

10th Conference for Directors General in Probation
Probation Dilemmas: Hard or Easy to Solve?

6-8 November 2023

Hotel Steigenberger Conti Hansa, Kiel, Germany

Background

The conference, specifically for Directors General, policymakers and senior managers in probation organizations, focused on the following key strategic issues for probation:

- Good-lives-approach and Risk Management approach;
- Caseload/workload in probation;
- Involvement of NGOs/CSOs;
- Education and Training;
- Volunteers in probation;
- New projects developed by CEP and future years to come.

Short summary

On November 7th and 8th, the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) organized its 10th CEP Directors General Conference. Annie Devos, the President of CEP, along with Dr. Susanne Mädlich from the Federal Ministry of Justice in Berlin and Prof. Dr. Kerstin von der Decken, the State Minister of Justice and Health in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, extended a warm welcome to 23 jurisdictions and 62 participants (directors general, senior managers in probation, representatives of the Ministry of Justice, researchers) who gathered in Kiel for the conference.

The primary focus of the conference was the theme of "Dilemmas: Hard or Easy to Solve?". In line with this theme, CEP was pleased to present a diverse array of speakers. Mr. Joachim Tein together with Prof. Dr. Christian Ghanem addressed the promotion of "good lives" through a discussion of the Schleswig-Holstein approach, while Prof. Nicola Carr from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, explored research approaches in probation, with a particular emphasis on factors beyond risk and the responsiveness of probation services. Subsequently, prof. Fergus McNeill took the opportunity to delve deeper into CEP Research development strategy that has been carried out by June 2024.

During the workshop sessions, participants engaged in brainstorming sessions led by Dr. Jane Dominey from the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, and Ms. Vesna Zelic Frencic from the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration of Croatia. The workshops covered topics such as caseload and workload. Another workshop, led by Mr. Joachim Tein, focused on the involvement of NGOs/CSOs and their potential role in strengthening probation in Germany. The day concluded with a presentation from Ms. Annie Devos, CEP President, and Ms. Jana Spero, who discussed prospects for 2024 and 2025, along with strategies to navigate the future.

On the second day, Ms. Rita Lourenço and Mr. Gerry McNally explained the CoPPer Project and the role that volunteers can play in probation. Following their presentation, Ms. Maret Miljan, Ms. Pia Andersson and Ms. Marta Ferrer, introduced DialogueTrainer—an online training simulation for probation workers aimed at teaching essential correctional skills. They provided insights into the project's results and the advantages of online learning. The final session featured a roundtable discussion with Nicola Carr – Ireland, Evelina Oueslati – Romania, Danijela Mrhar Prelic – Slovenia, Žilvinas Miliauskas – Lithuania and Domenico Arena – Italy on Education and Training, which included the Involvement of Volunteers as a component of professional development.

This concluded an enlightening conference with a summary and closing thoughts, marking the end of an incredible journey of learning and idea sharing. We express our gratitude to all the participants for their valuable contributions!

Presentations

Should Probation Services Focus on Promoting Good Lives? Learning from the Schleswig-Holstein Approach

by Mr. Joachim Tein and Prof. Dr. Christian Ghanem

There was - and still is - a lack of legal regulation for social services within the criminal justice system in Germany. In 2021 Schleswig-Holstein became one of the three German States to pass an Act on Ambulant Reintegration of Offenders and on Victim Protection (ResOG SH) that regulates community services provided by the justice system and also implies a right for social support for convicted persons. Based on this legislation, standards of service delivery were developed which define the structures, processes and outcomes of the services. According to §9 ResOG SH, the methodology of the therapeutic as well as of the social support services shall primarily focus on strength-based approaches and a participatory development process. This requirement marks a clear position in a long-standing nationwide debate about the priority of risk- or strength-oriented methodologies in therapy and social work. The presentation traced this development and comprised the

theoretical foundations with references to desistance, the Good Lives Model and general theories of social work.

Research Approaches in Probation: Beyond Risk Need and Responsivity

by Prof. Nicola Carr

Existing research on probation frequently focusses on questions of effectiveness. What interventions are likely to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and the likelihood of a person causing further harm? In this vein the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model has been a dominant paradigm. Broadly speaking, the core tenets of this approach is that interventions should be targeted towards criminogenic risks (needs) and that the level of intervention should be calibrated towards the level of risk, i.e., the higher the level of assessed risk, the greater the level of intervention. There is a more limited body of research exploring the circumstances and perspectives of people subject to supervision. A small number of studies from different countries document concerns regarding high levels of social needs and poorer outcomes across a range of domains including health, employment and education. Meanwhile research on experiences of supervision provides glimpses of the manifold challenges that people face including what Durnescu (2011) has characterised as the 'pains of supervision'. This presentation explored existing research on experiences of supervision, including gaps in our knowledge and avenues for further enquiry, and what this might tell us about the wider goals and purposes of probation.

