

Online expert group meeting on Education & Training

Date and time: 18 November 10.00-13.00h CET

Report

CEP President Gerry McNally opened the meeting, welcomed the participants and thanked them for coming together. He said that it was very important to create a network of experts in the field of Education & Training and to share with each other how people are trained and on which topics. Different jurisdictions have different experiences he said, and being this expert group/network it would be very useful to have regular meetings in order to build up the exchange. He indicated that Willem van der Brugge and himself would take an active part in this and that the intention was to meet 2-3 times a year. He asked the participants to bring in topics they would like to have discussed as (these were his words) *“this is your group”*.

Then CEP Secretary General Willem van der Brugge took over with some household announcements after which Gerry introduced the first speaker – Ms. Nicola Carr, associate professor at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom.

Guidelines regarding Recruitment, Selection, Education and Training of Prison and Probation Staff

Nicola started by saying that she had been involved in writing the probation elements for the guidelines – in first instance the document was mainly aimed at prison staff. It had been quite a process as there were many differences in the levels of training in the various countries, and besides that the nature of education had been changing over time.

She said that the Guidelines had been adopted by the European Committee on Crime Problems in April 2019. CEP had been involved in the process and had done important work to contribute to the probation part of the document.

Areas covered in the guidelines were: entry education levels ; criteria regarding recruitment ; advertising posts ; entry assessment procedures ; education & training ; professional development ; professional ethics and an education & training matrix. Nicola described the various entry levels for probation staff as well as the induction curricula for new recruits.

After this she asked the participants to log into the interactive tool Mentimeter to answer the following questions:

- Do the entry level qualifications for probation staff meet the CoE guidelines (i.e. level 6)?
- What areas are covered in your induction training for new recruits?
- What areas are covered in your ongoing training for probation staff?

In the PDF file attached to this report the answers can be found.

Chantal Avellino (Malta) shared her organization’s training programme with the group via the Zoom chat function: <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/programme/PMPRSFTT1-2020-1-O> . The same did Ioan Durnescu (Romania): <https://masterprobatiune.wordpress.com/>

Marc Cerón (Spain Catalonia) commented on the ongoing training for probation staff by remarking that in his jurisdiction it was possible for additional topics to be added to existing training programmes when a new law or project was introduced. He said that specific companies were responsible for delivering the trainings and that the Ministry of Justice checked the process to make sure that everything was properly conducted.

Then Nicola turned to the second part of her presentation, showing the participants the “Education and Training Matrix”, written as appendix for the Guidelines. The Matrix covered many areas like programmes, interventions, risk assessment, interagency working, gender responsiveness, working with victims, staff support and many more.

She asked the group if they had suggestions of additional topics that should or could be included? Ioan Durnescu answered that the Matrix was a very important and useful document, and that perhaps the (ethical) use of technology and data protection could be added? Willem reacted to this by suggesting the work in times of not being able to meet face to face. Nicola answered that these were indeed good points, both related to technology. In the Zoom chat Joep Hanrath (the Netherlands) said that he found the matrix very interesting – he indicated that his university had just started up a survey on how people experienced working online and via video conferencing, so it could be very useful to have a look at the results to see if good suggestions were made there. Willem indicated that Mental Health and Domestic Violence were very important topics at the moment, and suggested to include the recognition of signals of these problems.

Gerry thanked Nicola for her contribution and said that she had given the group a very good programme to further think about.

Then he introduced the next speaker, Mrs. Emmanuelle Cretin-Magand from the European Commission Judicial Training Department.

Update from the European Commission, Judicial Training Department

Emmanuelle started by explaining what her Department exactly did: being responsible for the training of justice professionals in Europe, with the aim of having EU law applied in the best way possible in all EU Member States.

The current strategy of the Department, set up in 2011, was now coming to an end and for quite some time they had been working on a new one that would be adopted on 2nd December 2020. She explained that in 2011 a need was felt for training people whose daily worked had to do with the EU law, and that this had led to implementing the first strategy. The situation changed in 2015 when terrorism became an important issue, and the fight against it was added to the strategy. Also preventative trainings were given, and it was at this point that probation officers came into the picture. The Department applied for funding in a call in 2017, received the money and since that year the training of prison and probation staff was included as a top priority.

