

Prisons in the Republic of North Macedonia

Elena M. TRPEVSKA*

Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Gordana LAŽETIĆ

Faculty of Law, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius

ABSTRACT: The Macedonian system of sanctions represents an integrated, pluralistic penalty system focusing on punishment as the main sanction. However, the main priority of Republic of North Macedonia should be enabling the alternative system of sanctioning for the first-time offenders, crimes of negligence and minor crimes. The prison sentence should not be considered in any way the sole response for breaches of a legal standard or crimes. With the introduction of The Law on Sanctions Execution in 2019, a new phase of the prison system and penal policy in the Republic of North Macedonia began. This article will analyze the forms of treatment for prisoners and the main challenges faced by the prison system today: conditions and overcrowding, ethnic diversity and religion, legal remedies, education, health treatment, and the special treatment of child offenders

1. General country background

Based on an agreement with Greece from June 2018, the country, previously known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ has renamed into Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter: RNM). This renaming took effect in February 2019.

The most common religion is Orthodox Christianity, practiced by most of the ethnic Macedonians. Islam is the second-largest religious group consisted mainly of Macedonian

* Contact: Elena Mujoska TRPEVSKA | emujoska@manu.edu.mk

¹ Often referred to as FYRM or FYR of Macedonia; the previous name will still be found in papers and reports published prior February 2019.



citizens from Albanian, Turkish and Bosnian ethnicity. In the period 2009-2019, there has been a continuous increase in the number of immigrated foreigners in the RNM².

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the RNM and the EU entered into force in April 2004, RNM is a candidate country since 2005, and for ten years there are continuously recommendations to the Council to open accession negotiations. Although there has been achieved progress, in June 2019 the Council postponed its Decision to no later than October 2019. Still, in October 2019 the Council has decided to “revert to the issue of enlargement before the EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020”. On 26 March 2020, the European Council endorsed the Council’s Decision to open accession negotiations with RNM³. However, since the latest veto by the Republic of Bulgaria, the European future of the RNM is seriously jeopardized. At the same time, the efficiency of EU policies in the Western Balkans has been seriously endangered.

2. Macedonian system of sanctions

2.1 Legal framework

2.1.1. Criminal Code, criminal policy and alternative sanctioning

The system of sanctions represents an integrated, pluralistic penalty system focusing on punishment as the main sanction. It is provided in the Criminal Code of the Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter CCRNM)⁴ which includes punishments, alternative measures, safety measures and educational measures. According to CCRNM, imprisonment and its alternatives are the only sanctions for adult, accountable, and guilty perpetrators, except for security measures which can be imposed on persons who are not mentally competent or have

² Last official Census was conducted in 2002. State statistical office, Macedonia in figures, 2019, available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2020/Macedonia%20in%20figures-2020-web.pdf>, last access: 25 April 2021.

³ North Macedonia 2020 Report, EC Brussels, 6.10.2020 SWD(2020) 351 final, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf.

⁴ Criminal Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, Official Gazette, No. 37/1996; 80/1999; 48/2001; 4/2002; 16/2002; 43/2003; 19/2004; 40/2004; 81/2005; 50/2006; 60/2006; 73/2006; 87/2007; 7/2008; 139/2008; 114/2009; 51/2011; 51/2011; 135/2011; 185/2011; 142/2012; 143/2012; 166/2012; 55/2013; 82/2013; 14/2014; 27/2014; 28/2014; 41/2014; 41/2014; 115/2014; 132/2014; 160/2014; 199/2014; 196/2015; 226/2015; 97/2017; 170/2017; 248/2018; available at: <https://pretsedatel.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Krivicen-zakonik.pdf>.

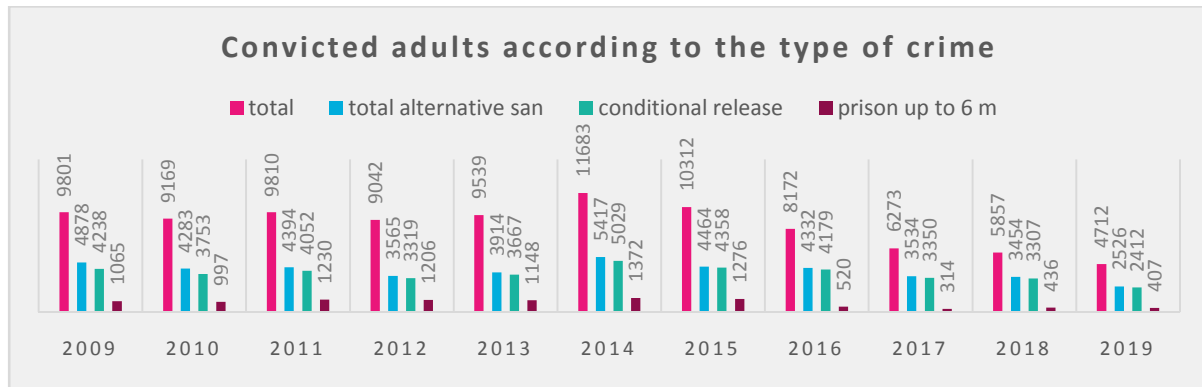


decreased mental competence, and drug and alcohol addicts. After the amendments in CCRNM in 2004, a new flexible penalty system was introduced and the number of punishments was increased. Therefore, there are two main punishments as in imprisonment and fine, and four secondary prohibitions on practicing a profession, performing an activity or duty, prohibition on operating a motor vehicle, the expulsion of a foreigner from the country, and a prohibition on attending sports competition (Article 33 CCRNM).

The Criminal Code of RNM differentiates between time-limited and life imprisonment. The legal minimum of the time-limited imprisonment is thirty days, while the general legal maximum is twenty years. For offences punishable by life imprisonment, a sentence of up to 40 years in prison may be imposed. If a sentence of 20 years of imprisonment is imposed for a premeditated crime, a sentence of life imprisonment may be executed for severe forms of this crime. The sentence of life imprisonment may not be imposed as the only main sentence and the offender sentenced to life imprisonment cannot be released on parole before he serves at least 25 years of imprisonment. The Law explicitly excludes the imposition of this punishment for an offender who at the time the crime was committed has not turned the age of 21 years (Articles 33-36 CCRNM).

Despite this regulation of the criminal legislation and the constant appeals for broader application of the alternatives to prison, in practice, they are rarely used. In the theory of criminal law, many questions still need to be reconsidered, given the current conditions of social development. Their values should correspond to current living conditions searching for appropriate measures and procedures to combat crime. It is necessary to determine alternative solutions to imprisonment for all minor offences. Indeed, prison sentences cannot be removed entirely and excluded from the criminal system, but it is necessary to reform the manner of their execution or, as a final choice, to find solutions to replace them.



