



THEA

TÜRKİYE HAPİSHANELER ENFORMASYON AĞI
TURKEY'S PRISON INFORMATION NETWORK

THEA NETWORK GUIDE



AÇIK
TOPLUM
VAKFI



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1. Turkey's Prison Information Network (THEA)

Prisoners are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Turkey. Many of them are stigmatised and discriminated in several phases of their lives: before, during and after imprisonment. Only a small number of NGOs have been working on the Turkish penal system for the past years. As individual NGOs we face difficulties to access prisons and to enhance our knowledge of the situation. Furthermore, there is a lack of interest of the Turkish civil society, authorities or universities on the operation of the penal system. The on-going debate on human rights violations within the penal system brought the awareness that any reform acts in the penal system would be meaningless without the full support of civil society. Working together as NGOs gives the possibility to mutually learn from our member NGOs, strengthen our knowledge and enhance our input on policy implementations.

To this end we established Turkey's Prison Information Network (THEA) to create a network of NGOs working on prison issues in Turkey. Furthermore, sub-networks work for prisoners with special needs: children, women, LGBTI, foreigner, elderly, health problems and life imprisonment. These groups have different needs concerning their rights, mental status, health or culture, which need to be addressed. Through former prisoners, prisoners' families and letters from current prisoners we learn about their concerns and needs. In case of any human rights violation that we are informed about through these means, we apply to the relevant human right governmental institutions and inform the public through the media. We work together in solidarity with other NGOs in order to increase the knowledge about the penal system. Through our upcoming conference we aim to share our work to a wider audience. Furthermore, handbooks for prisoners with special needs will be prepared for the prisoners.

This Network Guide is part of CISST's project "Turkey's Prison Information Network" (THEA) and it aims to inform members of the network and interested parties about the working methods of the network.

The initial phase of the THEA project of 2015 to 2017 are supported by the European Union and Acik Toplum. The given information are to be seen as guidelines and information is supplied without liability. Furthermore, the EU and Acik Toplum are not responsible for the contents of the material prepared by CISST or the network within this project. This guide does not replace any guides published by the EU or Acik Toplum or any other funding body.



2. The Network

The THEA network is guided by the Project Coordinator (PC), Project Director (PD), Project Assistant (PA), the Sub-Group Representatives and the Network Members and Volunteers. The PC, PD and PA are responsible for the general management of the networks activities.

2.1. Sub-networks

The sub-network representative is responsible for the running of the respectable sub-group. Within the THEA network there are six sub-networks: children in prison, women in prison, LGBTI prisoners, prisoners with health problems (disabled, terminal illness or mentally ill), foreigners and prisoners facing life imprisonment without parole. The members of the sub-networks consist of different NGOs, academicians, students experts and members of the civil society. The groups decide during the workshops and meetings what actions and working method they want to focus on, e.g. the sub-network on children is more rights based whereas the sub-network on LGBTI prisoners is rights based but also aiming to send supplies (such as clothes) to prisoners through the network. Furthermore, the networks sometimes overlap in their work, such as women with their children in prison, in which case the networks can share information accordingly.

2.1.1 Sub-Group Representatives Responsibilities

- Research their sub-groups needs and situation in prison;
- Establish and maintain contact to national and international organisations related to their sub-groups;
- Organise and conduct seminars for their specific sub-groups;
- Maintain the blogs and update the information concerning their sub-groups;
- Work together with TCPS members on the handbooks;
- Ensure the timely delivery of meetings and publications.

2.1.2 Network Members

Members of the THEA network are NGOs, academicians, students and members of the civil society. The working of the network can only be secured through mutual trust and the willingness to work together, to this end, Network Members should:

- Collaborate within the Sub-Network and/or the general THEA network;
- Share ideas and information about penal reform;
- Participate in common meetings, workshops and conferences to share information, mutually learn from one another and to plan common activities;

3. Communication

Communication is one of the key elements to keep a project running and to work towards its success. Especially in a network communication is of uppermost importance. Only through informing each other and through establishing a system of communication the network can run to its full potential. Within the network of our current project, THEA, we decided together with the network members on communication matters:

- The general method of communication will be through mail-groups;
- General questions, information and organizational matters will be discussed in appropriate groups;
- The groups are created out of the different member types (THEA, Sub-Group), to be able to send the appropriate and important and interesting information;
- Furthermore, members have access to the blogs, to be able to contribute and share their information.

It is important to note that the information shared in the mail groups is confidential, in order to protect the privacy of the recipients.

4. Turkish Law On the Right To Information (Law NO: 4982) and THEA

One important part of the network is to obtain and share knowledge. One of the best way to obtain official information about the Turkish prison system is through the Right to Information Act, law No. 4982, which was enacted in 2003¹. This act created the legal basis for citizens to obtain information from the government through applications. According to the law, public institutions, citizens and legal entities (e.g. associations, etc.) which apply to obtain information are entitled to a response within within 15 working days. If the requested information requires special work, such as that the institution has to gather information etc., that time can be up to 30 days. To gain information about prisons, members of the network can apply to the Ministry of Justice or specific prison administrations.

