



IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF Help e.V.'S RESOCIALIZATION PROGRAMME

**(Improvement of the treatment programmes in correctional institutions for
adults and juveniles - SOE03-19)/**

Milica Kolaković-Bojović, PhD

Ana Batrićević, PhD

Belgrade, October 2020

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
BACKGROUND.....	4
1. Rehabilitation, reintegration and post-penal care in Serbia.....	4
2. Methodology used for the purpose of assessing impact of the Help e.V. programme.....	5
FINDINGS.....	10
3. Programme components' factsheet	10
4. Beneficiaries' attitudes towards the Help e.V. programme	17
5. An overall Programme impact (PESTEL)	27
LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS.....	31
REFERENCES.....	32
ANNEX I	33

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The success of offender rehabilitation is influenced by institutional treatment and social climate with the focus on post-penal care. Both, education/vocational programs and post-penal care were introduced in Serbia after World War II and over time they changed and evolved; more tangible progress has been made in terms of the rehabilitation compared with the post-penal care where a clear legislative framework and efficient inter-institutional and cooperation with CSOs is still missing, while the low number of CSOs operate in the sector exclusively project-based. Developed, implemented and recognised as the one of the leading initiatives in such an environment, four stages Help e.V. support within the resocialisation programme, covering the period from September 2014 until December 2019 were subject of this Assessment. Within the analysed period, Help e.V. has provided significant support to the correctional institutions through the procurement of equipment necessary for the working engagement of inmates, accompanied with complementary training for CIs' staff and inmates to enable them to use the equipment. In parallel, numerous trainings, workshops and other capacity building activities have been provided to the inmates and CIs' staff to foster rehabilitation and reintegration, reduce risks of suicide, self-injuries and recidivism, support and develop personal competences, promote creativity, self-respect and self-confidence and enable more efficient social reintegration after being released. In addition to this, significant support to self-employment of ex-inmates has been provided through the procurement of necessary equipment and provision of trainings. This component made the programme well accepted and highly appreciated by PA and the direct beneficiaries.

In order to comprehensively assess the overall impact of the programme the ICSR Expert Team collected feedback and attitudes of 265 programme beneficiaries ((ex)inmates, CI employees, PA management and employees, CSO partners and Help e.V. management). More than 97% of the interviewed persons evaluated the programme activities positively, identified as the main benefits of the programme in enhanced personal development, greater motivation for further progress and the improvement of quality of life after serving the sentence, a better quality of time spent in the penitentiary, and the improvement of the internal functioning of the correctional institution thanks to the procured equipment. The promptness of Help e.V.'s reaction in addressing COVID 19 - challenging in terms of preserving social contacts of inmates- was highly appreciated. Help e.V.'s support in the process of self-employment of (ex)inmates, who underlined the importance of such support for their social inclusion by being given a second chance was evaluated most positively. Considering all the benefits, approx. 92% of the interviewed persons expressed their support to the programme to be continued.

As the purpose of the assessment was also to explore opportunities for possible improvements, the expert team identified concerns with the correctional institutions staff's role in the selection and informing the inmates on the presentations, public calls and available opportunities under the programme as issues raised by many respondents. Some respondents claimed that a preselection of participants occurred, based on unknown criteria. However, from all the available data, this problem seems to be beyond Help e.V.'s influence and control. Many participants also underlined the lack of printed materials, brochures and leaflets. They believe that such materials can contribute to better dissemination and understanding of Help e.V.'s activities among inmates. Some also questioned the expertise of trainers/coordinators of the workshops. Some of the weaknesses of the project highlighted by the employees in penitentiary institutions mostly refer to the inconsistency and discontinuity of programme activities, but also the lack of exploring the inmates' preferences/ needs. In terms of the support to self-employment of the former convicts the main challenges identified were the coordination with other start-up support programmes, inclusion of convicts who have not completed primary education, but also in terms of ensuring continuous monitoring and professional/advisory support to the beneficiaries within the initial period of running their small businesses.

BACKGROUND

1. Rehabilitation, reintegration and post-penal care in Serbia

1.1 The success of offender rehabilitation is influenced by institutional treatment and social climate. A renewed interest in offender transitions and reintegration has been apparent in recent years and most western correctional systems now feature policies and programmes that address issues relating to housing, employment, education and the broader ‘resettlement’ of offenders (Hardcastle, Bartholomew & Graffam, 2011). Since the lack of education and unemployment tend to be correlated with crime, programs aimed at reducing these two risk factors have been suggested as a means to reduce recidivism (Steurer et al., 2001; Hull et al., 2000; Batiuk et al., 2005; Vacca, 2004), as well as crime in general (Bushway & Reuter, 1997; Bouffard, Mackenzie & Hickman, 2000). Furthermore, the level of formal education, knowledge, skills and work experience of ex-prisoners have significant influence on employment rate and overall life opportunities. Convicts as a specific target group are exposed to the particular risk of not getting employed due to the background of former convicts.

1.2 Both- education/vocational programmes and post-penal care were introduced in Serbia after World War II and over time it was changed and evolved. When it comes to **education and vocational programmes**, the main focus was on ensuring programmes and diplomas equivalent to those gained out of correctional institutions. In parallel, significant attention was paid on development of various specialisations and vocational training programmes in order to ensure quick access to employment for ex-convicts. Most of them are accompanied by practical education and work engagement in the correctional institutions themselves. However, due to budgetary restrictions as well as prioritization in terms of the infrastructural investments, most correctional institutions are still struggling to procure necessary equipment.

1.3 To a lesser extent, but still tangible progress has been made in terms of the post-penal care. The Law on Enforcement of Penal Sanctions from 2014¹ and Law on Enforcement of Non-custodial Sanctions and Measures² took a new, modern approach in regulation of the post-penal care. Post-penal assistance is defined in the law as “all the necessary assistance and support” that is provided to the person who has been released after serving the sentence, in order to reduce the risk of recidivism (article 48 of the Law on enforcement of criminal sanctions).

1.4 Key institutions in Serbia for post-penal care and coordination of assistance are correctional institutions and Commissioner Service. According to article 185 of the Law on enforcement of penal sanctions, the treatment department of the correctional institution has to set up programmes for release

¹ Official Journal RS, No. 55/2014, 35/2019.

² Official Journal RS, No. 55/2014, 87/2018.

and has to cooperate with the Commissioner Service and the social service authorities, to provide assistance to released persons. According to article 186 of the Law on enforcement of penal sanctions, the correctional institution will cooperate with the Commissioner Service, social services authority which has jurisdiction according to the last known permanent address or place of residence of the convicted person before they were sent to the Institution to serve their sentence, with the police or an appropriate organization or association in order to provide assistance to released persons.

1.5 Post-penal care is a cross-sectorial issue involving a number of ministries, institutions, judiciary and civil sector. It requires close cooperation and exchange of information among all stakeholders. This cooperation basically depends on the ability and willingness of those involved to recognise the specific needs of former inmates and the interest of society to provide them with a tangible alternative to a criminal career.³

1.6 The Council of Europe recommended to Serbian authorities that Probation Service should take over the role of coordination body in support and cooperation of agencies involved in post-penal care.⁴ However, **Serbia is following good practices in relation to establishment of NGO initiatives focused on providing relevant information to former convicts and training program.** These initiatives are in line with the Council of Europe approach and recognition of the important role of NGOs in providing post-penal care and need to use these resources in development of inter-agency cooperation. Involvement of CSOs in post-penal care on official level is underdeveloped in Serbia, but organizations interested to work on those issues exist and in 2017 started an initiative for establishment of a network of CSO involved in post-penal assistance. The aim of the network is to strengthen cooperation between CSO involved in post-penal care, increase participation of CSO in post-penal care, work to improve post penal care in Serbia, discover and activate all available county resources that could be used in post-penal care, and establish strong cooperation with relevant state institutions.⁵

2. Methodology used for the purpose of assessing impact of the Help e.V. programme

2.1 Starting from the above described current state of play in terms of resocialization and post-penal care, **there are three Help e.V. initiatives relevant for the scope of this analysis**, covering the period from September 2014 to December 2019:⁶

³ Kolaković-Bojović, M, Matić-Bošković, M (2020) *Rapid Assessment of Post-Penal Cooperation and Recommendations for Improvement*, Improving Capacities of the Prison Administration in the area of Alternative Sanctions, Post Penal care and Healthcare, Project reference number: EuropeAid/138440/DH/SER/RS

⁴ Nelissen, P.Ph., Frost, C., Action: Enhancing human rights protection for detained and sentenced persons in Serbia, assessment report on reintegration mechanisms pre and post release and inter-agency cooperation, Council of Europe, January 2018.

