

Dear Sir/Madam,

For your information, I am sending you the minutes of the South-East NPM Network meeting which was held in Ljubljana on 26-27 May 2014. More information about the network and the meeting itself can be found at: <http://www.varuh-rs.si/o-instituciji/podrocja-dela-varuha/varuh-kot-drzavni-preventivni-mehanizem/south-east-europe-npm-network/>.

The main topic of our meeting discussions were the national preventive mechanisms (NPMs) annual reports, as they are an important weapon-tool for our work. One of the joint conclusions of our meeting was that the perspective and feedback of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) on the annual reports which we send to the SPT in Geneva are important for every NPM. The NPMs annual reports must also be submitted to the SPT, which publishes them on its website (in accordance with Guideline 29 of Guidelines on National Preventive Mechanisms, SPT, Geneva, 15-19 November 2010). We also found that some of the NPMs have already received some remarks or questions from SPT with regards to the annual reports that were submitted, while others have not. As a result, the question was raised of the SPT's (unified) approach to these matters. For example, does anyone read through or examine the reports we send in detail, or are they perhaps subjected to a critical assessment, and if so, what methodology is applied? With regards to this, the meeting participants also think that it would be important to establish unified principles of communication.

Also, the meeting participants have found that communication and dialogue of the SPT with individual countries (not only with NPM) is particularly important for the implementation of NPM recommendations. The NPM representatives who attended the meeting were convinced that an NPM's work would have greater impact if, for example, the country, as a party to the Optional Protocol, would receive a letter from the SPT (as an external authority) inquiring about the implementation of NPM recommendations. This already took place in the case of Bulgaria, which was very helpful for Bulgaria's NPM. The national competent authorities have an obligation to consider the NPM recommendations and establish a dialogue with the NPM about potential measures for their implementation. Therefore, the NPMs present at the meeting in Ljubljana of May 2014 encourage the SPT to continue with these kinds of practices and reinforce them further when necessary.

Ivan Šelih

NPM Slovenia

MINUTES

of discussions at the meeting of the South-East NPM Network representatives,

Ljubljana, 26-27 May 2014

Note: More information about the network and the meeting itself can be found at:

<http://www.varuh-rs.si/o-instituciji/podrocja-dela-varuha/varuh-kot-drzavni-preventivni-mehanizem/south-east-europe-npm-network/>.

Vlasta Nussdorfer, the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia (Ombudsman), first welcomed the meeting participants and then highlighted the importance of the national preventive mechanism (NPM), which has functioned in Slovenia within the institution of the Ombudsman since 2008 when the Ombudsman carried out its first visit in this role. The Ombudsman works closely with selected non-governmental organisations which, together with the Ombudsman's staff, examine the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty in order to strengthen their protection from torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. She expressed satisfaction that the representatives of national preventive mechanisms from as many as eight countries attended the meeting, which provides an excellent opportunity for the exchange of opinions, experiences and effective practices.

The meeting participants were also welcomed by **Ivan Šelih**, the Deputy Ombudsman and the head of the NPM in Slovenia, who also chaired the meeting. He emphasised that the meeting is organised by the Slovenian NPM, which presides over the South-East NPM Network. He expressed satisfaction that the meeting was being attended by the representatives of eight NPMs: Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Austria, Montenegro, Serbia, Hungary and of course Slovenia. He apologized for the absence of Mr Miloš Janković, the Deputy Ombudsman of Serbia, due to the emergency situation in Serbia (i.e., the May floods). He said that Mr Janković had informed him that the Serbian NPM has extra work due to the natural disaster, since it is visiting temporary accommodation centres for people affected by the floods. Mr Janković is also a member of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of the Committee against Torture (Subcommittee on Prevention - SPT) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Optional Protocol). Mr Janković has thus also conveyed greetings on behalf of the President of the Subcommittee on Prevention, Mr Malcolm Evans, as well as his request to forward to him any conclusions arising from the meeting. At the same time, Mr Janković

thanked all the representatives of the countries present at the meeting for all the care and humanitarian help provided by the neighbouring countries to Serbia.

Afterwards, Šelih presented the meeting program in detail. The first day was dedicated to a discussion of the NPM annual reports. This is an important NPM task, since Article 23 of the Optional Protocol specifies that States Parties to the protocol undertake to publish and disseminate the NPM reports. He finds that in practice, every NPM finds its own way and methods for carrying out these responsibilities. He also drew attention to Guideline 36 of the Guidelines on National Preventive Mechanisms of the Subcommittee on Prevention, which specifies that NPMs should produce annual reports and organise other forms of presenting their work to the public.

