

## **Review of Findings – Directors General of Probation Conference**

**Dublin. 24<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011.**

### **Maximising Probation Resources in a Changing European Environment.**

The bi-annual conference of European Directors – General of Probation Service was hosted in Dublin jointly by the ‘CEP’ and the Irish Probation Service. The conference was an opportunity for delegates to discuss maximising resources in a changing environment. Challenges identified by delegates at the Conference Opening, ranged from the impact of the challenging economic environment on services, organisational reform and the fusion between probation and prison services.

#### **Maximising Probation Resources; Vivian Geiran, Director of Operations, Probation Service Ireland.**

This presentation began with an overview of the Probation Service in Ireland. It outlined an organisational change process which the Service had undergone in prioritising its work and its resources accordingly. The model described was largely prioritisation based on risk and need and had three key elements, evidence based principles, organisational development and collaborative working. The need to continuously develop the probation “niche” was raised and to maintain and retain the relevance and effectiveness of probation services within the criminal justice area. The importance of the delegates creating a new shared reality was emphasised.

#### **Response; Iuliana Carbutaru, Director of Probation (Romania).**

In responding to the previous presentation, this presentation gave a historical overview of the Romanian Service and outlined its journey to the present day developments. It was described that the Romanian Probation Service has always acted in a changing environment preparing for accession to the EU, legislative changes, political and economic changes, and now fundamental legislative reform. The presentation further outlined the steps in its change agenda and the importance of consultation and partnership on the journey as it co-operates with other European authorities and implements the Framework Decision 947/2008/JHA.

#### **Building Partnership with European Organisations; John Scott, Former President C.E.P.**

This presentation outlined the significance of partnership working and detailed the 3 levels of European collaboration - cross-professional, bilateral and institutional. Cross-professional collaboration across the criminal justice system, bilateral collaboration with specific partners in particular with the prison service and institutional collaboration with the European Union and Council of Europe. The importance of being strategic in making partnership networks was emphasised. There were questions raised and answered regarding links between the C.E.P. and the development of a European prisons association, EuroPris. The presentation also referred to

the next steps agenda including presentation of the collaboration review report to The C.E.P. Board for incorporation in the 2011 Annual Plan.

## **Workshop Deliberations**

The delegates divided into three workshop groups in the afternoon and discussed the different presentations.

### **( i ) Maximising Probation Resources**

There was a good lively debate with participants contributing, telling their stories and all identified with the need to maximise resources given the current climate. The key outcomes from the workshop;

- Create an opportunity from the current crises e.g. use the budgetary cuts to examine how services are delivered. Is there a more efficient and effective way?
- Give clear direction – Delegates spoke of showing leadership to staff, approaching the challenges with clarity of intent. While the approaches may be different in different countries it is important to be clear on the criteria being applied to decisions.
- Retaining Quality – Need to retain the good practice and quality outcomes.
- Engaging staff in solutions – keep staff informed of the issues and changes, elicit their views and opinions. It is important that they invest with managers in finding solutions and in having a ‘sense of ownership’ of the solutions.
- ‘Buy in’ from key stakeholders – Engage with the policy makers and decision makers so that they are aware of the context and they gain an understanding of the impact of the changes.
- Communication- There is a constant need to communicate and to use different fora to repeat the key messages.

### **(ii) Partnership in Europe.**

There was a good sharing of views and opinions in this workshop and all delegates were of the view that international partnerships are critical for probation services in shaping the future. The key outcomes were;

- Strategic alliances are critical and can create a stronger platform both on a national and European level.
- Partnerships facilitate services in influencing and lobbying the European Union and the Council of Europe e.g. can be influential in determining spending priorities.
- Probation Services should adopt a pro-active approach, give a greater clarity to its message and make it easy to understand.

- A key partnership for the future is that between the C.E.P and Europris. However, it was also considered important that the priorities of C.E.P are maintained.
  
- Some examples of good European collaborative practice were shared amongst the delegates.
  - Nordic co-operation (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark) –annual meeting.
  - C.E.P – European curriculum working group has been established.
  - High Institute of Penitentiary Studies in Italy. Developed joint training programmes. France, Denmark, Lithuania and Poland are engaged in the programme.

### **(iii) Priorities for C.E.P in Europe.**

Annette Esdorf (Denmark) presented C.E.P's priorities in the afternoon workshop. The discussion amongst delegates from the workshop can be summarised with the following key outcomes;

- The importance of all services working together as C.E.P members was emphasised.
- The suggestion that C.E.P should be pro-active and take more of a lead role in seeking funding for European projects.
- C.E.P's role in relation to information and research should be developed to facilitate the achievement of the value for money and quality outcomes.
- C.E.P needs to communicate with its members in addressing a gap identified by delegates where information is generated centrally but is not reaching the members.

### **Probation Rules under probation – Professional fundamental guidelines according to financial resources.**

**Joerg Jesse, Director of Prison / Probation, Mecklenburg Vorpommern, Germany.**

This presentation assessed the probation rules against two criteria, underlying professional standards and the present restrictive economic situation across Europe. The model outlined in the presentation applied to the German circumstances, however, similar hypotheses can apply to the implementation of the rules in other countries and is a valuable approach to consider. It is critical that the probation rules are applied on an ongoing basis to the day to day activities of probation services across Europe.

The rules will assist in giving support and guidance in addressing the current challenges facing the probation services and in retaining a focus on quality.

## **Final Declaration**

The meeting concluded with a final draft declaration outlining ten priorities for the C.E.P. arising from the dialogue and deliberations from the Directors General at the conference. This draft was circulated and agreed by all for final adoption by the C.E.P.

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