

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 alike or are very different from each other. This article is written by Delia-Gabriela Marin a probation officer from Romania.



If I were to describe a day in my probation work, I would say that none of them is similar to another. Every day means new elements, new information, new people, with whom I come in contact and from whom I learn something, being aware that others also have their expectations.

Consulting the planning of the meetings, which extends for many months beforehand, and preparing the probation files are the preliminary activities for any day, because we have scheduled probationers at the meeting every day.

There can be 2-3 persons per day or there can be 10-12, depending on the planning, the persons, the emergencies.

When people start coming to meetings ... the agitation starts in the sense that I have to slalom between discussions with them, phone calls (to which customers call for any problems but also the courier, who will deliver different products for daily activities of the service), signing documents, talking to the gendarme who provides security and informs us that another person has come but does not know which counsellor was assigned, discussions with lawyers who enter the office for some probationers, taking over correspondence either from the representative of the Romanian Post, from the representatives of the courts or from the special/military post office, when the secretary is not at work or is unable to take over because she helps a colleague with translating the discussions into Romanian. I forgot to say that 85% of the population of Harghita County is of Hungarian ethnicity and when people show up for the first time at the headquarters of the service you do not know if they know the Romanian language or not. If they know, it's good for you, because you get along with them and the time spent together is more efficient. If they don't know, it's good for them, in the sense that they benefit from interpreting services, to make sure they understand what they have to do.

There are punctual and responsible people, with whom it is easy to work. But there are also people who put your patience and skills to the test, with their attitude: either they do not attend meetings even though they have previously taken note of this, or they come under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or they come without the required documents, or they negotiate every step of

the supervision. Each one must be treated differently, depending on the particularities of the case.

Probationers... are people like us, with different needs, interests, problems, priorities, who come and tell us everything, including that the wife is pregnant or gave birth, that they are raising their own children, that they are being assaulted by their life partner, that they sometimes get drunk, that they have committed other crimes, that they have health problems or that they work when their neighbours call them to work.

Each person's universe is different and must be perceived as such. The relationship with the probationers is the relationship with the person, regardless of his/her particularities, regardless of whether he knows how to write or read, whether he knows the time or not, whether he/she knows what day/month/season it is or not. And if on the statement he/she submits to the file, it's mention instead of "To, the Harghita Probation Service", "To, the Harghita Acrobatics Service", then the smile and good mood are ensured.

All these external elements that I encounter every day lead me to form a certain attitude, reactions, behaviours, strategies, procedures, so that I can clearly assess the situation and solve problems effectively.

When the flow of people ends, I look at the pile of files in which I have to operate and which I have to enter in the SERN (i.e., Risk Assessment Tool and Management Data Base) computer program. With some files I work for five minutes, with others for an hour. Especially if it is about the execution of the obligation to provide unpaid work hours or informing the partner institutions in case of the obligation not to leave the Romanian territory, without the court's consent, where the documents provided by law must be drawn up and sent.

Working with files, papers, documents, gives you the opportunity to get involved initially in the activities you enjoy and later in the others. But in the case of people, regardless of whether the subject of the probation is a responsible person, with whom you work optimally or is a difficult person, you must motivate yourself to talk to him/her, especially if they come unexpectedly to the office, announce a trip or file a document. Sure, we can be restrictive in the sense that we don't have meetings with persons who show up without prior appointment, but if we look at their age, the distance they come from, the weather outside (in Miercurea-Ciuc the winters are pretty cold), to the humble attitude, then it seems that the soul does not let you act differently and refuse the persons in front of you.

If it's Thursday and I'm assigned to go to the parole commission within the Miercurea-Ciuc Penitentiary, then at 09.45 the training gong beats: list, folder, pen, mask, ID, handkerchief. Nothing else. Possibly umbrella. Then a light 1-minute walk and countless doors and gates that open. At the commission ... still people but divided somewhat into two camps: commission members and detainees. And everyone has something to say.

There are also administrative problems in the daily activity: burning of a light bulb, cracking of a radiator, malfunctioning of the IT equipment, a door's lock, or a car's, making a stamp,

unloading the truck with paper etc. Yes, these activities also fall within the competence of the service, but given the specifics of my job, the chance to deal with them is higher.

At the end of the day, I look at the cup of tea that is half empty and I think: What an energized day I had! From all points of view...