

The National Project



“CHANCE FOR REENTRY”



About the project

Title of the national project: Šanca na návrat (in English “Chance for Reentry”)

Operational programme OP Human Resources

The main goal: to reduce the risks of social exclusion of individuals serving a custodial sentence and increase their competencies to be successful in the labour market in order to minimize the risk of repeated crime and to limit possible emergencies

Applicant: General directorate of Prison and Court Guard Service

Partners: ten selected facilities for the enforcement of custodial sentence, The Central Office for Labour, Social Affairs and The Family (hereinafter referred to as the “Central Office”)

Budget (allocation): 14 082 772.10 EUR

Implementation scope: 10/2018 – 09/2023 (60 months)

Key measurable indicator: 3600 individuals who have used the innovative system of comprehensive support for convicts to a smooth transition to civic life and/or measures to implement social inclusion services. As of 09/2022 the number of such individuals was 2,822.

Staffing: the first group consists of a psychologist, social worker (members of the Prison and Court Guard Service – a Slovak abbr.: ZVJS – hereinafter referred to as the “Guard Service”) and social curator – methodologist (employee of the Central Office) in a total of 30 people who work directly in the enforcement of custodial sentence and in pre-release units in ten partner facilities. The second group consists of principal investigators of the professional team which includes experts from practice (not only directly from penitentiary area, but also from the third sector) and from the academic environment (a total of 20 people, 6 of them are part-time). The third group includes project management specialists (a total of 12 people, 1 of them is part-time). The principal investigators of the professional team and the project management specialists (members and employees of the Guard Service) work at the General Directorate of the Guard Service (a Slovak abbr.: GR ZVJS). At the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (a Slovak abbr.: ÚPSVR), 1 person - a manager for the methodical administration supervises a running of the project. Each of groups mentioned above is equally important in ensuring the successful implementation of the project and they work intensively with one another.



Did you know?

In Slovakia, there is a total of 18 facilities for the enforcement of custodial sentence and facilities for pre-trial detention, out of which there are 10 facilities for enforcement of custodial sentence (hereinafter referred to as the “custodial facilities”) and 8 facilities for pre-trial detention and enforcement of custodial sentence (hereinafter referred to as the “detention and custodial facilities”). The oldest prison facility is detention and custodial facility Leopoldov, which was rebuilt from the original historic fortress Leopoldov to a prison in 1855. The largest in terms of capacity is custodial facility Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou with a total capacity of 1,433 convicts, in which, for example, 1,181 convicts were placed in 30/09/2022, which represented a utilization of the facility’s capacity of 82.4% at the time.

Partner facilities

In terms of material focus, nature of activities and geographical location, 10 custodial facilities were selected for the project. Almost all reentry units work with convicted men, only the reentry unit in Sučany works with juvenile convicts and the reentry unit in Nitra- Chrenová works with convicted women, considering also the structural-capacity specifics. All prison security levels are represented.

Partner facilities	External differentiation (Security level)	Target group	Total capacity	Capacity of reentry unit
Custodial facility Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou	minimum	men	1,433	40
Detention and Custodial facility Ilava	medium, highest	men	858	42
Detention and Custodial facility Leopoldov	medium, highest	men	1,413	31
Custodial facility Nitra-Chrenová	minimum, medium and highest	women (+ female juvenile)	354	12
Custodial facility Železovce	minimum, medium	men	755	20
Custodial facility Banská Bystrica-Kráľová	middle	men	753	26
Custodial facility for the juvenile Sučany	minimum	juvenile men, women	517	29 (22 men + 7 juveniles)
Detention and custodial facility Prešov-Sentence Department Sabinov	minimum	men	381	13
Detention and custodial facility Košice	middle	men	779	12
Custodial facility Košice-Šaca	minimum, medium + disabled	men	804	40
SPOLU			8,047	265



As of October 1, 2022, there were 9,939 convicted and charged persons in Slovak prisons, which represented 182 persons per 100,000 inhabitants. Slovak prisons were filled to 85.3 % of the total capacity of 11,653 people. Out of this number, 8,524 people served a custodial sentence, and 1,415 were charged. Of the total number of persons serving a custodial sentence, 5,454 were convicted repeatedly, which represents 63.98 % of penitentiary recidivists serving a custodial sentence.

