

Facing Covid-19: an interview with Mr. Sdiri, executive director of the French Drôme / Ardèche Probation Service

What is your current position?

I am the executive director of the penitentiary integration and probation services in the Drôme / Ardèche departments, a bi-departmental service with its headquarters in Valence in the Drôme. The governance of the entire region is complex because of its interdepartmental nature – I must always focus on taking into account the peculiarities of each of the territories while at the same time creating a balanced policy of harmonizing the practices and adhesion of each of the two areas. In fact the main objective remains to bring them together in a common collective spirit, which is the interest of our service.

Despite the confinement, what activities do your departments continue to carry out?

The continuity of prison public service during this very difficult period of total confinement is my main concern during each day. Preserving the health of my employees as well as that of the offenders, which are monitored by our service through a judicial mandate, are absolutely essential elements of the conditions for maintaining our activities. The care, evaluation and support that the staff of the SPIPs of Drôme and Ardèche provide to the 3000 offenders from the two departments continues, almost more than in the context of face-to-face interviews now supported by other means like telephone interviews, sending and receiving emails and SMS, and more conventionally via hardcopy letters. Finally, it should be noted that we have been able to maintain the number and quality of the production of the service's judicial reports in order to keep influencing and following court decisions despite the complicated technical working conditions. For this concern of the continuity of the response to the judicial authorities, we received thanks and congratulations from the magistrates.

What does this mean for you, the continuity of activities of the justice services?

The continuity of the functioning of justice, an essential sovereign mission of a democratic state capable of guaranteeing the security of all, must be imperatively preserved in all circumstances, even during such situations of exceptional magnitude and unprecedented nature like the current Covid-19 pandemic. This is, I believe, what we stand for in the SPIP of the Drôme and the SPIP of the Ardèche – maintaining the missions that we must ensure on a daily basis with the criminal public entrusted to us by judicial mandate.