



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

ICT in Prisons Workshop, Portlaoise, Ireland, 3rd – 4th April 2014

Purpose of the ICT in Prison Workshop

The ICT in Prison workshop is organised as part of EuroPris' core activities. This workshop enables Prison Services to promote the advances they have made within their own service by the use of ICT in their prisons and to exchange best practice with other Prison Services.

Plenary session day 1

EuroPris held its 2nd expert workshop on ICT on 3rd and 4th April 2014. The Irish Prison Service and Northern Ireland Prison Service hosted the event at the Irish Prison Service College in Portlaoise, Ireland. Kirsten Hawlitschek chaired and opened the event.

Michael Donnellan, Director General Irish Prison Service, opened the event with a talk about the Irish Prison Service (IPS). He mentioned that the IPS are trying to reduce the prison population from 4100 to 3500. He talked about the difficulties of a shrinking budget and compared to the costs that ICT needs. However ICT is the way forward. And he stressed that IT should not replace human contact, instead it should be a way of enabling staff and managers to do their job better.

George Jackson, Director of ICT Irish Prison Service, introduced shortly the development of ICT in the Irish Prison Service. In 2009 they decided to design their own prisoner information management system that went live in 2012. Other systems that are now in place are the health care management system and the prisoner accounts systems.

Sue McAllister, the Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), outlined the challenges ahead for the NIPS. She mentioned that the IPS and NIPS are cooperating closely, sharing experiences, looking at areas of common interest and possible joint project and started working together on training.

Dave Noone, ICT Network and Infrastructure Manager, spoke about the difficulties the service faced with 14 stand-alone education systems, each with a head teacher and no exchange between the different educational centres. Now all the education sites are linked together and a secure Prisoner Academic website exists. He mentioned that the budget restrictions of the budget forced them into closer cooperation and enhanced use of ICT.



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Presentations at the Plenary session

Theo Afman, Department of Strategy and Analysis, Dutch Custodial Institution Agency, talked about trend watching and analysis. In his presentation he explained what is already possible today with the most advanced digital technology and how this can link to the needs of the prisons. In addition he mentioned 'Gamification' and how serious gaming can help to change behaviour or how it can be used in trainings for prison services.

Craig Georgiou, Head of European Projects at NOMS, presented the new STEPS 2 Resettlement project. The project looks at the Framework Decision 909 (Transfer of Offenders between prisons). Based on a research and the experiences of member states that deal with a high number of transferred prisoners it is determined which data should and can travel with the prisoners and how these data could be exchanged. Part of the project is also the development of training programmes for prison staff and officials.

Ernst Steigenga, ICT advisor at the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice, introduced the e-CODEX project. The project looks at the technical side of the secure transfer of data in the civil and criminal justice sector between the EU Member States. The e-CODEX platform is currently working on a user case for the data related to the exchange of prisoners under FD 909 and will therefore be linked to the STEPS 2 project.

Carlos Solar, head of Strategic Projects at the Catalonian Prison Service and **Alberto Delgado**, Penteo Consulting. The Catalonian Prison Service conducted a survey on the kind of software that the prison services use across the EU. Some prefer the ready-made off-the-shelf commercial systems and other prefer self-developed systems. In the survey the advantages of using either off-the-shelf systems or self-developed systems was compared. As an outcome of the survey it was shown that the majority of Prison Services would choose the off-the-shelf systems as these are quick and easy to establish within current structures.

Croatia, Romania and Lithuania gave a joint presentation on the status of the use of ICT in their Prison Services. All three presented their offender management systems. All three countries are at a similar level of development and just started to work with digital technology in their Prison Services.

Workshops Day 1

Two parallel workshop sessions took place on both days on the following topics. The recommendations will be presented on the EuroPris website.

- Biometrics in the Northern Irish and Irish Prison Service
- Prisoner Healthcare Management System, Irish Prison Service



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- Mobility, the next step: where mobility meets the custodial environment, Netherlands
- Prisoner Information Management System, Irish Prison Service

Workshops Day 2

- Communication for inmates – use of e-mail by prisoners, Belgium and Netherlands
- Use of mobile devices in prison, Sweden

- Communication for inmates – use of video by prisoners, Belgium and Netherlands
- Family visits by video conferencing, Scotland

Midlands Prison visit Day 2

Delegates from the EuroPris expert meeting visited Midlands Prison in Portlaoise. The prison is an adult male prison with an operational capacity of 870. It is the committal prison for counties Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath. The roll on the day of the visit was 849. Midlands Prison has two parts. The original one built approximately 15 years ago and is designed on the radial style of the early Prisons from the UK. The second part of the prison called the 'new part' was built in 2013. The two additional wings increased the operational capacity by about three hundred. As like most Prison Services across Europe the Irish Prison service is facing cuts and budget restrictions. This was all too evident when the group noted that the wings in the new part were called E and G. There was no F. The Chief Officer informed the group that the original plans was to build F wing but when the construction was set with budget cuts, F wing was the one to face the chop.

The group were escorted by IPS College staff and the Chief Officer of Midlands. The group were shown the living accommodation in both parts of the prison, which the group noted was clean and fresh and seemed to have wider wings than some prisons from across the rest of Europe. The cells were clean and the prison itself was quiet and orderly. The group had a tour through the visit and exercise yards. The exercise yards had a central control area where the officer overseeing the visits was stationed separately from the rest of the offenders. This enabled the offenders to be observed by fewer guards thus saving money and keeping the safety of the officer paramount. The group were escorted through the staff area of the prison to have a look at the control room. This was state of the art and the officer showing the group was very knowledgeable and explained the systems to an interested group. EuroPris extends its thanks to the Governor, the Chief Officer and all the staff of Midlands prison and the Prison Service College for making this visit possible.

All presentations and recommendations from the ICT expert workshop are available at the EuroPris website <http://www.europris.org>

