

Signed

Agnieszka Bochniewicz