



General Information

- Number of inhabitants: 7.65 million at September 2008.¹
- Prison population rate per 100,000 inhabitants: 76.
- Link to Probation Services: -
- Links to websites:
 - www.prosaj.ch (Schweizerische Vereinigung Bewährungshilfe und Soziale Arbeit in der Justiz);
 - www.justice-stat.admin.ch (Swiss Federal Statistical Office).
- Member of the CEP in: 1986.

Characteristics of the Probation Services

- Within the decentralized Swiss probation system, each autonomous canton (26), has its own Probation Service. The cantons are free to choose the structure of the Service. Therefore, public as well as private Probation Services exist alongside each other. Irrespective of the organizational structure, financial resources are always provided by the cantons. Besides, additional resources (to fund special support programs) can be provided by private sources or foundations.
- In practice, the majority of cantonal Probation Services are public agencies. Within most cantons, these public Probation Services are integrated in the judicial system. Some cantons, however, incorporated the Services into the Department of Social Services. Private Probation Services (private foundations or non-profit organisations) can be found in two cantons.
- Probation Services have no rigid hierarchical structure. Even larger agencies (which have no more than thirty employees) only employ one manager or director. They are responsible for the agency's management, its representation toward the public and are personally accountable that the clients' cases are followed up.
- Public Probation Services are able to work with voluntary probation officers. By the end of 2006, 400 volunteers were involved in probation work within ten cantonal Probation Services. The majority of these volunteers (259 of them) are working for the cantons Berne and Zurich (144 and 75) and Basle-City (40). Private Probation Services only work with qualified professionals.

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

Tasks

The decentralized Swiss Probation Services have different mandates depending on the canton they are located in. Some Services for instance only provide support upon discharge, others, due to their broader mandate, may also provide support for inmates during the pre-trial period. Providing support for inmates in pre-trial detention means that the Probation Service assists the person bridging the difficult time in detention. Furthermore, the Service can take on a variety of tasks such as contacting family members, relatives and lawyers, but is also in charge of preparing pre-trial reports (on request of judges and prosecutors). Within the trial and enforcement phase, Probation Services are mainly involved in supervision activities (supervising community sanctions, drug/alcohol addicts and psychiatric clients, electronic monitoring, offender treatment programs etc). In some cantons public Probation Services are responsible for supervision tasks, in others the tasks are distributed between the Probation Service and the prison authority. Yet again, in other cantons supervision is totally delegated and the Probation Service itself acts only as coordinating authority. During their stay in prison, inmates are supported by social workers and warders who work in penitentiary institutions (they, amongst others, establish contact with family and prepare inmates for release). These social workers and wardens work hand in hand with social workers of Probation Services, whose goal is rehabilitation of the prisoner. Probation Services may also provide after care service, often together with private social organizations on voluntary basis.

Number of staff

- In 2007, 228 full-time positions were staffed by 300 employees. Of the 210 full-time positions, 18 were managerial positions (9%), 140 were in counseling (66%) and 70 in administration. Within the same year, there were close to 35 full-time positions needed for community service and electronic monitoring.
- Daily average number of offenders/clients dealt with: 50-100 clients.

New developments

On the first of January 2007, the revised general part of the Swiss Penal Code came into force. The 'new' revised Code includes a definition of the term probation. Therefore, many cantons have changed their name from the former Protective Agency to Probation Service. Furthermore, a growing number of cantonal Probation Services are taking charge of organizing volunteers, electronic monitoring and executing community sentences and measures. Moreover, it can be observed that the Probation Services are increasingly involved in the enforcement of community sanctions and measures (for instance in the cantons Zurich, Berne and Lucerne). On this matter a discussion started. The fact is, from the nineteen sixties, the main task of the Probation Services focused on social work and not that much on supervision tasks. Because of the new development, the past was left behind. In addition to the revised Penal Code, the different

cantonal Probation Services carried out several pilot projects during the last decade. Most recently, the following project are completed:

- Domestic violence offender counselling 2005/06, St.Gall, Solothurn, Basle Country, Zurich;
- Risk Assessment and Offender Learning Programs, 2007 Basle-City.

Probation during the different stages of the criminal procedure

	Pre-Trial-Phase	Trial and Enforcement Phase	Post-Release Phase
Preparing a Social Enquiry report	x	x	x
Supervision / assistance to pre-trial detainees	x		
Organising/Supervising community sanctions		x	
Organising/Supervising mandates of directives		x	x
Organising/Supervising mandates of probation, directives and mandates of ambulatory measures (out of custody)		x	x
Organising/Supervising measures for drug / alcohol addicts and psychiatric clients		x	x
Organising/Supervising mediation before court (ATA)	x		
Organising/Supervising electronic monitoring			x
Organizing/Supervising offender treatment programs		x	x
Organizing/Delegation after care			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](#).

