



Yellow Ribbon

Growing European Together



ROUND TABLE, 1ST - 3RD NOVEMBER 2023 • PRAGUE • CZECH REPUBLIC

PRESS RELEASE

Leaders of European criminal justice systems will join the race “Against prejudice”. In Prague they shared the common goals - reducing recidivism, greater safety in society and inclusion.

Prague, Oslo – November 6th, 2023 – On November 1st - 3rd 2023, European prison and probation leaders met in Prague with representatives of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, the Probation and Mediation Service and the non-profit sector. The Czech NGO Yellow Ribbon organized a Roundtable: Yellow Ribbon - Growing European Together - with the ambition to show this format to foreign partners and inspire them to bring this idea back to their home countries. The CEO of this organization, Gabriela Slováková, started the Yellow Ribbon Run (YRR) awareness project nine years ago, inspired by the Singapore event. Every year, the YRR brings together people from the public, private, and non-profit sectors as well as people with criminal backgrounds and those, who are still serving a sentence to run together against prejudice and to give a second chance to make a safer society. All attendees were positive about the idea to bring this format to their countries.



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The organization of the Round Table and the subsequent draft of the Yellow Ribbon educationaction plan – Growing European Together are financed by Norway Grants 2014 – 2021 (Justice programme).



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"The round table is the first major international activity that brings the Yellow Ribbon to European awareness. I am moved by the fact that we already know that all participants will be looking for ways, both to visit our event and to realize the Yellow Ribbon Run in their countries," says Gabriela Slovakova, the CEO and founder of Yellow Ribbon.

The main activity from the event was the presentation of the Yellow Ribbon Run project and its significance to the community.

"The Yellow Ribbon Run is an opportunity for networking with the prison service, other public institutions and non-profit organizations, families of people who are serving a sentence or academics for which we do not find an opportunity on other occasions. In addition we all wear the yellow ribbon T-shirt. You don't know who is who in a T-shirt. It is always great if NGOs and state cooperate," says Kateřina Šlesingerová, Deputy Director, Probation and Mediation Service.

The partner of the entire event is the Norwegian Prison Service. There were representatives from Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Croatia and the Council of Europe present at the event together with Singapore and Netherlands presenting on-line.



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“Our partner - The Norwegian Correctional Service - is a great support in helping us to share our ideas and build a Yellow Ribbon network - Growing European Together,” adds Gabriela Slováková.

The Norwegian Prison Service was represented by Ida Lindmo, Country Officer in Romania, International Unit, KDI.

“I see so many familiar faces, which reminds me of what Kim Ekhaugen (Head of International Unit, KDI, who couldn't be at the event) usually says, that international cooperation is just one big happy family. I believe that to initiate the movement and to promote support for those who have been affected by imprisonment is essential for their reintegration into society. The Yellow Ribbon Round Table is a significant opportunity for us to collaborate, learn from each other and taste the bright future for individuals who have experienced the challenges of incarceration,” adds Ida Lindmo.

The Roundtable representatives spent the third day of the event in an Open Prison Jiřice. The workshop was opened by Hana Prokopová, Head of the Open Prison, who talked about the importance of intensive and individual approach which is implemented to the program of treatment in this unique prison inspired by the Norwegian model.



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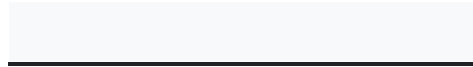
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The main event of the Yellow Ribbon project is a run organized for the public. It takes place every year in June in Prague. In 2023, there were 800 runners registered for the run. Next year, in the 9th Yellow Ribbon Run, Czech runners will give a second chance to dads with criminal records.

The Yellow Ribbon draws attention to the effects of incarceration on families of imprisoned fathers, and especially their children.



Yellow Ribbon Run (YRR) is the main project of an independent organization Žlutá stužka z. s. and its goal is to break the prejudices against people with criminal past and give them and their families a second chance to live a decent life, thus contributing to prevention of crime, reduction of recidivism, and better safety in our society. 800 people have registered for the 8th Yellow Ribbon Run in 2023.

From 2021, YRR organizes thematic years. The primary motive is to support people with criminal backgrounds in their parenting and other positive social roles.

[Video from the 8th YRR - Project 23](#)



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Gabriela Slováková - She worked for the Prison Service of the Czech Republic since 2003. In 2010, she became the director of a female prison in Světlá nad Sázavou, and since 2019 she continued as the director of a male prison in Kuřim. She is an international expert specialized in the issue of imprisoned women, also dedicated to the meaningful treatment of convicts as well as the issue of children and families of imprisoned parents. For a total of 8 years, she was a member of Board of Directors of the worldwide organization ICPA (International Corrections and Prisons Association) which brings together over 5,000 experts on the issue of prisons, as well as a chair of the expert group EuropPris which was focused on the relationships of inmates with their families in relation to their smooth integration into society after they served their sentence.

She is a co-founder of MECR (Middle European Correctional Roundtable), which deals with strategies in the field of prisons in Central Europe, and works in several expert groups organized by the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic or the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic focusing on criminal justice.

She is of the opinion that the families and children of prisoners are invisible victims of crime and cooperation with the family can significantly affect successful integration into society.

In her work, she implements the principles of restorative justice, which she considers essential for minimizing the impact of crime on victims as well as reducing recidivism.

She is the founder and director of the Yellow Ribbon awareness raising project that aims to raise public interest in the issue of people with criminal history and to connect institutions operating in this area. In a T-shirt with a yellow ribbon,



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all runners are equal, and so the motivation comes to pay more attention to the above mentioned issues. She herself is the mother of three children - eleven-year-old Matyáš and two-year-old twins Mariana and Natália.

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