Emmanuelle suggested that CEP (or the expert group) could apply for another grant to initiate a cross-border project on Education and Training? Cooperation with training providers could be included as expertise in the proposal and several different countries could be involved. She said that the group members should not hesitate to contact her for any questions regarding funding and provided them with her email address: JUST-JUDICIAL-TRAINING@ec.europa.eu .

Then Emmanuelle returned to further explaining the strategy. She said that the current (ending) one had objectives until 2020, of which large part had already been achieved in 2017. It was therefore time for new objectives and an evaluation was done in 2019, published in the autumn of that year. The results of the evaluation were very positive – people found the strategy successful and more than half of the professionals working with EU law had been attending training. Of course there were also difficulties, for example the difference between the cultures and education levels of the various EU Member States – this showed that specifically the target group of prison and probation staff needed to be addressed in a separate way (apart from the judges, prosecutors, court staff etc). For this reason a tailored training had been set up for them, and Emmanuelle expressed her hope to reach other countries like Greece – countries that had not yet implemented any training programmes.

She then mentioned the element of so-called “judge craft” in the new strategy – the art of carrying out the law. This clearly showed that, besides the rules and regulations, also the “soft skills” (psychological elements) were important to make trainings successful, especially for probation staff. The new strategy will also promote innovative ways of training and cross-professional trainings. These were included because probation officers never work alone – they always have to deal with other agencies as well.

The development of training for professionals had been a continuous process, naturally building on the already existing experts and training networks like EJM or EPTA. Emmanuelle invited the group members to share their experiences with her Department and to stay in touch.

Lastly she mentioned the European Training Module that is about to be launched. It is full of tools for justice practitioners and available in the languages of all EU Member States. An important part of this module is a search tool where people can easily look for specific training materials like handbooks or good project results.

Gerry thanked her very much and emphasized the importance of the mentioned cross-professional training. He said to be looking forward to the 2nd December when the new strategy would be launched, and to recognize Emmanuelle’s point of the “soft parts” that should be included in trainings to make them work better.

Willem asked if Emmanuelle could tell a little more about these cross-professional trainings? She answered that the original trainings had only supported judicial professionals – a limited target group because for example social workers were not involved. The Department had therefore decided to also include these other professionals working in the field, resulting in wider (cross-professional) trainings with new possibilities.

Gerry thanked her again, saying that her presentation had been really valuable by bringing up so many useful ideas.

He then gave the floor to the next presenter, professor Ioan Durnescu from the University of Bucharest.

PONT project online course

Ioan presented the PONT (Probation Observatory Network and Training) online course on the implementation of the Framework Decisions 829 and 947. He started by shortly describing the project itself, of which the main aim is to improve the use of mutual recognition tools among the EU Member States.

Ioan mentioned the several project activities: literature review, gap analysis, creating an e-manual, providing cluster-trainings (for groups of people from countries regularly working together on the Framework Decisions), and dissemination.

The creation of an online course was due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic – otherwise the course would have been a face to face one. It consists of 6 modules and contains videos, quizzes, tutorials, case studies and relevant links.

Ioan logged in into the website of the University of Bucharest where the course can be found (www.pont.unibuc.ro). He showed the participants the various modules and what the content looked like. Especially the part on the difficulties & solutions of the implementation was considered very important. Ioan said that it took around 7-8 hours to complete the course (free and open to everyone), but it was not necessary to do this all in one session – people could stop at each point and then later continue. Up till now 118 professionals from various European countries had participated in the course, which was a very satisfying number indeed.

After that he addressed the lessons learnt from the practice. Even though the evaluations that participants were asked to fill in after having finished were very positive, the level of interactivity could be improved. Ioan mentioned as example the Summer Course on Core Correctional Skills (taking place in Barcelona in the summer of 2021), where besides the learning materials people could also physically meet and share their experiences. “A lot can be done online”, were his words, “but the additional aspect of really being together cannot be missed and is of great added value”.

