



REPORT

**RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19
AND ITS IMPACT ON CLOSED INSTITUTIONS IN MOLDOVA**

IDOM 2021

INTRODUCTION

The information presented in the report is largely aimed at assessing the respect of the rights of persons in state custody during the pandemic, as a result of monitoring visits made in pre-trial detention places of Police Inspectorates (PDP), in Psychiatric Hospitals and Temporary Placement Centres for Persons with Disabilities.

The report requires a finding of the factual situation regarding the observance of human rights between 01.01.2021 - 01.12.2021, with the formulation of proposals and recommendations for state authorities, in order to ensure human rights in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Republic of Moldova.

In order to achieve increasing human rights observance within closed institutions, IDOM representatives carried out monitoring visits in the following institutions: Temporary Placement Centre for Persons with Disabilities from Brinzeni, Edinet, Temporary Placement Centre for Persons with Disabilities from Balti, Temporary Placement Centre for Boys with Disabilities from Orhei, Psihiatric Hospital from Chisinau, Psihiatric Hospital from Orhei and Balti and pre-trial detention places (PDP) from Chisinau, Balti, Râșcani, Edineț, Orhei, Cahul, Hincești și Cimislia.

In the context of monitoring the rights of persons in state custody, it is important to mention that persons deprived of their liberty are considered to be much more vulnerable in the context of COVID-19 pandemic than the general population due to the conditions that require people to be in common places for long periods of time.

The purpose of the monitoring visits was to familiarize with the human rights situation in these institutions, to identify violations and to make recommendations in order to restore rights, improve the conditions or situation of persons in custody of these institutions, regulate or optimize processes, including at legislative or normative level, based on the specifics of the identified violations, restrictions or limitations imposed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We consider that the measures taken by the government to address the impact of COVID-19 on the closed institutions such as pre-trial detention places, psychiatric institutions and residential institutions are not sufficient. Following the monitoring visits carried out by IDOM some problems related to poor management in the prevention of COVID-19 were identified.

Relating to psychiatric institutions and residential institutions.

At the beginning of the pandemic doctors and other workers in the health system were infected with COVID-19 and even died of COVID-19, and these statistics were very worrying because it reveals poor management in terms of training medical staff in prophylaxis, prevention and / or control of epidemic diseases. The patients from the targeted institutions also found themselves in the same situation, because they did not benefit from trainings in preventing the risk of spreading

the infection nor by anti-COVID-19 protection measures. From the beginning of the pandemic, newcomers were isolated (from those already placed in the institution) in a place for monitoring or sometimes for undergoing PCR tests, compared with the current situation when Rapid Tests are being performed on them. Even after more than a year of pandemic situation, the monitoring group noticed that at the entrance in the institutions just a protective mask is required, the thermometry of vizitors is occasionally performed and hand disinfection can be recommended.

In the **Orhei Psychiatric Hospital** only the hospital staff was affected by COVID-19, the beneficiaries were not affected. At the moment things have changed, because some of the institution's staff were vaccinated against COVID-19 (about 93%). With the patients consent the beneficiaries of the institution were vaccinated.

In the **Balti Psychiatric Hospital** all the beneficiaries of the institution were vaccinated with the patients consent and on the day of the monitoring visit, about 80% of the employees of the institution were vaccinated. Patients with COVID-19 were not transferred to other medical institutions because they were treated in the COVID-19 treatment department within the institution. Patients from Temporary Placement Centres for Persons with Disabilities from Balti and Badiceni, Edinet who were diagnosed with COVID-19 were transferred to the Balti Psychiatric Hospital because the institution has a Covid treatment department, including intensive care.

In the **Chişinău Psychiatric Hospital** all the beneficiaries of the institution were vaccinated with their consent and on the day of the monitoring visit, about 87% of the employees of the institution were vaccinated. Patients with COVID-19 were not transferred to other medical institutions because they were treated in the COVID-19 treatment department within the institution. At the same time, the doctors from the COVID-19 treatment department had the possibility to consult with other doctors from other medical institutions.

Relating to **Temporary Placement Centre for Boys with Disabilities from Orhei** staff of the institution and some beneficiaries as well (all beneficiaries over the age of 18) were vaccinated against COVID-19.

In the **Temporary Placement Centre for Persons with Disabilities from Balti** about 92% of beneficiaries of the institution were vaccinated with their consent and on the day of the monitoring visit, about 82% of the employees of the institution were vaccinated. Patients with COVID-19 were isolated and treated within institution (about 90%) and those in medium and severe condition were transferred to other medical institutions, including Balti psihiatric hospital.