He announced that this theme would be discussed within several themes and asked each NPM to prepare a short presentation within this context. Discussion would then follow, along with possible conclusions. He particularly emphasised that the main purpose of the meeting was to discover good practices and to exchange experiences. Our cooperation in the network also has the same purpose.

For the second day of the meeting, he announced a visit of detention facilities used by police units in Ljubljana. At this point, the Slovenian NPM will verify whether the recommendations it made on its last visit have been implemented. The meeting will conclude with an exchange of views and impressions from the visit of the detention facilities.

Afterwards, the participants from individual countries introduced themselves (see the list of participants):

Croatia	PUČKI PRAVOBRANITELJ, REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA	1. Mr MARIO KREŠIĆ (Zamjenik pučke pravobraniteljice) 2. Ms IVANA BULJAN (Savjetnica pučke pravobraniteljice)
Bulgaria	OMBUDSMAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA	3. Mr LUBOMIR KRILCHEV (Director of the NPM in Bulgaria)
Macedonia	OMBUDSMAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA	4. Ms ANICA TOMSHIC STOJKOVSKA (Savjetnica Makedonskog Ombudsmana) 5. Ms MERITA ALIU ALILI (Savjetnica Makedonskog Ombudsmana)
Austria	AUSTRIAN OMBUDSMAN BOARD	6. Dr KARIN TREICHL (Chairperson of one of the expert Commissions of the AOB responsible for the Austrian Laender of Tyrol and Vorarlberg) 7. Dr PETER KASTNER (Deputy chief of Cabinet of Ombudsman)
Montenegro	ZAŠTITNIK	8. Mr PETER IVEZIĆ (Zamjenik Zaštitnika za prevenciju)

	LJUDSKIH PRAVA I SLOBODE CRNE GORE	
Serbia	ZAŠTITNIK GRAĐANA, REPUBLIKA SRBIJA	9. Mr MILOŠ JANKOVIĆ (Zamenik zaštitnika građana) 10. Ms JELENA UNIJAT (Samostalni savetnik)
Hungary	THE COMMISSIONER FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS HUNGARY	11. Ms KATALIN HARASZTI (Deputy Head of Department)

NPM Slovenia

Ms VLASTA NUSSDORFER	Ombudsman
Mr IVAN ŠELIH	Deputy Ombudsman
Ms KATJA SODJA	NPM Slovenia
Mr ROBERT GAČNIK	NPM Slovenia
Ms ANDREJA SREBOTNIK	NPM Slovenia
Mr JURE MARKIČ	NPM Slovenia
Ms JASNA VUNDUK	NPM Slovenia
Ms LIANA KALČINA	NPM Slovenia
Mr MIHA HORVAT	NPM Slovenia
Ms NATAŠA MAZOVEC	NPM Slovenia

Introductory presentations followed:

Katja Sodja

She presented the conditions for the preparation of NPM annual reports according to the APT recommendations (*OPCAT Briefings, National Preventive Mechanisms: Drafting effective annual reports, April 2012*). She emphasised the responsibilities under the Protocol, which states that States Parties to the protocol undertake to publish and disseminate the annual reports of the national preventive mechanisms. The NPMs vary in the extent to which they fulfil these responsibilities. She emphasised that the NPM annual report is an important communication tool through which we contribute to making the work public and visible, ensure that important players and general public are notified of the NPM's activities and work, prepare and publish an analysis of the key issues connected to torture prevention, make recommendations, evaluate progress (or the lack thereof) of torture prevention, and establish and maintain a constant dialogue with the authorities. The annual reports are primarily intended for the national players and wide range of readers with a specific interest

in torture prevention. The contents of an annual report depend on various factors: whether the NPM already publishes other important information about its work, what its strategies are, and what the goals are that the NPM intends to achieve with the annual report. A NPM annual report must always contain: a short introduction and presentation of goals of the NPM in the particular country, information about the work of the NPM during the period in question, and a substantive analysis of torture prevention issues, including its most important findings. If reports of regular visits are published regularly, then the NPM can include just a synthesis of the key issues in relation to various places of detention in its report. The report must also include key recommendations for change. Future annual reports must also systematically include an analysis of how recommendations are implemented, unsolved issues from previous annual reports and noticeable changes, as well as reasons for possible failures.

