



## **Treatment of Addiction and Criminal Sanctions and Measures for Juvenile Offenders**

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### **Dear Editor-in-Chief**

Psychoactive substance abuse, gambling and internet addiction are associated with various behavioral disorders, as well as with juvenile delinquency (1). At the same time, addiction is considered as an unhealthy lifestyle (2). In responding to and preventing juvenile delinquency, it is crucial to apply measures by which juveniles do not only get to be punished, but also provided with adequate assistance for overcoming the problems that they face (3). In Serbia, there is a possibility of applying special juvenile sanctions through, which addiction is diagnosed and treated (juvenile orders). There is also a possibility of applying education orders that are aimed at preventing and treating addiction. At the same time, education orders are a mechanism used for the diversion of criminal proceedings against juveniles, in order to avoid negative consequences caused by trial and institutionalization (4).

Serbia, as a country with a population of approximately seven million, with children making up about 14% of the total population, has a stable or decreasing rate of juvenile delinquency (5). However, data from the Institute of Public Health of Serbia indicate that there is a persistent problem of addiction among general population and especially among young people. Even so, the analysis of statistical data leads to the conclusion that the

number of applied therapeutic measures is small (5). Thus, during 2018; 2744 criminal charges were filed against minors (less than 18 yr old) and about 44% of cases was resolved by the application of diversionary measures. The number of criminal charges involving minors amounted to 2903 in 2019 and diversionary measures were applied in 42% of cases (5). The share of sanctions and measures of therapeutic nature is insufficient. For example, in 2018 the share of therapeutic juvenile orders among all sorts of juvenile orders was just 1.37% (6). The reasons for this are, among other, related to scarce resources allocated for the treatment of minors with addiction issues. Compliance with international standards from the Beijing Rules, the Tokyo Rules and the Riyadh Guidelines requires greater investment and higher efforts to expand the scope of specific sanctions and measures for the treatment of addiction. Having in mind the above, a comprehensive survey will be conducted during 2021, in order to provide recommendations for the improvement of the system.

### **Conflict of interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.



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