In the **Temporary Placement Centre for Persons with Disabilities from Brinzeni, Edinet** all the beneficiaries of the institution were vaccinated with their consent and on the day of the monitoring visit, about 95% of the employees of the institution were vaccinated. Patients with COVID-19 were isolated and treated within institution and those in medium and severe condition were transferred to other medical institutions, including Balti psihiatric hospital.

Findings:

- In the context of the pandemic, the beneficiaries' contact with the outside world was reduced to zero. Likewise, the interaction in conditions of confidentiality with the family being practically impossible only if the beneficiary has personal technical conditions. The institutions do not have confidential technical solutions that would ensure the connection with close people from outside. Only in Chisinau Psychiatric Hospital relatives can visit the beneficiaries of the institution if they prove that they have been vaccinated or have are tested negative for COVID-19
- The material conditions existing in the accommodation rooms of the beneficiaries remain below the satisfactory threshold. In institutions, it is common to accommodate large groups of 5-10 people with individual beds. The bedrooms have enough natural and artificial light, but are poorly ventilated. Sanitary facilities are only available in the common areas per ward. The common toilets and the space intended for the shower do not have doors, thus the individualization of the intimacy of the physiological process is not ensured.
- In the wards of the Orhei psychiatric hospital, persistent smell of urine, chlorine and tobacco smoke which makes breathing difficult and it makes a presumption that some beneficiaries are neglected by caregivers.
- Insufficient staff training on COVID-19 pandemic prevention measures. However, some employees of psychiatric institutions have been trained in this field, for example in the Chisinau Psychiatric Hospital trainings were provided by the institution's epidemiologist, in the Balti Psychiatric Hospital by the representative of the Public Health Center, in the Temporary Placement Centre for Boys with Disabilities from Orhei and Temporary Placement Centre for Persons with Disabilities from Brinzeni, Edinet some of the managers of the institution were trained on COVID-19 issues by the NGO Keystone - Moldova and by representatives of the Public Health Center.
- Insufficient trainings on COVID-19 prevention measures for beneficiaries. Information materials on COVID-19 are available in limited quantities, most often only a few copies are placed in public places (corridor), they are on paper, developed by the MHLSP. Unfortunately, the vast majority of residents are illiterate, with deficiencies in understanding the messages. Some institutions have televisions in the halls of the institution, although existed informative videos on measures to prevention of COVID-19 infection were not broadcasted at the time of monitoring visits.
- The treatment of persons confirmed by COVID-19 shall be carried out in residential institutions. If necessary, persons with severe and critical forms are placed in public medical institutions or transferred to the psychiatric hospital designated in accordance with the MSMPS order (as appropriate).
- The provision of detergents, disinfectants, masks and other personal protective equipment is satisfactory, the needs being covered by the budget of the institution, MHLSP distributions and donors. However, the monitoring team noticed that the beneficiaries does not have protective equipment.
- Antiviral drugs, anti-COVID-19 vaccines and Rapid Tests are in stock. In some cases, difficulties were reported with the delivery of medications that were purchased and were not available at pharmaceutical warehouses. As a further factor or consideration is the lack of

management of storage / destruction of anti-COVID-19 protection used equipment in the Orhei psychiatric hospital and Temporary Placement Centre for Persons with Disabilities from Brinzeni, Edinet.

- Establishment of measures to ensure free access to movement without restricting the freedom of beneficiaries of residential institutions, by providing specific means of protection and observing precautions to prevent and combat infection COVID-19 by ensuring transport as necessary to ensure exits for the beneficiaries.

Recommendations:

- Exchange of good practices between institutions in order to develop institutional documents and implement their provisions.
- Involvement of the cooperation partners of the institutions in the elaboration and implementation of the response measures carried out within the institutions.
- Ensuring the hygienic conditions suitable for a medical institution.
- Ensuring that in addition to wearing a protective mask, thermometry and hand disinfection should be performed on people entering the institutions.
- Ensuring that beneficiaries have access to COVID-19 protective equipment.
- Ensuring an adequately technically equipped space to ensure the connection with close people from the outside (skype, viber, etc.) both during the pandemic and in order to maintain communication with relatives.
- Ensuring the information of the beneficiaries in an accessible language (including TV broadcasting) about the need to comply with the restrictions imposed by the orders and acts of the commission and the MHLSP regarding the prophylaxis, prevention and / or control of epidemic diseases.
- Ensuring compliance with the principle of proportionality in case of restriction of the rights of beneficiaries.
- Is a need to establish a management of storage / destruction of anti-COVID-19 protection used equipment.