To make an application go on the Ministry of Justice's website:

<http://www.bilgiedinme.adalet.gov.tr/> address

Questions when filling out the natural or legal person forms downloaded from the page if you good formula, you have to use the law more effectively.

Regarding the Right to Information Act it is important to keep in mind the following points:

- In some cases the answers are not satisfactory, as the answer might require a special study. Even an answer stating that "We can not answer your question" is of importance (for example the Ministry of Justice does not know how many people got ill in prison or which diseases the prisoners have).
- The questions should be asked open. He should not run away to answer. "These applications are made on the basis of what" you say, "No. ** based on the law," he can get an answer.
- You can refine your question: "How many children under the age of 18 are in Turkey's prisons? In which provinces are the children imprisoned / What is the distribution

¹ Translated from Alper, Z. text from the blog ozelihtiyacimahpuslar.wordpress.com:
<https://ozelihtiyacimahpuslar.wordpress.com/2015/02/02/hapishaneler-hakkinda-resmi-bilgi-edinmek/>



according to the prison? Which age has many children? " etc. It is for example important to use "age" instead of "age range" to get a more specific answer.

- If you are asking questions based on existing information that you have, try to thoroughly explain the situation in your question, for example: "Regarding the information we about the progress of the privatization of prisons, we want to learn which unit of the Ministry is dealing with it? Is there an exemplary model that you work with?"
- Privacy is also an important principle that the state/ we want to protect. In accordance with this principle, a question that asks "what is the condition of the prisoner?" explicitly cannot be answered. This is due to the issue of privacy, protection of personal rights, or on behalf of the investigation secrecy, etc., and they will say they cannot give us information about it. Instead it is better to formulate the question differently, for example: "During the breakdown of the sick prisoner Hasem Arduçlu in Siirt E Type closed prison on 31 December 2015, there was not a doctor in prison, the same day he had a heart attack and later lost his life in the hospital (related news link). Which process has been started regarding the responsible doctor and the administration? What measures have been taken to prevent the same thing to happen again in prison? Is there a doctor 24/7 available in the prison? This way it is not about the prisoner as such, and does not breach his privacy as the information is known, but more about the general administrations o the prison.
- Call and ask when there is no answer to your application and you might need to reapply. In case the answer to the earlier question was refused, you can open an investigation with the Committee of the Information Act.

In the past CİSST gained very important information this way, such as how many prisoners dies in prisons or the causes of death. Another example is that we learned about the plans to build a separated prison for LGBTI prisoners when we asked what measures they have taken for LGBTI inmates.

Although it might be a bit difficult at times to get information, it is a very important resource that still should not be abandoned. You can share the answers you receive through the network, media, websites, blogs, etc.

In addition, it is possible to learn in this way from other institutions outside the Ministry of Justice: Prime Ministry Communication Centre (BİMER), Ministry of Health (patient rights, prisoners in hospital wards, etc.), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (cases involving the gendarmerie).

5. THEA Network and Funding Bodies

This project is funded by the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey and Acik Toplum.

In case of questions regarding the implementation of the project documents of PRAG, the practical EU help guide (including annexes to the grant contract; financial forms) are helpful:

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/annexes.do?group=A>

5.1. Communication and Visibility - the European Union

The European Union sets out guidelines concerning the visibility as a funding body in its "Communication and Visibility Manual for the European Union External Actions" (2010) brochure.

This brochure is available online at:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication_and_visibility_manual_en.pdf

For any printed project material (folders, flyers, press statement, etc) it is important to keep in line with the EU branding. The manual states that²:

- the EU flag must be prominently displayed;
- the EU flag must be used in its entirety;
- without any alterations or additions made to it;
- the EU flag must not be shown to incorporate any flag or symbol from another country, donor or institution.

² European Union I (2010). "Communication and Visibility Manual for the European Union External Actions" (2010) brochure. Retrieved, March, 23, 2015 from: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication_and_visibility_manual_en.pdf

You can find electronic templates for the flag:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/visibility/index_en.htm

Furthermore, the EU prepared detailed standards and constructions, which can be found under the "Institutional style guide":

<http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-000100.htm>

The example of the flag given in the manual is this:



Additionally, each publication needs to incorporate the following disclaimer, as the "EU is not responsible for the contents of communication material prepared by contractors, implementing partners or international organisations [...]"³:

*"This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of <name of the author/contractor/implementing partner/ international organisation> and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union."*⁴

In case the project continues after the completion of EU funding, the EU flag must be used on further publications and material for six month after the end date⁵. After that, the following sentence must be included on the printed material:

³ ibid.

⁴ ibid.

⁵ ibid.

“The initial phase <dates> of this project/ programme was supported by the European Union”⁶

5.6. Communication and Visibility - Acik Toplum Vakfi

For any printed project material (folders, flyers, press statement, etc) it is important to keep in line with the Acik Toplum Vakfi branding. A template for their logo can be found here:

http://www.aciktoplumvakfi.org.tr/ATV_logo.pdf

The Turkish logo of Acik Toplum Vakfi:



The English logo of Acik Toplum Vakfi:



⁶ ibid.