

**30th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of justice**  
**"prisons in today's Europe"**  
Istanbul, 24 – 26 November 2010

**SPEECH**

**Mr Aleš ZALAR, Minister of Justice**  
**SLOVENIA**

Dear Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very thankful for the opportunity to introduce you with progress and results of the latest efforts in the field of prison policy in the Republic of Slovenia.

The basic principle which derives from international instruments is that with the deprivation of liberty people must not lose fundamental human rights and especially their basic human dignity.

To achieve this principle it is our obligation to provide for the conditions for serving a prison sentence to comply with international standards and to provide for a sufficient number of adequately trained personnel in prisons who perform their duties in compliance with a respect for human rights and the protection of such rights.

The respect for a person's integrity and his or her dignity in criminal and all other legal proceedings, as well as during the deprivation of liberty and enforcement of a sentence is ensured by virtue of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. Any violence against persons deprived of their liberty in any way is prohibited.

On the basis of the Criminal Code the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws applying to those who are subject to criminal sanctions can be withheld or limited only insofar as it is necessary for an individual criminal sanction to be enforced. A person who is subject to a criminal sanction should not be tortured and in no other manner should the said person be subject to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. If such a person was subject to this kind of treatment he or she should be provided with judicial protection.

It is necessary to treat convicted persons in a humane manner, to respect their personal dignity and protect their physical and mental integrity. It is necessary to provide them with adequate health care, with their consent also to the treatment of drug and alcohol addiction. The mission of the Slovenian prison system is to endeavour that our prisons are safe for society, for the imprisoned persons and for employees, that the possibilities for resocialization are guaranteed to inmates, and that training for their life when they regain their liberty is enabled.

Identity card

As of 2 November 2010 there were 1336 persons imprisoned in our prisons, of this number, 943 were convicted persons and 344 were detainees.

The proportion of imprisoned persons in our country is 67 for every 100,000 inhabitants. Slovenia holds one of the lowest rates of imprisoned persons in Europe; however, it is at the top of the list of countries in which the number of inmates has been increasing from year to year in the last five years. The situation has been improving during this current year.

### Overcrowding

Compared to the majority of other European countries Slovenian prisons are smaller, out of thirteen locations only four have a capacity of more than 100 places. In compliance with Recommendation Number R (99) 22 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning prison overcrowding and prison population inflation our country has adopted a set of actions. The problem of overcrowding is therefore being resolved in this manner. The strategy with regard to addressing the issue of space in prisons comprises the promotion of alternative sanctions and measures on the one hand, and the improvement of accommodation capacities in prisons on the other. The legislation has been modified by which alternative sanctions and measures have been introduced to a greater extent, and at the same time the accommodation capacities of existing prisons are being improved.

Last year some additional places were provided by means of a facility which was obtained by another state authority. In Slovenia's largest prison for longer prison sentences two additional facilities are being built which will give significant number of the additional places.

### Special feature

The new criminal legislation which was adopted two years ago enables greater possibilities for alternative criminal sanctions and measures. As an item of special interest I would like to mention a new feature: a "weekend prison" which consists of a specific form of serving the prison sentence during the weekend and may be used for persons convicted of a sentence of up to 3 years. With regard to this form it is the governor of the prison who makes the necessary decision. He allows convicted persons who have not been convicted of a prison sentence due to commission of a sexual offence, to reside at home during the week provided that they are employed on a regular basis or they are in an educational programme that they are industrious, and they keep to their employment relationship or their education programme. During free days, that is, as a rule, at the end of the week, they have to return to prison. Good results have been recorded and there have been no instances of abuse of this privilege.

### How do the activities and programmes for the resocialization of imprisoned persons take place?

The concept of the enforcement of a prison sentence in Slovenia is founded on humanity, respect for human rights, a great level of security of imprisoned persons, open communication between employees and inmates, and the possibility of resocialization with regard to their reintegration back into society after the sentence has been served.

Various programmes take place in prisons in the fields of education of imprisoned persons, work, leisure activities, preparation for release and special programmes linked to the specific needs of imprisoned persons like implementation of a strategy for the prevention of suicides. External professional institutions from the fields of education, health care, social care and non-governmental organisations co-operate in the implementation of the programmes.

Ladies and gentlemen, resolution on prison policy in today's Europe which will be adopted today represents new important international document which will help us to evaluate existent legislation, policy and practice in our prisons with aim to further development of execution of criminal sanctions.

Finally, how seriously the Slovenian government faces the challenges of the prison system ultimately proves also the fact that last month our Prime Minister paid the visit to our largest prison on the spot and despite serious financial situation ensured investments in the construction of the additional facilities. This inspires me as a minister with a moderate optimism about the future in this field.

Thank you again for your attention.