While preparing a report, care must be taken not to publish personal identification data. Reports should be written in a constructive tone. After several years of operation, an NPM could prepare an evaluation of its work and its effect on the situation of people, who are vulnerable to torture and other forms of unacceptable treatment. Such analyses could also be included in the annual report. Duplication must be avoided. The length depends on the structure and context.

If the NPM works within an existing institution (ombudsman), its annual report can be published as a separate report, or must at least have a separate section dedicated to it in the institution's general annual report. Insofar as the NPM works with or includes civil society organisations, the latter should be consulted on the contents of the report//. The first annual report is longer, while subsequent reports can be shorter. Appendices should be kept to a minimum in order not to compromise the readability of the report. An online version of the annual report is appreciated, which may contain links to reports, images, interviews and media reports, which could serve as supplements to the printed version of the report. It is important to find a balance between quantitative and qualitative information published in the report. The NPM must adopt a dissemination strategy for its annual report at the national level, including a press conference and bilateral meetings with the competent authorities. The dissemination of the NPM's annual report should be part of the NPM's strategy of raising awareness more broadly. The report (or at least a summary of the annual report) should also be available in English. The NPM's annual report must be sent to regional and international organisations and bodies, and especially the Subcommittee on Prevention, as well as other NPMs.

Miha Horvat

He presented a short comparative overview of the annual reports of the national preventive mechanisms. The overview covered (only) the annual reports of the SEE NMP Network members and (only) for 2012, which were available on the SPT website (all of them except for the report of the national preventive mechanism of Montenegro).

A comparison of the length of the annual reports showed that for the most part the length of texts actually written by NPMs ranged from 75 to 95 pages (Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), except for the reports of Austria and Croatia, which were significantly shorter (33 and 34 pages, respectively, with which it was also clarified, that these countries were submitting such a report for the very first time). The actual lengths of all the annual reports were somewhat larger, because the national preventive mechanisms often also include various other texts, such as relevant laws, regulations and other such texts - in short, texts which were not written by NPMs.

The linguistic approaches could be roughly divided into three groups: Croatia's national preventive mechanism, for example, published separate versions of its annual report in Croatian and English ("separate version approach"); Macedonia is an example of a country, whose national preventive mechanism issued its report in both Macedonian and English in the same publication, where the Macedonian text was followed by its English translation ("consecutive approach"); Slovenia (which is the only country using this approach) issued its report so that each page of Slovenian text in the publication was followed by a page with its English translation ("simultaneous approach").

Concerning the compilation of reports about the visits or related findings and the preparation of syntheses for the annual reports, the following approaches were pointed out: in the report of Albania's national preventive mechanism, an "exhaustive approach" can be seen regarding detention and imprisonment in the listing of recommendations concerning individually visited institutions, each of which also has its own subsection (e.g., 2.2.2. Pre-trial detention Institution 302 in Tirana, doc. no. 201203868); quite a similar approach can be seen in the Serbian report, except that the list of recommendations is included in an appendix (e.g., Recommendations to the police - Police Headquarters in Zrenjanin etc.); in the Croatian report, sections regarding individual institutions (e.g., Visit to Zagreb Prison) are divided into subsections, although the approach there to listing the related findings and reports is more descriptive in nature; in the Macedonian report, some sections, such as the section on Police Stations, are divided into subsections covering individual issues (e.g., Detention rooms, Right to food and water, etc.); in the Slovenian report, each category of places of detention (prisons, police stations, psychiatric hospitals, etc.) has a dedicated section, without further breaking down with subheadings.

It was also shown that the Macedonian approach to providing recommendations is very detailed, both in the sense of mere quantity and in terms of degree of implementation; the Slovenian approach is more general in nature, with a general summary of (inter alia) recommendations provided and an evaluation of their implementation; the Croatian report follows a tabular approach, in which the left column contains a description of the recommendation and the right column contains responses to it from the relevant parties (which is very similar to how the Slovenian national preventive mechanism handles visits of places of detention in its individual reports, which are also published on its website).

The Slovenian and Macedonian national preventive mechanisms also make use of a tabular presentation to give an overview of their activities across the year (the former within a separate chapter, and the latter as an appendix to the report), in which the latter also uses a

yellow background colour when listing its preventive visits, making it possible to quickly figure out which activities were carried out in which places.