⁵ Kolaković-Bojović, M, Matić-Bošković, M (2020) *Rapid Assessment of Post-Penal Cooperation and Recommendations for Improvement*, Improving Capacities of the Prison Administration in the area of Alternative Sanctions, Post Penal care and Healthcare, Project reference number: EuropeAid/138440/DH/SER/RS

⁶ The cut-off date for the purpose of this analysis is December 31th 2019. However, considering the specificity of the COVID 19 pandemic, only one activity implemented in 2020 (procurement of the IT equipment to enable communication of juveniles in CI Kruševac) has been taken into account.

- Poverty reduction and enhancement of employment opportunities of marginalized and vulnerable population groups in Serbia (Help e.V.: Project Nr.: SER 99-13) May 2013-December 2016
- Support to micro businesses in Serbia, phase II (*Help e.V. Project No.: SER 126*) June 2016-December 2017
- Support to the socio-economic stability in the western Balkan 2017-2019 (*Help e.V.: Project No.: SOE-01 – 17*)
- “Support to socio-economic stability in the western Balkans region 2019-2020” (*Help e.V.: Project No.: SOE-03 – 19*)

2.2 In order to provide as much as possible objective, informative and comprehensive assessment of the impact achieved through the implementation of the Help e.V. programmes, **the Expert Team** comprised of **Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research (hereinafter: ICSR)** researchers **Ms. Milica Kolaković-Bojović, PhD,⁷** Research Fellow and **Ms. Ana Batrićević, PhD,⁸** Senior Research fellow, has applied a **set of qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques**, following the main framework of **PESTEL analysis**. This approach ensured comprehensiveness not only in terms of the assessed topics/subjects and stakeholders, but also in terms of the potential target fields affected by, or benefitted from the programmes. The Expert Team was required to deliver a **25-40 page report**.

2.3 The initially planned **timeframe to conduct the assessment was May-October 2020**. Despite challenging circumstances related to collecting data in COVID 19 environment, as agreed between the representatives of Help e.V. and the members of ICSR Expert Team, no extension has been applied.

2.4 However, the **COVID 19 pandemic caused some modifications in terms of initially planned methodology and research techniques applied in collecting data**. Namely, it was initially planned to structure the work in three stages:

- **Phase I:** Desk review, based on qualitative and quantitative data gathered through cooperation with Help e.V. programme staff (May-July 2020)
- **Phase II:** Development and distribution of questionnaires for convicts, former convicts and prison administration staff to explore their attitudes on the implemented programmes (August 2020)
- **Phase III:** Organisation of 6 focus groups in correctional institutions based in Sremska Mitrovica, Niš, Kruševac (juveniles), Vranje, Sombor and Požarevac (women) to discuss experiences in programme implementation with the beneficiaries and Prison Administration staff. Interviews with former convicts who received employment/self-employment programme support. The ambition was to interview up to 10% of former convicts who received programme support (September 2020)
- **Phase IV:** Analysis of data gathered in phases II-III and drafting final document of the assessment (October 2020)

⁷ See: <https://ohchr.academia.edu/MilicaKolakovi%C4%87Bojovi%C4%87/CurriculumVitae>

⁸ See: http://www.iksi.ac.rs/zaposleni_en.html

According to this initial work plan, the ICSR ensured permissions of the prison administration in June 2020 for the members of the expert team to visit the correctional institutions, starting from September 2020. After the sudden change of the epidemiological situation at the beginning of July, the Government of the Republic of Serbia reintroduced restrictive epidemiological measures, as a result of which the organization of planned focus groups in institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions was prevented. Based on this, Help e.V. representatives and the Expert Team agreed as follow:

- To prepare more comprehensive, in depth questionnaire for the beneficiaries and the prison staff to enable them to express their attitudes on the programme comprehensively in writing and therefore to substitute *in vivo* discussion.
- To enable prison administration management to choose modalities of collecting and sharing findings with the members of the expert team (hard copy originals of the questionnaires were sent by mail, scanned originals sent by email or electronically filed questionnaires).
- To organise interviews with the beneficiaries of the self-employment programme support by phone, with the support of the Help e.V. team.

2.5 Based on the amended work plan, **after finishing the desk review⁹, the Expert team had developed and circulated the detailed questionnaire¹⁰** to governors of the six correctional institutions, Help e.V. self-employment programme beneficiaries and to several stakeholders whose participation in some components of Help e.V.'s programmes was significant. After data collection and analysis experts gathered the last set of information through in-depth qualitative telephonic interviews with ex-prisoners who are beneficiaries of the self-employment programme support. Finally, experts conducted interviews with the representatives of the prison administration (hereafter: PA) and partner NGOs.

2.6 As a final outcome, **the assessment included 265 individuals in total**, where 252 persons were included through the questionnaires distributed via management of the correctional institutions, 7 persons (10% of the total) are ex-prisoners / Help e.V. self-employment programme beneficiaries, 2 persons from PA, 2 Help e.V. representatives and 2 NGO representatives. The stratification of the sample and the selection of the participants were made in cooperation of the Expert Team and the PA/CI's management in a way enabling to reflect the real structure of the prison population and Help e.V. beneficiaries as much as possible. The role of the Help e.V. management in this regard was limited to providing data and contacts upon the Expert Team request.

Table 1: Status/Affiliation of interviewed persons

Institution	Convicted Persons	PA Employees	Governors
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	20	13	/

⁹ By this occasion, experts want to thank to Help e.V. management and staff for their unselfish support and responsiveness in sharing relevant reports and statistics, but also for their readiness to meet in person even in such challenging circumstances to discuss data.

¹⁰ For an integral version of the Questionnaire, see Annex I

Correctional Institution in Niš	113	7	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	11	1	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	49	20	1
District Prison in Vranje	3	5	1
District Prison in Sombor	5	3	/
IN TOTAL 252 PERSONS	201	49	2

2.7 When it comes to **the structure of the sample**, the expert team ensured that the sample fully reflects the structure of the prison population affected by the programme implementation in terms of gender and age.

Table 2: Age of interviewed persons – Convicted persons

Institution	Under 18	18-21	21-40	40-65	Over 65
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	/	1	15	4	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	/	9	75	26	3
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	/	6	5	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	11	35	3	/	/
District Prison in Vranje	/	/	2	1	/
District Prison in Sombor	/	/	3	2	/
TOTAL	201	11	45	104	38

Table 3: Imposed sanctions

Institution	Up to 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	More than 5 years
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	/	2	8	10
Correctional Institution in Niš	1	19	37	56
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	3	1	7

District Prison in Vranje	3	/	/	/
District Prison in Sombor	/	4	1	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	* Since in the case of juveniles, educational measure – remand to educational-correctional institution is imposed, its initial duration is the same. Namely, according to Article 21 Paragraph 3 of the Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Legal Protection of Juveniles (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 85/2005), a juvenile stays in educational-correctional institution at least 6 months and at maximum 4 years, but the court is obliged to reconsider every 6 months whether there are grounds to stop the enforcement of the educational measures or to replace it with another educational measure.			
TOTAL	4	28	47	73

Table 4: Gender of interviewed persons – convicted persons

Institution	Male	Female
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	20	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	113	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	11
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	47	2
District Prison in Vranje	3	/
District Prison in Sombor	5	/
TOTAL	201	13

Table 5: Education level of interviewed persons – convicted persons

Institution	Without Elementary School	Elementary School	High School	College or University diploma
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	1	7	12	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	4	36	63	10
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	2	6	2
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	10	32	6	1
District Prison in Vranje	/	2	1	/

District Prison in Sombor	/	1	4	/
TOTAL	15	80	92	13

The same parameters were checked when it comes to **PA employees as beneficiaries of the programme**, where the majority of them (66%) were 40-65 old, 60% male, 63% who hold University or college degree and 37% with high school diploma.

