Croatian Reading Program for Prisoners and their Children

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CROATIAN READING ASSOCIATION

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Croatian Reading Association

About

- Nongovernmental and voluntary association
- Established 1995
- Goals - promoting and encouraging reading and literacy at all levels, raising awareness about the importance and impact of reading and literacy
Croatian Reading Association

- **Projects**
  - Magazine *Hamster*
  - Annual conference on the September 8th
  - Annual photography contest "Smile... while reading!"
  - Publishing books
  - First national campaign "Read to me!"
Croatian Reading Association

Project

- Croatian Reading Program for Prisoners and their Children
- partner organisation: Parents in Action
  - RODA (“Stork”)
- conducted in 2015 and 2016 in the biggest prisons in Croatia (Požega, Glina and Lepoglava)
- financially supported by the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth
Croatian Prison Reading Program

- Motive
  - About 15000 children in Croatia have one or both parents in prison - invisible to community and vulnerable, direct or indirect victims of their parent’s crimes
  - Children are frequently distressed, disturbed and confused, as well as financially disadvantaged
Croatian Prison Reading Program

- Aims
  - Increasing the attachment between a parent-prisoner and their child
  - Increasing parenting capacities of parent-prisoners
  - Improving the reading skills of children whose parents are in prison
  - Increasing awareness of prison staff and the public on the needs and rights of children whose parents are in prison
Croatian Prison Reading Program

- the Croatian program is different from the others in the world:
  - implemented in all penal institutions in Croatia (2015–2018),
  - includes mothers and fathers prisoners,
  - financial support from Croatian ministries and continuously evaluated,
  - the books are selected by librarians.
Croatian Prison Reading Program

- In this project children

  - share a beautiful story through the audio book they have received from their fathers

  - have the opportunity to be with imprisoned parent, while the parent has the opportunity to give their child a piece of themselves
Croatian Prison Reading Program

- In this project CroRA promotes the importance of reading, especially reading aloud to children.
- Members Snježana Berak, Kristina Čunović and Ljiljana Sabljak:
  - developed and implemented one day workshops and manual for prisoners and prison staff in penitentiaries.
  - prepared a list of quality picture books and books for children and youth.
Croatian Prison Reading Program

- Programe is organised so that fathers in prison get picture books and books appropriate for older children, among which they choose a book for their child.

- Fathers read the text aloud as if they were reading it to their child directly, and the prison staff assist them in recording the audio. The audio recording and the book is then sent to the child.
Croatian Prison Reading Program

Program activities in brief:

• In every prison programme providers perform at least one workshop and/or presentation of the programme to the prisoners and treatment staff

• Activities of recording and shipping the books are conducted by the prison staff

• Evaluation of every target group
Croatian Prison Reading Program

**Results:**

- One hundred fathers from three prisons were introduced to the importance of reading aloud to children.

- Manuals from one-day workshops for prisoners and prison staff are still available for activity multiplying in other prisons.

- A handbook for implementation of the Reading program for fathers designed.

- ILA award for innovative literacy promotion in EU in 2017.
Croatian Prison Reading Program

**Evaluation:**

- based on research among parents/prisoners, prison staff and the families

- the evaluation shows that in 89% of the families children were happy to receive their father’s gift in the form of a picture book with an audiotape of their father reading
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<th><strong>Croatian Prison Reading Program</strong></th>
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<td>89% of the families children were happy to receive father’s present in the form of a book with an audiotape</td>
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<td>89% the child was glad to hear their father’s voice and they will listen again</td>
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<td>67% of the children express their need to show the father’s gift at school or kindergarten</td>
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<td>90% of the children would like such a gift to be sent by their father again</td>
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# Croatian Prison Reading Program

| 78% of the children will draw and send something from that book to their dad |
| 78% of the children would like to visit their father upon receiving the present |
| All of the families emphasized that the Reading program strengthens the connection with the father |
| Fathers were very pleased with the prison staff involvement |
“This action is for every recommendation. These activities help to connect the child to its father. The whole family listened to the audiotape of dad reading the picture book. It was very emotional for us, and the child was happy and joyful.”

_A comment from a mother_
Croatian Prison Reading Program

**Future:**

- Prison reading program will continue for the next three years thanks to the financial support of the Ministry of Justice.
- Written instruction manual for the participation in the Reading program.
- All the prisons will get dictaphone for voice recordings so that the programe activities can continue even after the programe is finished.
Croatian Prison Reading Program

Future:

- Prisoners will continue the participation in the program even if they would have to provide the money for the book and postal costs.