

The Ombudsman's press conference on the launching of the NPM

17 December 2014

The National Preventive Mechanism, set up in Hungary under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), is to start its activities on January 1, 2015. In a related press conference Dr. László Székely, Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, gave an overview of the operation of the domestic National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), pointing out that a separate department had been established within his Office for conducting NPM activities. He drew the participants' attention to the fact that the Office had consulted with various civil society organizations and institutions operating places of detention on the tasks of the National Preventive Mechanism. He said that the activities of the NPM would be completely transparent, with the exception of the schedule of visits which, due to security considerations, would be kept on a single memory stick.

Dr. Gergely Fliegauf, Head of the OPCAT National Preventive Mechanism Department, presented the methodology of the mechanism's operation and the principles guiding the preparation of the schedule of visits. He emphasized that the Office would strive to work in partnership with both the operators of places of detention and the civil society organizations conducting similar monitoring activities.

Dr. Katalin Haraszti, Deputy Head of the Department, presented in detail the domestic and international legal background of the National Preventive Mechanism. As a new feature, the National Preventive Mechanism may inspect not only institutions operated by the state and local governments, but also institutions operated by churches, civil society organizations and private actors. She also mentioned that the NPM's work would have a multidisciplinary character, i.e., the involvement of colleagues with expertise in social sciences would also be in great demand in the course of the inspections.

In a response to a journalist's question, it was also mentioned that the National Preventive Mechanism planned to visit 22 places of detention in 2015, covering all types of such places; however, that number may increase as a result of the information received.