The annual report of Macedonia's national preventive mechanism is also worthy of particular praise in its use of photographs, as it includes a set of photographs for this kind of demonstration of good practices or conditions.

During the deliberations, the participants pointed out (among other things) the following:

CROATIA

They thanked the organisers for organising the meeting. They said that they have four employees in charge of the NPM. To date only two reports have been published. The Act Ratifying the Optional Protocol was adopted in 2012. In 2013, additional staff members were hired. The report for 2012 was issued in a separate publication. In 2013, the report was published as part of the ombudsman report. A unified report is more practical. It is true, however, that the report's visibility is reduced, since the NPM report is "lost" in the unified report. The law only requires the report to be presented in parliament, not necessarily also approved. However, the parliament insists that they vote on the report.

The NPM staff is also responsible for handling complaints and making visits to institutions. Preparations for publishing the report begin as early as at the end of the year. The report is prepared in December and January. They find that there is not enough time to prepare an analysis of the implementation of the recommendations. Advisers and the Deputy Ombudsman are also involved in the preparation of the report. Both reports are being prepared simultaneously (NPM and Ombudsman). The most important findings of the NPM are presented in the chapter on the restriction of personal liberty. The Ombudsman is also the "head" of the NPM. This year, a separate NPM report will be published (for 2013), whereas previous reports were included in the Ombudsman report. The reports are written simultaneously. Reports are limited to 30 pages (restriction of liberty and NPM). The data on regular visits and NPM visits are intertwined. The report includes thematic visits: psychiatry this year, children next year. They find that the photographs complement reports very well (as is the practice in Serbia). The report is also submitted to the CPT and SPT. The report is also published on the website. The parliament also receives the report. It is also available to people who have been deprived of their liberty. The report is not subject to voting and it is not adopted. Nevertheless, the parliament (sabor) discussed the report and voted on it.

BULGARIA

A special presentation of their work was prepared. The reports for 2012 and 2013 have already been published. Various approaches were used. Seven people are in charge of the NPM. They have to prepare their NPM report by the end of March. They start planning the work much earlier. The Ombudsman confirms the plan for the report by 31 January. They include a summary of the NPM report in the Ombudsman's annual report. In March, the report is sent to the parliament for consideration. In the first year, all institution visits were announced. After that, institutions were visited without prior announcement. At the beginning of the year, the NPM's work program was adopted. In 2013, work was focused on psychiatric hospitals, including those intended for children. All the members of the NPM take responsibility for the preparation of the report. They prepare domain-specific expert contributions. The NPM director collects all the contributions and sends them to the head of the Ombudsman's office. Communication with the Subcommittee on Prevention (SPT) takes place regularly. They do not have sufficient funds to cover their travel expenses. The SPT asked the Bulgarian government what is happening with the NPM's recommendations. In practice, NPM also had some difficulties in carrying out its work because some institution directors did not allow them to enter the premises.

The report consists of an introduction from the Ombudsman, outline of the responsibilities, list of institutions visited and recommendations and responses from the competent institutions in table form. Implementation of recommendations is shown in tabular form. The report is organised into sections: prisons, psychiatric hospitals, etc. Only the most important systematic problems are described. The report has 60 pages and contains no images or photographs. The new report does not include any tables. They have difficulties in obtaining certain kinds of data. A special (separate) report with recommendations and how to implement them will be prepared. The report is not published in a printed version;. Only an electronic version is published. Special press conferences are organized, but only when the Ombudsman report is published. The report is sent to the parliament for discussion, despite the fact that this is not required by the law. The Ombudsman presents the annual report in the plenary session in parliament. The parliament does not vote on the report, since it is only submitted to it for information purposes.

Satisfaction was expressed with the cooperation in the network, since we all have the same goals and values in carrying out the NPM tasks. They wish to be a part of the network for exchanging experiences and information and, in their opinion, this meeting is a perfect opportunity for that.

