

Implementation of community service – a qualitative study in the Ljubljana region

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The paper focuses on the implementation of community service as an alternative form of punishment in Slovenia. In the first part, we focus on the evolution of legal foundations of community service in Slovenia and present the actors implementing community service. The second part includes the results of the preliminary study on community service as a form of alternative sentencing in the Ljubljana region. For the purposes of the paper, we conducted structured interviews with mentors, coordinators, judge, prosecutor, and persons sentenced to community service, from 21 implementing organizations, social work centres, courts, and the prosecutor's office. The results show that despite a long-standing statutory regulation of community service, organizations in the Ljubljana region began to accept persons sentenced to community service no sooner than in 2004, the great majority of them between 2011 and 2013.

Communication between social work centres and organizations is good despite a lack of personal communication (in most cases, it is conducted via telephone or email). Furthermore, we found that more than half of the employees in the organizations feel they are not sufficiently trained to work with persons sentenced to community service, who, in turn, highlight high levels of professionalism in and their good experiences with social work centres and staff in the implementing organizations. Based on the findings, we can conclude that the cooperation between implementing organizations, social work centres, prosecutor's office, and persons sentenced to community service in the Ljubljana region is carried out adequately. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to enhance the exchange of information as well as promote the discussion on good community service practices. Undoubtedly, an important role to be developed in the future community service implementation will be that of the probation

service providing assistance and support to the prosecutor's office and courts, the prisoners having gained early release, and a wider community.

Key words: alternative sentencing, community service, Ljubljana region, Slovenia

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