Figure 1.1 - Convicted adults according to the type of crime 2009 - 2019⁵

The main priority of RNM should be enabling the alternative system of sanctioning for the first-time offenders, crimes of negligence and minor crimes. That in fact is a priority of every modern criminal law legislation. But, unfortunately the penal policy in North Macedonia lacks consistency.

Therefore, from a conducted research of randomly selected verdicts⁶, a significant inequality was found in the sentencing for certain crimes in the courts in RNM, i.e. in most cases, the sentences were ‘mild’. For example, in 50 analyzed verdicts for the crime “unauthorized production and distribution of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors”, for which a sentence of 0 to 180 months is provided, an average percent of 14.26 months imprisonment was imposed, in 19 cases there were suspended sentences, and the highest sentence was 96 months in prison. For the crime ‘abuse of official position’, on the other hand, for which imprisonment from 6 to 180 months is envisaged, depending on the form, the average sentences were about a month and a half, in 39 cases there were suspended sentences and the others were below the legal minimum. For the crime ‘aggravated theft’, the courts in Gostivar and Shtip ruled twice milder sentences than those in the area of Skopje and Bitola, which means that citizens are not equal before the courts⁷.

⁵ Source: RNM State Statistical Office, 2021. Link: www.stat.gov.mk.

⁶ E. T. Mujoska (2017) “The (non)application of the alternatives in the Macedonian court practice”, *Macedonian Review of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 1: 3-4.

⁷ E. T. Mujoska (2017) “The (non)application of the alternatives in the Macedonian court practice”, cit., p. 4.

Several projects, analyses, and conferences have been conducted in past years with the common goal of assessing the current sentencing policy of national criminal courts, identifying the ‘weak points’ of the sentencing policy and making recommendations for the enhancement of a unified national sentencing system⁸.

Each alternative sanction or measure has its own set of characteristics; depending on the circumstances, they may be a viable option for achieving the country’s penal policy objectives. The importance of alternative sanctions and measures fundamental aspects of their judicial procedure use, as well as the instruments for guiding and enforcing the country’s punishment policy, should further reinforce their position in current legislation. As shown in the figures above (see Table 1.1) the assertion of alternative sanctions and measures has a declining trend and is getting reduced every year. When the offender is not a threat to society and can be reliably determined that re-socialization and reintegration will occur without being isolated in a penitentiary, the use of the alternatives to incarceration should be encouraged. The prison sentence should not be considered in any way the sole response for breaches of a legal standard or crimes. For years, there have been laws which maintain the tradition of imposing alternative solutions, as arrests and prison sentences have proved to be counterproductive for specific categories, especially for minor crimes.

2.1.2. Law on Justice for Children

Aside from Criminal Law, the creation of a separate juvenile justice system has made enormous progress in criminal justice reforms. The primary reason for this division was the need to improve both its legal framework and the mechanisms for its implementation in order to better comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international norms and standards. The new contemporary Law on Justice for Children⁹ promotes the idea

⁸ The most significant is the round table held in Macedonian Academy for Science and Arts in May 2014. Materials are published in *Macedonian Review of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 1, 2014. Available at: <http://www.maclc.mk/publications>.

⁹ Law on Justice for Children of the Republic of North Macedonia, Official Gazette, No. 148/13, 152/2019; 275/2019, available at: <https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/b2052db2045643c4bd6790fa1aa45fbd.pdf#page=26>.



of restorative justice, giving priority to mediation, alternative measures, informal action and exceptional application of institutional, educational measures or punishment. The idea of protection and assistance to the child is at the heart of the system of measures and procedures for children, which places the judge for children in a central role. Moreover, punishment is predicted as a reserve sanction for older children and for the most serious offences, which would apply, if educational or alternative measures cannot be applied.

Despite the changes in the legislation, after the adoption of the first Law on Juvenile Justice in 2007 and the Law on Justice for Children of 2013¹⁰, as well as the laws in the field of child protection, there is no significant progress in overcoming the treatment of children at risk and children in conflict with the law, as a marginalized category.

The poor implementation of the laws, due to which their treatment remains below the level of international norms and standards for children's rights, is primarily because of the insufficient institutional willingness for their implementation. That also reflects the inconsistency of the policies of the state in their adequate financing, staffing and creation of other conditions for appropriate measures of prevention, institutional and non-institutional treatment¹¹. In late 2018, a serious scientific research was done precisely for this problem, which results will be discussed in the following sections.

2.1.3. Law on Execution of sanctions

Penitentiary law undergoes two reform phases. The first phase begins with the adoption of the Law on Execution of Sanctions in 2006¹², which establishes the penitentiary-legal framework for the implementation of the Criminal Code's sanctions system from 2004. This law was in effect until May 29, 2019, when a new Law on Execution of Sanctions (hereinafter LES)¹³ was enacted and the second phase of penal system reforms began. The need for the LES to be enacted in 2019 resulted from a greater number of revisions to the

¹⁰ This Law can be also found as Law on Children Justice in published papers and reports.

¹¹ K. Vlado, G. Buzarovska-Lazetik, L. Nanev, O. Kosevaliska, B. Arifi, and D. Saiti (2018) *Commentary on the Law on Justice for Children with Practicum*. The book is available at: <https://eprints.ugd.edu.mk/21322/>.

¹² The Law on Execution of Sanctions, Official Gazette, No. 2/06-2, U.no. 9/2006-65/06. Not in force.

¹³ Law on Execution of Sanctions, Official Gazette, No. 99/2019, 220/2019, available at: <https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/65bfda0a7df54198aa359df8fa5f7ba4.pdf>.



previous law as well as developments in international norms on prison policy. So now, the new Law regulates the execution of sanctions imposed for crimes following the latest European trends in penitentiary law.

The Law on Execution of Sanctions is a complementary law that is in line with international standards and best practices in the field of execution of sanctions, with particular emphasis on the European Prison Rules of the Council of Europe and UN Mandela Rules regarding the rights of prisoners¹⁴.

Other reasons for the adoption of this Law, is alignment with the National Strategy for the development of the penitentiary system (2015-2019)¹⁵ and the Strategy for the reform of the judicial sector with Action plan in the period 2017-2022¹⁶. Its adoption reflects the efforts for provision of an efficient penitentiary system with a professional approach in the organization and oversight of the work of the penitentiary and juvenile institutions, aimed at improving the key areas of functioning of the penitentiary system¹⁷.