FINDINGS

3. Programme components' factsheet

3.1 As earlier mentioned, this assessment included **four-stages of Help e.V.'s programme** implemented in the period September 2014- December 2019, through the three main pillar/components.

3.2 The **pilot project component** dealing with support to resocialization of convicts (Component VI) has been included in the project within the project and budget amendment in September 2014. The specific objective of the project component was **to support the re-socialization of convicts by creating job opportunities and increase their competences. This was the first initiative of this kind in Serbia that provides assistance in the institutions for execution of criminal sanctions to the employees and the convicts during the sentence but also supports convicts who have completed their sentences in the process of re socialisation.** During the pilot stage, the cooperation between the Correctional Institution (prison) in Nis and District prison Vranje and Help e.V. within the project aimed at improvement of the execution of the criminal sanctions system and post-penal treatment for the successful re-socialization and reintegration of the former convicts into the society through:

- realization of specific professional trainings and education of employees and convicts to obtain certified knowledge and skills thus creating possibilities for the appropriate work engagement of convicts during the execution of sentence and successful reintegration into society after serving the sentence time
- improvement of treatment programmes during the sentence serving period
- advancement and incentives for employment and self-employment of former convicts, and
- other relevant activities contributing to better re-socialization of convicts.¹¹

3.3 Built on the experiences from the above described programme, project Phase II- Improvement of the treatment programmes in correctional institutes Valjevo, Nis and Sremska Mitrovica, within the project "Support to micro businesses in Serbia, phase II "(*Help e.V. Project No.: SER 126*) June 2016 - December 2017, has been implemented and later on within the project "Support to the socio-economic

¹¹ HELP E.V., Final Report for the project, Poverty reduction and employment opportunities enhancement of marginalized and vulnerable population groups in Serbia, May 2013-December 2016, *Help e.V.: Project Nr.: SER 99-13*, page 2.

stability in the western Balkan 2017-2019” (Help e.V.: Project No.: SOE-01 – 17) in Nis, Sremska Mitrovica, Leskovac, Zajecar, Pozarevac, Sombor and Subotica, starting from January 2018 and the project “Support to the socio-economic stability in the western Balkan 2019-2020.”

3.4 Briefly summarized in numbers, Help e.V. programs so far:

- supported 73 former convicts with equipment for employment or self-employment and with different trainings;
- 17 different Correctional Institutions received equipment for their workshops with the aim of increasing working engagement of convicts
- Implementation of a range of programmes within the Correctional Institutions (educational, vocational training programmes, treatment programmes, learning social skills, etc.) as a contribution to preserving the mental and physical health of the convicted persons during the execution of sanctions, behaviour change, training, more adequate preparation for their reintegration. **In total, 2,695 persons (convicts and employees of Correctional Institutions) have participated in different trainings and treatment programmes organized by Help e.V. - Organization of motivational workshops for the former convicts and convicts.**



Picture 1: Vocational training for convicts

3.5 Within the programme component dedicated to the **procurement of equipment for the correctional institutions in 2014-2016 period** the District prison Vranje received equipment for production of bread and baked items for internal consumption. The Correctional Institute (prison) in Nis needed a professional embroidery machine for the sewing department, a professional laser for engraving and a cutting CNC machine for processing of wood, metal and PVC for the crafts department. The value of the purchased equipment for the District prison Vranje amounted to Euro 30,000 and for the Correctional Institute (prison) in Nis, the value was Euro 40,000. Under the same component, within the **2016-2017 period** specification of the needed equipment and procurement were prepared and conducted together with the representatives of the correctional institutions in Nis, Sremska Mitrovica and Valjevo (total value Euro 117,281), where equipment for production of PVC and aluminium joinery was purchased for the correctional institute Valjevo in the total value of Euro 40,281; tools were purchased for production of agricultural machinery and pallets in correctional institution Sremska Mitrovica in the total value of Euro 40,282 and machines and equipment were purchased for the printing workshop correctional institution Nis in the total value of Euro 36,718 (due to the higher value of the equipment than planned Nis prison

increased their financial contribution in the project). Within **2017-2019 period this component has been significantly developed** and equipment was purchased for the correctional institutions in Nis, Sremska Mitrovica, Kruševac, Leskovac, Zajecar, Pozarevac, Sombor, Vranje and Subotica in total amount of Euro **292,922.43**¹²



Picture 2: Equipment for the correctional institutions

Table 6: Equipment for the correctional institutions

No.	Institution	Type of delivered equipment	Value €
1.	Correctional Institution for Sremska Mitrovica	Bakery equipment: Bakery oven, spiral dough mixer	39,624.47
2.	Correctional Institution Nis	Equipment for plastification: Stainless steel bath, cabin for electrostatic powder coating with multi cyclones and filter bags, furnace for polymerization, device for electrostatic powder coating, professional piston compressor, welding machine MIG/MAG, table saw for metal	30,849.44
3.	Correctional Institution Krusevac	Project design for drainage, heating and drip irrigation system for a greenhouse	39,913.92
4.	Equipment for Correctional Institution Zabela	Equipment for metal workshop: CNC press, machine for production of elements made out of forged iron with the tool set	56,958.25
5.	Correctional Institution Sombor	Equipment for wood workshop: Combined planer, spindle shaper, circular saw with sliding table, dust collector, oscillating edge belt sander, compressor	20,046.68

¹² Final report, Support to the socio-economic stability in the western Balkan 2017-2019, *Help e.V.: Project No.: SOE-01 - 17*

6.	Correctional Institution Nis (addendum)	Information system for convicts	12,689.31
7.	District Prison Leskovac	Equipment for metal workshop: Welding machine CO2, bench drill, electric shears for cutting sheet metal, angle grinder, hammer drill, portable spot welding machine, CNC machine - for curved and straight cutting of wood, plastic and light metals	6,999.50
8.	District Prison Subotica	Equipment for workshops: Air compressor, brad nailer, pneumatic set, bench grinder, band saw, metal cutting saw, plunge router, finishing sander, belt sander, high pressure washer, workshop trolley	3,937.90
9.	District prison Zajecar	Equipment for bakery: Dough mixer, dough divider, machine for rounding of dough , laminator, fermentation chamber, baking oven, baking trays - perforated	21,658.64
10.	District prison Vranje	Burner for agro and wooden pellet with training and commissioning	4,041.58
11.	Correctional Institution Sremska Mitrovica (addendum)	Equipment for metal and wood workshop: forklift, multi saw - steamer with two shafts, machine for production of crimped wire mesh	56,202.74

3.6 In addition to the above described, within the scope of COVID 19 response activities in 2020¹³, Help e.V. procured IT equipment which includes tablets and internet connection (total value Euro 4,078.56 - 16 tablets with a paid internet package of 20 GB per month for the next 24 months) as an alternative channel of communication, which enables online family visits at the time when visits are prohibited, such as in a state of emergency and similar situations. The equipment was procured for the correctional institutions in Niš, Sremska Mitrovica, Valjevo, Kruševac, Padinska Skela, Požarevac, Kragujevac and Belgrade.

