



General Information

- Number of inhabitants: 7.64 million at the beginning of 2008.¹
- Prison population rate per 100,000 inhabitants: 144.
- Link to Probation Service:
 - Bulgarian National Probation Service; part of the General Directorate Execution of Penalties (GDEP) that is positioned in the Ministry of Justice (www.mjeli.government.bg).
- Links to websites:
 - www.iga-bg.org
- The Bulgarian National Probation Service became CEP member in 2009.

Characteristics of the Probation Service

- The notion of setting up a Probation Service started in 1994-1995 can be seen as part of the intensive reforms within the judicial system. In the establishment of the probation several experts and high ranked officials of the country's penal system were involved. It is relevant as well that since 1990:
 1. an intensive development of the non-governmental sector took place;
 2. the Open Society Foundation (OSF) through a special programme has taken the initiative for penal system reforms. Financed by the OSF, the Crime Prevention Fund – IGA established in Pazardjik (1999) the first Centre for Social Support to ex-offenders that laid to the foundation of a 6-year pilot probation model.
- The probation system is strongly centralized (part of the GDEP). The Probation Services are regional divisions of the General Directorate "Execution of Penalties" at the Ministry of Justice.
- Other organizations involved in probation work:
 - Probation Councils (public bodies that also involve civil society representatives). Through the Probation Councils state control over the probation activities can be exerted and on the other hand the general public can take part in the correction and rehabilitation of offenders);
 - municipality (main partner of the Probation Services in the execution of probation measures, particularly in community service execution);

¹ International Centre for Prison Studies (2009), *Prison Brief for Bulgaria* London: King's College. Available online at: www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/law/research/icps/worldbrief/

- representatives of the non-government sector, volunteers or citizens.
- The Probation Services provides services to adults and juveniles (persons between 14 and 18 years).

Tasks

Activities that should be carried out by the Probation Services are the following:

- Provision of pre-sentence reports upon request of a judge;
- Evaluation of the offending behavior of people sentenced to probation through the use of special methods for offender assessment;
- Execution of sentences, case planning and supervision of sentenced persons;
- Assessment of the need for corrective interventions and planning of the application of special programmes;
- Support to offenders for the establishment of constructive contacts with relatives and with the public institutions;
- Preparation of different reports and analyses related to the execution of probation measures;
- Establishment of effective work relationships with representatives of other institutions;
- Providing up-to-date and quality information at the meetings of the Probation Councils;
- Coordination of the activities of the institutions and the organizations that are linked to the supervision.

The Probation Service in Bulgaria is not directly engaged with crime prevention activities.

Number of staff

Bulgaria counts 28 District Probation Services, which correspond to the jurisdiction of the District Courts. The District Probation Services are located in all of the district capitals and use own or adapted premises rendered by the state or municipality. The total number of probation officers (employees/staff) is 537 (509 state employees and 28 private employees working on full-time contracts), of which:

- 28 Unit Directors;
 - 305 Probation Inspectors (organize and manage the activities);
 - 28 Technical Assistants;
 - 28 Inspectors with police skills;
 - 120 Junior Inspectors with police skills and
 - 28 Lawyers – Consultants.
- Number of volunteers: none.
 - Daily average number of offender clients dealt with by professional staff: average caseload of 40 offender clients per probation inspector.

New developments

- Strategic Plan priorities 2007-2009: most important priorities of the Probation Services' development:
 - strengthening the establishment of the infrastructure of the probation service;
 - securing the effective operation of the Probation Service throughout the country;
 - extension of the probation staff.
- In 2007 a reform of the structure of the Probation Service was carried out. District "execution of penalties" units were created to unite Probation Services and pre-trial detention.
- In 2009 the ongoing debates on the introduction of pre-trial reports and electronic monitoring led to a new set of legislation amendments. They introduced pre-trial reports albeit not for all trial cases but only upon request of a judge. The other significant change is the introduction of electronic monitoring, which will be piloted in one of the District Probation Services in 2010.
- The issue of public-private partnership (PPP) in the activities of the Probation Service is discussed by politicians as well. Expectations of the debate (which was started by the former Bulgarian government) are that this will additionally stimulate development of professional capacity and competences of the probation system and will raise the efficiency of the supervision.
- The Probation Services have implemented programs, such as anger management, tackling drunk driving, communication skills optimization and changing the way of thinking. A program for sexual offenders is being developed at the moment and another aimed at offenders with drug addictions is expected to be introduced in 2010. Most of these activities though are implemented only in the biggest probation districts.

Probation during the different stages of the criminal procedure

	Pre-Trial Phase	Trial and Enforcement Phase	Post Release Phase
Preparing a Social Enquiry Report (prepared by the probation service after the sentence of the court has come into force)	x	x	
Supervising / organizing etc. community service		x	
Compulsory address registration		x	
Compulsory meetings with a probation officer		x	

Free movement restriction		x	
Attending professional qualification courses and programs for corrective influence		x	
Corrective labour		x	
Supervising etc. conditional sentence		x	
Supervising etc. conditional release/parole		x	

This summary is based on the country chapter in the book *Probation in Europe*, the most comprehensive survey of probation systems and services in Europe today. If you wish to order it, please click [here](#).