One of the main principles of LES is the respect of the human rights and dignity of sentenced persons, as well as the care for preserving their physical and mental health. The execution of sanctions is carried out without any discrimination on any ground – race, skin color, origin, national or ethnic belonging, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, language, citizenship, social origin, education, religion or religious beliefs, political beliefs, other beliefs, disability, age, family or marital status, property, health, personal capacity and social status (Articles 3-5 LES).

In this regard, LES can be assessed as an all-encompassing systemic law that fully regulates the execution of sanctions with respect to the age of the person against whom sanctions are imposed, according to the offense, type of sanctions, as well as the position,

¹⁴ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – The Mandela Rules – 2015 available at: https://www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/mandela_rules.shtml.

¹⁵ National Strategy for Development of the Penitentiary System 2015-2019, available at: https://www.pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/Nacionalna_strategijaMK_12_2014.pdf.

¹⁶ Strategy for the reform of the judicial sector with Action plan in the period 2017-2022, available at: https://www.pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/Strategija%20i%20akciski%20plan_MK-web.pdf.

¹⁷ National Strategy for Development of the Penitentiary System 2015-2019, cit.



rights and responsibilities of the prison police¹⁸. In January 2021 a new National Strategy for the development of the penitentiary system in North Macedonia (2021-2025) was prepared.

2.2. Macedonian penal policy and prison system

Each state's criminal policy represents the society's dominant ideological, economic, political, social, and other relationships and determinations. It is a normative discipline with the primary aim of defining the objectives of the criminal justice system. The concept of imprisonment in our country, which establishes the general minimum and maximum sentences, is a step in that direction¹⁹. It is important to highlight that the quality of prison conditions and treatment offered to prisoners will, to a large extent, depend on the domestic penal policy of that state²⁰. Therefore, the contemporary concept of criminal policy for crime prevention must combine all methods and means including the states actions and social activities. These include above mentioned alternatives to imprisonment and various 'extra-penalty' sanctions, such as coercive security measures or treatment measures²¹.

On the other hand, there are parts of the world like Scandinavia, where everything seems to be different. In discussions about prison and penal policy, it has remarkable, if not unique, characteristics. According to reports, only a small number of people are sent to prison there in the first place. This place is a beacon of stability in an age when the punitive impulse and prison numbers are increasing in almost every corner of the world. Furthermore, the standard of living in prison is said to be exceptional. Inmates have excellent prison conditions and are housed in modern, often very small-scale prisons, which have the feel of open prisons

¹⁸ National Strategy for Development of the Penitentiary System 2015-2019, cit.

¹⁹ V. Kambovski (2011) *Commentary on the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia*, Matica Publishing, Skopje pp. 5- 10.

²⁰ S. Timm, Y. Auge (2019) *Understanding retaliation, mediation and punishment: collected results*, p.229. Available at: https://pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item_3220258/component/file_3346556/content.

²¹ V. Kambovski, E. M. Trpevska (2021) "Legal postulates on criminal justice reform", *Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Art*, 10, 18 ss. Contrary argument in K. Reiter, A. Koenig [Eds] (2015) *Extreme Punishment: Comparative Studies in Detention, Incarceration and Solitary Confinement*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, p. 21.



in many cases. Another point of distinction is that there has been no notable privatization of prisons²².

When it comes to the RNM, criminal political measures continue to be used, which are heavily influenced by the society's current social and political interests. Thus, the penal policy contains repressive measures and measures of social prevention²³.

The penal theory and practice are often associated with the public opinion and its relationship and role in preventing, controlling and combating crime. Thus, in a country like ours, in addition to the state mechanism, the general public should be engaged in the fight against deviant social behaviours. It is crucial to develop anti-criminal public opinion.

2.2.1 - Network of the penitentiary and correctional institutions

The sentence of imprisonment, detention and educational measure of referral to a correctional facility can be executed in penitentiary institutions and correctional-educational facilities. There are 11 penitentiary institutions in RNM, which can be penitentiaries and prisons. They are divided in 4 penitentiary institutions and 7 prisons. The more severe punishments (over 3 years) are served in the Penitentiary institutions²⁴. The other penal institutions are prisons (for sentences up to 3 years), as followed: Bitola Prison, Gevgelija Prison, Ohrid Prison for juvenile delinquents, Skopje Prison, Strumica Prison, Tetovo Prison and the open-type Penitentiary facility Struga. The only ward for woman offenders in RNM is located in Indrizovo Penitentiery in Skopje.

Even though, the LES stipulates that there are correctional facility Tetovo and correctional facility for women in the Penitentiary Idrizovo (Article 33), currently there is one correctional-educational facility (CEF) for juveniles in Volkovija, Tetovo²⁵. The new CEF meets all the conditions of the international standards for functioning, operation and

²² See more in T. Vander Beken (2016) *The Role of Prison in Europe: Travelling in the Footsteps of John Howard*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, p. 51.

²³ Similarly, S. Zoran (1996) *Penologija*, Magor, Skopje, p.3.

²⁴ There are 4 Penitentiary facilities as followed: Penitentiary facility Idrizovo with an open ward in Veles, Penitentiary facility Shtip, Penitentiary facility Kumanovo with an open ward in Kriva Palanka and since December 2020 the Penitentiary facility Prilep.

²⁵ Available at: <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/zatvori>, last access.



implementation of the correctional-educational process with full respect for children's rights. The construction of a new correctional facility was expected for more than 19 years and is a permanent solution to the long-term problem of accommodation of juveniles who have been sentenced to correctional measures²⁶.

Macedonian legislation stipulates imprisonment for criminal acts only and not for misdemeanors (as crimes of lesser seriousness), like Serbia²⁷, Austria²⁸, Croatia²⁹ and others³⁰. Sentenced children must serve their prison sentence in a special institution for children (Article 38 LES), that is Prison Ohrid – the only juvenile prison in the country.

According to the degree of security, the degree of restriction of freedom of movement and the types of treatment applied to sentenced persons, prisons are divided into institutions of closed (there is physical and material security), semi-open (there is prison police to provide discipline and to control the movement of prisoners), and open type (there is no physical and material security). The organization of life and work of prisoners in these open type institutions is based on self-discipline and personal responsibility, and control over their movement and work is performed by educators and instructors. Special wards are established in certain institutions for detention (Article 35 LES).

