

**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 Daira Apine, probation officer of the Latvian State Probation Service.**

Since 2008, I have been a staff member of the State Probation Service Rezekne Territorial Division. I applied for a job at the Probation Service, because in higher education I acquired the speciality of a social educator and wanted to devote my professional life to helping people. There are currently 404 specialists working at the Latvian Probation Service.



How does my day pass? I joke: "I inhale in the morning and exhale in the evening!" The day is usually intensive, hurried, creative, often tense, because a large amount of work needs to be completed in a limited time. I am one of the four senior probation specialists in our team of twelve people and have a high responsibility.

The official working hours are from 8.30 AM until 5 PM. I am already at work around 8 AM. I stay until I finish urgent tasks, like preparing various documents and preparing decisions on determining specific additional tasks for probation clients. These tasks take up a lot of time. Sometimes, I continue to work at home on preparing for conducting group probation programmes, I refresh my knowledge, reread materials and make notes.

## **Dynamic days**

Every day is different, but all of them are dynamic. If anyone is complaining about a monotonous or boring job, they are definitely not talking about the work at the Probation Service. To manage everything in time and do it according to specific requirements is of utmost importance. At the end of each day I spend time planning my work, this is a priority. In order to manage everything, I use my time effectively. Sometimes a day is devoted to performing one specific function, but most often different functions are performed in turns.

My primary function is supervising probation clients, including persons who have committed sex crimes and minors. I supervise about 30 probation clients; thus I plan separate days or a particular part of a day for seeing them at the Probation Service. I see some of my probation clients two to four times a month, but others once every two months. It depends on the supervision level determined for each client. Determining the level of supervision requires time for gathering information on the probation client from different institutions, contact persons specified and databases. About two or three times a month, I go out to meet probation clients closer to their places of residence or to meet people with disabilities. Additional visits are required to assess the living conditions of probation clients and help colleagues to control community service. All the information gathered needs to be uploaded into the client's digital record.

Conducting probation programmes for groups takes up half a day or even an entire day. Especially if a probation programme needs to be conducted in another city. It also takes an entire day to conduct probation programmes in prison. The two nearest prisons are located in approximately a 100 km radius.

I am also responsible for organising interinstitutional meetings at Rezekne Territorial Division. I do the organisation, conduct the meeting and prepare a protocol.

No matter how successfully I plan my day, I always need to be ready to perform unplanned work and reassess priorities, such as when I suddenly need to replace a colleague or an assessment statement needs to be prepared within a short period of time. Probation clients periodically find themselves in crisis situations, which also need to be solved urgently, regardless of my plans for the day.

## **Exchange of good practice**

The Probation Service in Latvia is a progressive institution, which is why my day is often filled with participation in quality trainings and conferences, as well as meetings with colleagues from all over Latvia to exchange examples of good practice and solve problem issues during colleague consultations. In my work I have had the priceless opportunity to draw experience at international conferences in Belgium (in the framework of the DAPHNE project), England (organised by NOTA) and Croatia (organised by CEP). As much as I can, I attend consultations with a psychotherapist provided by the Probation Service. Additionally, I look for professional information that I need on the internet and by participating in an online psychology course. During my holiday, I used the opportunity to go on an experience exchange trip to Romania. I apply the newly acquired knowledge in my work with clients and share my experience with colleagues. Regular supplementation of knowledge is an excellent resource, because no school will teach you how to be a professional at a Probation Service.

## **Inspiring team**

In my work I use all the resources and methods available to support probation clients on their way to a law-abiding lifestyle and to reduce the possibility of further unlawful actions. With colleagues we discuss possible solutions in difficult cases. I am extremely lucky to be part of a coherent, friendly and supporting team. The ability to cooperate successfully and the support from colleagues provide enthusiasm, joy and satisfaction. Weekly meetings and the necessity to work together on performing specific tasks unites the team. I believe that work at the Probation Service is for people who truly realize the importance of this work and selflessly wish to help reinforce the safety of society. Probation clients feel this interest and this makes it a lot easier to achieve positive changes. I am immensely happy for those probation clients who are able to change and appreciate the invested efforts, these cases help sustain enthusiasm.

What helps to restore my internal strength and energy? Creating a decorative garden and visually enjoying the result makes me happy. I find relief in my family. They are a significant support for my professional activity. I am inspired by my colleagues. Getting together during free time to celebrate holidays has become a tradition in our team. I also find time to do socially useful work with my colleagues and participate in charity events.

I compare work at the Probation Service with a legendary bird, the phoenix. The ability to preserve a spark in you helps to rise and recover for the next flight. Like Y. Halevi once said: "Do what you love and love what you do and you will never have to work a day in your life!" I wish every one of us to preserve the joy for the important and responsible work we do every day!