Source: www.prisonstudies.org; www.zvjs.sk/statistics

Did you know?

Material-technical and operational equipment of the reentry unit

Reentry unit is established in the quarters of convicts and is structurally adapted to the needs of treatment of convicts. One reentry unit is established in each partner facility for the enforcement of custodial sentence.

The aim of the stay of convicted persons in a reentry unit is their preparation for return to normal life from the facility regime, with emphasis on the maximum possible elimination of the facility environment (prisonization, institutionalization, ideologization) with potential consequences after the release (e.g., sensory deprivation, etc.). At the same time, the priority is to strengthen protective factors and eliminate any risk factors of crime recidivism.

This is also considered in the “Standards of Penitentiary Treatment of Convicts in reentry units,” which also describe the material, technical and spatial standards of a reentry unit operation. They were created by the expert team of the National Project “Chance for Reentry” and approved by the Steering Committee of the project in 05/2022. They contain 12 criteria and determine e.g., the location of reentry unit separately from other premises, its living/floor area and layout space, number of rooms in the reentry unit, number of convicted persons per 1 accommodation unit, etc. The standards support in various ways the increased intensity of professional interventions in a reentry unit and transfer of responsibility from the facility/prison environment towards convicted persons (regime, self-service activities, etc.).



Pictures of selected parts of reentry unit after reconstruction

Did you know?

The differentiation group “reentry unit” already existed in the times of the first Czechoslovak Republic in the form of the so-called transitional criminal facility (Section 16 of the Act on Conditional Conviction and Conditional Release No. 562/1919 Coll.), in which the convicted person was under lighter supervision and had to get used to freer movement and freer work. In the event of the convicted person committing a disciplinary offence, the commission could order their return to the facility where the person had previously served a custodial sentence. The formal designation of the differentiation group “reentry unit” was officially introduced only in 2005 with the adoption of the new Act on the Enforcement of Custodial Sentence No. 475/2005 Coll. Since 2005, the reentry units were not physically set up as separate accommodation units, and therefore, such person was treated individually with a focus on preparing for a smooth transition to civic life. However, the person remained physically placed in the group of other convicted persons within other differentiation groups.

Tools

■ IAPSZ (a Slovak abbr. for Individual Action Plan on Social Inclusion)

Planning and evaluation tool for a social worker, psychologist, and social curator – methodologist when working with a convicted person. The aim of the IAPSZ tool is to maintain the continuity of effective interventions provided in the prison environment to a convicted person with interventions provided after the release. It is a key and dominant element of the project aimed at effective resocialization.

We linked the policies of penitentiary and post-penitentiary care also using a digitization of the IAPSZ during May 2021. We have trained workers from 46 offices of labour, social affairs and family, who provide us with feedback and information about persons after release from VTOS. Since the digitization of the tool, 1,434 IAPSZ have been created, of which we acquire feedback for 813 dismissed persons.

■ Sorting Mechanism

The aim of setting up the basic framework of the sorting mechanism is to place convicted persons in the reentry unit from the point of view of:

- their social inclusion capabilities and opportunities,
- their application in the labour market,
- predicting social failure and identifying risks and determining needs.

The framework of the sorting mechanism is a basic element in the procedure of placing convicted persons in the reentry unit, which is assessed by the relevant placement commission and approved by the director of the given facility. One of the consequences of the newly created „Basic Framework of The Sorting Mechanism for The Purposes of Placing Convicts in Reentry unit” (as well as of the gradually fulfilling philosophy and vision) is the placement of convicts in reentry units as much as possible in accordance with the accommodation capacities. Priority is given to the placement of persons showing medium and/or high risk of crime recidivism and social failure.

■ HRON (a Slovak abbr. for RoSH - Risk of Serious Harm Assessment)

This screening tool for assessing the risk of serious damage to society detects a danger for society posed by the assessed person immediately after their release (it focuses mainly on persons convicted of violent crime). It has been pilot tested and contains 15 items.

■ CRA (abbr. for Crime Risk Assessment)

This tool for assessing the risk of crime recidivism detects the resocialization prognosis or the risk that the assessed person will commit a new criminal offence within two years after their release from the reentry unit after serving a custodial sentence. The tool has been pilot tested three times, contains 6 sections (38 items) and the evaluation is created by 4 evaluators.