Closed, semi-open and open wards are established in closed and semi-open penal institutions. Departments for reception of prisoners (reception departments) are established in the institutions (Article 36 LES). Special wards for convicted foreign nationals and stateless persons may be established in the institutions as well. When executing a prison sentence for these offenders, the international documents related to the serving of a prison sentence for this category of convicted persons are applied. Departments for prisoners with high and very high security risk may be established in the institutions (Article 37).

²⁶ See more at: www.pravda.gov.mk, www.msp.org.mk.

²⁷ Law on Misdemeanours, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No.65/2013, available at: <http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2013/65/2/reg>.

²⁸ Verwaltungsstrafgesetz, Bundesgesetzblattgesetz nr. 52/1991, available at:

<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10005770>.

²⁹ Prekršajni zakon, Narodne novine Republike Hrvatske 107/07, 39/13, 157/13, 110/15, 70/17, 118/18.

³⁰ E.M. Trpevska, K. Bitrakov (2020) "Benefits from the application of alternatives to imprisonment", *Macedonian Review of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 1-2, p. 3.



2.2.2. Serving the prison sentence

The system of execution of imprisonment is organized so that in separate institutions or separate departments of separate institutions and groups in them can be deployed, classification and relocation of specific categories of prisoners, for more straightforward implementation of different types of treatment, prevention the mutual harmful influence of the prisoners and the maintenance of discipline (Article 16 LES).

In a penitentiary institution, the convicted persons are classified according to the necessity for application of treatment measures and the type of necessary treatment, age, personal characteristics, and other circumstances relevant for assessing the convicted person's personality (Article 18 LES).

The LES defines 'resocialization' as the main goal of the execution of the prison sentence, which as a term, in addition to re-education, also includes the 'social adaptation' of the convicted person, his preparation for socially acceptable behavior of freedom. For this purpose, all penological methods and means of serving a sentence are subordinated, which due to the individualized approach, are sublimated through the notion of 'treatment of the convicted person'. The treatment concept includes all procedures and measures that affect the prisoners' personality to suppress the negative and support and develop his positive qualities and value orientation. The prison system is based on the principle of the 'group serving a sentence'. The 'classification' is made according to the sex, age, length of the sentence and the need for stricter measures to prevent escape. The classification in groups within the institution (vertical, internal classification) is subordinated to the need for identical forms of treatment for different prisoners. In addition to the previously set criteria (gender, age, etc.), the basis for this classification is the subjective characteristics of the convict, level of education, profession, individual preferences and interests, etc. This creates conditions for 'individualized treatment', which in addition to the procedures and measures that apply to the whole group, includes the special treatment methods of each convicted person³¹.

³¹ See V. Kambovski (2010) *Criminal Law - General part*, Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, pp. 876-882.



For a person released from serving a sentence, the LES provides, at least declaratively, post-penal assistance to eliminate the negative effects of imprisonment and its reintegration into the social environment. Assistance consists of re-employment, completion of education, material assistance, accommodation, etc., which in developed countries is designed as an integral part of the (extended) treatment of the convicted person. According to Kambovski³², in our country, in our social conditions, increasingly limited material resources continue to be a scribble on paper³³ and a problem that is the basis for deeper analysis and research.

In the following parts of the article, we will analyze the forms of treatment (work, training, cultural, artistic, sports, and other forms of leisure organization) as well as the main challenges faced by the prison system (conditions and overcrowding, education and health treatment), and the special treatment of child offenders.

3. Current conditions in penal institutions

3.1. Prison conditions and overcrowding

The total capacity of the prison system in RNM is 2384. For more than two years this figure has not been exceeded. However, the overall picture of the prison system began to improve intensively with the change of government in 2017, and the transformation of authorities in the Directorate for Execution of Sanctions.

From 2010 to 2017, RNM faced continuous overcrowding of the prison facilities. The inadequate prison conditions and prison overcrowding, were the main issues that obscured the correction process in general. Additionally, the overcrowding and inhumane prison conditions caused other problems for prisoners in terms of accommodation, nutrition, general and personal hygiene, poor sanitation, etc., which led to frequent conflicts between the prisoners.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*



The Ombudsman made appeals in its annual reports on the absolute non-compliance with the domestic and international standards for the accommodation of persons deprived of liberty³⁴. In 2018³⁵, it was reported that in some of the penitentiary institutions in the country the overcrowding is significantly reduced, but the conditions for serving the prison sentence are still very bad and degrading. Thus, unreserved reliance on prison sentences, in addition to overcrowding in prison facilities, has led to exceptional demands such as the adoption of amnesty laws³⁶. The same year, after the adoption of the Law on Amnesty³⁷ the number of sentenced persons in certain prisons significantly decreased, which was especially visible in institutions with a smaller number of prisoners. The trend of reduced prison capacity continued in 2019 and 2020.

In 2019 the conditions for serving the prison sentence and the detention measure were still not satisfactory, although overcrowding has been significantly reduced. In the reporting year³⁸, a significant information came from the women's ward of Idrizovo Penitentiary. Namely, a group of woman offenders expressed dissatisfaction with the conditions, especially the inability to maintain personal hygiene and the hygiene in the premises where they are serving a prison sentence. They pointed out that in this institution, they do not have basic hygienic conditions, which directly affects the maintenance and preservation of their health, expressing disappointment with the indifferent attitude of the prison administration, stating that they treat them as 'ordinary' numbers, not people with basic needs, which after serving a sentence and the process of re-socialization, should be included in the social life, with good health. After the conversation and inspection of the facility (Women's ward in Idrizovo Penitentiary), the Ombudsman made sure the director of the institution took concrete measures to create the necessary conditions for serving a prison sentence, pointing out that

³⁴ Cf. the Annual reports on the work of the Ombudsman, available at: http://ombudsman.mk/mk/godishni_izveshtai.aspx.

³⁵ Report available at: <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2017/GI-2018.pdf>.

³⁶ With this law, persons are released from criminal prosecution, the initiated criminal proceedings are stopped and some prisoners are completely released from serving the prison sentence.

³⁷ Cf. Law on Amnesty Official Gazette, No. 11/2018.

³⁸ Report available at: <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2019/GI-2019.pdf>.



the dignity of prisoners should be respected, and in that context to takes care of maintaining their health and hygiene, which is in fact, his legal obligation³⁹.

