

”Women in Prison” Social, Economic and Cultural Rights of Female Prisoners

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Women in Prison

- The number of female prisoners have increased in every country
- Equal opportunities and equal access to social, economic and cultural rights are demanded
- Access to these rights is a question of gender's rights and minority rights

Female prisoners have been disadvantaged to obtain:

- Information about their human rights
- Education and vocational training
- Safe and loving relations
- Sufficient housing conditions
- Health care
- Independence

Female prisoners are to be considered as a vulnerable group

- They face the same problems as other prisoners but in addition:
- Difficulties related to their motherhood
- Difficulties because they belong to a minority
- Difficulties because of their crimes

Implementation of Social rights

- Right to relations to their children and husband
- Right to unguarded family visits
- Right to stay in the country because of family reasons, if not citizen
- Right to Health service
- Right to spare time activities

Implementation of Economic Rights

- Right to work inside the prison and right to a civil work permission during the sentences
- Right to income
- Right to social security
- Right to use their own money

Implementation of Cultural Rights

- Equal access to education and vocational training inside and outside the prison
- Equal access to sports, cultural activities and handcrafts
- Equal access to learn special skills like use of computer, learning of languages, especially for foreigners

What is the reality like?

- In most European countries there are no legal barriers to offer equal opportunities to social, economic and cultural rights for women in prison
- The problems are to be found in the implementation and on the level of attitudes.

Some examples:

- Lack of equal opportunities to work
- Lack of equal opportunities to study
- Less possibilities to serve the sentences in an open or semi open unit
- Less possibilities to sparetime activities

- Higher demands to obtain some kind of privileges
- The answerer to a request might be: not even all men in this prison have that kind of possibilities, but you seldom here the opposite : not even all female prisoners have those possibilities
- The prison sentences have been designed for men and by men, women are always an exception. It creates problems to find a special solution to meet the needs of women.

What need to be done to meet the human rights of Female prisoners?

- More attention should be paid to their needs and their situation in EU member states and not only in candidate countries
- There should be a special legal body responsible to supervise that the equal rights are followed by prison services

Female prisoners situation has been neglected

- Attitude to women in prison is that they must be really bad
- They are often considered also by prison staff as more difficult than men to deal with
- The moral punishment from the society is much harder

The most demanding challenge is not to create new principles, laws and recommendations, but to implement the existing. This would benefit most of all female prisoners.

Social, Economic and Cultural rights are Human Rights!

Women are responsible to improve the conditions and the treatment of Female prisoners, no one else will do it!

