

## **CHARTER**

### **INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF PENITENTIARY EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND CENTRAL ASIA**

#### **PREAMBLE**

On October 6-8, 2014 an international conference "Adult education in the penitentiary system: problems, approaches, best practices" was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, with the assistance of the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International). More than 50 representatives of partner organizations both from state and non-state sectors of Belarus, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine as well as representatives of foreign and international organizations working in the sphere took part in the work of the conference.

The participants noted that, despite certain progress in the development of adult education in the penitentiary system and in the work on resocialization of those released from penitentiary institutions, the above-mentioned countries still face some problems that need to be addressed:

- Access of prison inmates to certain types of education is limited or missing. Not all penitentiary institutions have an opportunity to provide high-quality vocational education. In many countries the mechanism of ensuring prisoners' right to higher education remains unsettled. Not enough attention is paid to broadening the range of formal and non-formal adult education services, including programs of social and psychological rehabilitation, development of social competences and preparation for release.
- The legal regulatory framework containing guarantees and mechanisms for the execution of the right of prison inmates and people released from correctional institutions to education at all levels and in various forms (formal and non-formal, professionally-focused and aimed at the development of social, civic and personal competences) is insufficiently developed.
- Lack of theoretical and applied research impedes the development of penitentiary pedagogics. Along with the poorly developed system of personnel training and low level of readiness of some officials and society in general to support investments into the humanization of the penitentiary system, this factor presents a major obstacle to increasing the efficiency of pedagogical processes in correctional institutions.
- The material and technical resources in penitentiary institutions are slowly updated: not enough budgetary funds for updating or creating a basis of modern technical means of training are allocated – computer classes, multimedia projection systems, software, television and video devices, other training materials and equipment.
- The closed nature of the system hampers the expansion of the circle of social partners from among educational institutions, businesses, faith-based and non-governmental organizations and attraction of additional resources for broadening the range and number of educational and correctional programs.
- There are no special programs for social rehabilitation of the persons released from correctional institutions either on state, or on local levels.

Realizing the similarity of unresolved problems, the participants agreed to join efforts of all interested parties and to create an international network (a platform for exchange of experience and information) the activity of which would aim at the development of education for adults and youths in penitentiary institutions and those after release in the countries of Central Asia and Eastern Partnership.

The idea of creating a network was presented at the International scientific and practical conference "Educational, socio-correctional activities and psychological aid in the penitentiary system" that took place on November 16-18, 2016 in Gomel (Belarus). The participants supported the idea and expressed interest and willingness to take part in the creation and further activities of the network.

Preparatory process came to an end during a working meeting that took place on May 17-19, 2017 in Minsk (Belarus). 24 persons representing 11 non-governmental and 3 state institutions from 8 countries took part in it (Armenia, Belarus, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine). Being the organizer of the meeting, DVV International emphasized the important role of education in penitentiary and post-penitentiary spheres for the achievement of social justice in adult education, in general, and confirmed the willingness to be an active member of the international network in partner countries in the future.

The participants of the meeting decided to consider the working meeting a constituent assembly of the network.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF THE NETWORK**

The members of network believe that

- realising the priority of people's rights and freedoms is the most important achievement of the world community;
- the right to education is one of the fundamental human rights. According to a number of international conventions and recommendations, prison inmates have the same right to education as other citizens;
- the right to education equally extends over general secondary, vocational, higher and additional education of adults and youths and covers all types of educational activities for youths and adults (formal, non-formal and self-education);
- education is an effective tool of resocialization and prevention of repeated crimes and is also an important component of economic and democratic development of society. Consequently, education aimed at the development of a person and his/her social, psychological, civic and other competences is an integral part of an education system and social and psychological assistance in penitentiary institutions and bodies, and also in activities of other organizations focused on the work with prisoners and ex-prisoners (people released from penitentiary institutions);
- the success of humanizing and reforming the penitentiary system largely depends on partnership and joint efforts of civil society, the state, private sector, international organizations, experts and engaged citizens (individuals).