MACEDONIA

Their report is published in Macedonian, Albanian and English. The Ombudsman's report must be submitted to the parliament by 31 March. In its consideration, the parliament does not vote on the report. The report is sent to relevant institutions in Macedonia and international human rights organisations. The NPM staff members do not handle individual cases, but only visit institutions and carry out preventive visits. Unfortunately, last year's annual report has not been published on the website yet. Every year a specific topic is discussed (women, migrants, children, etc.). The report is published on 26 June (international day against torture). At the beginning of the year, its structure and focus are determined. The work tasks are assigned. There are only two employees who are in charge of the NPM and check the joint document. The Ombudsman is also the head of the NPM. This year, a calendar of visits in Macedonia will be published, with photographs of positive and negative examples. A list of all participating employees will be included in the report. A report is prepared after each visit. Afterwards, problems common to all the visited institutions are analysed and a synthesis is prepared. Preparations for the report start in January and continue in February. By March, a relatively clear picture of what will be included in the report emerges. This year's special theme will be dedicated to the situation of refugees and migrants. NGOs are not included. A memorandum of cooperation is concluded with forensic specialists and criminologists. Experts who write separate reports do not collaborate on writing the final report. A proofreader is employed at the institution but does not get into content. A table of recommendations was prepared with their levels of implementation. Not all recommendations are included in their report, but particular attention is dedicated to recurring ones. Both general and specific recommendations are included in a special table. SPT sent a response to the report submitted. After each visit a report is prepared and sent to the institution in question along with recommendations, whose implementation is then being verified. The extent to which state authorities implement their recommendations is important. It is not a matter of technical issues in cooperation, but of substance. They wonder whether the SPT will cooperate with the national authorities to implement the NPMs' recommendations. A press conference is organized in Macedonia for the publication of the report, and there is a lot of interest in it. A Power Point presentation of the report is prepared, which is sent to all relevant bodies, including the SPT, after the conference.

An interesting fact was mentioned, namely that a few employees were found to be under the influence of alcohol at one of the police stations visited. Standards at police stations are very low. They do not have their own standards but adopt those of CPT. They highlighted a debate at the last meeting of the medical network, when there was also discussion of the

standards at institutions. In October 2014, a regional conference will be organized (together with the NPM network) about standards in psychiatric institutions (fixation, psychiatric confinement, etc.). A psychiatric hospital in Skopje will be visited. A short summary of the conference program will be prepared. All the NPM representatives will be invited to attend the conference.

AUSTRIA

Reports and recommendations are prepared after each visit. There are three Ombudsmen in Austria and one of them is responsible for the NPM. One person is responsible for integrating all the texts into a single report. Before the report is printed, a journalist is asked to read it in order to ensure its readability. In January and February, texts and documents are collected and the report is prepared. In May or June, the report is submitted to the parliament.

The report is of average length (80 pages) and is addressed to the Austrian parliament. Detailed records are included in order to inform readers, including members of parliament, of the activities performed by the NPM/. Half a page is dedicated to every visit.

Recommendations are also published. The Ombudsman's report is 350 pages long. The NPM report has 80 pages. There have been some ideas about publishing a separate NPM report. The visits are carried out by committee members rather than the Ombudsman, although they are not civil servants and are not employed by the Ombudsman. Six such groups are established, which include 48 people altogether. Two committee members are always present. At least one of them must have professional knowledge about the institution visited. They are guaranteed access to documents. They wondered how other countries deal with recommendations and whether they check their implementation. They presented their work from 2012 onwards. The most important principle for their work is that they must not harm the people and institutions that they visit. They wondered how other NPMs specify standards.

They invite the media to their annual report presentation. They send the report to the president of the country and the political group leaders. The report is submitted to the parliament rather than to institutions and ministers, since the latter are already included in the discussions during the investigations. They have a special TV programme on public television in which particular cases are discussed. They wonder what to do to increase the visibility of their work further.

MONTENEGRO

In Montenegro, a special parliament session is dedicated to the discussion of the NPM report. The NPM report is part of the general Ombudsman report - a special part of the report. This year, a separate report was prepared which will also be submitted to the committee. There are 15 pages dedicated to the NPM report in the Ombudsman report. Eight to ten examples of institution visits are selected. The NPM report is published in a shorter version. Only one report has been published so far. The Human Rights Committee of the Montenegro parliament discussed the NPM report. Representatives of appropriate ministries were also invited. However, in the plenary session, the parliament discusses only the Ombudsman report and not the NPM report as well. The report is sent to a wide range of selected institutions.

SERBIA

The NPM report is prepared by the end of April. On 26 June, the international day of fight against torture, a public debate about the report is held to which NGOs and experts are also invited. The situation is described, organised by thematic field. Some issues and even recommendations recur from year to year. In their opinion, it is important to present the country's situation accurately.