CoPPER Project: Engaging Volunteers and the Community in the Offender's Rehabilitation Journey

by Ms. Rita Lourenço and Mr. Gerry McNally

The CoE, as outlined in Recommendations CM/Rec (2010) by the Committee of Ministers to its member states regarding the Council of Europe Probation Rules, describes a volunteer involved in probation as "a person carrying out probation activities who is not paid for this work. This does not exclude the payment of a small amount of money to volunteers to cover the expenses of their work."

The CoPPER project's main activities will be proposing a European approach to volunteering in probation services. It will develop a European Training programme for volunteers in Probation Services, a sourcebook to design and implement volunteer programmes using an interagency collaboration and develop a Handbook for probation practitioners.

The CEP is the co-ordinating lead for CoPPER project. CEP has the expertise to bring together practitioners, managers, academics, stakeholders, and others working in

the field of probation and criminal justice from across Europe. The CoPPer project partnership brings together one higher education institution, two Public Probation services, one foundation that delivers probation services, three NGOs, and one Enterprise.

The CoPPer project started on 1st December 2022 and will conclude on 1st December 2025. Website: www.copper-initiative.com

Dialogue Trainer: Exploring the use of simulations for training and measurement within Probation

by Ms. Maret Miljan, Ms. Pia Andersson and Ms. Marta Ferrer

The Confederation of European Probation (CEP) launched an initiative to explore the use of online simulations with the aim to strengthen the training and education of probation workers. In 2022 a pilot project was implemented in cooperation with UAS Hogeschool Utrecht, DialogueTrainer and four CEP member states: Estonia, Romania, Finland and Catalunya (Spain). The aim was to develop an online conversation training tool for probations workers based on the concept of the Working Alliance and Motivational Interviewing. These are well-researched and evaluated concepts in 1:1 client work and considered to be part of the core correctional skills. Usually these skills are taught in the classroom through role-play method, but online simulation is a new innovative way to learn it. In the presentation the speakers introduced the project and present the results, talked about the process of creating simulations, the benefits of learning this way and give our recommendations for implementing these kind of projects. And, attendants were able to see the simulations created and how they work.

Workshops

Workshop A - Caseload vs Workload: How much is too much?

by Dr. Jane Dominey and Ms. Vesna Zelic Ferencic

'How much is too much' is an everlasting topic in probation circles. This is surely one of the reasons why the theme for the 2022 CEP audit was the caseload and workload of probation staff across Europe.

This workshop included an overview of the audit report including: the extent to which the size of the probation caseload is viewed as problematic across Europe; definitions of the terms caseload and workload; links between workload, practice effectiveness, service quality and staffing arrangements; systems for measuring caseload and workload; and approaches to workload management. The role of CEP in facilitating debate about these issues was also considered.

The workshop included discussion in small groups enabling participants to learn from each other's experience and consider the discussion points raised in the audit report.

One aim of the workshop was to generate strategies for implementing improvements in the measurement and management of the probation workload and addressing the problem of probation 'overcrowding'. There may be no easy answer to the question 'how much is too much?' but much scope to develop good practice for people on probation and the staff who supervise them.

What were the key themes and issues raised by the presenter (s)?

- Definitions of workload and caseload;
- Subjective perception of excessive caseload and workload;
- How do we measure probation caseload and workload;
- Ideas how to manage increase in caseload and workload.

What were the main questions and areas of discussion?

- How do we measure probation workload (statistics and measuring instruments)?
- How do we manage probation "overcrowding" (what works in practice)?

What were the key points and conclusions arrived at in the session?

- An extremely important topic that should be dealt with systematically;
- It is important to exchange the experience of individual European Probation organisations in order to find an adequate solution applicable in a particular social context;
- Pay special attention to situations of overcrowding in which it is impossible to provide quality supervision and staff are "only pretending" that effective work is being done;
- CEP has a role to play in raising awareness of this issue with bodies like the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Workshop B - Involvement of NGOs/CSOs: enforcing probation in Germany

by Mr. Joachim Tein and Ms. Jana Bewersdorff¹

More than 31 million people in Germany engage in volunteer work in their free time. Volunteering not only helps people participate in society, but is also an expression of a strong civil society and a stable democracy. Volunteering in the justice system in Germany has a long tradition dating back to the 19th century. Around 1830, the first associations of volunteers were founded to offer help and support to offenders. Despite the professionalization that took place in the 20th century, volunteerism remains an integral part of the criminal justice system. In terms of content, the activities cover a broad spectrum, from serving as a juror in

¹ for health reasons Mr. Daniel Wolter could not attend and lead two rounds of workshop.

court to leadership functions in associations and organizations for the assistance of offenders and probationers and from serving on prison advisory boards to providing voluntary probation assistance.

