**Workshop Script**

**Slide 1:**

This workshop today is going to focus on a prison monitoring organisation called the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT for short). We are going to discuss who the CPT are and what the purpose of the organisation is.

\*Before we get started, can you raise your hand if you have heard of the CPT before this workshop?

**Slide 2:**

We are here to do this workshop because back in April, researchers from Trinity College Dublin came to this prison and asked how we could best tell people in prison about the CPT. The most common answer was an in-person workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to help you learn more about the CPT.

**Slide 3:**

Before we look at the CPT specifically, lets talk about rights for a moment.

[*Discussion*]

\*What do we mean when we talk about rights?

\*What rights do you think you have now?

**Slide 4:**

Some people assume that they no longer have rights because they are in prison, but this is not true – you still have rights in prison. Rights are basic things that every person should have or be able to do. Rights help keep you safe, respected, and treated fairly.

**Slide 5:**

Why is prison monitoring important? You know that things can sometimes go wrong in prisons whether it be the conditions such as the food or overcrowding, or whether it be ill-treatment of people in prison. One way to try to prevent these bad things from happening is to have visits from organisations that are independent of the prison. Independence means that the organisation does not work for the government or for the prison administration.

\*Do you think it is important for organisations that monitor prisons are independent from the government and the prison? Why/Why not?

**Slide 6:**

There are organisations in Europe that come to visit prisons to report on whether rights are being protected. We are going to focus on the one that covers all of Europe – the CPT.

The CPT is short of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The CPT is an **independent** organisation that visits prisons and other places where people are detained to make sure that people are being treated well and live in good conditions. Again, this means that the CPT do not work for the government or for the prison administration.

**Slide 7:**

[*Discussion*]

\*What comes to mind when you think of ‘Torture’?

\*What do you think ‘Inhuman and degrading’ means?

Torture has been defined by the European Court of Human Rights as "deliberate inhuman treatment causing very serious and cruel suffering". The degree of suffering is the main difference between torture and inhuman treatment, but it also has to be deliberate, for example, to extract information or to intimidate.

"Degrading treatment" involves humiliation and debasement as opposed to physical and mental suffering. As with inhuman treatment, it does not have to be deliberate.

Some examples of inhuman treatment could include overcrowding in a prison setting.

**Slide 8:**

Conducted survey of awareness in Penitentiary of Timisoara and found:

* Just under 25% of people who took our survey had heard of the CPT
* Out of 21 interviews, no one had heard of the CPT

When it comes to prison monitoring and human rights, expectations tend to be quite low. People don’t expect for their experiences to matter and people can be cynical about rights in prison.

**Slide 9:**

As we’ve seen, research shows a lot of people in prison have not heard of the CPT, don’t know what it does, and don’t know that it is okay to talk to them. Once people learn more, they feel better informed about the CPT and often feel glad that someone checks on prison conditions.

If the CPT visits the prison you’re in, they might ask to talk to you. You don’t have to talk to them if you don’t want to. But you can also ask to talk to them if you want. What you tell the CPT is private. That means they won’t tell anyone else what you said, unless you say it’s okay. They might want to talk to you because you are in a part of the prison they are checking, like special cells. They might also talk to you because something happened to you that they want to understand better. Or they might just choose people at random to talk to.

People in prison are often also not sure about what powers the CPT has or what it can do. This is an even bigger problem for people who do not speak the language most people in the prison speak. A lot of people in prison feel that it is not worth it to raise any concerns they have about prison. All these reasons mean that people in prison may not be sure what the CPT is, or if they should talk to the CPT when it comes to visit. When people in prison get information about the CPT, they often think it is a good thing to have an organisation which checks how people are being treated in prison.

**Slide 10:**

The CPT visit prisons all over Europe. The CPT visits happen every 4 or 5 years in prisons across Europe, or sometimes more often if they have a particular concern. A small team of 5 or 6 people usually come to visit a prison. These people have different skills – they might be doctors, lawyers, psychologists, human rights experts, or prison governors. The CPT also brings interpreters to help them speak to people in different languages.

Each year the CPT announces which countries it will visit. The specific dates are shared with the authorities a few days or weeks in advance of the visit. However, the specific places of detention they will visit are not shared in advance and the CPT has the power to visit all places of detention in a country. In preparation, members of the CPT will review previous reports and information received from NGOs and national bodies which visit prisons to help in deciding which places to visit and issues to look into.

When they visit, the CPT looks at how people are treated and what the prison conditions are like. They check things like whether the food is alright, if people are treated with respect, and how punishments are handled.

During a visit, the CPT can check all areas of the prison, read records such as health files, speak to any prisoner in private, and talk to staff.

**The CPT does not handle or resolve complaints from individual people. The CPT focuses on big picture issues in the prison.** The CPT is trying to make prisons better for all people in prison all over Europe, now and in the future.

**Slide 11:**

After each visit, the CPT talks with the government and writes a full report. They do not share what anyone in prison told them, and they don’t use any names of people in prison in the report.

The government then replies with:

• More information, and

• A plan to fix the problems the CPT found.

These reports are shared on the Council of Europe website, but you might not be able to go online. Some reports are shared right away, and others only if the government says yes.

The CPT’s ideas help the government make prisons better. Other human rights groups can also use the reports to ask for change. You can go online to the Council of Europe website if you have access to the internet. You can ask if the report is in the prison library, or ask for the library to get a copy.

**Slide 12:**

Latest visit to prisons in April 2025.

Latest published report on prisons is from 2021. Recommendations focused on:

* Living conditions
* Purposeful activities
* Staff numbers
* Healthcare services including mental healthcare
* Overcrowding
* Physical ill-treatment
* Inter-prisoner violence
* Complaints system

**Slide 13:**

If you are worried about your treatment or your conditions, talk to someone you trust, like a staff member or your lawyer.

You can contact the CPT if you are worried about how you are being treated in prison by sending them a private letter to this address.

Remember that you still have rights while in prison. The CPT helps to protect those rights. You have a voice – and it matters.

**Slide 14:**

Thank you for your attention. Have you any questions?

We will do a short survey now – it is not a test, but just some questions to get your feedback on the workshop.