



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF  
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

## EUOPRIS INTERVIEW

### Artūras Norkevičius

EuroPris talks with Artūras Norkevičius, Head of the Prison Department, Ministry of Justice Lithuania

The Director General of the Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. He graduated the Police Academy and also has an LL.M. in Penitentiary Law and started his career in 1998 at the Police Department where he worked in different managing positions until 2011. In 2012 he took the job as the Director General of the Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania.



**EuroPris** Could you tell us about your career path? Why have you chosen to work in the prison and correctional field?

**Artūras Norkevičius** The work itself has chosen me, to be more precise. The proposal to take the position of the Director General of the Prison Department was a challenge I couldn't resist.

**How many Prison establishments do you oversee?**

11 establishments, of them:

- 1 Closed Prison-Remand prison;
- 6 Correction Houses;
- 2 Remand Prisons;
- 1 Juvenile Remand Prison-Correction House;
- 1 Central Prison Hospital and
- 5 probation services.

We also have 3 State Enterprises at correction houses and a Training Centre.

**How many prisoners are in prison at the moment in Lithuania?**

As of 28 April 2014 the total prison population was 9087, of them 8078 inmates, 1009 detainees, 87 juveniles, 382 women.

**How many staff do you manage?**

Around 3656, of them – 2735 are officers, 46 – civil servants and 875 employees work under labor agreements.



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**What are in your opinion the required attributes and qualifications of someone wanting to be a prison officer?**

A prison officer should follow universal ethical standards and respect human rights, be tolerant, socially responsible and psychologically resistant.

**What is the biggest concern with regards to security in prisons in your country?**

Outdated penitentiary institutions are usually situated within city limits what makes it difficult to prevent throwing over of forbidden things as well as to ensure safety of the penitentiary staff and inmates.

**What do you consider to be the biggest achievements for your service in 2013? What challenges you had to overcome?**

In 2013 the reform of the probation system was launched; the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 Programme LT14 Corrections, Including Non-Incarceration Penalties was approved in the context of which 5 pre-defined projects shall be implemented in the Lithuanian penitentiary system. Currently we are in the process of modernization of the penitentiary system in the context of the Strategy for Modernization of Custodial Facilities approved by the Government: at this stage the procurement procedures are ongoing. But our biggest challenge is to change the public opinion for the penitentiary employees to have a deserved honourable place in the eyes of the society.

**What are the challenges for your service this year?**

As the prison population is not decreasing, the penitentiary infrastructure is getting outdated, the financing of the penitentiary system is not increasing it is getting complicated to ensure qualitative enforcement of imposed sentences and prepare inmates for release. We are also facing the continuity and results of the challenges 2013: further implementation of the probation reform witnessing positive outcomes, launch of the projects financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and we expect to accomplish public procurement procedures for modernization of the penitentiary system.

**In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges for the European prison and correctional services at the moment?**

In my opinion the increasing number of foreign offenders is a common challenge to the majority of the European jurisdictions.



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**What benefits do you see being linked as a Member to an organisation such as EuroPris?**

EuroPris membership gives the national penitentiary system an opportunity to reach out to professionals in the field, access solutions and resources to address problems otherwise faced alone.

**Do your prisons engage with NGO's / Charities?**

The Prison Department and its subordinate institutions seek to expand cooperation possibilities with different NGOs and religious communities by drawing up agreements on cooperation. NGO support is oriented to satisfy inmates' spiritual needs; settle addiction problems; organize meaningful occupation; facilitate re-integration into the society, etc. We also closely cooperate with NGOs that provide assistance to inmates with psychotropic substance abuse problems. Furthermore, NGOs take active part in different sports and cultural events organized to inmates.

We have cooperate with the Lithuanian Prisoners Care Association, Lithuanian Caritas, Lithuanian Prison Chaplains Association, religious portal Bernardinai.lt, groups of Anonymous Alcoholics, Charity and Support Organization Garstycios grudas which implements social rehabilitation projects, etc. More and more volunteers come to cooperate with our penitentiary institutions and probation services.

**What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in the correctional field?**

The current penitentiary system requires creative, innovative, prompt decisions and approaches; each decision should be evaluated from the view of future impact, its influence both on the inmates' situation and public security.

Most upsetting is the society's attitude towards the hard work of penitentiary staff and financing of the penitentiary system which is not increasing.

**If you could be remembered for one thing whilst being in charge what would it be?**

It's good to know that due to successful reintegration of released inmates back into the society the number of re-offending and re-entering the penitentiary institutions is decreasing and you have also contributed to it.