

”Leading Organisational Change in Challenging Times”, (20 min)

Thank you for this opportunity to celebrate the 40-year-old CEP and discuss the organisational solutions regarding the enforcement of community sanctions with you. It is actually a current topic in Finland at the moment, as we have been planning the reorganisation of the prison and probation services for a couple of years now and aim to implement the reform in next June.

Over the past decades, it has been a custom to reform the organisational structures every ten years in Finland. So, it is time for a new reorganisation.

In Finland and probably elsewhere too, the objectives and orientation set by the different staff groups for their work differ significantly even though we are all guided by the same legislation. In addition, the contents of sanctions differ too much between the regions and units, which is problematic in terms of equal treatment of clients.

Based on these observations, our aim is to develop the organisational structures of the prison and probation services so that they will promote a more uniform and operationally consistent organisation, which is able to carry out its public tasks effectively. However, a uniform and operationally consistent organisation must not result in us losing our ability to take account of the specific characteristics of the various operational sectors. For example, the objectives and content of the enforcement of community sanctions differ from the enforcement of prison sentences and that should also be reflected in the overall organisation. In this presentation, I will focus on the tasks linked to the enforcement of community sanctions.

At first, some words about the history of community sanctions in Finland and how our current organisation was formed.

We have carried out probation work for over 150 years. The Finnish Prison Association, which was established in 1870, started probation work in Finland. It was first carried out by voluntary work. The goal was to help people released from prison to find work, accommodation and livelihood as well as to promote moral education among prisoners.

In 1975, the organisation and duties of the Probation Association were included in law. The Probation Association was established under the administrative branch of the Ministry of Justice. The association was mainly financed by the State but it was

not, however, a public authority. The association **focused on providing social work services** for people sentenced by court.

In the 1970s, the Finnish criminal policy debate emphasised the introduction of sanctions enforced in freedom and, in particular, those sanctions that **highlighted general deterrence**. One of the grounds for extending the use of these sanctions was that they were inexpensive. The fact that, at that time, Finland had a very high prison population rate per inhabitants — one of the highest in Europe — also contributed to the discussion.

In the 1990s, the Probation Association was in the centre of a social and criminal policy debate. The discussion concerned **the relationship between the support and the control** in probation work. As a result, the Probation Association was tasked with **the enforcement of community sanctions**.

At the end of the millennium, the cooperation between the prison and probation services **became closer as they drew up basic principles together**. According to the basic principles, both organisations were bound by the same shared values. Our organisation still follows those same values, which are justness, safety, respect for human dignity, and belief in an individual's potential to change and grow.

In 2001, the Probation Association was abolished, and a new authority called the Probation Service was established **to manage the implementation of community sanctions**. The Prison Service and the Probation Service were separate units and had separate directors, but they **shared the central administration**. We could say that the units operated separately, but under a shared umbrella of administration.

In Finland, the aim of criminal policy has long been to reduce the number of prisoners by increasing the use of fines and community sanctions and converting prison sentences into community sanctions by the court. Although the so-called treatment ideology has not gained the same foothold in Finland as in some other countries, several **elements of treatment** have been included in the legislation on community sanctions. All community sanctions may include, among others, some rehabilitative activities or treatment arranged by the Criminal Sanctions Agency or social welfare and health care services as part of the sentence.

The next big organisational reform happened in 2010 when the Prison Service, the Probation Service, and the Criminal Sanctions Agency were united into one office under the name of Criminal Sanctions Agency. One of the reasons for the 2010 organisational reform was to strengthen the high-level professional competence throughout the organisation. Probation officials already had a high level of education. The second reason was to create **a single organisation for the enforcement of sentences that has social impact**.

At that time, we established some combined management posts where the same director managed both a prison and a probation office. The main reason for combined management was productivity although we also aimed **to increase the unity** of the Criminal Sanctions Agency even then.

Another decade has passed and next year, in 2022, a major organisational change will take place again. The goal is to enhance the ability to implement the strategic objectives within the organisation and **to strengthen unity and the consistency of procedures**. The management system will be changed and the tasks reorganised.

We will abolish the administrative region centres and form four areas of responsibility that operate nationwide and have separate directors. The aim is to strengthen uniform management, guidance and development. In the future, the units will receive more consistent and better managed guidance regarding the provisions on enforcement of sentences, the quality control, the resources and the development of the work with clients. We will also centralise the administrative processes.

The national areas of responsibility will guide 11 prison and probation centres, each of which has a director. A prison and probation centre consists of local units, which may include probation offices, open prisons, closed prisons and remand prisons. The units are led by heads of unit.

From the point of view of probation work, it is important that the current combined management posts will also be abolished as their tasks are considered too broad and scattered. Many people think that the management of probation work is often overshadowed by the work carried out in prison. Instead of emphasising the unity of prison and probation work, we want to better ensure and take into account the specific needs of probation work and the uniform enforcement of community sanctions throughout Finland.

In the future, each probation office will have its own head of unit, who has time and competence to manage probation work and promote local cooperation with municipal and other service providers. There will be more intensive collaboration with all cooperation partners. The head of unit is also responsible for promoting the use of community sanctions locally by working closely with the prosecutors and judges.

Finland is a long country with great distances – from south to north about 1 300 km. The operating environments also vary in different parts of Finland. This causes challenges to both the work with clients and the management and requires that the circumstances are taken into account in everything. One solution is to use digital tools in our daily work.

The central government of Finland launched a project on joint government facilities. The goal is **to place the probation offices in joint citizen service points together with our key cooperation partners** in 2030. In addition, new ways of serving the citizens are being developed, such as a mobile bus service. Citizens will also be offered more electronic services and places to use them. In this way, the citizens will get the services they need equally throughout the country regardless of their location.

Dear Colleagues,

In the middle of major legislative and organisational reforms, it is important to recognise that we cannot really develop the services provided for our clients by merely reforming the organisational structures. However, the structures can either support the desired reform or, at worst, hinder the development of the organisation. We should constantly keep in mind that the development of the organisation and, in particular, of the services provided for clients happens through a multistage process.

First of all, we must have good legislation that defines the objectives, means and powers of high-quality work. Second, we must have an up-to-date strategy that the whole organisation is committed to put into practice. Third, we must be able to offer our clients a high-quality range of services that meets their needs. Fourth, we need organisational structures and a management system that enable good management. Fifth, we need good directors who are capable of changing the atmosphere and working culture of the organisation in a more united and client-oriented direction. Sixth, we need skilled and motivated staff who are committed to the goals of the strategy and carry out high-quality individual work with the clients.

It would be self-deceptive to claim that there is some shortcut to bypass the different stages of development.

So, in what stage of the development are we in Finland now? We have a somewhat incoherent but satisfactory legislation that enables high-quality probation work. We have a good strategy which is the basis of our work. We have a range of services, which meet the needs of our clients and which we develop constantly with our key cooperation partners. The development of the cooperation with our partners is a continuous activity that will never end. We will reform the organisational structures and the management system by next summer.

After the organisational reform, we will focus on developing the management system. The main goal of the directors appointed to the new organisation will be to develop

the atmosphere of the organisation towards a high-quality individual work with clients and to create a more united working culture.

The aim is to establish an organisation where both prisons and probation offices carry out **uniform, rehabilitative work that reduces recidivism** — in accordance with the individual objectives and roles of the different units.