Year	Number of female prisoners	Percentage of total prison population	Female prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)
2000	32	2.3%	1.6
2005	66	3.1%	3.2
2010	59	2.3%	2.9
2019	70	3.3%	3.4

Table 1.1. Female prisoners in RNM - Source: World Prison Brief, 2021⁴⁰

Similarly, in 2020⁴¹, one case of the Ombudsman stands out, who acted upon a complaint from a relative of a convicted foreign citizen for inadequate accommodation conditions and inability to exercise his rights, in the Kumanovo Penitentiary. Additional complaint was submitted by the Ombudsman of Albania regarding the conditions in which a group of 30 convicted persons – foreign citizens are serving a prison sentence⁴². Namely, the complaint pointed out the poor conditions in prison (lack of water in the rooms, inadequate promenade, inadequate nutrition, i.e. the insufficient amount of food and irregular giving of fresh vegetables and fruits), as well as the fact that they do not have conditions for sports and leisure activities, nor are employed.

³⁹ Annual report on the work of the Ombudsman (2019), pp. 82-87.

⁴⁰ Source: World Prison Brief data, Europe, North Macedonia, Link: <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/north-macedonia>.

⁴¹ Report available at: <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2020/GI-2020.pdf>.

⁴² Annual report on the work of the Ombudsman (2019), pp. 71-72.



Figure 1.2 - Prisons population trend in RNM⁴³

To conclude, the overcrowding in the penitentiary has significantly decreased, but there is still space for improvement. DES needs to improve the accommodation conditions in all penal institutions and respect the dignity of the prisoners. According to the latest data obtained for this paper, the total number of sentenced persons in all prisons is 1883. The number of detained persons is 291 and 13 children in CEF Volkovija Tetovo.

3.2. Ethnic diversity and religion in prisons

The new LES has special provisions to ensure protection of prisoners' religious feelings, personal beliefs and moral norms (Art. 4, par. 4). According to Article 155 line 10, every convicted person has the right to satisfy their religious needs. The law indicates that prisoners are provided with food considering their religious beliefs, in accordance with the possibilities of the penal institution (Art. 162, par. 4) and they are allowed to satisfy their religious feelings and needs in accordance with the conditions and possibilities of the institution (Art. 194).

Equality of all prisoners, regardless of their sex, race, color of skin, ethnic and social origin, political and religious belief, property and social status, is of utmost importance for the creation of a just and harmonious society, without further conflicts and crisis. Unfortunately, after 2018 the State Statistical Office does not provide statistical overview for

⁴³ Source: World Prison Brief data, Europe, North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/north-macedonia>.

different ethnic groups in Macedonian prisons. The total number of prisoners in 2018 was 6,273 out of which 2,957 are Macedonians (47.13%), 1,228 are Albanians (19.57%), 270 are Turks (4.30%), 587 are Roma (9.35%), 5 are Vlachs (0.07%), 43 are Serbs (0.68%), 40 are Bosniaks (0.63%), 95 are other nationality (1.51%), 1,048 are unknown. Even though, this is vaguely outdated statistical data, we can easily get the ethnic profile in Macedonian prisons.

We will analyze one ethnic group specifically Roma prisoners, given the available data regarding the adult offenders of crimes for the period from 2011 to 2018. In the researched period, nearly 11% were Roma prisoners⁴⁴. The most frequently committed crimes are the crimes against the property (nearly 74% of all crimes). With less than 6% in the total committed crimes, are the crimes against life and body and against public order and peace, and with less than 4% participate in crimes against marriage, family and youth and crimes against human health (see Table 1.3).

Year	Total Roma	Crimes against property	Crimes against life and body	Crimes against public order	Crimes against marriage, family and youth	Crimes against human health
2011	1130	813	53	43	47	49
2012	996	746	68	41	28	21
2013	1083	825	44	32	28	22
2014	1180	830	65	77	23	22
2015	1091	818	41	67	21	27
2016	772	572	33	53	23	13
2017	587	421	39	36	22	8
Total	6839	5025	343	349	192	162
%	100%	73.48%	5.01%	5.10%	2.80%	2.37%

Table 1.3 - Common crimes committed by adult Roma⁴⁵

There is a significant research⁴⁶ about discrimination of Roma and their position in the judiciary, in aspect of discrimination in general, police treatment, use of inadequate force,

⁴⁴ Perpetrators of Criminal Offences 2011-2018, RNM State Statistical Office, available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/PublikaciiPoOblast_en.aspx?id=43&rbrObl=6. Additional resource: Analysis of the position of Roma as defendants in criminal cases procedure in the Republic of Macedonia, 2017, p. 31, available at: <https://cpia.mk/mk/анализа-за-положбата-на-ромите-како-об/>

⁴⁵ Perpetrators of Criminal Offences 2011-2018, RNM State Statistical Office, cit.



intimidation, repression and inhuman treatment⁴⁷. The general conclusion is that there is no discrimination of Roma as offenders or victims of crimes, nor in terms of achieving procedural possibilities or in terms of pronouncing stricter criminal sanctions. Similar, another research showed the same results: there is no different treatment or discrimination against various prisoners, especially not on grounds of ethnicity⁴⁸. However, it can be concluded that there is discrimination in the broadest sense of the word, in terms of inefficiency in utilizing the procedural possibilities that Roma have during the procedure. Because of illiteracy many Roma defendants do not have proper (or not at all) legal defense counsel. In cases where lawyer was hired, he was either hired by the NGO sector, or he was *ex officio*, leaving room for doubt about their defense's effectiveness⁴⁹.

Another category that is immediately noticeable in the table above, is the group of prisoners under the category 'unknown'. This situation may vary from different circumstances. It may be because of prisoners own free will and not wanting to proclaim any ethnic background or, more likely, is because they do not know their right to update ID card. According to Article 215 of the LES, prisoners who are citizens of the RNM have the right to update the identity card data after its expiration, at the expense of the budget of the country. If prisoners don't have valid documentation, they cannot be included in official statistical data.

To make the picture clearer, we will refer to the Ombudsman statement regarding this issue. In 2018 and 2019 the problem with the lack of personal identification documents of prisoners was evident. After submitting complaints for protection of the rights of prisoners and the knowledge that these persons after serving the sentence, face a problem in terms of further health care, and exercise of other rights that require possession of appropriate personal

⁴⁶ Center for Legal Research and Analysis (2017) *Analysis of the position of Roma as defendants in criminal cases procedure in the Republic of Macedonia*, available at: <https://cpia.mk/en/анализа-за-положбата-на-ромите-како-об/>.

⁴⁷ Available at: <https://www.cpia.mk/media/files/%d0%90naliza-za-polozbata-na-romite-kako-obvineti-vo-krivichna-postapka-vo-republika-makedonija.pdf>.