The group experts were very enthusiastic about the course. David Williamson (Ireland) said that in his organization they had just finished writing a toolbox/manual looking at these core probation skills in Ireland and were about to deliver this training to new staff in an online way now.

Maret Miljan (Estonia) indicated that in the trainings that she delivered in the Academy of Security Sciences to correctional staff she already used the training kit and found it very useful.

Gerry thanked Ioan very much for his presentation as he had shown the participants that it was possible to just “*get out there and do it*”. He said that the hybrid model might be the one of the future so it was really important to work on these practices.

He then introduced the next and last speaker, Mr. Joep Hanrath of the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences who would be presenting the tool “Dialogue Trainer”.

Dialogue Trainer

Joep started by saying that the initial challenge when developing this training programme was to find out *how* people learn and then *what* they should learn. He emphasized the importance of mentoring for new students and of having a secure learning environment.

Joep then showed two online conversations on Domestic Violence, the first one with a mother and

the second one with an offender. Every time in the conversation the probation officer (i.e. the person following the training) had 3 or 4 answers as options to reply. Depending on the choice he/she made the conversation continued in a certain way, and via this process the students could learn which way(s) of communicating with their clients was the most efficient and fruitful one. Joep said that they were now developing and testing the scenarios, and that surely it was the intention to develop more conversations, after which the whole would be evaluated. He said that the training almost had a double efficiency because during the process the students were also challenged to reflect on their own behaviour/choices – why were they doing things in a certain way, and why?

Maret Miljan (Estonia) asked if they could use the Dialogue Trainer? Joep answered that universities or training institutions could buy licenses and said that he would put her in contact with the CEO of the organization.

David Williamson (Ireland) said that found the course that Joep had shown “absolutely fascinating” and wondered if the future it might be possible to incorporate things like tone and non-verbal cues? Joep answered that they were doing their best as the CEO of the Dialogue Trainer company was very much in favour of emotions as key part of a conversation. It is however complex as different people use different languages, as well as cultural differences that need to be taken into account.

Joep provided the group participants with the links to practice:

- Domestic violence, first conversation of a Mother with Child Protection Services
https://en.dialoguetrainer.app/scenario/play/3135/XaXy-Nu_BP2ySkipCUvkexEPOX9O5Not9yhXi2S6
- Domestic violence, first conversation with an offender to write an advisory report on conditional release. <https://en.dialoguetrainer.app/scenario/play/2895/OQmzVsfzNBw-YFttmzbdBXGIf11wQ7OQZhhcqTG>

Gerry then took the floor again and thanked Joep for his presentation. He had found it very interesting because such training tools showed the complexity of relations being three-dimensional and having to deal with cultural differences and issues.

He said that the aim of CEP always was to share knowledge and offer mutual support, so there would be great opportunities in this network group to further pick the matters up and exchange experiences. Now the question was: where to go next? He invited the group members to bring in topics that they would like to discuss, and to meet 2-3 times a year. Perhaps the next meeting could be on assessment? Or on cross-jurisdictional training? Gerry said that CEP could host any meeting, but would need the group members to give input for ideas and content.

Then Ioan asked the group (he said he could not resist) if it would be an idea, following Emmanuelle’s proposal/offer, to submit a project proposal together under the EU call for funding? Education was such a relevant topic – it brought people a higher social status, more knowledge and a higher salary. “Shall we think about it?” Ioan asked.

Many positive reactions came in via the chat – people found it definitely interesting to explore options and see what aspects could be included, like a research & evaluation element (Nicola) and the need to train probation officers to deliver programmes online, besides the individual case management (Cristina Neves, Portugal).

Cira Stefanelli (Italy) said that especially now during Covid-19 it was very much important to share – share on how organizations train, share each others' experiences and the new ways of working with offenders.

Maret asked if perhaps it would be an idea to organize a bigger event? In the times of people travelling it were often only directors or higher staff members to participate in events, while now in online meetings it would allow many more people to join?

Closing

Gerry thanked all participants once again and reminded them to have a look at the new strategy of the EU Judicial Department and to further think about a project proposal.

He then closed the meeting and wished everyone a nice afternoon.