3.7 Under the **project component II- Improvement of the treatment programmes in correctional institutes within the 2014-2016 period** Help e.V. organised trainings for 187 persons. 39 convicts attended business trainings and 148 persons' professional trainings (18 prison employees, 43 convicts from Vranje and 87 from Nis prison). Professional business trainings were mostly related to the engagement on the received equipment in both prisons. Employees were trained as well as convicts who are serving a sentence. The following trainings were organised: training to operate CNC milling machine MBL VG1322; Corel draw; AutoCad 2D and 3D; Production of pastry, baker; Program for laser engraving – LaserCut; Operating in software Artcam and Alphacam; Computer development of motifs for embroidery Pulse Tajima DG/ML; English language training; Basic computer skills. In **2016-2017**¹⁴ within the training activity for institutions Help e.V. organised trainings for 236 persons from the correctional institutions Nis, Sremska Mitrovica and Valjevo. 96 of them are prison employees who have attended the specialised training on

¹³ It is important to mention that this activity was conducted as a part of the HELP E.V. project "Support to socio-economic stability in the Western Balkans Region 2019-2020" which is not the subject of this assessment since the implementation is still ongoing, but activity is worthy to be mentioned as a clear sign of the HELP E.V. responsiveness and readiness to identify and address the real needs of the beneficiaries.

¹⁴ HELP E.V., Final Report for the project, Support to micro businesses in Serbia, phase II, *Help e.V. Project No.: SER 126*, June 2016- December 2017

suicide, attempted suicide and self-injury prevention. 140 convicts who attended vocational trainings opted and attended the following trainings: Auto cad 3d; Production of pastry, baker; Tailoring and sewing; Production of aluminium and pvc joinery; Printing on textile; Welder; Carpenter; Solid works; Lathe operator; Grinding machine operator; Basic computer skills; Milling-machine operator; Locksmith; Cook. Within the **2017-2019 period** Help e.V. actions were significantly increased in this field, too. Help e.V. organised trainings for 1,596 persons (convicts and employees) from the correctional institutions Nis, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Pozarevac and Valjevo. 1,076 of them are prison employees from the correctional institutions Valjevo, Nis and Sremska Mitrovica who have attended different vocational trainings and the specialised training lead by the Centre for human rights Nis that focused on the prevention and addressing the suicide and self-injury risk.¹⁵ 520 convicts attended vocational professional trainings.¹⁶ In addition to this, **motivational workshops** were organised in small groups within the whole analysed period in order to address important topics related to labour motivation and integration, conflict resolving and psychological support. Within the **2019-2020** programme stage related to the training activity for institutions Help e.V. organised 44 different vocational/professional trainings in 11 Correctional Institutions. In total 333 persons attended vocational professional trainings, 86 employees and 247 convicts.



¹⁵ Training a specialized team for the adaptation of convicts at risk of suicide and self-injury; Suicide, attempted suicide and self-injury prevention system in penal conditions, improving knowledge and skills of the treatment department for work with convicts who are at risk of suicide or self-injury, for the purpose of their recovery - general part; Record 10 test tasks illustrating the symptoms indicated by a person who intends to self-injury or take suicide in the near future and print copy blocks in which the recognized symptom needs to be marked and activate the prevention system; Training for a specialized team for the adaptation and re adaptation of convicts at risk of suicide or self-injury, who will work on recovering people at risk after psychiatric intervention and assisting colleagues from the treatment services who have previously attended the basic module and building optimal and efficient model of functioning; Training of the members of the services that are in daily contact with convicts to recognize the symptoms of suicide risk and to activate protection mechanism; Creation of optimal and efficient model for functioning of all the departments within the prevention mechanism; Training of guards, instructors, medical technicians and doctors for applying the list of symptoms and initiating prevention mechanism; Monitoring of the work of the Expert Team and all instructors and application of specialized procedure; Monitoring of the application of the general procedures (of the department in the daily contact with convicts).

¹⁶ Glazier, construction industry; Production of aluminium and pvc joinery; Joiner/ carpenter; Welder; Locksmith; Printing on textile; Upholstery; Baker; Cook; Car –body sprayer; Screen printing; Offset printing; Tailoring and sewing; Plumber; Painter; Ceramist; Facades installing; Electric arc welding; CO2 welding; Argon welding; CNC machine operator; Electrician; Software for 3D design; Software for 2D design; Computer training.

Picture 3: Motivational workshops for convicts

3.8 The two joint initiatives implemented together with the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Correctional Institution Sremska Mitrovica are especially worthy to be mentioned here- **a pilot project to train inmates in Sremska Mitrovica to provide care for stray dogs, socializing, rehabilitating and preparing them for adoption or release to designated locations after neutering.** The project's key aims are to provide offenders with the opportunity to participate in meaningful activities, improve behaviour and employability skills, and enhance educational engagement. In November 2017, Sremska Mitrovica Correctional Institution, in co-operation with the City of Sremska Mitrovica, opened a dog shelter with a capacity of approximately 300 dogs.



Picture 4: Resocialisation of convicts through work with dogs

Apart from this initiative, Help e.V. **implemented another pilot activity: re-socialisation of convicts through work with horses.** The program of re-socialization of convicts through work with horses in the penitentiary institution Sremska Mitrovica relies on the fact that within the prison there are around 40 horses, as well as a horse club, and the program itself is modelled on the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation Second Chance program, which has been implemented for 20 years in a dozen US states, as well as on the Wild Horse Inmate Program. 28 persons attended the Horsemanship training, 26 convicts and 2 employees of the correctional institution.



Picture 5: Resocialisation of convicts through work with horses

3.9 Project component III, Support to convicts after serving a sentence in their efforts of generating income and facilitation the process of re-integration into society. Within the **2014-2016 period** Help e.V. supported 20 of 34 applicants with the equipment for starting a business¹⁷ with an average value of Euro 2,400 (10 in Nis and 10 in Vranje). Supported beneficiaries are dealing with different business activities in the sector of agriculture (8 beneficiaries), crafts (2 beneficiaries) and services (11 beneficiaries). Within the **2016-2017** programme phase assistance in the form of **grant scheme/equipment in the average value of Euro 2,400 was provided to 16 out of 54 ex-convicts who applied for the support.** Supported beneficiaries are dealing with different business activities in the sector of agriculture (3 beneficiaries), crafts (3 beneficiaries) and services (10 beneficiaries). Finally, within the **2017-2019 period** assistance in the form of grant scheme/equipment in the average value of **Euro 2,400 was provided to 30 out of ex-80 convicts who expressed their interest.** The assessment for the interested convicts was conducted in cooperation with the Correctional Institutes Valjevo, Sremska Mitrovica, Nis, Subotica, Sombor, Zajecar, Leskovac and Vranje. However, Help e.V. did not reject former convicts from other prisons who heard for the programme and directly contacted Help e.V.. Supported beneficiaries are dealing with different business activities in the sector of agriculture (11 beneficiaries), crafts (6 beneficiaries) and services (13

¹⁷ The main business activities are: growing fruits, beekeeping, production of furniture, horse trainer, cutting and splitting wood, production of items made of wood, sports centre/coach, repair of vehicles, car wash workshops, crops growing and installing electric utilities and equipment.

beneficiaries).¹⁸ 7 of 33 additional interested beneficiaries were supported within the stage 4 of the program in 2019.



Picture 6: Support to former convicts after serving the sentence through donation of equipment

4. Beneficiaries’ attitudes towards the Help e.V. programme

4.1 When it comes to the beneficiaries’ attitudes towards the programme, the very first topic explored by the Expert team was how the interviewed persons found out about the programme.

Table 7: How the interviewed persons found out about the Programme – Convicted persons

Institution	From employees at Help e.V.	From Prison Governor	From employees at Prison Treatment Service	From the media or via internet	In other way	No answer
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	/	/	16	/	3	1
Correctional Institution in Niš	9	2	88	3	11	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	/	10	/	1	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	5	7	35	/	2	/

¹⁸ The business activities are: production of other furniture except chairs and seats, processing and canning of fruits and vegetables, production of bread and baked goods, production of postcards, services within woods growing and use, amusing activities, cars’ maintenance and care, reproduction of computer media, canteens, construction works including specialized works, hairdresser and other beauty treatments, cleaning public area, washing carpets and upholstered furniture, growing fruits and growing vegetables, growing grain and other crops and plantings, mixed farming etc...

