



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

EUROPRIS INTERVIEW

Celso Manata

EuroPris talks with Celso Manata, Director General of the General Directorate of Probation and Prison Services Portugal



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

Celso Manata I am a Public Prosecutor since 1981 (at the beginning of 2016 I was placed at the Appeal Court as Deputy General Prosecutor). Nevertheless, during my life I've been nominated to several posts such as:

- Teacher at the Centre of Judiciary Studies (clerkship for judges and prosecutors), National Institute for Police and Criminal Sciences, Bar Association and Centre for Penitentiary Studies;
- Assistant and Head of Cabinet of several Secretary of State and Ministers (Justice / Urban Affairs, Spatial Planning and Environment);
- Coordinator for the office of the Ombudsman (areas of Justice, Defence and Internal Affairs);

Between 1994 and 2001 I have been the Portuguese Director General of Prison Service and from 2005 until 2015 I was the Portuguese member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). Since February 2016 I am, again, the Portuguese Director General for Probation and Prison Service.

I choose, again, to work in the prison area because I always believed in Human nature and I really want to give my best contribution to those who want to become useful citizens.

How many Prison establishments do you oversee?

I oversee 49 prisons and 6 facilities for juveniles (meaning children that have committed a crime being at the time between 12 and 16 years old).



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

How many prisoners are in prison at the moment in Portugal?

At the end of 2015 we had 14222 prisoners and 151 juveniles deprived of liberty.

How many staff do you manage?

In total I manage 6251 members of staff (4074 are guards).

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

Besides having the required physical conditions the guards must be honest, educated, with excellent intercommunication skills and high self-control. Of course they must be fully qualified in several areas related, not only with security or use of force but also with legal issues and human rights.

What is your opinion on the role of women in the European correctional field?

In my opinion women can perform any role in the correction field.

In Portugal a significant part of the directors (including prison directors) are women and they represent the majority at the resocialisation area. As to what concerns security areas they are a minority but very often male prisoners respect a female prison officer more than a male officer.

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

The enormous lack of staff and, more important, qualified staff.

What do you consider to be the biggest achievements for your service in 2015? What challenges you had to overcome?

Difficult to say because I was not in the service. Anyway, Prison Services have not been for sure a priority in Portugal during the last years.

What are the challenges for your service this year?

Also difficult to say because it is a very, very long list. Just to mention some more important:

First of all and because several services have been merged in this new directorate (Prison Services, Juvenile Justice, and Probation) we must make sure that the organisation is always working as a big team.

To sensitise the media, judges, politicians and the whole community for the absolute necessity to decrease the size of our prison population is also a major challenge.

We must get attention from the political level in order to be given much more human and financial resources.

There is also a need to start building new prisons and refurbish others.

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

The overcrowding of the prison system is still in many countries a major problem (and the cause of many other problems). The radicalisation of the prison population is something relatively new that should be permanently in our focus and must be prevented at all costs.

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

The exchange of information and experiences.



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PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Do your prisons engage with NGO's / Charities?

Yes in both cases. I think this is something very important, not only because it can lead to some decrease of expenses, but mainly because it is essential to the prisoners to maintain contact with the outside world and also because they can witness what is going on inside the prison walls and also support our causes within the community.

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?

To have the opportunity to contribute to change somebody's life is something unique that makes my life more challenging, more demanding but also more interesting and significant!!

What is more dissatisfactory is the lack of comprehension of our needs by the politicians and other bodies of the Public Administration and the unfairness of some "trials" of the media and other entities that don't understand our work.

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

Everything that is related with international support and funding of our needs.