

LATVIA

Women's programmes

In Latvia there are no specific in-prison programmes for women who have suffered gender violence before entering into prison.

However, there exist several initiatives (programmes *Life school II*, *KIAP Mirjama*, *Equip*, *Art-therapy* and *Emotional upbringing of child*) targeting female inmates and dealing, at some point, with issues of gender violence.

These programmes have the general aim of preparing women inmates for release and for their integration into society, by providing psycho-education, self-help and social help. These programmes are run annually in Ilguciema women's prison (semi-closed prison) and have been created specifically to respond to female inmates' needs.

The main objectives of these programmes are:

- To develop inmates' social skills
- To reduce the degrading effect of relationships in prison subculture
- To improve the relationships between mother and child
- To help avoiding addictions, including alcohol and drug addictions

The professionals running these programmes belong to the prison staff and have a psychological and/or pedagogical background.

The programmes are voluntary-based and target any woman inmate in Ilguciema prison, so they gather also juvenile offenders and mothers with their children.

The selection criteria for participating in some of these programmes are defined as follows:

- In the programme *Life school II* all sentenced prisoners that are candidates to early release.
- In the programme *Mirjama* the participants must be visiting the chapel of prison regularly, and the approval from prison administration is necessary.
- In the programme *Emotional upbringing of child*, inmate mother with child till 7 years old can participate.

During 2008, 127 women started any of these 5 programmes, and 90 of them finished them.



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The theoretical background of these programmes is diverse, depending on the programme, but it includes social rehabilitation methods, ethics and Bible studies, among others. The professionals are the ones responsible for structuring the themes and topics of the programmes.

The programmes combine both individual and group sessions, which take place weekly, with a duration of 45' up to 2h. The programmes usually have between 6 and 13 phases.

In general, the participation in these programmes does not have any effect in their sentences. However, their conditions in prison may be improved with this participation. Thus, for example, the participants in the Mirjama programme, have a separate dormitory.

These programmes are evaluated at their end by participants, through personal interviews. The professionals also evaluate them through observation. According to the evaluation of Latvian Prison Administration the results of these programmes are very good, which is proved by the fact that most of the programme participants, when get back to society, never go back to prison.

Men's programmes

In the Latvian Prisons there are no specific programmes for men who have committed gender violence within intimate partnerships and are in prison.