



**National School
of Penitentiary Administration**



**L'Organisation Européenne
de la Probation**

**The European Organisation
for Probation**

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17 et 18 Décembre 2009

Recrutement et formation des **agents de probation**
Recruitment & Training of **Probation Officers**



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Introduction

Cooperation

How to proceed?



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I. Introduction

Dutch Education System:

Secondary vocation education: in colleges

Higher professional education: in universities
of applied sciences

Academic education and research:
universities

II. Cooperation:

Missed connections from three perspectives
Repared in three steps:

1. Judicial context versus voluntary social work
2. Unity versus differentiation
3. Practice, education and research

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Result of the missed connection:

Ten years ago, competences of social work graduates did not match properly with the requirements of probation services

And of other organisations working in judicial contexts.

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How could this happen?

What have we done to solve the problem?

What were succes factors?

Reparing the connection, step 1:

Working in a judicial context versus voluntary social work

Social work focused on helping people on
voluntary base

Averse to 'patronising'

Principles and dilemma's of involuntary context
not explored

No systematic general method for probation.

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In-company trainers:

Could not spend time training advanced competences

Because they were busy teaching the very basics of working with involuntary clients.

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In 2001:

Trainers/universities discussed their problems
with probation services

At the same time: rise – in The Netherlands – of
What Works.

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End 2001:

Probation Services asked us to develop a basic method for probation.

And asked other experts to develop an instrument for risk assessment and diagnosis.

Result:

Common language

Methods to be taught

Social work schools could devote attention



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But first, another problem had to be solved:

Repairing the connection step 2:

Unity versus differentiation

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In these years:

Dutch public shocked by crimes committed by clients of youth care of probation.

Together with 'teachable' methods:

Wake up call for universities of applied sciences.



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Social work bachelors all over the country adapted their programs. But individually.

Probation services asked them to coordinate their strengths

Tricky since The Netherlands have many different social work related bachelor programs taught in many universities.

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Pragmatic solution:

Developing a minor, 30 ects with **four** enthusiastic and motivated universities (started 2004)

Representatives in the professional field joined in.

Asking feedback twice in a conference with 80 professionals.



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Result:

Minor, recognized by relevant organisations,
(probation, youth care, forensic psychiatric care)
started in 2006

Competence of graduates (if taken the minor)
improved.

More realistic picture of this work:
Preliminary selection improved



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Five other universities joined in

So, the minor is now taught in nine universities (50% of the social work schools in the dutch universities)

In 2010 the minor will be adopted by the senior management of nearly all social work schools.

So the minor gained national coordination, acquired bottum-up.



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Reparing the connection, step 3: Practice, education and research



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Continious development of probation needs
a poperly functioning cycle of:

Reflection on practice,
Practice-based evidence,
Evidence based knowledge and
Professionalization.



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How to strengthen this cycle
in the Dutch dual system

with social work bachelors without research
tradition (Applied Sciences)

and universities with mainly fundamental
research? (science)



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In the Netherlands: strong investments in practice-based or applied research in the past 7 years.

Universities of Applied Sciences started research programs, supervised by professors with professional backgrounds or with 'feel for practice'.

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Probation services recognized the opportunity:

They created two research groups on working in a judicial context, at two universities of applied sciences.

They contribute to the costs and provide input in research programs.

Professors, lecturers, probation officers and students are working together.

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Research groups at work for nearly two years.

Allies and critical friends

Independant, eventhough probation services do contribute financially.

Other contributions from the Universities themselves (funded by Ministry of Education, Culture & Science).



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Program of researchgroups:

Independant research, general knowlegde of probation, may be critical to current policy, inpetus to discussions. Mainly PhD research.

Effective professionals, moral practices, education in closed institutions.

Research 'on demand', leading to specific and immediately applicable knowledge.

Development of some supervision modules

Development of an instrument for indication, baed on diagnosis.



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In addition:

The research groups, especially the professors, are responsible for developing curricula for probation on bachelor and master level.

Currently: updating and theoretical expansion of the national minor.

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To summarize:

Intensive cooperation probation and universities
Developed a joint basic method for probation
Developed a minor which currently being taught at almost all social work bachelors in the country
Cooperation in researchgroups for applied sciences.

Doing so: *Probation services organized their feedback system effectively.*

III How to proceed?

1. Longer degree programmes (60ects). Students working in probation from the start. Probation officers playing a crucial role in coaching and assessing practical competences.

2. Continious learning routes from secondary vocational colleges to bachelor degree, and from bachelor degree to professional master on working with unvoluntary clients.

3. Initiate a European Degree Programme.

Two dutch universities are taking first steps.

Other countries do the same.

Maybe lessons can be learned from the Dutch process:

Start with small group, work in an open structure, which allows others to join and benefit, coordinate practical research programs as well, and create a good cycle between practice, education and research.