## **STATUS OF THE NETWORK AND BASIC PRINCIPLES**

The International network of penitentiary education in the countries of Eastern Partnership and Central Asia is a voluntary association of institutions and individuals consolidating the efforts of organizations and experts in advancing the right to education in penitentiary and post-penitentiary spheres and promoting education as an effective means of reintegration of (ex)prisoners in society.

The network is not a legal entity – for achieving the goals set and conducting joint actions, the legal status of its members is used.

The activities of the network are regulated by the present Charter.

The members of the network build relations on the following principles:

- shared purposes and basic values;
- voluntary membership and interaction within the network;

- mutual respect, trust, support and regard to the interests of all members of the network;
- respect for the rights of intellectual property and information accuracy;
- distributed leadership and allocation of responsibilities;
- transparency.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **The aim of the Network:**

Contributing to the execution of the right to education for prison inmates and people released from penitentiary institutions; promotion of education as an effective means of reintegration of prisoners into society.

Joint activities of the network members are meant to achieve the following **objectives**:

1. Development of policies ensuring the realization of the right to education in penitentiary and post-penitentiary spheres in member countries, including:
  - assistance in the development of penitentiary pedagogics and legal frameworks regulating participation in educational and correctional activities of prison inmates and persons released from penitentiary institutions;
  - promotion of values and principles of partnership on the issues of organizing educational activities in the penitentiary system and in society;
  - assistance in professional development of staff of penitentiary institutions and their social partners who are engaged in the organization of educational and correctional activities.
2. Drawing the attention of broader public, state authorities, mass media and international organizations to the issue of respecting human dignity, execution of the right to education and cultural development of the persons serving sentences and those released from penitentiary institutions; social and economic expediency of development of education in penitentiary institutions.
3. Joining efforts of organizations, experts and individuals dealing with issues of education of adults and youths in the penitentiary system and reintegration of those released into society.
4. Assistance in organizational development and capacity building of the network members.

## **TYPES OF ACTIVITIES**

To achieve the aims and objectives of the network, the following types of activities can be used:

- Development and implementation of joint projects and programs by the members of the network.
- Organising and conducting joint activities (conferences, forums, seminars, trainings, festivals, exhibitions, round tables, webinars, etc.) for drawing attention to the subject, exchange of experience, etc.
- Creating expert and consulting groups concerning educational and correctional activities in the penitentiary system.
- Carrying out analytical work (polls, research, analysis of existing regional and world practices, preparation of country and regional reports, etc.).
- Creation of databases (e.g., experts-trainers, teachers, researchers working in prison education; publications and materials on the topic).

- Development and distribution of information, didactic and methodological materials concerning education in the penitentiary system.
- Publishing and distribution of information, periodical, printed and other materials on network activities.
- Organising educational exchanges, traineeships and practical training sessions between the countries (organizations)-participants of the network and other countries.
- Conducting advocacy campaigns, including organizing and holding actions, public events, competitions for drawing attention to the topic of education in the penitentiary system (e.g., photo exhibitions, presentations of documentaries, competitions for the journalists covering the topic, etc.).
- Mobilization of resources for the activities of the network and implementation of joint initiatives (fundraising).

## **MEMBERSHIP, RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS**

Participation in the activities of the network presupposes fixed membership of organizations and private individuals dealing with issues of education of adults and youths in the penitentiary system and (re)integration of those released into society.

Admission to membership in the network is carried out based on the on-line application (organization or individual) posted on the website of Network to the governing body of the network (Steering Committee). The applicant is deemed accepted to the members of the network based on the written consent of the majority of members of the Steering Committee that can be given in an electronic form.

Membership in the network is terminated in the following cases:

- Withdrawal on one's own will (on the basis of a written request);
- Exclusion from the members of the network. Exclusion from members is carried out based on the written consent of the majority of members that can be given in an electronic form. The reason for exclusion from members can be as follows: failure to comply with the regulations of the Charter; committing an action contradicting the aims and principles of the network; suspension or termination of activity of the organization.

Account of network members is carried out by the Steering Committee by making a list of members which is updated in process of withdrawal/entrance of members and is edited as and when needed.

