

Launching of the "Justice" Program, implemented by the Romanian Ministry of Justice, within the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014 - 2021

The Ministry of Justice organized on November 16, 2018, in Bucharest, the launching conference of the "Justice" program, in the amount of 52,941,176 euro, out of which 45,000,000 euro non-refundable financial assistance from the Kingdom of Norway, which will be implemented during 2018-2024.

The "Justice" program is managed by the Ministry of Justice as a Program Operator and is composed of 7 pre-defined projects in the following areas of interest: correctional services (penitentiary and probation systems); the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system, the consolidation of the rule of law; domestic violence and gender-based violence.

In the opening of the conference, the Minister of Justice, stressed the importance of the "Justice" Program for the justice system, pointing out that "The exercise 2014-2021, that we inaugurate today, brings not only a doubling of the financial allocation compared to the previous Mechanism, but also a range of ambitious interventions. which aim to contribute both to the development of internal working practices in the beneficiary institutions, as well as to the improvement of interinstitutional cooperation."

In his turn, His Excellency Lise KLEVEN GREVSTAD, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway in Romania, emphasized that "the launch today of the Justice program, financed through the Norwegian grants, marks a point of reference in the cooperation between Norway and Romania in the justice sector. The program is based on the good results obtained in the previous Norwegian Financial Mechanism. At the same time, the program was built on the basis of excellent partnerships that were developed in the 3 areas of intervention namely, correctional services, court administration and domestic violence and gender-based violence."

In the field of correctional services, the three predefined projects "Correctional" (31,000,000 euro), "4 Norm" (5,000,000 euro) and "Child" (1,494,117 euro), implemented by the National Administration of Penitentiaries, have as objective strengthening the capacity of the penitentiary and probation system in view of contributing to the social reintegration of convicted persons, by facilitating their transition from the penitentiary to the probation system and, later on, in the community, through close cooperation with the local authorities. Also, the programs for social reintegration and the daily activities of the convicted persons will be redefined at the level of three pilot penitentiary units (Craiova, Ploiești, Poarta Alba), in order to enhance their responsibility before and after release. At the same time, the facilitation of the social reintegration of juveniles and young people offenders will be pursued, by improving the education and the specific assistance provided to them within the Târgu Ocna Educational Center.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system and the consolidation of the rule of law are going to be achieved by the implementation of three predefined projects "Judicial Training and Capacity Building" (4,100,000 euro, implemented by the Superior Council of Magistracy) and "Fighting Criminality and Corruption" (4,250,000 euro, implemented by the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice) and one project dedicated to vulnerable groups, including Roma population, in view of improving the response of the legal authorities towards their specific problems – discrimination, access to justice and to other public services, lack of information (budget allotted 2,000,000 euro). The project "Judicial Training and Capacity Building" aims at a better application of the European legal concepts and

strengthening the training capacity at the level of the judicial system. The project "Fighting Criminality and Corruption" aims at improving the capacity of the Public Ministry to fight against organized crime and corruption.

With regard to domestic violence and gender based violence, the predefined project "Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania" (2,500,000 euro, implemented by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men) aims at improving the capacity of the Romanian authorities to implement the Istanbul Convention, by setting up 10 centers for victims of sexual violence and 8 counseling centers for aggressors and also by carrying out a campaign in the field of domestic violence and violence against women.

The launch conference of the "Justice" Program was attended by officials from the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Embassy from the Kingdom of Norway in Bucharest, the program donor partners – Norwegian Court Administration, Norwegian Correctional Services, and from the Romanian Ministry of Justice, Ministry of European Funds, Ministry of Public Finances, and representatives of project promoters and project partners as well.

Detailed information on the projects to be funded can be found in the **Projects** section.