District Prison in Vranje	/	2	3	/	/	/
District Prison in Sombor	/	/	5	/	/	/
TOTAL	14	11	157	3	17	1

Table 8: How the interviewed persons found out about the project – employees

Institution	From employees at Help e.V.	From Prison Governor	From employees at Prison Treatment Service	In other way	No answer
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	1	4	3	1	4
Correctional Institution in Niš	3	2	1	1	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	1	/	/	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	3	5	12	/	/
District Prison in Vranje	/	4	/	1	/
District Prison in Sombor	1	1	1	/	/
TOTAL	8	17	17	3	4

These data clearly show that **the treatment staff in correctional institutions played the crucial role in informing inmates, but also the guardians about the programme.** The data also showed that here are not many inmates who learn about the programme directly from Help e.V. staff. That is a bit controversial, having in mind the practice of organisation of the programme promotion in correctional institutions where Help e.V. staff directly talk to the inmates about the programme goals, activities and the ways to apply for the various modalities of support. **Some of the interviewed beneficiaries raised a concern about the correctional institutions staff's role in the selection and informing the inmates on the presentations, public calls and available opportunities under the Programme, claiming that there is a kind of preselection of the participants/inmates based on unknown criteria.** However, from all the available data, this problem seems to be out of Help e.V.'s influence and/or control. In addition to this, many participants underlined **a lack of printed materials/brochures/leaflets.** They believe that such materials can contribute to better dissemination and understanding of Help e.V. activities among inmates.¹⁹

¹⁹ Some convicted persons highlight that they cannot fully understand what Help e.V. actually is, despite the presentation, and some of them seem to have either misunderstood the rules related to Help e.V.'s projects and activities or forgotten them. It should be checked whether the convicted persons who attended the presentation had been given some kind of leaflets or printed materials with the information about Help e.V. or they are only

4.2 In order to confirm the relevance of the expressed opinions on the programme, all the interviewed persons were asked whether they have participated in some of Help e.V.'s programme activities.

Table 9: Participation of the interviewed persons in the project activities

Status/Affiliation of interviewed persons	Convicted persons			Employees		
	YES	NO	No answer	YES	NO	No answer
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	18	2	/	13	/	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	93	20	/	7	/	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	9	2	/	1	/	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	13	35	1	14	6	/
District Prison in Vranje	3	/	/	5	/	/
District Prison in Sombor ²⁰	/	5	/	3	/	/
TOTAL	136	64	1	43	6	/

From the data presented in the table, there is an obvious discrepancy between the share of the interviewed inmates who have participated in the programme activities (68%) and those in the status of the CI employees (87.7%) which could be explained in the context of the limited number of the inmates that could be included in the programme, but also through the mirror of the continuous fluctuation of the prison population, where numerous beneficiaries of the programme are not in the CI anymore. However, 179 subjects interviewed through the questionnaire, plus 13 people with whom in depth interview was conducted **(in total 192 (72.4%)) answered that they took part in the Help e.V. programme.**

4.3 All the interviewed persons were also asked to determine/list in which Programme activity/ies they've took part.

informed about the project activities. Namely, if they did not listen carefully enough or failed to take notes, there is a possibility that they did not memorise or that they misinterpreted the rules regulating project participation even if these rules had been presented to them properly. Having this in mind, one of the recommendations for the improvement of the project would be to design a leaflet containing the information about: Help e.V., project activities and preconditions to participate in them.

²⁰ All 5 interviewed convicted persons from District Prison in Sombor wrote that they did not participate in the project activities, but they answered the questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 (or, at least, some of these questions) as if they did participate in the project activities.

Table 10: The project activities in which the interviewed persons participated – convicted persons

Institution	Purchase of equipment for prisons	Specialized training for prison employees ²¹	Professional training for convicted persons or prison employees	Several Project activities	Participated in project activities but did not specify in which ones
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	/	3	17	/	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	4	6	70	5	8
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	/	8	1	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	6	/	7	/	/
District Prison in Vranje	/	/	3	/	/
District Prison in Sombor ²²	/	/	/	/	/
TOTAL	10	9	105	6	8

Table 11: The project activities in which the interviewed persons participated – employees

Institution	Purchase of equipment for prisons	Specialized training for prison employees	Professional training for convicted persons or prison employees	Several Project activities	Participated in project activities but did not specify in which ones
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	/	4	9	/	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	2	4	5	3	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	/	/	/	1

²¹ Some convicted persons answered that they participated in the project activity „Specialized training for prison employees “. Our opinion is that they chose this answer by mistake because they thought that it refers to the training for persons working in prison, however, not in the sense of prison staff, but in the sense of prisoners who chose to work while serving their sentence.

²² All 5 interviewed convicted persons from District Prison in Sombor wrote that they did not participate in the project activities, but they answered the questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 (or, at least, some of these questions) as if they did participate in the project activities.

Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	2	2	9	1	/
District Prison in Vranje	1	1	4	1	/
District Prison in Sombor	1	/	2	/	/
TOTAL	6	11	29	5	1

4.4 From the presented data it could be concluded that **the majority of the interviewed** (inmates and CI staff) **have participated in various training activities**. Only 6 inmates and 5 CIs' staff confirmed that they have participated in several programme activities.

4.5 All the interviewed persons were requested to **evaluate the programme in which they participated**.

Table 12: How the interviewed persons evaluate the program in which they participated – Convicted persons

Institution	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	13	3	4	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	48	27	16	2
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	8	3	/	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	10	5	7	2
District Prison in Vranje	2	1	/	/
District Prison in Sombor	1	1	3	/
TOTAL	156	82	40	4

Table 13: How the interviewed persons evaluate the program in which they participated – employees

Institution	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No answer
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	7	5	1	/	/
Correctional Institution in Niš	5	7	/	/	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	/	/	/	/	1
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	/	4	1	/	/

District Prison in Vranje	2	2	/	/	/
District Prison in Sombor	3	/	/	/	/
TOTAL	17	20	2	/	1

Based on the data presented in the tables, it could be concluded that **the significant majority of the inmates evaluates the programme activity(ies) where they have participated positively (97.4%)** of which 52.6% find the programme activities to be excellent, while 25.6% evaluate them as good and 19.2% think they are satisfying. Only 2.6% of the interviewed inmates believes that the programme activities are unsatisfying. The situation is similar when it comes to the **CIs' employees, where 97.5% of the interviewed persons evaluate the programme activities where they have participated positively.** However, internal allocation of the positive grade is a bit different compared with the attitudes of the inmates, considering that most of them evaluated the programme activity(ies) as good (50%), while 42.5% think they are good and 5% of them find the activity(ies) satisfying. Only 1 participant from the category of the CIs' employees thinks that the activities are of the unsatisfying quality.

4.6 Asked to provide some **reasons for their positive evaluation of the Help e.V. programme**, the beneficiaries were given an opportunity to give their own explanation without answers offered. Even more challenging for the Expert Team to proceed with findings, this approach ensured an inclusion of the direct impressions of the beneficiaries.

4.7 Some of the **explanations frequently highlighted²³ by the inmates** were:

- The possibility to obtain a regular/legal employment (source of income) after serving the sentence
- Gaining new and/or renewing the existing knowledge and professional skills²⁴
- Learning practical skills and working while serving the sentence
- Obtaining a certificate, i.e. diploma without visible marks that these documents have been obtained within a prison institution
- Communication with family members via Viber application on tablet device

In addition to this, most of the interviewed inmates underlined some of the **good sides of the project that refer to personal development, motivation for further progress and the improvement of life quality after serving the sentence**, which could be the best understood through the sentence: "The project Help e.V.ed me to return to regular courses of life and gave me a chance for a new beginning."²⁵ Some of them also recognised good sides of the project that refer to **a better quality of time spent in the penitentiary**

²³ More than a half of the interviewed inmates highlighted some of the listed positive aspects

²⁴ The beneficiaries also recognise a special importance of some of the offered specialisations, e.g. computer literacy, saying that "It is very good that the persons who previously did not have the opportunity to use the computer got the chance to improve their digital literacy since digital literacy is the most important for any kind of employment."