■ IN (a Slovak abbr. for Indication Tool)

A screening tool designed to indicate/classify convicts in selected specialized resocialization and educational programmes. It has been pilot tested and contains 5 items for selected programmes.

Prior to the introduction of the CRA into operation, the Guard Service used a tool called „Social Failure Risk Assessment” (a Slovak abbr. „HRSZ”) which was created by a working group headed by the Pre-trial Detention and Enforcement of Custodial Sentence Unit of the General Directorate of the Guard Service. It is a revision of the Canadian LSI – R tool. At the time (in 2009), the Slovak tool consisted of 13 items (the original Canadian had 54 items). Based on the degree of determined risk of social failure, the resocialization prognosis was subsequently determined by up to three levels (favourable, less favourable, and unfavourable). The HRSZ has been used at the national level throughout all prison facilities until 01/2021 when the Order of the Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic no. 8/2020 amending the Order of the Minister of Justice no. 16/2015 on The Treatment of Charged and Convicted Persons, as amended, according to which the CRA replaced the HRSZ, entered into force.

Did you know?

Resocialization and educational programmes

One of the primary goals of the project was the creation, practical implementation, pilot verification and subsequent evaluation of a group of resocialization and educational programmes. As part of the project, we created two groups of standardized resocialization and educational programmes:

The basic resocialization and educational programme (hereinafter referred to as a Slovak abbr. "ZRaVVP") called a *Basic Package* is a preventive and informative programme which is implemented in the form of experiential education for convicted persons in reentry unit. The main goal is to teach the convicts and develop in them knowledge, abilities, skills, habits, and motives from various areas of life (self-knowledge, communication, family relationships, employment, financial literacy, addictions, legal aspects) with the intention of leading a life without criminal behaviour in the future. ZRaVVP contains seven modules. Each module has 8 hours and consists of a combination of theoretical and practical training, while the main part is formed by the practical training. The total time range (sum of time allowance of individual modules) is 56 - 72 hours. Every convicted person placed in the reentry unit must complete the ZRaVVP from 01 April 2020.

In the period of pilot verification of ZRaVVP from 01 October 2019 to 31 July 2020, ZRaVVP was completed by 274 convicted persons, of which 141 persons completed it in the required scope of at least 56 hours. From 01 August 2020 to 30 September 2022, ZRaVVP was completed by 1,617 convicted persons, of which 1,161 persons completed it fully.

Specialized resocialization and educational programmes (hereinafter referred to as a Slovak abbr.: "ŠRaVVP") are explicitly thematically defined educational programmes (focused on one selected criminogenic factor). Their content is detailed, and their main goal is to create, deepen and strengthen in convicted persons knowledge, abilities, skills, habits, and motives from a specific area of life, which is indicated to them as desirable due to risk factors and needs influencing recidivism and social failure. During the implementation of the project, 9 ŠRaVVP were created: *Financial Literacy, Employment, Community Life* (for convicts coming from a segregated community), *Restart* (for people with addictions), *Family and Relationships, Diversity Unites Us* (for people convicted of radicalization and extremism), *The Second Chance* (for convicted men committing violence in relationships), *I Want to Change* (for juvenile offenders) and *A Chance for Dog Eyes*.

The intention for standardized and pilot-tested ŠRaVVP is to be implemented for convicted persons placed in various units of the enforcement of custodial sentence. The details of specific ŠRaVVP are regulated by specific standards called "Standards of Specialized Resocialization and Educational Programmes". To illustrate, we present the course of the pilot verification of the implemented specialized programmes in the table below. So far, we have pilot-verified 8 ŠRaVVP in the project implementation process. To ensure pilot verification, 46 lecturer positions, for which we realized more than 50 individual selection procedures.

