EUROPRIS

THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

EUROPRIS INTERVIEW

Nils Öberg

EuroPris talks with Nils Öberg, Director General of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service

> Nils Öberg, PhD/MSc political science, previously director-general for administrative affairs at the Swedish Ministry of Justice, deputy director-general, director of the division for Police and Prosecution Issues at the Swedish Ministry of Justice, director, division for EU Affairs at the Swedish Ministry of Justice, civil servant in the Swedish Commissioner Anita Gradin's cabinet, European Commission, Brussels, the Swedish Security Service's liaison officer at the Swedish embassy, Paris, principal administrative officer, Swedish Security Service, consultant for various foundations and NGOs.

EuroPris How many Prison establishments do you oversee?

Nils Öberg I oversee approximately 30 remand prisons, 50 prisons and 35 probation offices across the country. The Swedish Prison and Probation Service also conduct around 80 000 client transports each year.

How many prisoners are in prison at the moment in Sweden?
Around 4 300 individuals are incarcerated in Sweden at the moment. Another 12 000 clients are subjects of our non-custodial probation service.

How many staff do you manage?
11 000 employees with over 200 different job descriptions, for example prison officers, inspectors, transport staff, nurses, kitchen staff, cleaning staff and office workers.

What are in your opinion the required attributes and qualifications of someone wanting to be a prison officer?
He or she needs to be able to create relationships with others based on a professional and respectful approach. Security awareness is crucial, as well as a good understanding of our clients individual needs and a belief in their ability to change.

What is your opinion on the role of women in the European correctional field?
The European correctional field, like any field, needs both men and women. We recruit women to all different kinds of jobs within The Swedish Prison and Probation Service. Our staff should reflect

society as a whole and we need a mix of skills and experiences. In the entire organization we have about 50 percent women, among prison officers about 40 percent.

What is the biggest concern with regards to security in prisons in your country?
We have systematically and very successfully improved our security within the past ten years and this as a constant work in progress. Our strategy, dynamic security, is based on four principles: 1) Physical and technical equipment, 2) a humane and professional approach towards clients, 3) presence of staff and 4) laws, rules and routines. These principles, combined with a proper placement of each client, form a robust security system.

What do you consider to be the biggest achievements for your service in 2015? What challenges you had to overcome?
- I am very proud of our staff. They provide high quality work day after day, week after week despite all the challenges, setbacks and adversities that are part of their every day job.

What are the challenges for your service next year?
One challenge is to further reduce isolation in our remand prisons, especially among our younger and most vulnerable clients.

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges for the European prison and correctional services at the moment?
To promote the potential of non-custodial sentences. It is more effective and far less damaging. Another challenge is to keep focusing on our primary task; safety in our society through humane and effective prisons.

What benefits do you see being linked as a Member to an organisation such as EuroPris?
The added value lies entirely in enabling exchange of experience amongst experts and practitioners in our different European services.

Do your prisons engage with NGO's / Charities?
Yes, we cooperate with and offer financial support to organizations within our field, for example organizations working with client rehabilitation.

NILS ÖBERG