Relating to the pre-trial detention places from Police Inspectorates:

Cases of illness with COVID-19 among the police employees exist, meanwhile, employees of the Police Inspectorates who wished to vaccinate against COVID-19 were vaccinated. In all police inspectorates, the thermometry of the persons is performed at the entrance and the disinfection of the hands and the obligatory wearing of the protective masks are required. However, mostly, the anti-COVID-19 protection used equipment is destroyed by burning without having any contracts for their collection and distruction with specialized agencies / hospitals.

The **PDP from Chisinau Police Department** is provided with Rapid Tests, have antiviral drugs in stock and protective equipment (received from the General Police Inspectorate (GPI)). At the time of the visit, about 71% of employees had been vaccinated against COVID-19. The detainees

who were tested positive for COVID-19 were transferred to the Pruncul penitentiary Nr. 16 or to hospitals for treatment, being guarded by the police. The persons in police custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in mild form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP within the Singerei Police Inspectorate (strategic detention isolator strategically established by GPI provision no. 365 of 29.10.2020).

PDP from Balti Police Inspectorate has antiviral drugs and Rapid Tests and protective equipment in stock (received from the GPI). The persons in police custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in mild form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP within the Singerei Police Inspectorate.

PDP from Orhei Police Inspectorate. Cases of Covid 19 disease did not occur in PDP Orhei. They have antiviral drugs and Rapid Tests and protective equipment in stock (received from the GPI). The persons in police custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in mild form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP within the Singerei Police Inspectorate.

PDP from Edinet Police Inspectorate is provided with Rapid Tests, have antiviral drugs in stock and protective equipment (received from the GPI). The persons in police custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in mild form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP within the Singerei Police Inspectorate.

In the **PDP from Rîșcani Police Inspectorate** cases of COVID-19 did not occur, just one police officer was quarantined at home because one of family member had COVID-19. PDP has antiviral drugs, Rapid Tests and protective equipment in stock (received from the GPI). The persons in police custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in mild form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP within the Singerei Police Inspectorate

PDP from Cimișlia Police Inspectorate did not register cases of COVID-19 among employees. About 99.3% of the employees of the Cimișlia Police Inspectorate were vaccinated. PDP has in stock antiviral drugs, Rapid Tests and protective equipment (received from GPI). **PDP from Cimișlia Police Inspectorate** is a strategic detention isolator established by GPI provision no. 365 of 29.10.2020.

PDP from Cahul Police Inspectorate did not register cases of COVID-19 among employees. About 55% of the employees of the Cahul Police Inspectorate were vaccinated. IDP has in stock antiviral drugs, Rapid Tests and protective equipment (received from GPI). The persons in police custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in light form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP from Cimișlia Police Inspectorate.

PDPs from Hincești Police Inspectorate registered cases of COVID-19 among employees. About 82% of the employees of the Hincești Police Inspectorate were vaccinated. PDP has in stock antiviral drugs, Rapid Tests and protective equipment (received from GPI). The persons in police

custody, confirmed with COVID-19 in a light form and who do not meet the hospitalization criteria are transferred to PDP within the Police Inspectorate from Cimislia.

Findings:

- The provision of PDP with medical staff is insufficient in terms of number of units and occupancy, which influences the access and quality of medical services available to detainees in police custody.
- Institutional plans for the training of PDP staff in the field of COVID-19 prevention are not available, including operational procedures and reaction scenarios in various possible circumstances in the work of the isolator.
- Some police officers who were infected with COVID-19 at work received unique compensation. At the moment, such compensations are no longer allocated by the state;
- No instructions for medical waste management, instructions for cleaning surfaces, instructions / procedure for symptoms / suspicion of COVID-19 in employees, instructions / procedure for cases of COVID-19 symptoms / suspicion in detained persons.
- Not all PDPs provide detainees with hygiene products, disinfectants or any COVID-19 protective equipment.
- Not all institutions benefited from specialized trainings on the prevention and treatment of COVID-19, but also other trainings on the organization of medical activity in PDP. Just in some PDPs were organized practical trainings of PDP employees on the use of protective equipment, hand hygiene, management of used equipment and other aspects related to infection control.
- Information materials on COVID-19 are available in limited quantities, most often only a few copies are placed in public places (entrance to PDPs, corridor). Materials on COVID-19 and preventive measures for detainees were not observed and are not distributed individually or placed in cells.

Recommendations:

- Exchange of good practices between institutions in order to develop institutional documents and implement their provisions.
- Ensuring the contracting of services or the implementation of waste management mechanisms resulting from medical activity within isolator (management of storage / destruction of anti-COVID-19 protection used equipment).
- The need to provide detainees with hygiene products and protective equipment against COVID-19.
- Ensuring the disinfection of the cells inside the pre-trial detention places.
- The need of conducting more trainings of police officers and medical staff from PDPs on COVID-19 infection by some experts.

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