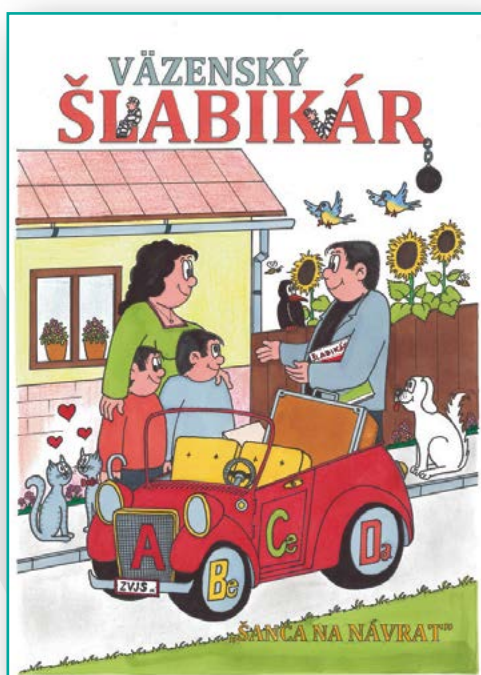
Did you know?

Three of the convicts from the partner detention and Custodial facility Leopoldov who took part in the above-mentioned sub-activity obtained official certificates within the given education - „Certificates of command of the Slovak language at the A1 level on the basis of a language audit“. The language audit consisted of an oral and a written examination which was passed by the convicts on 27 April 2021. The Certificates were granted by Vzdelávacia akadémia J. A. Komenského, s. r. o. – V. A. J. A. K. - pobočka Trnava (The J. A. Komenský Educational Academy - Trnava branch). It is a financially demanding certificate, for which the convicted persons must have their own financial resources, therefore we are proud that at least three convicted persons among those who have completed the above-mentioned education have been able to purchase it.

Title	Duration in months	Time range in hours	Custodial facility/ Detention and custodial facility	Participants/ Graduates	Pilot verification
Reštart	6	300	Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou	15/12	06/2020 – 03/2021
Reštart	6	220	Leopoldov	15/12	05/2021 – 10/2021
Community life	6	250	Nitra Chrenová	15/9	08/2020 – 06/2021
Community life	6	250	Košice-Šaca	15/15	05/2021 – 10/2021
Financial Literacy	4	216	Želiezovce	15/11	05/2021 – 09/2021
Financial Literacy	4	216	Košice mesto	15/12	05/2021 – 09/2021
Employment	4	216	Sabinov	15/11	06/2021 – 09/2021
Employment	4	216	Sučany	15/11	05/2021 – 08/2021
Family And Relationships	4	216	Banská Bystrica-Kráľová	15/13	06/2021 – 09/2021
A Chance for Dog Eyes	2	180	Leopoldov	2/2	06/2020 – 12/2020
A Chance for Dog Eyes	3	180 + 33	Leopoldov	2/2	02/2021 – 05/2021
A Chance for Dog Eyes	5	180 + 33	Leopoldov	2/2	11/2021 – 03/2022
I Want to Change	6	65	Sučany	8/8	02/2022 – 05/2022
The Second Chance	6	150	Hrnčiarovce nad Parnou	10/9	04/2022 – 09/2022

Information and counselling services for specific groups

Information and counselling services for specific groups focus on working with convicted persons with multiple disadvantages. The language barrier not only represents a major obstacle in the process of dealing with a person who does not speak a foreign language, but in combination with a lack of family ties and contact with the outside world, it is a risk factor in the social reintegration of released people. The services are also provided to convicts who do not have basic communication literacy and numeracy (they do not know how to read, write or count). As part of these services, we have implemented the following measures:



- We have translated 1,807 standard pages of documents providing basic information on the enforcement of custodial sentence into the most frequent languages like Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, English, German, French, Russian, Spanish, and Bulgarian. The choice of languages was preceded by a thorough analysis of the number of imprisoned foreigners for the period from 2014 to 2018;
- we have created an independent modular course „Slovak Language for Foreigners and Literate Persons of Non-Slovak Nationality Who Do Not Speak Slovak“ (levels A1, A2, B1, B2). So far, we have implemented 12 courses completed by 70 participants;
- we have developed a methodology for the course „Education of Adults (Including Adults with Special Educational Needs) of Elementary Communication Literacy and Numeracy“ (modules A, B, C, D). So far, we have implemented 13 courses attended by 51 participants.

