

Distinguished members of the Committee,

My name is Dan HALCHIN – I am the Head of the Romanian Prison Administration and also the Head of the delegation assigned by the Romanian Government to present the progress made by my country within the main institutions responsible for taking care of vulnerable categories of our citizens.

The delegation comprises Mr. Marius Valentin LAZĂR, Head of the Coordination Service of Detention and Preventive Arrest and Mr. Costin SAMBETIANU, Head of the Service for Internal Regulations and Methodologies within the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ms. Cătălina CONSTANTIN, Director – National Center for Mental Health and Fight against Drugs within the Ministry of Health. As stated in the official documentation, the delegation also comprises Mr. Traian FILIP Chargé d'affaires a.i., Mr. Bogdan NEAGU, Minister plenipotentiary and Ms. Maria MIHAILESCU, Minister counsellor, Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations Office in Geneva.

Now, it is obvious for us and I'm sure many will agree, that the custody of people serving sentences in prison, dealing with mental illness or institutionalized because of disabilities or advanced age, came a long way from the early 90's to present day. The legal framework, the infrastructure and the tools we constantly improved are a good indicator of our commitment to implement the best practices in each area. Whether we refer to the modern bill of 2013 on the execution of penal sanctions or to the strategic planning paper (*Rezmives* Memorandum) for extending prisons and remand centers infrastructure, it is obvious that efforts are being made towards improvement.

We acknowledge that a lot of work still needs to be done, and for that we are committed to observe the recommendations of international bodies, including the Committee against Torture/CAT and the Subcommittee for Prevention of Torture/SPT.

With your permission, I would like to highlight a few points, which might be of interest in our further discussions. Of course, we are open to tackle any other topics anyone would like to clarify.

Romanian Prison Administration

It is an institution that falls under the competence of the Ministry of Justice, and is run by a Director General. It is composed of 33 prisons for men, 1 prison for women, 6 prison hospitals, 4 detention centers for youth and 4 support training and logistic units. Currently there are 12.700 prison police staff and 23.500 inmates.

Our major priority is to expand the accommodation capacity, for which we still need an additional of 2800 beds. Since 2020 we have a Memorandum signed by the Government, according to which we planned for over 5800 new beds until 2025. For 2021 and 2022, we meet the milestones, meaning that we put into use 724 new beds out of 655 that were initially planned. For this year the plan is to have 1275 additional places, which are also on track. Two new prisons with a combined capacity of 1900 beds are estimated to start effective construction in February 2024.

One other priority is the reintegration of the inmates we have in our care. From this perspective, a significant number of prisoners are working and are going to school. In

addition to this, there are over 100 social reintegration programs in all areas, such as mental health, substance addiction, sexual abuse, domestic violence, resistance to authority etc. All this array of activities and programs steadily decreased the recidivism rate, from 46 percent in 2012 to 36.9 percent in 2022.

Detention and Remand Centers

They are organized under the General Police Inspectorate, which falls within the competence of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This subsystem is functioning under the legal provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Law for Execution of Penal Sanctions and Preventive Measures. In terms of physical infrastructure, the Romanian Government also approved a chapter in the same Memorandum regarding prisons, based on which 31 centers will be modernized, resulting in over 1400 beds. The current progress consists of 147 beds in four detention centers completed, with another five detention and remand centers being under complete overhaul.

In addition to the infrastructure, the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is taking steps to improve the staffing, equipment and material conditions, including transportation, needed for the centers countrywide. A special consideration is also given to the training aspects of the job, given the sensitive status of the persons held in custody. We are confident that the progress will keep the same trend and that we will accomplish the objectives stated in the Memorandum.

National Center for Mental Health and Antidrug

It is the national body - under the competence of the Ministry of Health - responsible for setting the priorities for an integrated approach concerning mental health issues. It collaborates with many institutions, governmental, NGOs and academics.

Its main objectives are to provide an efficient training architecture for staff working in the field, to articulate a psychiatric system which is accessible for the wide community in order to facilitate proper reintegration of patients and to promote a sectorial program for free psychiatric treatment for chronic patients.

The Ministry of Health is aware that the issues of mental health and substance abuse are often related and interconnected. To have a proper response to this challenge an integrated approach is needed, and indeed steps in term of planning and financing have been taken.

The institution developed and submitted a mental health national program designed to cover multi-dimension areas including prevention and education in all medical units, providing information for general population, reducing stigma for medical staff and patients and facilitation of social reintegration. The vast array of mental diseases makes the job of all practitioners really difficult- all the more reason to stay committed to our objectives, by constantly placing this matter to the center of our attention.

National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

During the past years, Romania has adopted a series of measures to promote and further expand the rights of persons with disabilities.

One of them is the support for deinstitutionalisation - in November 2022, Romania adopted a new strategy for the persons institutionalised, in order to support deinstitutionalisation. Together with *Law no. 7/2023 on supporting the process of deinstitutionalization of adults with disabilities*, a series of measures to promote the deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities was initiated. Among these measures we note the following: a new case management for persons with disabilities, independent living plans for persons with disabilities, as well as a better monitoring of the indicators relating to institutionalised persons. Our strategic goal is to achieve independent living for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the principles of the UN CRPD.

Another measure is related to a reinforced network for social services. Romania has initiated a series of flagship projects to develop and to further expand the social services network for persons with disabilities. Currently we have in implementation more than 100-projects related to the development of day care centres and other types of services for persons with disabilities. The following financial programs take into account the development of the entire social infrastructure needed at the community level, which would allow the support of independent living for people with disabilities. In addition to this, we adopted measures to diversify the financial support from the State budget for social services and we also revised the quality standards for these services.

An important measure concerns enhancing legal representation for persons with disabilities. In this respect I would like to mention the changes made by *Law no. 140/2022 on protection measures for people with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities*, which presents a new view on guardianship, as well as a new methodology for assessment of the need for representation of persons with disabilities. In this way, we once again affirm the intention of continuing the reform in the field of disability, being actively involved in the implementation of the CRPD.

Thank you.