



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF  
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

### ***How does the prison of the future look like?***

That is the main question in the European project Prison of the Future. An additional question is to get insight into alternatives to regular imprisonment in different countries and to assess cross-national alternatives. What can we learn from the present and the past and what kind of realistic future options of our prisons can be developed?

The project Prisons of the Future started at April 2014. Project partners are coming from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands and the European Probation Organisation CEP as well as EuroPris. The first working session took place in October 2014. We informed each other about current trends in our countries with regards to prison and probation practices. The presentations are written down in draft versions of papers. At the end of the project, April 2016, the final papers will be published in the final conference book.

What can be learnt from the past 15 years? In different countries the same kind of trends can be viewed. Well-known alternatives to detention are fines, compensations to victims, community services, electronic monitoring, (contract) treatment, community care and probation. However, in practice, different alternatives are combined in one sanction. The sanction is a mixed application. Moreover, they are not only used as an alternative to detention, but they are also accompanied by detention. For example, they are applied as a pre-trial option, as a front door option to avoid incarceration, as a back door option, as a form of conditional release, and, some times, even as aftercare. Consequently, they not only replace detention, but also shorten time in prison. Therefore, it is maybe better to talk about 'more or less prison'. However, these options and alternatives can also create new types of prison. For example, probation can be viewed as a 'virtual prison', whereas treatment and care is another way of monitoring and keep an eye on the offender. Sometimes, treatment and care takes place out of the prison, whereas in other cases they are imported in prison.

We learned also that different countries use similar guiding principles of prison and probation practice. Common principles are, for example, normalisation, restoration, public safety, reintegration, proportionality, retribution, professionalism and counteract pains of imprisonment. However, in practice, these criteria have different meanings and are used in diverse combinations. We discovered some basic dimensions. A first dimension concerns a focus on punishment & retribution versus reintegration & restoration. A second dimension concerns a focus on individual needs versus societal needs. A third dimension is related to normalisation versus isolation & exclusion from society. By applying these dimensions a difference can be made between what we say about our prison and probation practice (espoused theory) and what we really do in our prison and probation practice (theory-in-use).

The next step in the project will be to analyze some best practices in depth. Therefore, the second working session will take place in one of the new Belgium prisons, the prison of Beveren (near Antwerpen) where we will study 'prison cloud', the new technology that is used to increase prisoners' self-sufficiency, self reliance and independence. We will also further analyze electronic monitoring and the so-called *Circles of accountability and support* (COSA).

If you want to learn more about our project, please get in touch with Cisca Joldersma, project manager, [c.joldersma@dji.minjus.nl](mailto:c.joldersma@dji.minjus.nl).