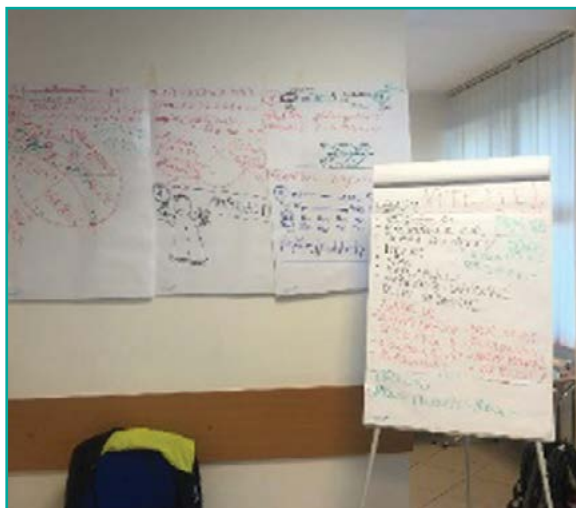
Staff training

During the project, continuous training of employees takes place on the basis of regular meetings in the form of courses, seminars, trainings or workshops. Their goal is not only to immediately put new innovative elements into practice and strengthen existing knowledge and skills, but also to exchange examples of good practice from reentry units. We started the implementation of educational activities at the beginning of the project with a professional seminar in Omšenie, then, during the project implementation, we carried out several courses, professional seminars, workshops, and trainings.



Selected specialized education

In addition to the above-mentioned educational activities, there were also specialized trainings and seminars carried out by combining the acquisition of theoretical knowledge with forms of experiential techniques in the following areas: legal aspects, addictions, employment, family and relationships of convicted persons, financial literacy, linking of penitentiary and post-penitentiary care, group leadership, conflict in a group. Perhaps the most comprehensive training that the staff and members of the project underwent was a 60-hour educational training “Motivational Interviews” after which they received a certificate. It is an international counselling and therapeutic approach aimed at supporting the search for internal motivation to change one’s behaviour. The training was carried out in group work, by practicing model motivational interviews in different life situations and with the use of experiential forms of learning.



Bridges

“Bridges” represent a link between penitentiary and post-penitentiary care in order to streamline the re-socialisation after the release of convicts from serving a custodial sentence and their social inclusion as socially disadvantaged and vulnerable persons. They contribute to the support of “decent life” without crime, and thus to the security of the society. The main vision of the “Bridges” platform is to build cooperation with relevant entities from the public, private and third sector.

In the period from 10/2019 to 09/2022, we held a total of 98 working meetings (online or in person) with 52 cooperating organizations. In order to ensure the sustainability of the project, we have created a digitized anonymized database for the selection and employment of convicts in social enterprises after their release.

The connection between penitentiary and post-penitentiary care creates a benefit of a social curator – a methodologist who enables a person serving a custodial sentence to cooperate with relevant entities. From the beginning of the project implementation until 09/2022, the social curators – methodologists provided interventions for 2,575 clients. Through selected entities, the convicted person can gain work experience in cooperation with employers, develop work skills with the possibility of employment in social enterprises, deal with addiction in organizations providing residential resocialization programmes, outpatient programmes and health care programmes (focused on substance and non-substance addictions) in health care facilities, or re-establish social ties and integrate into the community in cooperation with municipalities/cities and churches. During the period mentioned above, 61 convicted persons were interested in employment in one of 18 social enterprises that cooperate with us. 14 convicted persons managed to fulfill their actual needs through municipalities/cities of which they returned to after serving their sentence. 9 persons were dealing with their addiction after being released from sentence in one of the above-mentioned facilities.



Already during the serving of a custodial sentence, the convicted persons are interested in follow-up care after the release through resocialization or treatment programmes for drug users. Also, thanks to the National Project “Chance for Reentry” the Guard Service concluded nine agreements on cooperation with the above-mentioned types of facilities, including centres for children and families, centres for drug addiction treatment, facilities providing outpatient or inpatient care.

Did you know?

Key outputs

The project is focused on the main activity, which is “Resocialization and active integration of citizens serving a custodial sentence in society and the labour market and improvement of their access to social services.” In connection with it, we focused in the project on sub-objectives/sub-activities, through which we were fulfilling the key outputs.