⁴⁸ OSCE (2010) *Discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity*, p. 76, available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/116792.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Read more at: Center for Legal Research and Analysis (2017) *Analysis of the position of Roma as defendants in criminal cases procedure in the Republic of Macedonia*, cit., p. 31.



documents, the Ombudsman conducted a survey⁵⁰. It confirmed that there is a large number of prisoners who are admitted to serving a prison sentence, but also those who are released from the institution after the expiration of the sentence, without any valid personal identification document. Back in 2018, the penitentiary institutions did not have accurate records for prisoners who do not have identification documents, and there was no diligence of these institutions regarding the initiation of procedures for issuing ID cards to prisoners who do not have documents.

This condition further prevents the realization of other rights of prisoners. For example, in 2017, some of the prisoners did not vote in the first round of the local elections due to the expiration of their ID cards: “When they come to serve their prison sentences, the convicted persons leave the ID cards to the administration (...) the administration does not inform them when the personal documents expire and does not help them to renew them”⁵¹. Regarding this situation, the Ombudsman submitted recommendations to the DES and to the Director of the Idrizovo Penitentiary, requesting that the necessary measures be taken in order to comprehensively assess the situation of prisoners who do not have personal identification documents, such as and to determine and know exactly which person has been sent to prison without personal identification documents. Regarding the given recommendations, the above-mentioned bodies informed the Ombudsman that certain activities were undertaken in order to overcome this situation, in a way that the DES established contacts with the Ministry of Interior and the Registry Office, and that this problem is in the solution phase, both in the technical part and in the part of finances for its implementation.

On March 1st, 2021, the prisoners and detainees at the Kumanovo Penitentiary were among the first to have a chance to register, officially launching the first phase of the census as the country’s extensive statistical operation⁵². With this process RNM will overcome the long-lasting problem with recording ethnic diversity in prisons.

⁵⁰ The Report and the survey are available at: <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2017/GI-2018.pdf>.

⁵¹ Available at: <https://meta.mk/ombudsman-del-od-zatvorenitsite-ne-glasaa-poradi-istekot-na-vazhnosta-na-lichnite-karti/>.

⁵² The director of the DES stated that in the first half of March 2021, 2,200 convicted and detained persons in the country will be counted. Source: <https://www.dw.com/mk>.



3.3. Legal remedies for prisoners

Every prisoner has the right to legal aid i.e. legal advice and remedies. The LES stipulates that the institution shall provide information and legal assistance to the prisoners regarding the use of legal remedies and the undertaking of actions for protection of their rights. The prisoner who is illiterate may also give the legal remedy or other submission on the minutes in the institution. In submitting the legal remedies, the prisoners should have a right to discretion (Article 206).

Recent studies⁵³ show, that the prisoners in general, and especially prisoners from different ethnic communities (mainly Roma) do not fully understand the right to be informed and to use legal remedies available to them. The prisoners from different ethnic communities do not use the complaint mechanism if they consider that their basic human rights are abused⁵⁴.

The illiterate prisoners' rate is too high. Thus, most of them do not understand the written rights. With the lack of employed lawyers in prisons today, which is evident, the prison staff provides the prisoners with legal advice and legal remedies instead of doing the things that they were hired to do. It is necessary to (continue to) promote the rights of the prisoners using legal means. Adequate actions are missing from the Centers for social work, so the penal institutions should consider establishing closer cooperation. The penal institutions should consider training for directors and prison administration on how to provide legal remedies. Also, they should consider training prisoners on how to use legal remedies and how to take actions to protect their rights. No prisoner submitted a request to the CPT or the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ever.

⁵³ N. Amdiju, E. Paunovska (2020) "Recognizing the rights of convicted persons in the Republic of North Macedonia, with a focus on members of the Roma ethnic community", available at: <https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/analiza-za-pochituvane-na-pravata-na-osudenite-licza.pdf>; E.M. Trpevska, K. Bitrakov (2019) "Fair and equal treatment of the Roma in Macedonian Prisons", *Macedonian Society for Penology*, available at: https://msp.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/brosura_so_cip.pdf.

⁵⁴ E.M. Trpevska, K. Bitrakov (2019) "Fair and equal treatment of the Roma in Macedonian Prisons", cit.



In July 2019⁵⁵, brochures were published as well as posters in 4 languages (Macedonian, Albanian, English and Roma) and 2 forms which were distributed in every penal institution in the country. That will guarantee the complaints mechanism process and will ease the process of submitting legal remedies, petitions and other requests received through the institution.

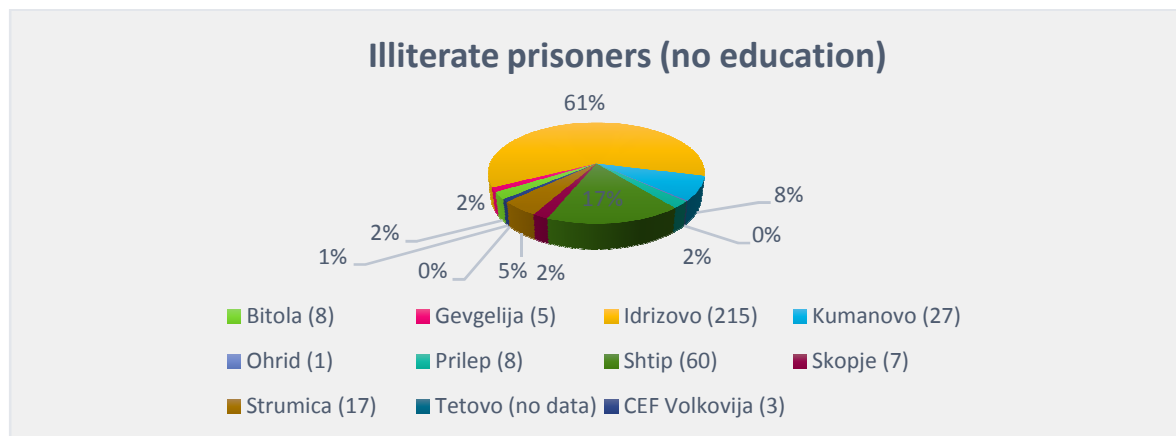


Figure 1.3 - Illiterate prisoners in RNM – Source: Directorate for Execution of Sanctions, January 2021

The complete elimination of illiteracy in prisons, will only be possible with serious determination to enable education in prisons.

3.4. Education in prisons

One of the main problems in prisons across the country is the lack of education. The (lack of) educational process of prisoners is a serious problem which continues for many years. According to the current legal regulation, primary education of prisoners must be organized in all penal and correctional institutions as part of the general education system in the state. The latest official statistics demonstrates that the number of illiterate and not educated prisoners is continuously declining i.e. shows a downward trend.