²⁵ Some of them connected this kind of benefits with the length of the sentence saying: Having in mind the fact that I have been inside the penitentiary institution for more than 5 years and that I could not access computer for all that time, my personal benefit consists of the fact that I recalled everything I had already known about basic informatics education and I learned some new things as well."

saying that: “The fact that the time passes faster and that I don’t have to watch scum and drug addicts all day.” Some impressions showed to what extent the procured equipment improve the quality of life in the CI through the small details which personally means a lot to the beneficiaries (e.g. one of the juveniles in Kruševac said that a tablet enabled him to see not only the family, but also his pets in the backyard). Finally, some inmates recognised the benefits of the project in terms of the **improvement of the internal functioning of the correctional institution thanks to the procured equipment.**²⁶

4.8 Some of the **good sides of the project highlighted by the employees in penitentiary institutions** addressed the generally positive sides of the programme, while some others are closely related to the specificity of the fact that different institutions have been applying different types of project activities, which should be taken into consideration when analysing the answers. In terms of the general comments, most of them highlighted the increased capacities to fulfil the working tasks and obligations, but also the compatibility of the programme with the current needs. Some of the beneficiaries (especially in Kruševac) mentioned the high quality of the lecturers. They also recognised improved technical capacities of the newly equipped parts of the institutions.²⁷ Special attention of the employees in CI Kruševac was paid on the benefits of the procured IT equipment for the communication of the juvenile inmates with their families during COVID 19 pandemic.²⁸

4.9 In addition to the good sides of the programme, the interviewed persons were asked to identify some of the possible **weaknesses of the programme.** Some of the weaknesses of the project **highlighted by the inmates** refer exclusively to one issue - the lack of the competence/knowledge/skills of the lecturers within capacity building activities. While some of them questioned directly their knowledge, some others addressed primarily their skills in terms of transferring the knowledge at all or transferring the knowledge to the inmates as a specific group. Some also noted that courses are too short/ the number of lessons too small or there was insufficient quantity and/or inappropriate quality of technical devices/equipment that are necessary for work. In addition to this some raised concerns related to the monitoring of the programme results saying that: “After the completion of the project, Help e.V. representatives never visited or talked to the persons who obtained a certificate and who wanted to start their own business with the assistance of Help e.V..”

²⁶ e.g. Better functioning of prison kitchen and bakery

²⁷ “The procurement of the machines increased the quantity of production inside the institution and improved the quality of final products. This is necessary for participation in the market and making profit, which is used for the improvement of living, working and learning conditions of the convicted persons.”

²⁸ “The possibility for the juveniles to have a direct contact with their families, particularly those who are not able to communicate with them in any other way or to make these contacts more frequently. Generally speaking, this way of communication has stimulative effects on all juveniles, since it facilitates a stronger emotional interaction between them and their family members and encourages them to express their emotion, which has a positive impact on their future behaviour.”

“My greatest personal benefit from this project comes from the satisfaction and happiness that the juveniles felt in the moments when they talked to their family members, which also has a positive impact on further work with them.”

4.10 Some of the **weaknesses of the project highlighted by the employees in penitentiary institutions** mostly refers to the inconsistency²⁹ and discontinuity³⁰. Some of the CI employees also emphasized that the topics chosen for training and workshops do not match the real needs of the inmates. Some also raised an issue of the insufficiency of the equipment used during the trainings (e.g. computers).

4.11 The most comprehensive **feedback** the Expert team got in terms of the **Component III of the Programme, procurement of equipment** having in mind that it included not only potential beneficiaries through the questionnaires, but also the beneficiaries from that category were included in the in depth interviews. Most of them perceive the support they got through the programme as **chance for a new beginning**. They also emphasized that this kind of support made them feel a worthy member of the community, capable to have a normal life. They positively evaluate the **promptness of the Help e.V. intervention in terms of the procurement of the equipment**. However, most of them identified also **some negative aspects**, like the fact that only newly registered companies³¹ are eligible for the support. Similarly, some of them were unsatisfied with the fact that not all kind of small businesses are eligible for the support.³² They also think that the amount of money that the participants receive is insufficient. One of their concerns is also the fact that persons who did not complete elementary education cannot participate in the project. Despite the fact that the majority of supported ex-inmates have a low level of education³³, persons who have not completed primary school are not eligible for the support, even for the agricultural production which does not require a special education. All of them agree that the possible participants/beneficiaries are not sufficiently informed about Help e.V. and its activities.

4.12 A very important issue raised by most of the **Component III beneficiaries** refers to the fact that almost all of them said that **they feel that Help e.V. continuous monitoring is missing**³⁴, but elaborate this in different ways. Namely, while some wish to have some kind of mentoring approach when starts their small business, some other wish to receive Help e.V. staff (or external monitors) visits, more like a way to have a mechanism of self-confirmation because they are doing “the right thing “. However, this is a bit controversial considering data from Help e.V.’s reports that state that Help e.V. Grant Officers performed 63 home visits during the monitoring, usually a few months after the distribution of the donated equipment, excluding visits on the equipment delivery occasion. The frequency was a bit higher than for the regular micro business supported due to the vulnerability and the specific fragile status of

²⁹ There is no clear connection between topics which should make them to be part of the uniform context

³⁰ E.g. „The English language course was not continued, i.e. after the basic level course was finished the next level course did not take part.”

³¹ E.g. in 2014-2016, 71% of supported businesses are start-ups, while others had some prior experience but working unofficially including those performing in the sector of agriculture. In 2017-2019 83% of supported businesses are start-ups.

³² “I did not receive any benefits or profits because they told me that my field of work was not covered by project activities (transport of passengers, i.e. taxi service) although I have all the necessary documents and permissions (issued by the state and the city authorities) for this job.”

³³ In fact, majority of supported former convicts (95%) are of low education level, only primary and secondary school completed (Programme stage I, 2014-2016). In the programme phase II, concerning education, majority of supported former convicts 69% completed secondary school and 19% have attended only primary school. Two of them are having advanced education level.

³⁴ Most of them said: „They (Help e.V. staff) came once or twice to visit me. “

the former convicts. (2014-2016)³⁵ having in mind that in this period, Help e.V. supported 21 persons that means that every beneficiary received at least three visits before the end of 2016. However, it might be associated with the fact that only 21 visits have been performed in 2016-2017 period to monitor 16 beneficiaries who received the equipment.³⁶ The situation was even worse in 2017-2019 period where only 29 home visits were performed to monitor 30 beneficiaries.³⁷ **That practically means that some of the beneficiaries have never been visited by Help e.V. staff to *in vivo* check the status of implementation, but also to hear from them about impressions and needs. This also needs to be improved, combined with the professional assistance of external professionals in order to increase the percentage of the small business with sustainable functioning,³⁸ but also plays an important role in teaching them how to increase their incomes,** since their increasing trend currently reflects only the increased amount of salaries in Serbia in general, but does not show any progress associated with the improved programme assistance.³⁹

4.13 In addition to the request to evaluate the programme, all the interviewed persons were asked whether the programme should be continued.

Table 14: Should the project be continued?

Status/Affiliation of interviewed persons	Convicted persons			Employees		
	YES	NO	No answer	YES	NO	No answer
Correctional Institution in Sremska Mitrovica	20	/	/	13	/	/

³⁵ Help e.V., Final Report for the project, Poverty reduction and employment opportunities enhancement of marginalized and vulnerable population groups in Serbia, May 2013-December 2016, *Help e.V.: Project Nr.: SER 99-13*, page 9.