The summary of the key results of individual project sub-activities as of 09/2022:

1. Steering Committee – since its establishment in early 2019, the meetings were held regularly in half-year intervals. The meetings were held in person or online (due to anti-epidemiological measures). It was approving/taking note of the documents created in accordance with the project plan;
2. information and counselling services in reentry units – we have established 10 reentry units as a separate space; created 4 tools for differentiating convicts and identifying the risks and needs of convicted persons; created Standards for Penitentiary Treatment of Convicts in Reentry Units, Standards of the Basic Package and Methodology for the Preparation and Evaluation of an Individual Action Plan for Social Inclusion. We have prepared an Analysis of Educational Needs for the Performance of All Information and Counselling Activities in Reentry Units and Minimum Standards of The Educational Programme for Staff Working in The Reentry Units. Within the reentry units, we installed 10 information kiosks for the convicted persons with the new HOLUP application and created an intranet site for staff;
3. RaVVP –RaVVP (a Slovak abbr. for Resocialization and Educational Programmes) - we have developed specific standards for all created RaVVP for future public and non-public service providers and also a system of accreditation mechanism. At the same time, we have created 9 RaVVP, of which we have pilot verified 8 to this date;
4. information and counselling services for specific groups – they were properly filled during the project (see page 7);
5. the evaluation of the project and individual activities takes place on an ongoing basis. At the end of 2021, an independent authority made an evaluation of the project, and the final evaluation report was completed at 09/2022. Convicted persons placed in pre-release units undergo an evaluation, which is aimed at improvement/deterioration with respect to the monitored parameters before and after the intervention.

The main measurable indicator of the project’s activities was the number of people who used new, innovative services to provide social inclusion services. The number was set to 3,600 persons. As of 09/2022, 2,882 convicted persons had passed through the pre-release unit. However, the final counting must also take into account the situation caused by COVID-19 and the related nationwide measures taken by the government and the Public Health Office, which affected events in the partner facilities, delays in the planned outcomes of the principal investigators team, the need to interrupt programmes and work with convicts (restriction related to group activities, to access to facilities and placement of convicts in pre-release units), as a result of which the need to prolong the work with them proved necessary. For this reason, we have requested a change/extension of the project, as we consider it necessary to fulfil the implementation of activities according to predetermined goals.

Publicity

Since the National Project “Chance for Reentry” is one of the large and demanding projects in the Guard Service portfolio, and is focused on the treatment process, we decided to purposefully promote the project for selected target groups through appropriate communication channels during its implementation as part of the communication strategy. We focused on the Guard Service staff, the professional and general public and, last but not least, on prisoners and people close to them.

Within the implementation of the concept of the project’s communication strategy, with the aim to promote the project and its preliminary or final results, the outputs were processed and published in the following form:

- brief news on the website (129 in total), the Guard Service’s website (41), the Central Office for Labour, Social Affairs and the Family website (9), social networks (18);
- press releases in electronic media (34) and in TA3 television (1), appearances on TV news on TA3 and RTVS (3) and a television documentary (1);
- 2.5-minute video for professional public (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) and 2.5-minute video for social enterprises (YouTube);
- popularization and professional articles in the magazine “Slovenské väzenstvo” (15) and “České vězství” (1), in the prison magazine (3), and in other external periodicals (4), even from external authors (6);
- appearances at domestic and foreign scientific conferences (16), scientific articles in journals and in proceedings (3), in a professional and scientific proceeding (1), information brochure (1) and in a scientific monograph (1).



Second edition.

Data update: 09/2022



National Project

“CHANCE FOR REENTRY”

Would you like to know more about the project?

You can find us here

Národný projekt Šanca na návrat
Building CBC1 (22nd floor)
Karadžičova 8/A
821 08 Bratislava

Correspondence address:

Generálne riaditeľstvo
Zboru väzenskej a justičnej stráže
Úsek projektu „Šanca na návrat“
Šagátova ul. č. 1
813 04 Bratislava

Website and e-mail contact

Šanca na návrat (sancanavrat.sk)
sancanavrat@zvjs.sk
info@sancanavrat.sk

Detailed information about the project's output can be found in the Output analysis document on our website in the section [„Documents for download“](#).

This project is implemented thanks to support from The European Social Fund and The European Regional Development Fund under the Operational Programme Human Resources.

www.esf.gov.sk
(www.employment.gov.sk, www.zvjs.sk)