⁵⁵ The materials were published as a result of the project *Monitoring of the complaints mechanism process in prisons*, conducted by the Macedonian Society for Penology with the support of the OSCE Mission in Skopje. Available at: https://msp.mk/en_US/2019/05/27/заштита-на-правата-на-осудените-лица-с/.

	Total	Without education	Incomplete education	Primary and lower secondary school	Upper secondary school	Higher education	Unknown
2017	6 273	180	173	1 105	2 328	323	2 164
2018	5 857	250	255	1 145	2 198	356	1 653
2019	4 712	323	215	989	1 740	266	1 179

Table 1.3. Convicted adult perpetrators by types of criminal offences and educational attainment, by year⁵⁶

Even though the LES and the Strategy for Penitentiary System specify that the Ministry of Education and Science does the organizing and funding of primary education of prisoners, it is a fact that the educational process is supported only by several international organizations in the country. For example, since March 2021 the DES together with UNDP and the Ministry of Education and Science, conducts a primary education process in Shtip Penitentiary, where 42 prisoners are engaged. Also, another primary school from Skopje provides primary education in the Idrizovo Penitentiary where 15 female prisoners are included, while in the CEF Volkovija 10 children are included in the educational process and it is implemented by the primary school from Brvenica, a nearby village⁵⁷.

3.5. Health care

The LES specifies that convicted persons shall be guaranteed the right to health care and shall be provided with the necessary medical assistance and hospital treatment in

⁵⁶ For the purposes of this paper, we requested information regarding the number of illiterate prisoners to the DES. The answers are presented in the Figure 1.3. Additional Source: State Statistical Office, 2021. Link: http://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/en/MakStat/MakStat__Sudstvo__ObvinetiOsudeniStoriteli/450_SK2__Mk_T20_ml.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=46ee0f64-2992-4b45-a2d9-cb4e5f7ec5ef.

⁵⁷ Likewise, in the beginning of 2021, within the project “Creating opportunities for all”, professional trainings for prisoners were realized. This action included 10 prisoners who are serving prison sentences in the Skopje Prison. The professional trainings for the carpentry profession were conducted by school from Skopje, where in February 2021, the prisoners obtained appropriate certificates with which they will be able to get a job. In the Penitentiary in Prilep, the trainings for the profession of cook included 15 prisoners. The classes were performed by the teaching staff from the high school in Krushevo, after which the prisoners received appropriate certificates that will contribute to their equal reintegration into society. Available at: <https://uis.gov.mk/2021/03/24/obrazoven-proces-vo-казнено-поправни/>.



accordance with the regulations in the field of health care and health insurance. The health care rights shall be indicated to the convicted persons by health workers who perform primary health care in the network at the primary level for health care on the territory of which the seat of the institution is located. The convicted persons have the right to secondary and tertiary level of health care. The costs for the health care of the convicted persons in the institutions are part of the state's budget (Article 182 LES). However, the reality is different. The health care of prisoners remains one of the biggest concerns today.

Over the past few years, prisoners and detainees in correctional facilities have been complaining about the same problem: a shortage of adequate health care⁵⁸. The National Preventive Mechanism⁵⁹ as well as the Ombudsman in their reports for 2020⁶⁰ noted that there are no significant changes regarding the health services of the institutions, in terms of providing adequate health treatment to prisoners and detainees, due primarily to the fact that procedure for taking over the health services of these institutions by Public health institutions have lasted a very long time.

Actually, the takeover procedure is not completely finished in all institutions. The process of transferring the responsibility for health care in prisons to the Agency for public health administration under the Ministry of Health, should have been completed in March 2017⁶¹. Today, in 2021, we are still facing the problems from the past: some institutions are still using the services of Public Health Institutions in the nearby cities; there is absolutely no medical personnel at some institutions and in those undertaken by the Public Health Institutions the number of medical personnel has not been completed. Furthermore, the conditions in the premises in which health services are provided have not been improved in

⁵⁸ For prisoner's healthcare data and statistics preceding 2017, see T. Mujoska, *The health care of prisoners in Macedonia: a critical analysis*, 14(8): 1-9.

⁵⁹ The National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) is a national body set to regularly examine the treatment of the persons deprived of their liberty in places of detention, providing protection against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Their work is in line with the obligations arising from the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). Available at: http://ombudsman.mk/Почетна/НПМ/3А_НАС.aspx.

⁶⁰ Source: <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2020/GI-2020.pdf>.

⁶¹ Council of Europe, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2017) *Report to the Government of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" on the visit to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/pdf/168075d656>.



terms of medical equipment and devices. The lack of dental services for prisoners is another serious concern. The DES has the obligation to take measures in order to improve dental services, especially in the Idrizovo Penitentiary. On top of that, the prisoners and detainees often complain that prison staff is not transferring them to hospitals on time.

We can conclude that the healthcare protection system in the penitentiary and correctional facilities is poor and dysfunctional and faced serious challenges during COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main strategic targets on the new Strategy for Penitentiary System is strengthening the healthcare to prisoners, including mental healthcare. The main goals are:

- Establishing a functional healthcare in prisons,
- Training the medical staff and positive influence and/or motivation to work in penitentiary health care,
- Providing adequate access to mental health services for prisoners in need,
- Providing Medical and psychosocial treatment for inmates with substance use disorders,
- Taking preventive activities (preventing ill treatment, infective diseases screening and counseling, preventing suicides and self-harm and gender sensitive medical screenings).

Hopefully, in this manner, we will overcome the challenges facing health care in prisons, including the lack of staff, inadequate screening of new arrivals in prison which has consequences both for the prevention of ill-treatment and public health, inadequate dental and psychiatric care and poor drug treatment practices.

3.6. Imprisonment for children

The modern concept of the rights of the child and its protection is the result of a long evolution, caused by the rapid social changes in the last two centuries, which today receive unimaginable acceleration. The international standards for children's rights are constantly appealing for the need to improve the conditions for applying the institutional measures, especially for the fulfillment of legal obligations. Children should, while in institutions, get



education, but also vocational training for work, acquisition of skills and training, which will help them to be useful members of the community.