³⁶ Help e.V., Final Report for the project, Support to micro businesses in Serbia, phase II, *Help e.V. Project No.: SER 126*, June 2016- December 2017, page 10

³⁷ Help e.V., Final report, Support to the socio-economic stability in the western Balkan 2017-2019, *Help e.V.: Project No.: SOE-01 – 17*

³⁸ The results show that by the end of the Phase I completion, from 21 beneficiaries, 57% of them (12 beneficiaries) are regular activities operational continuously during the whole year; the majority is providing services and there is one craftsman, while 43% (9 beneficiaries) are engaged in seasonal types of businesses, i.e. agriculture. In 2016-2017 81% of them (13 beneficiaries) were regular activities operational continuously during the whole year while 19% (3 beneficiaries) are engaged in seasonal types of businesses, i.e. agriculture. In 2017-2019 from 30 beneficiaries, 63% of them (19 beneficiaries) are regular activities operational continuously during the whole year while 37% (11 beneficiaries) are engaged in seasonal types of businesses, i.e. agriculture.

³⁹ In 2014-2016 average per month profit was approx. Euro 163 while the maximum profit reaches Euro 450. In 2016-2017 average per month profit was approx. Euro 258 while the maximum profit reaches Euro 600. In 2017-2019 average per month profit was approx. Euro 256 while the maximum profit reaches Euro 600.

Correctional Institution in Niš	100	4	9	7	/	/
Correctional Institution for Women in Požarevac	11	/	/	1	/	/
Correctional-educational Institution for Juveniles in Kruševac	22	1	/	16	1	3
District Prison in Vranje	3	/	/	5	/	/
District Prison in Sombor	5	/	/	3	/	/
TOTAL	161	5	9	45	1	3

From the data presented above, it is obvious that **most of interviewed persons think that the programme should be continued**. Impressive, but there is almost no difference at all in this regard between the interviewed inmates and CIs' employees. While **92% of the interviewed inmates** think that the programme should be continued, **91.8% of the CIs' employees** said the same.

4.14 In addition to the opinion on possible/desirable continuation of the programme, all the interviewed were asked **what could be the best way to improve the programme**. In this regard some differences could be noted between the attitudes of the interviewed inmates and the CIs' employees. **When it comes to the inmates, one** of the general comments frequently repeated was aimed at the need to better and more comprehensively **present and promote the Help e.V. programme** in order to make it more accessible to potential beneficiaries. Some of inmates think this should be done by CI's treatment staff. When it comes to the position of the inmates, it prevails their **wish to have additional equipment, books and/or tools compatible with training programs** in which they are participating or participated. Many of them suggested also **prolongation/continuation of training** with more focus on practical training. As some suggested, a **larger number of different courses** should be available / new courses should be introduced (the number of professions for which the participants can apply should be larger). One of the especially interesting suggestions coming from the inmates was that **"consultations with convicted persons should be organised** in order to upgrade the project instead of constant implementation of the project," which is basically compatible with the earlier mentioned opinion that training programs should be more adjusted to the real needs of the inmates, but also with some suggestions to harmonise the programme activities with the previously implemented by the CI's.⁴⁰ Some of the participants suggested Help e.V. to ensure to have a permanent contact with experts from some fields. When it comes to CI's suggestions they mostly referred to the continuation of the English language courses. In addition to this, the following suggestions were made:

- A survey should be made about the needs of the convicted persons as well as about the needs of the employees when it comes to professional development;

⁴⁰ There were also some pretty extreme comments like one suggesting that the participation in the project activities should be obligatory for all convicts or one indicating that there was some abuse of resources, but without clear explanation what is it about.

- Some trainings and projects should take part more frequently, i.e. the time gaps between the courses of different levels within the same training should be shorter;
- The number of classes per week should be increased;
- A larger number of participants should be encouraged to participate in any kind of training;
- It would be good if the trainings and the procurement of equipment could be planned earlier – at least one year in advance, so that they could be in accordance with the financial plans of the correctional institution. If that is the case, the employees who participate in the project activities should be informed about that
- Additional logistic support should be provided (financial resources, constructive monitoring)
- The financial resources for the procurement of equipment should be increased

5. An overall Programme impact (PESTEL)

5.1 To summarise the impact made by the programme so far and to assess the possible improvements for the next stages of implementation, main areas of the society where such an impact can be measured and which should be taken into account in the process of planning further Programme activities are considered below: political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal (PESTEL).

5.2 In terms of the **political factors**, it is important to mention that the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Justice-Directorate for execution of criminal sanctions/Prison Administration recognised the benefits of Help e.V.'s re-socialisation programme and its long-term impact, not only concerning financial aspect but, more important, improved position of the prisoners through the work engagement, reduced conflict rate, improved treatment programmes, empowerment of prisoners, better re-socialisation prognosis and hopefully decreased return rate. The programme has complied with the main policy goals as defined by the MoJ and the RS Government. A high level of the PA organisational and functional autonomy within MoJ has ensured continuity of such compliance regardless personal and organisational changes in MoJ itself in general, associated with the election period. When it comes to the planning of the further steps, the Help e.V. management should carefully monitor and actively participate in the process of development of the main policy documents whose preparation is ongoing (e.g. The Strategy of the Development of the Enforcement of Penal Sanctions in Serbia 2021-2027, Post-penal Care Program) in order to provide inputs to relevant stakeholders based on the experience gained through the programme implementation so far, but also to ensure a compliance of the future strategic goals and activities in terms of the rehabilitation, reintegration and post-penal care of convicts.

5.3 The Help e.V. programme has proved the great capacity of connecting rehabilitation and post-penal care programmes with the actual labour market requirements and other **economic factors**. Professional vocational trainings enable better accesses to the labour market in the post penal phase thus enhance employment opportunities or better performance of the individual businesses if they are self-employed. Trainings allow convicts to gain valuable theoretical/practical knowledge, experience but also very important to obtain certificates for different profession without reference to the prison. The new knowledge and experience acquired provides possibilities for job creation when they are released. However, in planning future activities in this regard, a more detailed pre-assessment of the current economic situation (labour market (local and global), GDP *per capita*, compliance and compatibleness

with the National Employment Service programmes, etc), but also a more detailed assessment of the real needs, capacities, preferences and limitations on the side of convicts in order to overcome some of the obstacles identified so far is necessary.

5.4 Social factors play an important role in increasing impact and developing future activities of the Help e.V. Programme. The work of the sentenced persons is considered an important and integral part of the treatment procedure of the convicts. By continuous work engagement convicts gain excellent practical skills. Also, the work involved prisoners have a possibility to express their creativity, and it has also been noticed that increased number of persons engaged in work, reflects positively in the pavilions. Convicts engaged in work receive remuneration, which further alleviates the position and problems of the convicts whose families cannot provide monthly parcels and assistance during the sentence. In addition to this, implementation of a range of treatment programs (educational, vocational training programs, learning social skills, etc.) contributes to preserving the mental and physical health of the convicted persons during the execution of punishment, behaviour change, training, more adequate preparation for their reintegration. Successful rehabilitation and reintegration affects also the whole family beyond the impact that have on the convict person itself. A capability to preserve or establish marriage and/or family life, prevention of suicide and self-injuries, decreasing emigration rate, increasing income and profit, access to medical care, education and health insurance, integration in the society based on age, sex, nationality, religion, cultural norms, etc., are significantly determined by reintegration and post-penal care programmes. A majority of these programs affects and has multiple influence on the social factor and the wellbeing in general, especially through the development of empathy, improved anger control, support to creativity, self-respect and self-confidence. Considering this, the future planning of the programme activities should take into account this fact and should be based on the pre-assessment of the possible impact that all the factors have on the successful implementation of the programme, but also the contrary - to what extent the planned programme can address the social factors.



Picture 7: Specialised training on the prevention of suicide, attempted suicide and self-injury

5.5 Many of Help e.V.'s programme activities implemented so far have shown the awareness of Help e.V. management in regard to the importance to perceive **technological development factors** when designing and implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. This is especially visible through the procurement and education for the use of CNC machines, IT courses, procurement of tablet PC to ensure communication of minors with their families, etc. This approach should be further followed, but also developed in the future stages of the Help e.V. programme. In terms of this development, the attitudes and opinions of inmates, ex-convicts and CI employees identified through this assessment should be taken into account. Of particular importance should be ensuring continuity in IT training with the

possibility to organise advanced training for those convicts who serve a longer sentences and show predispositions for specialisation in this field. A clear connection should be established between this training and the post-penal care in various aspects, including necessity of digital literacy to obtain necessary ID documentation and ensure access to health care, education and employment. In terms of the employment, this advanced or specialised IT knowledge can ensure a high level potential of employment and self-employment, especially in the context of the current needs of labour market, but also the various start up support programs provided by various State agencies. Beyond the employment and the access to various e-government services, a digital literacy can contribute to re-establish social contacts and to better understand current cultural and social environment, which is significantly different from those which is known to inmates who spent a long time in CI.

