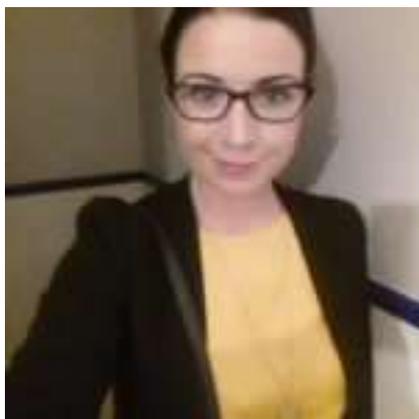


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Is the day of a probation officer in Germany similar to the one of someone working in Romania? In the series 'A day in the life of a probation officer', we publish articles written by probation officers from different countries in Europe to see if their days look a like or are very different from each other. This article is written by Deirdre Delaney, Probation Officer for the Irish Probation Service.

The start of the day

I joined the Probation Service two years ago and have been working in Limerick and Clare. My workday typically starts at around 9.00 a.m. as I review and respond to my emails. This is followed by meetings with offenders I am supervising or on whom I am preparing assessment reports for the court.



Today I am meeting a man, referred to the Probation Service by the District Court of Appeal, a second appointment for the preparation of a pre-sentence report for a road traffic offence. In preparing for the meeting I review my notes from the previous interview and identify new information that I need to acquire, the offence and offending history is the focus of today's meeting. The offender attends the appointment as planned, we discuss the circumstances surrounding the offence as I begin to complete the risk assessment. The offender presents as open and engages fully in the process. Once this appointment is over, I prepare for my next one.

My second meeting of the day is with a woman, also referred for a pre-sentence report, for theft, by the District Court. This is also her second meeting, the focus of which is primarily on her personal circumstances, as relevant to the overall circumstances leading to her appearance before the court, the woman requires some emotional support, as she has a number of difficulties in her life at present. By the end of the meeting, we have a plan in place for her to access a local support service over the coming days.

So far things are going to schedule. Then my third appointment of the morning fails to attend and makes no contact. Following unsuccessful efforts to contact my client, I use this time as an opportunity to start drafting a report that is due in coming weeks, as well as liaising with the relevant services to gather collateral information for a number of on-going assessments.

Lunchtime

Time for a quick lunch and chat with my colleagues. Working in probation my colleagues are an invaluable support and resource to me. They are always there to offer advice, provide support and much needed humour at times.

In the afternoon head to Limerick Prison. At the moment I am working with the prison team on a part time basis. At the prison, I go through security and am assisted to access the female wing by my prison-based probation colleague. I locate some of the women with whom I have been working to give them some feedback on the follow up I have completed. In fact, a number of women have requested to meet with me to discuss some issues that are prevalent in their lives. I try to facilitate as

many as I can in a short space of time, before meeting a woman I am working with in the preparation of a pre-sentence report, this time for the Circuit Court.

After a couple of hours, I leave the prison and return to the probation service office, grabbing a coffee from the café across the road to get me through the rest of the afternoon. On returning to the office, I follow-up on the tasks related to the meetings with the women, which includes referrals to addiction services and contacting social workers etc. Before the day is finished, I write up some case notes.

Time to go home

On the drive home, I reflect on my day. Probation work is diverse, and each day presents new challenges and different situations, which require different approaches. As busy as my day is, I embrace the diversity of the work and the opportunity to make a difference, applying my knowledge and skills to make a difference in people's lives.

I find it easy enough to de-brief as I leave the work day behind. It has been a busy day today. Tomorrow I am on court duty which will bring different challenges and opportunities.