The Deputy Ombudsman, who is responsible for handling issues related to deprivation of freedom, is also in charge of the NPM report. At the beginning of 2013, a separate department with three employees was established. The structure of the report has been changed. In the 2013 report, tables have been prepared and used as the basis for the report. The tables include the most important data.

General recommendations of a systemic nature are prepared. Special reports are annexed to the report. The first part of the report contains legal and other basic information about the NPM, and presentation of the NPM's purpose and goals. In addition, personnel information and financial sources are presented, as well as cooperation with NGOs and employee training. There is a separate section dedicated to dialogue with the authorities. One section is dedicated to legislation and cooperation with the SPT. General recommendations are also included in the report. Recommendations by individual visits (and by time period) are published in an annex to the report. In another supplement, the Optional Protocol is published, as well as a proposal for a new organisational structure, an example of a memorandum with an NGO and a letter to the SPT. The SPT asked them whether the

national authorities implemented the NPM's recommendations. The SPT's suggestions have been implemented.

The report is published in Serbian and English. It is sent to all the ministries, the psychiatric institutions, the social security office and the police, etc. It is also sent to the parliament boards (national assembly), experts and international organisations (UN, Council of Europe, EU).

A public discussion of the report is held in the assembly. Last year, both reports were discussed in the parliament on the same day. All the reports submitted by independent institutions are discussed at the same plenary meeting. Embassy and NGOs representatives (on a wider scale) are also invited to participate. A public session is planned for this year as well.

The media can abuse individual cases for sensationalist writing. The psychiatric clinic visit was an example of such an abuse. Unfortunately, the media focused only on fragments of information and failed to present the case as a whole. The public's reaction was ferocious and extremely negative (the case concerned a paedophile). However, the NPM later explained which human rights they were standing up for and why.

HUNGARY

The deadline for issuing the report is 31 March. This is the only deadline set by the law. The law requires the Hungarian Ombudsman office to establish a new department and hire 11 people. This year, Hungary suffers from severe financial crisis. They are planning to establish a special department which will also prepare the report. The law makes no special provisions on the contents of the report. This depends on the Ombudsman. They said that they have not yet faced the issues pointed out by the other NPM representatives. In the future, a message containing questions will be sent to the network members, as the more intensive work has only started. There are currently no specific plans on how to write the report.

There are no regulations specifying how the parliament should discuss the Ombudsman's annual report. 400 copies are sent to the parliament members. Follow-up checks and visits are being discussed. The discussions can last as long as four weeks so that all the parliament committees are visited and participation in the plenary session is assured, where the report is also subject to voting. They ask themselves what would happen if the Parliament would reject the Ombudsman's report and especially the NPM part. During the

parliamentary discussions, the media as well as the general public are being kept well informed.

SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, the preparations for writing the report begin already at the first meeting in January, which is attended by NPM employees and representatives of the cooperating NGOs. One of the meeting topics is also the preparation of the report. Every year, more and more sections are prepared by the selected non-governmental organisations. In the 2013 report, Katja Sodja (NGO) prepared an entire section on visits to police stations and prisons. The report is thus the joint task of all the collaborating parties, and the work is divided among all the members. The Deputy Ombudsman is responsible for the NPM's work and prepares an introduction, overview and, if necessary, completes or edits the texts prepared for the report. In order to manage the work more easily, the Deputy has a set of folders which he uses throughout the year to collect particularly interesting topics which could be included in the report (so that they are not forgotten). This means extensive work. In Slovenia, the NPM department is not (yet) separate from the Ombudsman's operations.

In addition to the meeting held by NPM employees at the beginning of the year, the purpose of the first Ombudsman's bureau meeting in January is to establish deadlines for preparing the contents of the Ombudsman report and the NPM report. Every Deputy must prepare the texts related to his area of responsibility by the end of January. The NPM has until mid-February. The Deputy responsible for the NPM sends the draft report to the Ombudsman. She reads everything through, completes it, and draws attention to ambiguities. An editor takes care of proofreading and editing the text. In past years, all the members of the Ombudsman's bureau would discuss and read the report together. Although this is very time-consuming, it is also beneficial because areas and content potentially overlap. Unfortunately, this practice was abandoned.