5.6 Environmental factors awareness in Serbia is still in early stage, but already recognised in some aspects of the Help e.V. programme. This is well done through the course about the production of fruits and vegetables under protected conditions, accompanied with: high competency of the lecturers; practical work in green houses and use of expert literature. An initial result of such training, but also of the procurement of worthy equipment are already visible through the contribution of CI to the local self-governments' work on humanisation of the urban city environments (planting flowers for the public areas in CIs, establishing dog shelters in order to ensure better care and adoption for abandoned dogs, but also to reduce costs through the work engagement of inmates, etc.), but also through the work engagement of ex-inmates in the fields of special importance for environment-friendly productions and services, like organic food production. There is no doubt that this course should be further followed, but also improved, especially taking into account the EU accession context and possible synergy between the Help e.V. programme and other project support initiatives associated with the Chapter 27. This is also in line with the priorities identified in the programme of the newly elected Serbian Government.



Picture 8: Green houses in Correctional Institutions in Niš and Požarevac

5.7 It is important to underline that despite the huge steps made by the last set of the penal legislation in Serbia, there is still a large room for the improvement in terms of **legislation**. This is the most visible in light of the absence of the State arrangements and legally prescribed mechanisms of post-penal care, that should rule inter-institutional cooperation, but also the mechanisms of cooperation with the CSO in the sector. The same goes for the role of the Commissioners' Offices in the post-penal care. Some unclearness still also exists in terms of ensuring non-discriminatory approach of the National Employment Service to the employment of ex-convicts. Similarly, some provisions of relevant laws that rule access to shelters, food and IDs still do not recognise to the needed extent all the specificities of the ex-convicts' needs. All the mentioned has some negative impact on the efficient implementation of the Help e.V. programme, but also provides for the fruitful ground to provide a clear input to relevant stakeholders in the process of amending legislation and developing policy documents in the field.

5.8 However, advocacy in the field should be followed by **significantly increased transparency and visibility of the Help e.V. work**, having in mind that currently it is almost impossible to publicly access the accurate and comprehensive data on the Help e.V. programme and recent achievements in the field. This improved transparency may significantly contribute to the awareness of the relevant stakeholders in the field (currently limited to the Prison administration and several CSO and academic institutions active in the field), but also an understanding of the possible beneficiaries on what they can expect from the programme. This also important from the angle of increasing the quality of the Help e.V. programme, through improved competitiveness in the process of selection of potential partner organisations interested to implement some component of the Help e.V. programme (i.e. training, workshops, etc). Finally, this can contribute to the awareness of the general public that nobody should be left behind, even those who committed crimes, but still deserve a second chance as a valuable members of the society.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1	In cooperation with PA improve visibility and inclusiveness of the programme allowing all interested convicts and Cls' employees to access relevant information on the programme through various printed and e-materials, website(s), but also workshops and presentations.
2	Conduct pre-assessment of the inmates' and Cls' employees preferences/ needs when developing training programmes.
3	Improve expertise of trainers though the inclusion of the public and competitive processes of the selection of CSOs and partner companies, but also for individuals involved in the implementation of the Programme activities.
4	Ensure consistency and continuity of programme activities for employees in penitentiary institutions, ensuring continuous dialogue aimed at exploring their needs and preferences in parallel with the management of PA and Cls, but also directly with Cls' employees.
5	Ensure proper coordination and a complementarity of the support to self-employment of the former convicts through periodical (annual) assessments of the relevant employment and the social protection legislation, initiatives and measures that affects the status of former inmates as a potential beneficiaries.
6	Ensure continuous monitoring and professional/advisory support to the beneficiaries within the initial period of running their small businesses in order to contribute the sustainability and efficiency of those businesses, but also to the self-confidence and the autonomy of the beneficiaries.
7	Actively contribute to the processes of developing public policies relevant for the execution of criminal sanctions and post-penal care in order to disseminate Help e.V. knowledge and experiences as a fruitful ground for further reform activities.
8	Increase transparency and visibility of Help e.V.'s work through increased presence in the media, continuous updating of the website and active communication with public through the social networks to contribute to the awareness of the general public on the importance of the rehabilitation and reintegration of convicts.

REFERENCES

- Help e.V., Final Report for the project, Poverty reduction and employment opportunities enhancement of marginalized and vulnerable population groups in Serbia, May 2013-December 2016, *Help e.V.: Project Nr.: SER 99-13*
- Help e.V., Final Report for the project, Support to micro businesses in Serbia, phase II, *Help e.V. Project No.: SER 126*, June 2016- December 2017
- Help e.V., Final report, Support to the socio-economic stability in the western Balkan 2017-2019, *Help e.V.: Project No.: SOE-01 – 17*
- Kolaković-Bojović, M, Matić-Bošković, M (2020) *Rapid Assessment of Post-Penal Cooperation and Recommendations for Improvement*, Improving Capacities of the Prison Administration in the area of Alternative Sanctions, Post Penal care and Healthcare, Project reference number: EuropeAid/138440/DH/SER/RS
- Nelissen, P.Ph., Frost, C., Action: Enhancing human rights protection for detained and sentenced persons in Serbia, assessment report on reintegration mechanisms pre and post release and inter-agency cooperation, Council of Europe, January 2018.
- The Law on Enforcement of Penal Sanctions, Official Journal RS, No. 55/2014, 35/2019.
- Law on Enforcement of Non-custodial Sanctions and Measures, Official Journal RS, No. 55/2014, 87/2018.

ANNEX I

Questionnaire

**for the purpose of impact assessment of Re-socialisation implemented by NGO HELP E.V.
(Improvement of the treatment programmes in correctional institutions for adults and
juveniles - SOE03-19)/**

1. Status/affiliation of the interviewed person

- a) person serving the sentence
- b) employee in the penitentiary institution
- c) principal of the penitentiary institution

2. Age of the interviewed person

- a) under 18
- b) 18-21
- c) 21-40
- d) 40-65
- e) over 65

3. Imposed sanction

- a) under 1 year
- b) 1-3 years
- c) 3-5 years
- d) over 5 years

4. Gender of the interviewed person

- a) male
- b) female

5. Education level of the interviewed person

- a) without elementary education
- b) elementary education
- c) high school education
- d) higher education or faculty

6. How did you find out about the Project?

- a) from HELP E.V.'s employees
- b) from the principle of the penitentiary institution
- c) from employees in the treatment service
- d) from the media or via Internet
- e) in some other way

7) Did you participate in any of the Project activities?

- a) YES
- b) NO

8) Which Project activity did you participate in? (If the answer to previous question is "YES")

- a) procurement of equipment for penitentiary institutions
- b) specialised training for employees in the penitentiary institution
- c) professional training for convicted persons or employees (working with provided equipment, working on computer etc.)
- d) several Project activities _____ (please write the letter/letters on the line)

9) How would you evaluate the program that you participated in?

- a) excellent
- b) good
- c) satisfactory
- d) unsatisfactory

10) What would you single out as good sides/advantages of the Project?

11) What are the bad sides/ flaws of the Project?

12) What would you single out as your greatest personal benefit from participation in the Project?

13) Do you think that the implementation of the Project should be continued?

a) YES

b) NO

14) In your opinion, how could the Project be improved/upgraded?

On behalf of the Institute of the Criminological and Sociological Research,

Milica Kolaković-Bojović, PhD, Research Fellow

Ana Batrićević, PhD, Senior Research Fellow

Ivana Stevanović, PhD, Director of the Institute

Belgrade, November 5th 2020