According to the Law on Justice for Children⁶² a ‘child in conflict with the law’, aged 14 to 16 years, is a child who, at the time of the commission of the crime, defined as a criminal offence for which a prison sentence of more than three years is provided, has reached 14 years of age and still is not 16 years old. A child in conflict with the law over 16 years old is a child who, at the time of the commission of the crime, defined as a criminal offence for which a prison sentence of more than three years is provided, has reached 16 years of age and still is not 18 years old. A child who at the time of committing the act, which is defined by law as a criminal offence or misdemeanor, has not reached 14 years of age, may not be imposed a sanction determined by the Law.

According to this Law, a child aged 14 to 16 years, may be imposed only correctional measures for action deemed by law as a criminal offence: court reprimand or referral to a special child centre; intensified supervision by parents, guardians, foster family or by the local centre for social work; and institutional measures, such as referral to a special education institution or a youth correctional facility. A child aged 16 to 18 years, may be imposed correctional measures for criminal offence, and exceptionally, a prison sentence or an alternative measure.

A child over the age of 16 may be imposed: child prison; fine; prohibition of driving a motor vehicle of a certain type or category; and expulsion as foreigner from the country. A criminally liable child over 16 years of age may be punished if, due to the severe consequences of the crime and the high degree of criminal liability, it would not be justified to impose an educational/correctional measure.

A child prison sentence may only be imposed as a punishment to a child who is criminally responsible, is 16 years and older, and has committed an act: which is defined by law as a criminal offence for which a prison sentence of five years or a more is prescribed, if committed under particularly aggravating circumstances and with high degree of criminal liability of the perpetrator, and it is unjustified to impose a correctional measure.

⁶² The following terms and sentences are stipulated in the Articles 19, 34, 50, 60 of the Law on Justice for Children.



The child prison sentence may not be shorter than one or longer than ten years⁶³. Alternative measures for aforementioned child perpetrator include suspended sentence with protective supervision; conditional cessation of the proceedings against such child; and community work.

The referral to a special child institution i.e. CEF Volkovija, children are kept for one to five years or by the time the child is 23 years of age. When imposing this measure, the court does not set its length in advance, it is decided additionally. The court revises the need for custody at the facility every year.

The new CEF, has a capacity of 110 children, male and female. It includes several buildings for accommodation, stay, education and work in accordance with European standards and regulations. House Rules and a Brief Preventive Programme for Raising Awareness among Children of the Negative Consequences of Using Drugs and Prevention of Communicable Diseases have been prepared. Under the National Strategy, a series of other activities are also envisaged, such as implementing the YOU TURN/EQUIP programme for work with children, introducing vocational education by professions, etc. As regards drug testing, it should be noted that it is not compulsory and is performed if there are indications that a child has used illicit psychotropic substances⁶⁴.

Currently⁶⁵, there are 17 juveniles (aged 15-19) with imposed educational correctional measure in CEF Volkovija. One minor is currently serving 1-year juvenile prison and one is currently placed in Psychiatric hospital. Four are Macedonians, three are Albanians, two are Turks and eight are Roma. Ten of them are illiterate, with no education at all, five of them are Roma.

⁶³ This sentence is pronounced when the child reaches legal age or half a year before reaching the legal age.

⁶⁴ Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs III, IV, V and VI report of the Republic of North Macedonia under the UN Convention on the rights of the child and its two optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Skopje, March 2019, link: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/MKD/CRC_C_MKD_3-6_6738_E.docx.

⁶⁵ The data is referring to the period up to 4 May 2021.



In 2018, a significant study on juvenile delinquency in RNM⁶⁶, which was mentioned earlier in the article, was conducted. The study confirms a deep discrepancy between proclaimed policies, strategic and program documents, laws and their practical application. The findings of the research also point to the inconsistency and non-harmonization of laws relating to the treatment of children at risk and children in conflict with the law, especially in terms of non-compliance with the concept of justice for children, incorporated in the Law. These weak effects have been amplified by the lack of coordination between the competent ministries. Also, what is evident is the lack of coordination between prison/ECF and Centers for social work as well as poor post-penal assistance for children after their dismissal from the institution.

It is necessary to strengthen the multi-sectoral approach, which is implemented by teams of psychologists, pedagogues, social workers, special educators, psychiatrists, etc. The composition of the team depends on the needs of the child and for the successful implementation of the individual plan with measures and activities. The juvenile's parents should also be included the programs for resocialization, in order to develop better family relationships.

The implementation of the Law on Children Justice is monitored through indicators developed with the help of UNICEF. These indicators demonstrate the exercise of the rights of children in the juvenile justice system and are the basis for their further promotion⁶⁷.

According to the organization of the state judicial system, there are no specialized courts for children. In court proceedings against children, decisions are made by juvenile judges, juvenile panels, and their members in specialized juvenile court departments that have been established in the basic courts with extended jurisdiction.

In 2009, a State Council for Prevention of Child Delinquency was established. It has 15 members. The Council adopted the National Strategy for Prevention of Child

⁶⁶ Available at: <https://msp.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Анализа-на-состојбата-во-КПД-и-ВПД-МПД-2018.pdf>.

⁶⁷ According to 2016 Annual Report on the work of the State Council for Prevention of Child Delinquency, in most cases the law enforcement agencies and their officers competent in the child justice system apply measures/sanctions that do not involve child freedom deprivation. See also: Ministry of Foreign Affairs III, IV, V and VI report, op.cit.



Delinquency. Each year, the Council prepares an Annual Report containing an analysis of the degree of implementation of the Law on Justice for Children, based on indicators that are used in monitoring the implementation of this Law⁶⁸.

Conclusion

With the adoption of the new LES and the amendments to the relevant laws in the field, especially the Criminal Code and the Law on Justice for Children, a significant step forward has been made. However, numerous fundamental shortcomings regarding the treatment and conditions of detention of persons held in prison establishments and, mainly, at Idrizovo Prison remain.

In this regard, RNM and DES have to make an effort to achieve the following prison priorities:

- To include a variety of purposeful activities to convicted and remand prisoners to change their conditions significantly;
- To provide space and security conditions for prisoners to be able to spend a fair amount of time outside their prisons;
- To provide a comprehensive training program for all prison staff to maintain and upgrade their skills;
- To provide training and educational activities for prisoners, mainly in the field of prisoners' rights and legal aid;
- To provide an appropriate education for adult and minor prisoners and
- To ensure the Ministry of Health's, Ministry of Justice's and DES's complete, unconditional, and responsible involvement in providing healthcare to prisoners

These are just a few of the issues that must be addressed as soon as possible by the appropriate authorities. Only in this manner, RNM will achieve the goal of providing a new, modern, and humane prison system.

⁶⁸ Available at: <http://dspdp.com.mk/category/dokumenti/izvestai/>.