Each member of the network (organization or individual) has one voice.

The members of the network have the right:

- to elect and to be elected to all elected bodies (governing bodies) of the network;
- to put forward proposals to the governing bodies regarding the improvement of the network's operation and to take part in their discussion;
- to put forward proposals about modification of and amendments to the founding documents regulating the activity of the network;
- to have access to all available information on the activity of the network, sources of financing, annual reports;
- to initiate projects, programs and activities; to participate in their preparation and implementation;
- to participate in all events held by the network (in all forms of activities of the network, contributing own expertise and resources);

- to freely withdraw from the network.

The members of the network are obliged:

- to share and support the aims and values of the network and to promote their achievement;
- to comply with the requirements (clauses) of the present Charter;
- to ask for the permission of the Steering Committee to submit joint project applications on behalf of the network;
- to avoid actions undermining the authority and reputation of the network and also the actions prejudicial to its interests;
- to carry out the decisions of the Steering Committee made within its competence.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND DECISION-MAKING**

The supreme governing body of the network is the General Assembly. The General Assembly (GA) has to be conducted at least once in 3 years. The GA accepts reports of the Steering Committee, adopts a Strategic plan and approves the structure of the newly elected Steering Committee.

In-between the meetings, the administration of the network is performed by the Steering Committee (SC). The procedure of SC creation is based on a country principle. The list of candidates for membership in the Steering Committee is made on the national level by self-nomination and/or nomination at the initiative of other members. The vote is taken according to this list (electronic vote is possible). The candidate who receives maximum number of votes automatically becomes a member of the Steering Committee, the candidate who gets the second place in voting becomes an alternate (if applicable) for the member of the Steering Committee. Disputable situations are solved by negotiations and reaching consensus. If a country is represented in the network only by one person, this member (representative of the member organization) automatically becomes a member of the Steering Committee. Only one representative of an international organization having legally registered divisions in other countries of the region can be member of the SC.

In addition to the members of the SC elected at the national level, DVV International as one of the initiators of the network establishment has the right to propose 1 additional member to the structure of the SC. Thus, the quantitative structure of the SC is defined by the number of member countries plus 1 representative of DVV International.

Competences of the Steering Committee:

- Developing a draft operation plan and the Strategic plan of the network, providing feedback and organising the vote of members for the purpose of its approval.
- Representation of the network's interests at the international level in relations with potential partners and donors.
- Initiation of establishing and supporting the activities of working groups on separate lines of the network's activities.
- Approval/negotiation of offers (projects) coming from the members of the network.
- Keeping account of the members of the network.
- Informing the members of the network on the current activities.
- Development and distribution of information materials about the aims, objectives and activities of network.
- Management of resources/budget/property of the network.
- Admission of organizations / individuals to members of the network.

- Preparation of annual reports on the activities of the network.

The Steering Committee elects the Chairperson from its members. The Chairperson is responsible for organising the work of the Steering Committee and moderating the meetings of the Steering Committee. The term of chairmanship is determined by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is elected for up to 3 years (until the date of the next General Assembly). If needed, the term of its powers can be extended up to the moment when a new Steering Committee is formed. The meetings of the Steering Committee are held not less than 2 times a year. They can be held as offline meetings or by carrying out Skype/videoconferences. During all meetings of the Steering Committee minutes are kept. The procedure of decision-making is based on compromises and voting. Decisions are made by a simple majority vote, also by means of electronic vote. Disputable situations are solved by negotiations and reaching consensus. If the consensus is not reached by the members of the Steering Committee, the controversial issue can be brought up for the vote of all members of the network.

The Steering Committee is obliged to submit to the newly elected structure annual reports on the activity of the network (in writing) and to hand over all the relevant documentation.

### **TERMINATION OF ACTIVITIES**

The decision on the termination of activities / dissolution of the network is made by written poll of all members of the network or by voting during the General Assembly of the network. The issue of termination of the network's activity can be raised by the Steering Committee and/or the simple majority of the total number of network members.