The report is actually a synthesis of the general findings made on the basis of individual visits. In the Slovenian report for 2013, one summary table will be dedicated to visits and another to an overview of the NPM's other activities. While preparing the report about the visited institution, the institution itself is described and the goals of the national preventive mechanism's operations are presented. The report also contains the Convention and the Optional Protocol. Some of the important SPT documents are also included.

Annual reports are sent to all the visited institutions, police stations, prisons, hospitals, the social security offices and national institutions (ministries, parliament, government, etc.),

general and specialised libraries in Slovenia and international human rights organisations (EU, UN, Council of Europe), as well as the SPT and CPT. The Ombudsman (in Slovenia) sends the parliament a special (separate) NPM report alongside the regular report. Already at the beginning (2008), we were wondering whether to publish it separately or as an integrated part of the Ombudsman report (under the section on personal liberty). The fact is that the parliament pays less attention to the NPM report if it is included in the comprehensive Ombudsman report. In Slovenia, the parliament does not vote on the report, but it only adopts recommendations for the government, which are formed on the basis of the Ombudsman's recommendations. The Ombudsman must send the report to the parliament by the last day of September. In Slovenia, the procedure for discussing the Ombudsman annual report is well established in the National Assembly rules. A specific article stipulates that the parliament must discuss the Ombudsman's report. The Ombudsman personally presents the report to the members of parliament after it is presented to the parliament committees and second house of the parliament (National Council of the Republic of Slovenia). Parliamentary discussions thus end by the parliament adopting recommendations for the Government and other national authorities. In recent years, the government also prepares a comprehensive response report. The report is also presented at a special news conference.

The following issues, findings and conclusions were highlighted at the meeting:

Unfortunately, not every reader of the report is familiar with the NPM's activities, so more should be done to promote its work. The SPT publishes all the NPM reports on its website, and NPMs should check if their reports are published or not. We must come to know the goals of the annual report and why we even prepare it, other than for fulfilling our obligations under the convention. We have to know what effect the report has on the public and on decision makers. More attention should be paid to analysing recommendations. The question remains what happens when a report is rejected by the parliament (in some countries reports are subject to a vote in the parliament). Which information should be included in the general Ombudsman's report and which in the NPM report? Thematic reports are very interesting. We are faced with the challenge of how to monitor the implementation of recommendations. Should we rely on the responses obtained or do we have to make follow-up visits of all the institutions to verify the levels of recommendation implementation? The visited institutions often promise that they will put everything in order, but it is necessary to check what has been done. The SPT's perspective and feedback on our reports is important for all of us.

At the network's meeting in Belgrade (2013), a question was raised on how to establish standards. Within the network, we will be able to dedicate more attention to this issue. A lot of effort and energy will be needed. We comply with the CPT standards now. We are less familiar with the SPT standards. In our work, we often refer to the CPT standards. Sometimes we also look for guidance in UN documents. Unfortunately, they are very general and it is difficult to use them as a reference.

SPT can ask any country about the implementation of recommendations. It is an important tool-weapon for our work. Unified principles of communication should be established.

The meeting participants have found that communication and dialogue between the SPT and individual countries is important for the implementation of recommendations.

About the network's future work:

Ivan Šelih informed the meeting participants that Bulgaria also wishes to join the network, as the Ombudsman of Bulgaria had informed him by letter. Šelih expressed satisfaction with the unanimous decision to accept Bulgaria's NPM into the network and with the collaborative support for it, as everyone can contribute and share their knowledge, experience and practices.

The next issue concerns the **chairing of the network**. Article 13 of our declaration states that each country will chair the network for a period of one year. NPM Slovenia took the first presidency and in March 2014 the year came to an end. In Belgrade it was agreed that NPM Albania would take over the presidency after Slovenia, but unfortunately it is not present at this meeting. It was agreed that Ivan Šelih would ask them whether they are prepared to take it. Otherwise, the next country, Macedonia, would take it. In October, Macedonia will be organising a conference and we will discuss this further at that time.

Suggestions were made regarding themes to be discussed at future meetings. Croatia suggests the possibility of joint visits (Article 8 of the declaration) and exchange of experts. Austria suggested to discuss control (follow-up) visits to institutions. Slovenia proposes a topic related to the standards of ensuring high-quality food for prisoners. Possible themes also include prison regimes (open, closed, etc.). Another current issue is related to solving the temperature issue in prisons and other institutions (what are the standards).

The meeting minutes will be forwarded also to Geneva.

Written by Liana Kalčina in cooperation with Ivan Šelih