The workshop presented a number of examples of how volunteer work is integrated into probation services in Germany as well as what tasks volunteers perform and what function they assume in rehabilitation.

What were the key themes and issues raised by the presenter (s)?

- Involvement of NGOs or CSOs in probation and its structure;
- Plus and minuses / challenges and opportunities.

What were the main questions and areas of discussion?

- What roles do NGOs or CSOs play in probation in my own country? Are there similar structures? If not, how could NGOs be involved?
- What challenges can there be in cooperation between governmental and non-governmental institutions?

What were the key points and conclusions arrived at in the session?

- Different approach of countries to volunteers – e.g. Germany, Austria – incorporated in their systems, while e.g. Italy has no structure system of volunteers;
- For most of the countries NGOs are critical partners as they supply the “gap” in services provided, and volunteers working in both probation and NGOs provide much needed extra help;
- Different understanding and trust to the work of NGOs – e.g. in Germany it is a fully established system with a strong structure and long history – plays crucial role;
- Volunteers should be part of probation as much as possible.

RoundTable - Traditional classroom vs e-learning and facilitated online learning - impact and benefits

Chair: Nicola Carr (Ireland)

Speakers: Danijela Mrhar Prelic (Slovenija), Evelina Oueslati (Romania), Domenico Arena (Italy), Žilvinas Miliauskas (Lithuania)

Key outcomes:

- Different initial training for probation staff across Europe – important to take into account and not to forget that education is a basic ground for the

successful professional organisation, probation demands special knowledge and skills, indepth knowledge on skills;

- Open mind to innovations is crucial, especially for probation staff, focus should be on them and their motivation;
- Covid-19 actually brought a „push“ to some jurisdictions to quickly develop trainings online but also to focus on update in the f2f training structures;
- The education system should be a two-way system – staff should learn from it but also the system should learn from the staff;
- Traditional classroom vs e-learning and facilitated online learning – it has its pros and cons – speakers agreed that in general a combination of traditional vs online training can and is working with the probation staff across Europe, the need not to fully switch to online has been adressed by the staff as it is of the same importance to meet f2f and discuss/exchange/study information in order to fully develop skills needed for their professional development.

Brainstorming session with DGs

Jana Špero and Annie Devos presented the key achievements in 2023 as well as introduced the 2024 work plan. The brainstorming session in order to continuously monitor the members´ needs took place – what to address, focus on, activities to plan, communication etc.

Outcomes:

- Assessment of policies, reassessment tools, programme evaluations;
- Exploring arising homelessness and country´s respond to that;
- Skill shortages;
- Prisoners on release to work and develop skills and competences;
- Employability potential of probationers;
- Training of professional qualifications with events designed for experts;
- Study visits for DGs and senior managers on specific topics;
- Study visits for practitioners;
- Antipaternalistic approach in probation and how to involve service users´ perspective – development of concepts, methodologies etc;
- Persons released from prison and understanding of society, awareness raising;
- Technological developments and digital transformation;
- Hate crime and working with minorities within jurisdictions;
- Professional secret (confidentiality) vs multi-agency cooperation;
- DG meeting in one country for a couple of days to support political ideas, encourage stakeholdes;
- How to be more effective as managers, role of managers in a context of changing environment, promotion of innovations;

- IT and artificial intelligence within probation - critical reflection and added value, means and how it is possible to organize this in the practices of probation services;
- Probation issue of the year – presenting on how countries are dealing with it;
- Building future leaders, development of partnership with universities for post/graduate programmes;
- Different models of facilitation and development of senior leadership, future leaders and joint meeting;
- Cooperation with prosecutor offices and judges - how we deal with that nowadays, communication with criminal justice chain in general;
- Communication of good practices, good examples - one week/month dedicated to a specific country with presenting and sharing good practices;
- Parole as a joint subject with EuroPris for the years to come;
- Hiring of new staff, retention, well-being and resilience.

Feedback on the event:

Website: <https://www.cep-probation.org/recap-10th-directors-generals-conference/>

YouTube: <https://www.cep-probation.org/watch-the-aftermovie-of-the-cep-10th-directors-general-conference/>